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## A Study of the Experience of Social Workers in Relation to Ethical Problems

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A STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCE OF  
SOCIAL WORKERS IN RELATION  
TO ETHICAL PROBLEMS

by

Lester John Bohman

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Social Work

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1953

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In his professional service the social worker has many objectives. He may be helping an individual or group to make a better environmental adjustment, or he may be meeting needs or helping groups or individuals with problems. These are proximate goals. There are other goals such as: aiding in personality growth, contributing to social health, and promoting citizenship. These are intermediate goals.

These goals, in themselves, seem rather meaningless unless one considers the purpose of life, the ultimate goal of man's existence here on this earth. The ultimate objective of Social Work, then, is to help individuals or groups to remove obstacles in the path of life's ultimate goal through social work services and methods. If it is granted that this be true, it is then important that social workers be aware of the means to this ultimate end besides knowing the means to the proximate and intermediate objectives.

It is the Catholic belief that this ultimate objective is a perfect union with God and that this objective can be

attained through God's love for us and because of His love for us. This implies that His creatures should obey God's laws and the laws of nature as ordered by God. To do this it is helpful to know God's laws. When one is helping others toward their ultimate objective it is necessary that one know and be aware of God's laws.

Moral problems cannot be separated from the other problems of life because of the wholeness of man and the necessity of his final end.

To anyone who has been engaged in professional social work even a brief time it is evident that there is need on the part of the individual worker for practical knowledge of basic moral principles pertaining to moral questions. The experienced worker is aware that the profession of social work is concerned intimately with human beings who have personality problems, often touching upon, if not primarily resulting from, difficulties in the field of morals. Experienced workers need not be reminded of the necessity of equipping themselves with an understanding of principles of morality for solving these problems, or at least of being able to make a proper referral for their solution.<sup>1</sup>

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study is to determine what has been the experience of social workers in relation to ethical problems.

In the questionnaire, four ethical problems are presented. The first problem is whether the caseworker has

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<sup>1</sup> Charles R. McKenney, Moral Problems in Social Work, Milwaukee, 1951, pages 1-2.

ever been asked to refer a client to a birth control clinic. This question attempts to find out whether social workers have been asked by the client, by the supervisor, or any other person having anything to do with the case, for a referral to a clinic that is known to support the practice of artificial means of birth control. What factors have influenced this referral? The second problem concerns placing a child in an institution that automatically sterilizes its inmates. Have social workers been asked to make such a placement and what factors have been determinants in who makes such a placement? The third problem asks if the caseworker has ever met a situation where a client is considering an abortion as a way out of her problem. What factors have made this particular worker meet this situation? The fourth problem asks if the social worker has had a validly married Catholic consider a legal divorce and remarriage. What are the factors that have made a particular worker meet or not meet this situation?

As these problems involve moral issues, there is a question about whether a social worker has consulted a clergyman in regards to any of these problems. Social workers consult lawyers, doctors, psychiatrists, and other professional persons for advice in certain matters; so this question asks if they have consulted one who is considered an authority on moral



problems in regards to the four ethical problems as stated above.

In ethics there are two concepts which are considered basic to the application of ethics to a particular situation; therefore, there is a question which asks, in technical terms, whether the social worker understands the principle of double effect and the principles regarding cooperation in evil. It is felt that the social worker should remember these terms if he expects to apply these principles to a particular situation.

The last question asks if the social worker feels he was adequately prepared in a school of social work to handle the four ethical problems stated above. This question seeks to know the feelings of the social worker in regard to the curriculum of the schools of social work in the area of ethics as applied to social work.

METHOD: The method used in this study to acquire data was the questionnaire. The following is the questionnaire used.

A. IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

1. School of Social Work Attended: \_\_\_\_\_  
Year graduated: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Undergraduate School Attended: \_\_\_\_\_  
Year graduated: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Age \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Priest \_\_\_\_\_ Nun \_\_\_\_\_

4. Religion \_\_\_\_\_
5. Number of years in social work practice  
     BEFORE graduation from school of social work \_\_\_\_\_  
     AFTER graduation from school of social work \_\_\_\_\_
6. Agency employed in at present: \_\_\_\_\_  
     Position: \_\_\_\_\_

**B. IN YOUR CASEWORK EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS:**

1. You are asked to refer a client to a birth control clinic. YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_
2. You are asked to place a mentally deficient child in an institution which automatically sterilizes inmates. YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_
3. A client is considering abortion as a way out of her problems. YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_
4. A Catholic client validly married is considering a legal divorce and remarriage. YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

**C. IN ANY OF THESE SITUATIONS DID YOU CONSULT WITH A CLERGYMAN?** YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

**D. DO YOU FEEL YOU UNDERSTAND THE FOLLOWING CONCEPTS IN ETHICS?**

1. The principle of the double effect. YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_
2. The principles governing cooperation in evil. YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

**E. DO YOU FEEL YOU WERE ADEQUATELY PREPARED TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATIONS IN QUESTION (B) ABOVE, FROM THE ETHICAL POINT OF VIEW, IN THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK?** YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

**SOURCE:** The questionnaire was sent to all graduates of Catholic schools of social work as listed in the membership directory of the American Association of Social Workers. This group totaled 354 members. The questionnaires, with an accompanying letter, were sent out with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to facilitate their return. Of the 354 questionnaires sent out, six were returned unopened as the addressee was no longer located at the

address listed in the directory. Of the 348 members, two hundred and forty-four returned the questionnaire. This is a 70% response. This large response may possibly be explained by the fact that the source is predominantly Catholic and that graduates of Catholic schools of social work have an interest in this subject. The briefness of the questionnaire, the ease with which it could be answered, and the self-addressed, stamped envelope are all factors which may have contributed to the large response.

IDENTIFYING INFORMATION OF THE SOURCE: The following identifying information presents some characteristics of the group that responded to this questionnaire.

SCHOOLS OF SOCIAL WORK ATTENDED: Graduates of all the Catholic schools of social work in the United States are represented in the respondents. The number of respondents from each school is more or less in proportion to the enrollment of each school, with the exception of Our Lady of the Lake, which started to confer the Master's degree very recently.

TABLE I  
SCHOOLS OF SOCIAL WORK ATTENDED

<u>SCHOOLS</u>	<u>NO. OF RESPONDENTS</u>
National Cathelic School of Social Service . .	89
Boston College . . . . .	51
Saint Louis University . . . . .	40
Fordham University . . . . .	35
Loyola University . . . . .	27
Our Lady of the Lake . . . . .	1
No Information Given . . . . .	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	244

YEARS GRADUATED FROM A SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK:      The graduation date of the respondents varies from twenty years or more to one year. Sixty percent received the Master's degree within the last eight years.

TABLE II

## YEARS GRADUATED FROM A SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

<u>YEARS</u>	<u>NO. OF RESPONDENTS</u>
Up to 1932 . . . . .	14
1933 to 1936 . . . . .	10
1937 to 1940 . . . . .	29
1941 to 1944 . . . . .	42
1945 to 1948 . . . . .	70
1949 to 1952 . . . . .	77
No Information Given . . . . .	<u>2</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>244</b>

UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOL: One hundred and fifty-six graduated from a Catholic undergraduate school, and eighty-five graduated from a non-Catholic undergraduate school; three did not reply to this question. It may be presumed, therefore, that the first group, 64% of the respondents, had a course in ethics in their undergraduate training.

AGE: A distribution is seen that would almost fit into the normal curve concept. In a professional field you would expect to find such a distribution. Only a few are found over fifty-five years of age and we see a majority in the younger years. This can be accounted for by the newness of the field of social work as a profession.

TABLE III

## AGE

<u>AGE</u>	<u>NO. OF RESPONDENTS</u>
25 - 29 . . . . .	29
30 - 34 . . . . .	56
35 - 39 . . . . .	58
40 - 44 . . . . .	41
45 - 49 . . . . .	29
50 - 54 . . . . .	22
55 and over . . . . .	8
Information Not Given . . . . .	<u>2</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>244</b>

SEX: Seventy-two were males and one hundred and seventy-two were females. This distribution would be expected because of the large number of females in the field of social work.

PRIESTS AND NUNS: Nineteen were priests and nineteen were nuns. If one were to look at the enrollment of a Catholic school of social service, one would expect to find a proportionate number similar to what is found here.

RELIGION: As the study is concerned with Catholic schools of social work, one would be expected to find a preponderance of Catholics. The distribution found in Table IV seems to be the same as you would find enrolled in a Catholic graduate school of social work.

TABLE IV

## RELIGION

<u>RELIGION</u>	<u>NO. OF RESPONDENTS</u>
Catholic . . . . .	200
Protestant . . . . .	29
Jewish . . . . .	10
Greek Orthodox . . . . .	1
No Religion . . . . .	2
No Information Given . . . . .	<u>2</u>
TOTAL	244

YEARS IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE BEFORE GRADUATION FROM A SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK: In other professional fields professional

training is considered prerequisite for professional practice. Considering this the number having had experience before graduation is a majority. Because of the newness of the profession it has been necessary to employ untrained people in the field. As is seen here, many of these individuals do go on to professional training.

TABLE V

**YEARS OF EXPERIENCE BEFORE GRADUATION  
FROM A SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

<u>YEARS OF EXPERIENCE</u>	<u>NO. OF RESPONDENTS</u>
No experience . . . . .	110
1 to 3 years . . . . .	56
4 to 6 years . . . . .	32
7 to 9 years . . . . .	18
10 to 12 years . . . . .	13
Over 12 years . . . . .	<u>15</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>244</b>

**YEARS IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE AFTER GRADUATION FROM A SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK:** In view of the large number of recent graduates, it is not surprising that a large number have only had a few years of experience after graduation from a school of social work.



TABLE VI

**YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AFTER GRADUATION  
FROM A SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

<u>YEARS OF EXPERIENCE</u>	<u>NO. OF RESPONDENTS</u>
1 to 3 years . . . . .	62
4 to 6 years . . . . .	68
7 to 9 years . . . . .	36
10 to 12 years . . . . .	30
13 to 15 years . . . . .	27
16 to 18 years . . . . .	7
Over 18 years . . . . .	<u>14</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>244</b>

AGENCY EMPLOYED IN AT PRESENT: The distribution as seen in Table VII would be what one would expect of graduates of Catholic schools of social work.

TABLE VII

## AGENCIES

<u>AGENCIES</u>	<u>NO. OF RESPONDENTS</u>
Catholic . . . . .	86
Public . . . . .	78
Non-Sectarian . . . . .	50
Jewish . . . . .	3
Other Sectarian . . . . .	2
Schools of Social Work . . . . .	4
Undergraduate Schools . . . . .	6
Other professional Agencies . . . . .	7
No Agency answered . . . . .	<u>8</u>
TOTAL	244

POSITION: Although a large number are caseworkers, the majority are in supervisory or administrative positions. Because of the scarcity of trained professional workers, it would be expected that many of them would be in positions of responsibility.

**TABLE VIII**  
**POSITIONS**

<u>POSITION</u>	<u>NO. OF RESPONDENTS</u>
Caseworker . . . . .	74
Supervisor . . . . .	61
Director . . . . .	37
Executive Secretary . . . . .	16
Field Representative . . . . .	4
Asst. Director . . . . .	9
Consultant . . . . .	10
Administrator . . . . .	2
Personnel Officer . . . . .	2
Professor . . . . .	9
Research . . . . .	2
Superintendent . . . . .	1
Public Relations . . . . .	1
Director of Vocations . . . . .	1
Rector of Latin School . . . . .	1
Asst. Pastor . . . . .	1
No answer . . . . .	<u>13</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>244</b>

**PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY:** The study will be presented in the order that the questions are listed on the questionnaire. The responses to each question will be discussed and the data

presented in a table. Comments that were added will be presented where they are relevant to the nature of the study in that they may explain the nature of the responses or the reasons for the nature of the distribution. The responses will be correlated in tables with data in the identifying information in an attempt to explain the responses.

The second chapter will deal with the first four questions regarding the ethical problems. The third chapter will deal with the way these problems were handled and the ethical background of the group. The final chapter will deal with whatever conclusions are to be drawn from this study.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FOUR ETHICAL PROBLEMS

The tabulation of the responses to each question will first be given, along with comments which the respondents may have volunteered to write in. Then a correlation of these responses will be made with certain factors in the identifying information, with the hope that these correlations may indicate some underlying patterns.

Question B 1: Have you been asked to refer a client to a birth control clinic.

Birth control is a large problem facing society today and many present it as a solution to what is seen as our population problems. Because of this controversy, it is surprising, then, that only 25% have given the affirmative answer to this question.

TABLE IX

Responses to Question  
Regarding Birth Control

<u>Total</u>	<u>244</u>
Have been asked to make a referral . . . . .	61
Have not been asked to make a referral . . . . .	176
No answer . . . . .	7

One individual stated, "The biggest problem in ethics I face day by day is the use of contraceptives by Catholic husbands and wives and the problems continence brings to a marriage." This individual sees birth control as a very real problem. Certainly the conflict that is presented is a very real one and one would expect to see it more generally found as a problem facing caseworkers.

Another individual sees it from a different point of view. This individual believes the question comes up, "but not from the point of view of definite recommendations. It is more or less casually thrown out as something to think about as a possible solution - which is promptly ignored and not followed through." It is possible that the statement given above may explain the small percentage of individuals who have actually become involved in this problem. Possibly, as this person states, in casework, birth control as a solution to other problems was passed over quickly by the caseworker or client because of the

moral issue involved. Another comment states, "only once - and not by client. Person asking anticipated my answer and accepted my explanation." This comment would possibly show the reluctance of a client to bring such a problem to an agency especially if it is a Catholic agency, or if the client knows the worker is a Catholic. This could be explained on the basis of the very wide publicity given to this problem.

TABLE X

CORRELATION OF RELIGION TO ANSWERS  
REGARDING BIRTH CONTROL

RELIGION	YES	NO	NO ANSWER
TOTAL	61	176	7
Catholic	42	153	7
Protestant	13	16	
Jewish	4	6	
No Religion	1	1	
No Information given	1	1	

**TABLE XI**  
**CORRELATION OF AGENCY TO**  
**ANSWERS REGARDING BIRTH**  
**CONTROL**

AGENCY	YES	NO	NO ANSWER
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>7</b>
Public	27	52	
Catholic	12	82	3
Non Sectarian	18	33	4
Jewish	2	1	
Other Sectarian	0	2	
No Agency answered	2	0	

It seems obvious that a larger percentage of non-Catholic workers than Catholic workers have met the problem and the same would apply as to Catholic and non-Catholic agencies. This fact would support the notion that possibly the Catholic caseworker or client has passed over the issue very quickly because of the feelings of the Catholic in regard to the moral issue involved as the earlier comments have mentioned.

It should not be overlooked that possibly the Catholic worker or agency is dealing with clients who do not concern themselves with birth control. Possibly it should be considered that the Catholic worker or client who is hesitant



to bring this issue forward is actually looking at the problem, to which birth control is offered as a solution, in the most realistic manner, and allowing the focus to be placed upon a real solution to the problem presented. The difficulty here may be the possibility of hostility toward the agency if this problem is not dealt with by the worker.

Question B-2. Have you been asked to place a mentally deficient child in an institution which automatically sterilizes inmates:

Recently some state legislatures have passed laws which require sterilization of mentally deficient children placed in state institutions. The problem for the worker (especially the Catholic worker who is aware of the moral problem involved) becomes very complex especially in regard to material cooperation in evil. It is surprising that only 10% have been asked to make such a placement. This could be explained on the basis that the Catholic agency or worker will avoid such a placement, that few graduates of Catholic schools of social work are working in agencies making such placements, or that actually such placements are not too numerous as most institutions do not automatically sterilize or that a great many states do not have laws requiring automatic sterilization. Twenty-eight states do have laws requiring compulsory sterilization of deficient.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Supplement 162 to U. S. Public Health Report, Eugenic Sterilization in the United States, Washington, 1940, 4. Albert Deutsch in The Mentally Ill in America (New York, 1946) stated "While Eugenic Sterilization laws exist in twenty-eight

**TABLE XII**  
**RESPONSES TO QUESTION**  
**REGARDING STERILIZATION**

<u>Total</u>	<u>244</u>
Have met situation of placement . . . . .	24
Have not met situation of placement . . . . .	214
No answer . . . . .	6

Some individuals even qualified their "yes" answer to this question with "The children are sterilized only upon parents' consent." Another stated that only "some" are automatically sterilized. Another, who is now in an administrative position, commented that automatic sterilization "was not established practice in the community" when she had her casework experience. One person saw it as a grave problem, "What becomes of the mentally deficient in a state with a sterilization law? I have tried to argue that the church should provide other facilities for the children of Catholics that cannot accept this law or should fight to have it changed - No results, as yet"

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states today, only in a few states are they operative. This situation is due principally to strong popular, religious, and scientific opposition to sterilization, besides constitutional and administrative difficulties in enforcing the laws. A survey made in 1926 showed that such statutes were functioning effectively in only four states, with moderate efficacy in eight more, while in the remaining states, operations were performed only sporadically if at all."

TABLE XIII

**CORRELATION OF RELIGION  
WITH ANSWERS TO QUESTION  
REGARDING STERILIZATION**

RELIGION	YES	NO	NO ANSWER
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>6</b>
Catholic	20	174	6
Protestant	3	26	0
Jewish	1	9	0
Greek Orthodox	0	1	0
No Religion	0	2	0
No Information given	0	2	0

TABLE XIV

**CORRELATION OF AGENCY TO  
ANSWER TO QUESTION REGARD-  
ING STERILIZATION**

AGENCY	YES	NO	NO ANSWER
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>6</b>
Public	3	76	0
Catholic	16	78	3
Non-Sectarian	4	48	3
Other Sectarian	0	2	0
Jewish	1	2	0
No information given	0	8	0

The number having made placement is not a very significant one, but it can be seen that Catholics and those working in Catholic agencies are involved in this problem. Catholic agencies do a great deal of work with children, and, therefore, should be extremely interested in seeing that something is done to solve this problem, which is a grave one despite the few who have been asked to make such placements.

QUESTION B-3. In your casework experience have you encountered a client who is considering abortion as a way out of her problems: This problem has been with social workers and the medical profession for many years. A large percentage, 46%, have met this problem. Abortions may be sought for many reasons, medical, social, emotional, or economic. Chances are the emotional element will enter into most cases and it is thus seen that those seeking abortions are in particular need of casework services.

TABLE XV

RESPONSES TO QUESTION  
REGARDING ABORTION

<u>Total</u>	<u>244</u>
Have had client wanting abortion . . . . .	112
Have not had client wanting abortion . . . . .	125
No information given . . . . .	7

There were no pertinent comments with the answers to this question.

In Catholic agencies, family problems and problems with unmarried pregnant women are often seen. In Tables XVI and XVII it is seen that the problem of abortion is met by a large percentage of Catholics and Catholic agencies. Because of the seriousness of this problem and the chances being great that abortion will be met especially in Catholic agencies, it is important that the graduate of a Catholic school of social work be thoroughly aware of the ethical principles involved in the problem of abortion.

TABLE XVI

CORRELATION OF AGENCY  
TO ANSWERS TO QUESTION  
REGARDING ABORTION

AGENCY	YES	NO	NO ANSWER
TOTAL	105	136	3
Public	26	53	0
Catholic	59	37	1
Non-Sectarian	16	37	2
Other Sectarian	0	2	0
Jewish	2	1	0
No agency given	2	6	0

TABLE XVII  
CORRELATION OF RELIGION  
WITH ANSWERS TO QUESTION  
REGARDING ABORTION

RELIGION	YES	NO	NO ANSWER
TOTAL	108	129	7
Catholic	93	100	7
Protestant	10	19	0
Jewish	5	5	0
Greek Orthodox	0	1	0
No Religion	0	2	0
No Religion given	0	2	0

Question B-4. In your experience have you encountered a client, validly married, who was considering a legal divorce and remarriage: A good majority (67%) has met this problem. This high percentage should be of great concern to social workers because of the threat that divorce is to the family. One of the basic principles held in social work and psychiatry is the importance of the family to the development of its members.

TABLE XVIII

<u>Total</u>	<u>244</u>
Have had client consider divorce and remarriage . . .	164
Have not had client consider divorce and remarriage . . .	76
No information given . . . .	4

A few stated that they had met the problem of divorce, but "if remarriage is intended we are not told about it." Another stated, "But a good Catholic tries to do something about this situation." This is true, but it could also be said that a good caseworker tries to do something about this situation.

It is important to see our present culture in regards to this situation. Divorce is prevalent in our culture today. Of course, this does not say that it is good, but it does explain partially the reason why we have a large incidence of this problem in social agencies.

TABLE XIX

CORRELATION OF AGENCY TO ANSWER  
TO QUESTION REGARDING DIVORCE

AGENCY	NO	YES	NO ANSWER
TOTAL	79	161	4
Catholic	18	79	
Public	36	42	1
Non Sectarian	20	32	3
Jewish	0	3	
Other Sectarian	0	2	
No agency answered	5	3	

TABLE XX  
CORRELATION OF RELIGION  
TO ANSWERS OF QUESTION  
REGARDING DIVORCE

RELIGION	NO	YES	NO ANSWER
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>4</b>
Catholic	59	138	3
Protestant	11	17	1
Jewish	5	5	
No Religion	1	1	
Greek Orthodox	1	0	
No Religion given	2	0	

It can be seen that the percentage of those having met the problem is greater among non-Catholics and in non-Catholic agencies than among Catholics or in Catholic agencies. This would be expected because of the laws of the Catholic Church regarding divorce and remarriage.

Summary: In Chapter II it is seen that the problem of birth control was met by 25%. A larger percentage of non-Catholics and those working in non-Catholic agencies met the problem of birth control than did Catholics or those working in Catholic agencies. The problem of automatic sterilization of the



mentally deficient was met by only 10%. It was noticed that Catholics and those in Catholic agencies have met this problem to some degree. The problem of abortion was met by 46%. The high percentage of Catholics and those in Catholic agencies who have met this problem was noted. The problem of divorce and remarriage was met by 67%, the largest percentage, indicating its prevalence. It was noted that non-Catholics and those in non-Catholic agencies met this problem to a greater degree than did Catholics and those in Catholic agencies.

## CHAPTER III

### CONSULTATION AND ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

In this chapter the remainder of the questions on the questionnaire will be discussed. The responses will be presented; comments will be brought forth; and factors in the identifying information will be correlated with the responses. The questions to be discussed are those regarding the consultation of a clergyman, the principles of double effect, the principles governing cooperation in evil, and the feeling of being adequately prepared in the school of social work to handle the four ethical problems from the ethical point of view.

QUESTION C. In any of these situations did you consult with a clergyman: The clergyman, because of his training in the area of morals, should be able to advise the worker about the handling of a situation involving moral issues. Not quite half (47%) did consult with a clergyman about the four ethical problems. The percentage might have been higher if more of the workers had had an opportunity to cope with these problems. Typical responses were, "Pastors are always consulted whenever a religious question is involved," or "Would have consulted a clergyman if it were necessary." Others said, "Client was

asked to speak with her priest." As these individuals all answered negatively, it can be seen the willingness to consult a clergyman is much better than the percentage indicates.

# TABLE XXI

## RESPONSES TO QUESTION REGARDING CONSULTING A CLERGYMAN

<u>Total</u>	<u>244</u>
Have consulted a clergyman . . . . .	144
Have not consulted a clergyman . . . . .	79
No information given . . . . .	32
Already are a clergyman . . . . .	19

One individual stated, "Except for the Jesuits and a very few Catholic priests, most social workers are better off not consulting clergyman because, frankly, they don't have the answer, nor the solution, and worst of all the understanding! - This is my opinion." This individual does state that some clergymen can be helpful. As the field of social work is a new one, it is difficult, at times, to find individuals in other professions who understand the role of the social worker in these situations. It is to be hoped that clergymen will become better informed as the educated public's understanding of human behavior increases. The hope that clerymen will increase in understanding and knowledge of the field does not mean that the social worker should not consult the clergyman; just as the

social worker would not hesitate to consult a doctor or lawyer about a medical or a legal problem just because the professional person may not have an understanding of social work. One should also consider the opportunity of interpreting social work to the clergy.

TABLE XXII

**CORRELATION OF AGENCY TO QUESTION  
REGARDING CONSULTING A CLERGYMAN**

AGENCY	YES	NO	NO ANSWER
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>33</b>
Public	34	35	10
Catholic*	57	12	9
Non Sectarian	19	24	12
Other Sectarian	1	1	0
Jewish	1	2	
No Information given	2	4	2
*19 are clergymen			

One thing that is noticed in Table XXII is that a considerable number of those in non-sectarian agencies have consulted with a clergyman. This may be interpreted as very encouraging; it might indicate that workers in non-sectarian agencies are more aware of ethical problems than is popularly

believed.

**TABLE XXIII**  
**CORRELATION OF RELIGION TO**  
**QUESTION REGARDING CONSULTING A CLERGYMAN**

RELIGION	YES	NO	NO ANSWER
TOTAL	114	78	33
Catholic*	101	55	26
Protestant	10	16	3
Jewish	3	6	1
Greek Orthodox	0	0	1
No Religion	0	1	1
No Information given	0	1	1
*19 are clergymen			

A larger percentage of Catholics have consulted with a clergyman than have non-Catholics. This could be explained perhaps by the fact that Catholics have traditionally been more disposed to confide in their clergyman than non-Catholics have.

**QUESTION D.** Do you feel you understand the following concepts in ethics?

1. The principle of double effect.
2. The principles governing cooperation in evil.

These two ethical principles are basic in the application of ethical facts to a particular situation. Consequently

it is necessary that the social worker have an understanding of these principles and an acquaintance with their technical names. A good majority of those responding indicate they do have an understanding of the principles; 79% state that they understand the principles of double effect, and 88% state that they understand the principles governing cooperation in evil.

TABLE XXIV

RESPONSES TO QUESTION  
REGARDING PRINCIPLE OF DOUBLE EFFECT

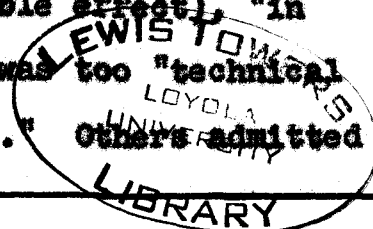
<u>Total</u>	<u>244</u>
Understands principle . . . . .	194
Does not understand principle . . . . .	40
No answer . . . . .	10

TABLE XXV

RESPONSES TO QUESTION REGARDING  
PRINCIPLES GOVERNING COOPERATION IN EVIL

<u>Total</u>	<u>244</u>
Understands principle . . . . .	215
Does not understand principle . . . . .	24
No answer . . . . .	5

A few commented that they did not understand the principles (especially the principle of double effect), "in these terms". Another stated the question was too "technical for a non-Catholic practicing social worker." Others admitted



they did "not (understand the principles) fully". One non-Catholic went into detail.

As a non-Catholic attending a Catholic school of social work I encountered these concepts (the Catholic interpretation of them) for the first time. During that period I developed a fair intellectual understanding and acceptance of them. The emotional acceptance was no doubt lacking in great measure. At present I find I have a difficult time recalling the interpretation of these concepts as it was presented in graduate school.

In regard to the principle governing cooperation in evil, one individual states, "could use more understanding of the role of the third person e.g. the assistant."

Because a great majority indicated that they did understand the principles, we can assume that these terms are not as baffling to the social worker as might be supposed. Probably the non-Catholic who felt he had not gained the emotional understanding of the principles hit at the reason why the questions were not clear to the others. Since a large majority state that they know the principles, it could be assumed that they were taught the principles as students. The teaching of these principles should be intensive enough to insure as much emotional understanding as possible.

One individual commented, "To the point of understanding the principles of ethics involved, I have always felt that any ethical question as serious as those listed, should be discussed with the priest because of the varying ramifications

found in the individual cases." The writer would certainly agree with this, but it would also be necessary to know the principles in order to carry out the advice of the clergyman in the actual interview situation.

TABLE XXVI

**CORRELATION OF RELIGION TO ANSWERS OF  
QUESTIONS REGARDING PRINCIPLE OF DOUBLE EFFECT**

RELIGION	UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLE		NO ANSWER
	YES	NO	
<b>TOTALS</b>	194	40	10
Catholic	173	23	5
Protestant	13	11	4
Jewish	6	3	1
Greek Orthodox		1	
No Religion		2	
No information given	2		

**TABLE XXVII  
CORRELATION OF RELIGION TO ANSWERS OF  
QUESTIONS REGARDING PRINCIPLE GOVERNING COOPERATION  
IN EVIL**

RELIGION	UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLE		NO ANSWER
	YES	NO	
<b>TOTALS</b>	215	24	5
Catholic	184	14	3
Protestant	18	8	2
Jewish	9	1	
Greek Orthodox	1	0	
No religion	1	1	
No information given	2		



Religion seems to have had some influence upon the individual's understanding of the ethical principles, but not to any great extent. These are not religious principles; they are philosophical principles because ethics is a division of science of philosophy. The understanding of these principles would, therefore, depend more upon one's philosophical training. It can be seen in Table XXVI that 87% of the graduates of a Catholic undergraduate school said that they understood the principle of double effect and 67% of those graduating from a non-Catholic undergraduate school expressed the same understanding. In Table XXVII 90% of those graduating from a Catholic undergraduate school said that they understood these principles governing cooperation in evil and 83% of those graduating from a non-Catholic undergraduate school expressed the same understanding.

TABLE XXVIII

CORRELATION OF UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOL WITH ANSWERS TO  
QUESTIONS REGARDING PRINCIPLE OF DOUBLE EFFECT

UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOL	UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLE		NO ANSWER
	YES	NO	
TOTALS	194	40	10
Catholic	135	16	5
Non Catholic	57	23	5
No information given	2	1	0

TABLE XXIX

**CORRELATION OF UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOL WITH ANSWERS  
TO QUESTION REGARDING PRINCIPLE GOVERNING  
COOPERATION IN EVIL**

UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOL	UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLE		NO ANSWER
	YES	NO	
<b>TOTALS</b>	211	27	6
Catholic	140	11	5
Non-Catholic	71	13	1
No information given	0	3	0

QUESTION E. Do you feel you were adequately prepared to deal with the situations in Question "B" above, from the ethical point of view, in the school of social work? Question "B" referred to the four ethical problems.

The school of social work, and particularly the Catholic school of social work, has a responsibility to prepare the graduating students to meet whatever problems may arise within the social worker's professional area. Certainly ethics should be included in this preparation. A majority (77%) did feel they had been adequately prepared to meet ethical problems in a school of social work. Many qualified their answers by stating they felt they were prepared, but they were not sure whether they had received their preparation in their undergraduate training or in the school of social work.

TABLE XXX

RESPONSES TO QUESTION REGARDING  
FEELING ADEQUATELY PREPARED

TOTAL	<u>244</u>
Felt adequately prepared . . . . .	188
Did not feel adequately prepared . . . . .	49
No answer . . . . .	7

A few stated that they would like to have had additional courses in this area of ethics and others thought that a "refresher course is needed".

A few non-Catholics gave their feelings concerning this preparedness. One stated his position in this manner.

My dealing with the situations listed under (B) has been based upon my understanding of good case-work practice and upon my own moral convictions and beliefs. I do not question that these convictions and beliefs have been influenced, to some degree, by the ethical and moral teachings of the Catholic social work courses, but in some instances my beliefs and convictions remain different from those presented in graduate work.

Probably the main value I gained from these courses was the understanding of Catholic philosophy and belief, which has helped me to understand better the problems of Catholic clients with whom I have had contact. In that sense I was better prepared for professional practice because of my training at a Catholic school of social work.

Quite a great number had doubts about their preparedness.

The competence acquired in learning how to serve people with problems like those listed above did not come through classroom instruction alone, nor even

primarily through a school of social work but there was some learning of applied ethics to social work problems in the graduate school. However, there was not sufficient integration between the teaching of what was scholastic philosophy and casework, etc.

Another stated

There is, of course, one answer to this - I learned the viewpoint of the Catholic church. However in my present job, I am learning what I came to graduate school to learn. How do you help people work this out thus accept their church's teaching?

From these comments one would feel that it is important to know all ethical principles, but it is still more important to know exactly how to apply these principles in the interview situation.

Religion does not seem to have affected the responses to this question to any great degree. One factor that is noticeable in Table XXXI is that half of the priests and nuns felt they were not adequately prepared. A priest would be considered an authority in this area and thus his response would lend some weight to this question. One priest commented

As a priest, I knew what to do or would know what to do if such questions arose. I would not have known, however, if I had only my training in social work, for these things were not discussed at the school of social work I attended during my time, or at least I didn't get into any courses where they were discussed.

TABLE XXXI

CORRELATION OF RELIGION TO ANSWERS  
TO QUESTION REGARDING FEELING  
ADEQUATELY PREPARED

RELIGION	YES	NO	NO ANSWER
TOTALS	188	49	7
Catholic	131	29	3
Protestant	21	7	1
Jewish	9	0	1
No religion	1	1	0
No information given	2	0	0
Priest or Nun	24	12	2

Summary: In this chapter it was seen that 47% had consulted a clergyman regarding the four ethical problems. A majority felt that they understood the two ethical principles; 79% understood the principle of double effect and 88% understood the principles governing cooperation in evil. It was thought that one's undergraduate training might have affected this knowledge. A majority (77%) felt they were adequately prepared to deal with the four ethical problems, but many commented that they felt more integration was needed. Half of the priests and nuns did not feel that they were adequately prepared in a school of social work, but they indicated that they might have gained the knowledge from another source.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine what the experience of social workers had been in relation to ethical problems. Question B presented four ethical situations and asked the respondent if he had encountered the situations. These situations concerned birth control, sterilization, divorce, and remarriage. Question C asked the respondent if he had consulted a clergyman in regard to the four ethical problems. The question attempted to determine to a limited degree how the social worker had dealt with the problems. Question D asked if the respondent knew two ethical principles, the principle of double effect and the principles governing cooperation in evil. This question attempted to determine the intellectual preparedness of the respondent to deal with the four ethical problems. Question E asked the respondent if he felt adequately prepared by his social-work education to deal with the four ethical problems.

According to this study, divorce and contemplated remarriage by a Catholic client are the greatest problems faced by graduates of Catholic schools of social work practicing in

the field today. This problem was met by 67% of those responding. Abortion was the next most frequently met problem (46%); birth control was met by 25%; and the problem of automatic sterilization of mental deficient was met by only 10%. Many of the respondents (47%) consulted with a clergyman in regard to the four ethical problems. In regard to the two ethical principles, 79% felt they understood the principle of double effect and 88% felt they understood the principles governing co-operation in evil. A good majority (77%) felt they were adequately prepared in a school of social work to deal with the four ethical problems.

Throughout this study Catholics and non-Catholics, Catholic agencies and non-Catholic agencies have been compared. This was done because the religion and the agency of the respondent seemed to account for the way in which some of the respondents answered the questions presented to them.

A larger percentage of non-Catholics and those working in non-Catholic agencies have met the problem of birth control than Catholics and those working in Catholic agencies. From this one could say that non-Catholics and those working in non-Catholic agencies are more apt to meet the problem of birth control.

Catholics and those working in Catholic agencies do meet the problem of sterilization of deficient. Although only

a few have met this problem, certainly the Catholic should be aware of the ethical factors involved in such a procedure. The problem of abortion was also met by a large number of Catholics and those in Catholic agencies. The reason both abortion and sterilization of deficients was met by a large percentage of Catholics and those in Catholic agencies could possibly be explained by the fact that Catholic agencies deal with family problems to a large degree.

A larger percentage of non-Catholics and those in non-Catholic agencies have met the problem of divorce and remarriage by the Catholic client than Catholics or those in Catholic agencies. This would indicate the necessity for non-Catholics to be aware of the ethical factor involved in divorce and remarriage.

Although more Catholics and those in Catholic agencies have consulted a clergyman than non-Catholics and those in non-Catholic agencies, the number of the latter who have consulted a clergyman is more than would be popularly believed.

Catholics and graduates of Catholic undergraduate schools seemed to have a better understanding of ethical principles than non-Catholics and graduates of non-Catholic undergraduate schools. This fact might indicate that graduates of Catholic colleges were better prepared to deal with ethical problems met in social work than graduates of non-Catholic colleges.



The religion of the respondents did not seem to affect, one way or another, their response to the question whether they had been adequately prepared, by their social-work training, to deal with ethical problems.

With a 70% response to a questionnaire, one could assume that there is a great deal of interest in the subject of ethics as it relates to social work. Certainly, if the social worker is to consider the client in his entirety, he must consider man's ultimate goal in life and thus he must know ethics so as to know when the client is blocked in his pathway to his ultimate end. One respondent, who is a nun, states it in this manner

I think it takes a great deal of courage to hold your stand in the above issues. I have found that Catholic lay workers do a great deal of good in this area and influence people by re-educating them. Some situations, however, definitely, need the knowledge of both priest and doctor to influence people.

If by re-education the respondent means the casework method, the writer would agree. The social worker does need the help of the professional persons who often deal with ethical problems, the priest and the doctor. Often these professional people need the interpretative help of the social worker as to the social and emotional factors influencing the client in a particular situation.

Not all of the respondents felt that ethics was an

important factor. One respondent stated, "I question whether a school of social work should go into these problems because they are outside of the profession of social work and belong to the religious profession."

From this study one can conclude that social workers are involved in ethical situations. If they are involved in them, they must be aware of the meaning of the client's problem, especially to the client and also to the worker. The social worker does not deal with a part of man, but he sees man in his entirety.

Because of the social worker's involvement in ethical problems, one recognizes the importance of being aware of the particular ethical problems that the social worker may meet. Many respondents indicated through comments that they felt the school of social work should place a greater stress upon ethical problems and the recognition of them in social work practice.

An even more important consideration is what to do with the problem once it is seen as one. Some respondents have indicated that greater integration between ethics and social work is needed to prepare the social worker to meet ethical problems. The social worker needs to be aware of the specific manner in which he may use ethics in his professional service. This integration should be included in the social worker's professional training.

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