

# Critique of theoretical framework

Science



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Religion, Social Policy, and Social Work Practice Faith-based Services in Public Welfare It is generally accepted that the church has been a locus of social service and social change throughout America's history, and " that the concept of human services emerged, at least partially, from a religious base" (Ellor, Netting, ; Thibault, 1999, p. 13). Furthermore, it is recognized that the social work profession in the United States was influenced by a long history of religious traditions (Ellor et al, 1999; Huguen, 2012; Rosenthal, 2006).

The social welfare system that emerged in the United States, ormerly and presently, continues to be a mix of faith-based and secular organizations and groups with diversified perspectives and approaches (Ellor et al, 1999). The diverse perspectives and approaches to social welfare in the United States are rooted in an expansive array of worldviews and faith traditions. The U. S. is a pluralistic society characterized by a diversity of people, opinions, and religions (Monsma, 2012).

The church is simply one of many places where social welfare ideations have manifested themselves, and the battles against social injustices have been fought. For many years a great variety of religiously affiliated organizations, colleges, hospitals, and social service agencies have received federal welfare funding. There is nothing profoundly new about the inclusion of faith-based organizations in the delivery of social welfare services to the disenfranchised and vulnerable populations (Karger et al, 2007).

What is new is the prominence of postmodern, humanistic ideologies in social welfare that began in the 20th century (Huguen, 2012). The clashes between present-day humanistic and faith-based ideologies have spawned a

lasting political debate over the correctness of federal government funding of faith-based social services. A major landmark for this political debate occurred in 1996 when the United States Congress passed a set of provisions under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) section 104” also known as the Charitable Choice clause (Daly, 2009; Wuthnow, 2004).

Charitable Choice removed many of the restrictions on integrating religious content with faith-based delivery of social services, and positioned faith-based social service agencies as equivalent to secular social service agencies (Karger et al, 2007). The movement to incorporate faith-based social service agencies was further fueled by President George W. Bush's Faith Based and Community Initiative (FBCI) (Kennedy & Bielefeld, 2006; Daly, 2009; and Wuthnow, 2004).

The Bush administration aimed to do two things based on the core principles of Charitable Choice: first, to increase the amount of federal social-welfare resources going to faith-based organizations; and second, to protect the organizational autonomy and religious identity of these groups when contracted with the government (Daly, 2007). As a result of the Bush-era FBCI, eleven faith and community-based offices were created in federal agencies, and many states began to develop programs to expand the role of faith-based social services in delivering anti-poverty assistance (Reingold, Pirog & Brady, 2007).

The Bush-era faith-based initiative was strong enough that the Bush administration's proposed budget for 2002 allocated nearly \$90 million to

organizations that expanded or emulated models of faith-based social service programs (Twombly, 2002). Today, according to the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS), there are 956,738 public charities, 97,435 private foundations, and 70,745 other types of nonprofit organizations (NCCS, 2013). According to the NCCS Core Files, public charities reported over \$1.59 trillion in total revenues, and \$1.9 trillion in total expenses in 2011. Of the public charities' revenues: 22% came from contributions, gifts and government grants; 72% came from program service revenues, which include government fees and contracts; and 6% came from "other" sources (NCCS, 2013). Blackwood, Roeger, & Pettijohn (2012) reveal that there was a 42.3% growth in the number 501(c)(3) public charities from 2000 to 2010. In New York State alone, there are 15,362 religious or spiritually related public charities (IRS Business Master File 04/2010).

Eric Twombly (2002), an affiliate of The Urban Institute, and Ira Colby (2007), a social work professor at the University of Houston, point out that many faith-based organizations, such as The Salvation Army, United Jewish Communities, Catholic Charities, and Lutheran Social Services have historically received government support and played a significant role in social service provisions in the United States. These groups are key players in many local areas in both direct social provision and setting government service priorities.

The goal of this essay is to explore the political debate over Charitable Choice and the faith-based initiative, and secondly, to uncover the implications for social work practice and social work education from this debate. It is evident that faith-based organizations play a substantial role in

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the delivery of social welfare services in the United States (Nagel, 2006). To begin our exploration of this issue, we will look at the relevant worldviews and belief systems that support or refute the federal government support of faith-based social service agencies.

**Worldview/ Belief Issues** Republicans have favored the privatization of social welfare and reinforced the value of nonprofits. Conservative thinkers believe that churches can address welfare better than the government and the secular social service system (Cnaan & Boddie, 2002). Conservatives vigorously attack the belief that government should finance and deliver social services to the population (Karger et al, 2007). Conservatives argue privatization has become a paradox in social welfare because the private sector has been utilized in service provision and precedes the welfare state in many instances.

David Osborne and Ted Gaebler (1992) assert in *Reinventing Government* that the private and public sectors have different roles. The government's role should consist primarily of establishing the objectives of social policy, and the private sector role should consist of executing the policy. David Stoesz (2007) co-author of *American Social Welfare Policy* argues, "nonprofit organizations have been poor competitors, often losing out to for-profit firms" (p. 193).

He further asserts that the nature of nonprofits make them less competitive than commercial firms, and when for-profits enter the same market, they often take a substantial portion of the market until nonprofits adopt the same management procedures and become more efficient. A large

assumption is this: if for-profits suspect that they can generate a profit by providing superior service to a clientele, they will seek to subcontract with the government and provide the service.

Conversely, Ira Colby (2007) the Dean and Professor of social work at the University of Houston asserts that privatization of social services as the answer to creating effective service provisions for the poor is a "grossly erroneous assumption" (p. 194). According to Colby (2007) the catchphrases of "compassionate conservative" or "faith-based social services" are simply resurfacing ideas from a previous welfare era where greater reliance on the private sector was emphasized.

Liberal ideology asserts that the government should play a central role in the provision of services" that government is responsible for ensuring that all people, regardless of status in life, receive needed services and supports that maximize their well-being and ability to participate in society. In essence, basic social services are the business of the government (Colby, 2007). Monsma (2012) identifies 5 factors that underlie and work to mold how liberals view the public role of faith-based organizations.

The first is a strong emphasis on the free, autonomous, choosing individual. The second is a suspicion of traditional values and religion when they enter the public square. The third is seeing government as a potentially positive force for social change and improvement. Fourth is its embrace of the strict church-state separation, no-aid-to-religion standard. The fifth and final factor is the legacy of the nondiscrimination statuses of the 1960s. These factors,

which can be considered beliefs, lead liberals to look negatively upon faith-based human service providers.

The emphasis seems to be instead on freedom of choice and what the government can potentially do to improve societal conditions. Rev. Robert Owens (2001) posits that a negative correlation exists between the amount of funding received by religious organizations and the strength of religious mission. Owens, in his stance against public funding of religious organizations, argues that accepting government money to provide social service programs only deepens the confusion in communities about who works for whom. Accepting government money turns the state/ church relationship upside down” where the church works for the state.

The solution then is to keep religious congregations independent of the influence of government. Political, Legal, Social Policy After the Great Depression, President Roosevelt's New Deal political ideations focused on the structural conditions contributing to poverty and social inequality. Because of the depression, it had become obvious that personal morality could not prevent or be the primary cause of poverty (Nagal, 2006). Therefore, the public responsibility for social welfare was emphasized, and the popular moral dimension was minimized in social service delivery.

Following the New Deal era, the Reagan administration shifted the focus back to the inclusion of faith-based organization in social service provisions. President Reagan considered religious organizations to be more effective than public or secular, nonprofit social service providers (Cnaan & Boddie, 2002). Reagan went so far as to use the parable of the Good Samaritan as a

metaphor for the cause of poverty. His perception of the biblical parable contrasted a bureaucratic caseworker against the Good Samaritan: The story of the Good Samaritan has always illustrated to me what God's challenge really is.

He crossed the road, knelt down, bound up the wounds of the beaten traveler, the pilgrim, and carried him to the nearest town. He didn't go running into town and look for a case-worker to tell him that there was a fellow out there that needed help. He took it upon himself. (Denton, 1982, p. 3 as cited in Cnaan & Boddie, 2002) Reagan believed in volunteerism and the increased responsibility of private organizations to meet society's social-welfare needs. The emphasis on volunteerism resulted in a decrease of government spending on social welfare initiatives in the 1980s.

Reagan challenged the private sector to step up and meet the needs of society. He called on churches to provide for the needs of the poor within their own neighborhoods (Yancey, 2007). President Clinton took the challenge one step further and suggested that organized religion would be able to make a significant contribution to reducing the need for social welfare if each congregation in the United States would hire one person in need (Wuthnow, 2004). Here is what President Clinton said:

Under this law [Charitable Choice], every state, when it becomes effective, every state in the country can say: If you will hire somebody off welfare, we'll give you the welfare checks as a supplement for the wages and the training. It means, folks, when you go back home, your church can receive a person's welfare check and add to it only a modest amount of money to make a living



wage, and to take some time to train people and bring their children into the church, and make sure their children are all right and give them a home and family.

I just want every pastor in this audience to think about it. Just think about it. If every church in America hired one person off welfare, if every church in America could get some work to do that, it would set an example that would require the business community to follow, that would require the charitable and other nonprofit organizations to follow. We cannot create a government Jobs program big enough to solve the whole thing, but if everybody did it, one by one, we could do this job. Associated Press, 1996, section A2)

Throughout the later part of the 20th century, the federal government called on the Church to act as the primary safety net for people in need. History reveals that faith-based organizations have always been a part of providing social welfare services. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 with the Charitable Choice clause and Bush's Faith Based and Community Initiative simply increased the collaboration between faith-based organizations and the federal government.

Separation of Church and State Before the Charitable Choice provision of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, faith-based organizations contracting with the government had to remove all religious symbols from the room where service was provided; accept all clients; refrain from any religious ceremonies; hire staff that reflected society, not the organization's belief system; adhere to government contract regulations; and incorporate separately as an 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organizations (Cnaan ; Boddie, 2002).

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All this changed after the PRWORA of 1996. First, faith-based service providers retain their religious autonomy; second, the government could not curtail the religious expression or practice of faith-based services; third, faith-based service providers were exempt from complying with employment policies mandated by the Civil Rights Act of 1964; finally, faith-based organizations contracting with the government were no longer required to establish a separate, secular 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization (Cnaan ; Boddie, 2002).

There are, however, some stipulations that remain in order to contract with the government. Faith-based organizations are fiscally accountable to use government funds for the intended social services and not for religious worship or proselytization. The purpose of this section of the law is to ensure a clear separation between church and state. In order for the government to remain neutral to the religious or secular character of organizations, both are offered an opportunity to participate in social service programs.

As Rosenthal (2006) states in his conclusion on Charitable Choice Programs and Title VII's Co-Religionist Exemption: By offering religious institutions the opportunity to participate in social service programs, Congress is faithfully engaging the constitutional principle of neutrality by affording these organizations the same opportunities as non-religious organizations. On the flip side, however, the Constitution requires that this participation be both secular and non-discriminatory, so as to ensure that religious organizations are not benefited simply by virtue of their religious character. p. 665)

Implication for Social Work Practice David Stoesz (2007) in his response to Should Social Services be Privatized asserts that the social work profession  
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traditionally sides with social welfare. This leads to the dismissal of nonprofit agencies and blatant hostility to for-profit agencies. Because of this bias, social work education is devoid of the knowledge and skills that are essential to business strategies in service provision. The implication for social work education would entail an increase of content in finance, marketing, information systems, and contracting.

This would equip social workers to be more competitive in the new human-service market. With access to government funding that no longer regards the religious character of the service provider as a hindrance to the separation of church and state, it is likely (if not already evident by the NCCS reports) that more faith-based organizations and churches will engage in partnership with the public sector. This significant change has influenced social service delivery.

As a social work practitioner, I could easily find myself working within a faith-based organization or at least collaborating with a faith-based organization in service delivery. Social work is a value-based profession. Although more secularized than ever before, social work can provide leadership in shaping the collaborative effort between the helping professions and faith-based organizations. This is especially important in considering the integration of spirituality and religion in social work practice.

With the prevalence of faith-based organizations providing social services, it could be beneficial for social work education to increase the content on ethical social work practice within religious settings. With an increased competency in the integration of social work practice with religion and

spirituality, social work practitioners can further appreciate the efforts of religious organizations to address social problems. Social work should also "proceed cautiously to outline the parameters of ethical social work practice in religious organizations" (Sherr et al, 2009, p. 64) so that service delivery does not cross the ethical line and become an opportunity for proselytizing. The profession of social work continues to realize the importance of religious and spiritual beliefs for clients. The importance of these issues in social work education is supported by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Educational Policy and Accreditation Standard, 2.1.4: Social workers understand how diversity characterizes and shapes the human experience and is critical to the formation of identity.

The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation... [Social workers] gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups... (CSWE, 2008, p. 5) The NASW Code of Ethics (2008) points to the importance of recognizing religious and spiritual beliefs in order to practice in a holistic, client-centered manner.

Section 1.05(c) of the Code of Ethics states: 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, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status and mental or physical disability. (NASW, 2008, p. 9) Competently addressing religious and spiritual beliefs is part of the <https://assignbuster.com/critique-of-theoretical-framework/>

holistic approach to working with the multi-dimensional person” bio, psycho, social, and spiritual.

To ignore the value system of a client leaves the door open for social workers to taint the helping relationship with their own beliefs and values (Zellmer & Anderson-Meger, 2011). Summary populations (Karger et al, 2007). History reveals that faith-based organizations have always been a part of providing social welfare services. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 with the Charitable Choice clause and Bush's Faith Based and Community Initiative simply increased the collaboration between faith-based organizations and the federal government.

Conservative thinkers believe that churches can address welfare better than the government and the secular social service system (Cnaan ; Boddie, 2002). Conservatives vigorously attack the belief that government should finance and deliver social services to the population (Karger et al, 2007). Liberal ideology asserts that the government should play a central role in the provision of services” that government is responsible for ensuring that all people, regardless of status in life, receive needed services and supports that maximize their well-being and ability to participate in society (Colby, 2007).

With an increased competency in the integration of social work practice with religion and spirituality, social work practitioners can better appreciate the role of religious organizations to address social problems. With the prevalence of faith-based organizations providing social services, it would be beneficial for social work education to increase the content on ethical social work

practice within religious settings. The clashes between present-day humanistic and faith-based ideologies have spawned a lasting political debate over the correctness of federal government funding of faith-based social services.

In the American pluralistic society, public funds should not be used to promote any particular religion. Therefore, the social work profession should take a leadership role in appreciating diversity, and ethically navigating social welfare and the faith-based initiative.