

Social Work's Historical Relationship to Volunteerism

ALTHOUGH SOCIAL WORK RECOGNIZES JANE ADDAMS AS ONE OF THE matriarchs of the profession, current practice looks entirely different from what she envisioned. As practice settings have become more diverse (hospitals, mental health centers, corporations, drug and alcohol treatment centers, hospices, etc.), the basic construct of social work practice has narrowed. Instead of using social work knowledge, values, and skills to partner with people to address systemic social problems, the majority of social work practice involves individuals providing treatment and services to individual clients. Social work practice methods that involve partnering with volunteers are almost nonexistent.

This chapter examines what happened to the relationship between social work and volunteerism. It seeks to answer the question, How did the social work profession, which owes its existence to the efforts of volunteers, lose touch with volunteerism as a central means of delivering effective services and advocating social and economic justice? After describing the historical relationship between social work and volunteerism, the chapter examines two reasons—insecurity and avoidance—to explain that relationship.

THE HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP

The historical relationship between social work and volunteerism can be divided into three discernable periods. Before we discuss the three periods, it's important to begin with a brief review of the underlying importance of volunteerism to American society.

Volunteerism is crucial to American society. More specifically, having the freedom to organize and participate in volunteer associations is vital to a functioning democracy. The more citizens involve themselves as volunteers, the closer they come to making the ideals of democracy a reality (Ellis & Noyes, 1990). In 1835, when Alex de Tocqueville visited the United States to study American democracy, he observed that the key that enabled the Americans to make democracy work was their disposition toward forming volunteer associations. Tocqueville (1835) commented on this unique aspect of American society: “Americans of all ages, all

stations in life and all types of dispositions are forever forming [volunteer] associations. They are not only commercial and industrial associations in which they take part, but others of a thousand types—religion, moral, serious, futile, very general and very limited, immensely large and very minute” (p. 485).

The propensity for forming volunteer associations in America began as an effort for survival. In the seventeenth century, cooperative farm ventures were formed to assist with building construction, collective cattle herding, and labor sharing (Barck & Lefler, 1958; Earle, 1923). Groups of volunteers would also work together to erect churches that would function both as places of worship and as meeting places for all types of community functions (Rines, 1936). Government took the form of voluntary town meetings where unpaid officials were selected to fulfill numerous roles such as clerks of the market, town criers, and surveyors of the highways. Although at first volunteer efforts did not formally address organized charity, as the population increased, benevolent societies formed to provide relief to the poor when families were unavailable to assist them. As these benevolent societies failed to meet the growing needs of the poor, they eventually began to regard the entire community as ultimately responsible for the care of the unfortunate (Fairlie, 1920). It was through the formation of volunteer associations, therefore, that the need for community social welfare was recognized.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, nearly every advance in American society came about as a result of volunteerism (Berger & Neuhaus, 1977; Ellis & Noyes, 1990). Volunteer societies formed to improve transportation, sanitation, communication, fire prevention, public safety, and education. Volunteer associations also advocated fair labor practices, especially concerning children; women's rights; African Americans' rights; better medical practices; and humane treatment of the mentally ill and brought attention to the debilitating effects of alcohol (Carter, 1926; Cubberly, 1944; Dunlop, 1965; Laidler, 1968). Ellis and Noyes (1990) even go so far as to suggest that nearly every social need recognized and addressed by the government was first recognized and advocated for by some volunteer effort.

Even the social reform advances of the Progressive Era depended upon the volunteer collaboration between the lower and middle classes (Hofstadter, 1963). Whereas their efforts had once been fueled by a need for survival, now the common thread of their collaboration was humanitarianism. During the Progressive Era, volunteer efforts worked toward encouraging the government to act “upon the public's civic alertness and will” (Ellis & Noyes, 1990, p. 168) and to temper the zealotry for economic prosperity with the protection of human rights. As the chapter will show, however, reformers did not intend for increased professional and government involvement to replace the participation or responsibility of volunteers.

Volunteerism: The Origin of Social Work

Simply stated, the profession of social work owes its existence to volunteerism. Volunteers founded relief societies, children's homes, day care programs, recreation

services, family and child welfare associations, and mental health associations. In other words, volunteers preceded social work in almost every field of practice (Anderson & Ambrosino, 1992). Many introductory texts on social work and social welfare recognize the profession's origin in volunteerism. For example, Morales and Sheafor (2004) describe the beginning of social work as being "found in the extensive volunteer movement during the formative years of the United States" (p. 40). Most notably, the contributions of volunteers are recognized as essential to the development of the Charity Organization Society (COS) movement and the settlement house movement (see, e.g., Ellis & Noyes 1990). It is in these two movements that the role of volunteerism is linked to the emergence of the social work profession.

As a volunteer movement, the COS movement emerged to become a significant precursor to social work, representing the first efforts to serve poor people in a systematic way. Essentially the movement consisted of volunteers who assisted families in meeting their physical, economic, emotional, and spiritual needs. In 1877 the Reverend S. Humphrey Gurteen established the first COS in Buffalo, New York, to provide an alternative method to indiscriminate giving for helping the poor (Pumphrey & Pumphrey, 1961). The proponents of COS worked to make philanthropic practices more systematic and efficient. The principle method to improve efficiency was volunteer cooperation. COS organizations usually consisted of an executive council of volunteer leaders who were already actively engaged in providing services to the poor. Moreover, the council trained direct service volunteers, commonly referred to as "family visitors," to screen applicants, conduct family histories, and manage cases to make informed choices about the best ways to provide support (Putnam, 1887).

As discussed in chapter 4, the settlement house movement also emerged from the efforts of volunteers. As a volunteer member of the Woman's City Club of Chicago, Jane Addams turned an old and battered building into Hull-House. The Hull-House Woman's Club would become one of the largest women's volunteer clubs in the city of Chicago. Addams (1910b) acknowledged the value of the women's volunteer clubs, saying, "The entire organization of the social life at Hull House, while it has been fostered and directed by residents and others, has been largely pushed and vitalized from within by the club members themselves" (p. 253). More specifically, it was within the context of her membership in these clubs that Addams was able to encourage fellowship among women of different ethnicities, connect residents of Hull-House with better housing, and advocate improved conditions within Chicago's city jails.

Social Work's Attempt to Distinguish Itself

The COS and settlement house movements characterized the shift away from individual and volunteer philanthropy toward scientific charity. As people such as Mary Richmond, Josephine Shaw Lowell, Robert Hunter, and Edward Devine recognized the importance of comprehensive assessments, clear record keeping, and effective coordination of services, there was a growing recognition of the need for people to be professionally trained to work with the poor and needy (Morales &

Sheafor, 2004). Professional training, however, was never intended to replace individual concerns and volunteer efforts. In fact, Mary Richmond (1908) believed that social workers could never completely stand in as the social servants of the community. She believed instead that a basic responsibility of the social work profession was to guide and support the efforts of volunteers.

As the delivery of services became more systematic, however, Richmond's reminder and Addams's example of the importance of reciprocal partnerships between professional helpers and volunteers were quickly forgotten. By the time President Roosevelt's administration enacted the New Deal, the government had become primarily responsible for social welfare services, and social work became the primary profession in the provision of these services (Ellis & Noyes, 1990; Katz, 1996). Trattner (1999) summarizes the shift in the relationship this way:

The devaluation of volunteers did not take the form of outright rejection, largely because of the long tradition of volunteerism in social welfare and because professional social workers needed the power, influence, and financial help of volunteers. What occurred, then, was a reversal of roles. Whereas earlier what was considered the real work of the agency, friendly visiting, was conducted by volunteers and the menial labor by paid staff members, by the turn of the century, the opposite was beginning to occur; volunteers did the office work or, by serving as trustees helped shape policy and raise funds, while the work in the field, casework, was in the hands of paid professional agents. Viewed earlier as a civic duty, volunteerism became, instead, a privilege granted by agencies to those who accepted their authority and discipline. (p. 103)

Reconciliation in Times of Need

Of course, the social work profession did not abandon ties with volunteerism altogether. Instead, as Trattner (1999) points out, the relationship shifted. Cnaan (1999) accurately depicts the relationship as one in which social workers develop and deliver systematic and professional services while volunteers provide a hidden safety net. Indeed, during certain critical periods, social workers have enlisted the help of volunteers. During the Great Depression and World War II, social workers turned to volunteers as necessary personnel for addressing social needs. In the 1950s, volunteers were partners in auxiliary social work services, helping as fundraisers, educators, office assistants, and drivers. In the 1960s, some volunteers moved into direct service roles, offering lay therapy in child abuse and neglect programs, counseling on telephone crisis lines, advocating in domestic violence programs, and participating in self-help and mutual aid groups (Anderson & Ambrosino, 1992).

More recently, in response to the shortage of professionals available, social work is again turning to volunteers, this time asking them to fill many traditional social work jobs. The idea is that if properly trained and supervised, volunteers can fill in and allow professional social workers to focus on the more complex aspects of practice (O'Neill, 2002).

EXPLAINING WHAT HAPPENED

Reviewing the three periods in the relationship between social work and volunteerism only illustrates the shift that occurred. They do not explain what caused the shift in the relationship. At some point, however, something must have happened to make social work want to separate and distinguish itself from volunteerism. The answer is found in the 1915 proceedings of the forty-second annual session of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections—a precursor to the National Association of Social Workers.

Flexner's Analysis of Social Work

At the 1915 NCCC conference, Abraham Flexner, an accepted authority on the study of professions, was invited to present an analysis of whether social work was a profession. Apparently, the organizers assumed that Flexner's presentation would offer them assurance that social work was, or was about to become, a full-fledged profession similar to medicine, law, and engineering. They were not prepared for the possibility that he would draw the opposite conclusion.

At the beginning of his presentation, Flexner distinguished between the relative use of the term “professional” and the absolute use of the term “profession.” To Flexner, the term “professional” loosely denotes a person who devotes his or her time to a specific activity, be it baseball, basketball, dancing, acting, bartending, or truck driving. In contrast, Flexner defined the term “profession” as a limited group of activities that meet a certain predetermined set of objective criteria. He spelled out six criteria that separate a profession from all other occupations. He then used the criteria to assess whether social work was a profession.

1. Professions involve activities that are essentially intellectual—the thinking process is the main instrument applied to address problems. Individuals who use their intelligence in their professional capacity are often held accountable for outcomes. To Flexner (1915) the activities of a social worker were definitely intellectual: “The worker must possess fine powers of analysis and discrimination, breadth and flexibility of sympathy, sound judgment, skill in utilizing whatever resources available, facility in devising new combinations. These operations are assuredly of intellectual quality” (p. 17).
2. Professions derive their own raw material from science and learning—the thinking process uses information specifically learned for the given field instead of drawing upon knowledge and experience that is easily accessible from general sources of information. Flexner indicated that social workers perform a mediating function with material developed by other fields instead of using raw material that they developed themselves. He questioned whether the social worker was a professional or the person who brought professional activity into action. He stated, “The very variety of the situations [a social

worker] encounters compels him to be not a professional agent so much as the mediator invoking this or that professional agency” (Flexner, 1915, p. 17).

3. Professions apply learning in a way that is practical—the thinking process and the development of raw knowledge have a clear-cut end that is recognized and sanctioned by society. To Flexner social work did not have definitive ends that distinguished it from other professions. He viewed social work as being in touch with many professions rather than a profession in and of itself. “It appears not so much a definite field as an aspect of work in many fields” (Flexner, 1915, p. 18).
4. Professions use a transmittable technique that requires education—there are specific objectives a practitioner must master before gaining entry into the profession. In addition, there is an agreed-upon standard for the admission requirements and the content and length of education. Flexner viewed the fields of social work as too numerous and diverse to constitute a single educational discipline. Although he determined schools of social work to be important, he posited that the content was not technically professional. Instead, he characterized the education of social workers as supplemental and “broadly cultural in a variety of realms of civic and social interest” (Flexner, 1915, p. 18).
5. Professions are self-organized—the activities of a profession are so definitive, so absorbing in interest, so richly engaging in duties and responsibilities that individuals and their families tend to organize around a strong nucleus. As Flexner pointed out in his presentation, the annual conferences testified to the development of professional self-identity leading to self-organization.
6. Professions become increasingly altruistic in motivation—as time goes on, devotion to the common well-being of society becomes more and more an accepted mark of professional activities. Eventually the interests of individual practitioners of a given profession yield to the increasing realization of responsibility to the larger social environment. To Flexner, this was the one criterion in which social work exceeds most other occupations. Although he would not officially call social work a profession, he did acknowledge that social work’s professional spirit, in many ways, was what mattered most. According to Flexner (1915), “The unselfish devotion of those who have chosen to give themselves to making the world a fitter place to live in can fill social work with the professional spirit and thus to some extent lift it above all the distinctions which I have been at pains to make” (p. 19).

The Sustained Impact of Flexner’s Presentation

Flexner described social workers as intelligent, kindhearted, and resourceful people who perform an important mediating function. In his opinion, however, so-

cial work was not a profession. What happened thereafter, and still continues to occur, was an all-out attempt to demonstrate to colleagues, clients, society, and most importantly ourselves that social work was and is a profession. And if social work was to be considered a profession, there would have to be separation between the field of social work and the efforts of volunteerism. Social work thus abandoned its roots in its quest for professional status.

In the decades following Flexner's presentation, the focus of social work was dominated by its search for a knowledge base and practice methods. In its search, social work became infatuated with psychiatry and Freudian psychology, which conveniently offered two advantages in terms of achieving professional status. First, the use of psychiatry and Freudian psychology allowed social work to claim adherence to a specific knowledge base that would satisfy the gap pointed out by Flexner. Within a few years of his presentation, several leading social workers began promoting their new knowledge base. Eventually psychiatric social work emerged as a distinct field of practice, and Freudian psychology (and the theories derived from Freudian psychology) emerged as the primary theory in most areas of practice.

Second, psychiatry and Freudian psychology offered social work the opportunity to associate its practice methods with the medical model of practice, thus elevating the status of social workers to that of trained experts providing treatment. Instead of emphasizing the larger environmental causes of poverty and other community problems, the scope of social work practice narrowed to more definable ends—providing services and treatment to enhance the well-being of individuals (Hamilton, 1956; Perlman, 1949). Under the medical model, social workers essentially study the problems of their clients, diagnose the problems (or strengths, in the current perspective), and prescribe action steps to produce the desired outcome. Whether working in child and family services, foster care, mental health, substance abuse, or gerontology, the social worker today commonly equates practice with working directly with individual clients to enhance their well-being (Specht & Courtney, 1994).

The prominence of the medical model remains evident in the NASW Code of Ethics. The very first sentence of section 1.01 of the code states, "Social workers' primary responsibility is to promote the well-being of clients" (National Association of Social Workers, 1999, p. 7). Furthermore, as is evident from the list of ethical standards in section 1, of the term "clients" is narrowly defined as individuals receiving treatment or services from trained social workers.

While the field's use of psychiatry and Freudian psychology helped to legitimize social work as a profession, Richmond's and Addams's belief that social workers could never completely stand in as the social servants of the community was forgotten. On one hand, the profession blossomed during the twentieth century as social work secured its place as the primary profession in the development and provision of social services (Council on Social Work Education, 2001). On the other hand, several scholars suggest that social work has tended to focus primarily on

individual needs while neglecting to pay adequate attention to the social and environmental factors that contribute to people's vulnerability, oppression, and poverty. For example, Brueggemann (2002) asserts that current social service organizations (the main employers of social workers) do not promote compassion, empathy, reciprocity, or asset building. Instead, the emphasis on social work licensing and systematic and efficiently run organizations has actually perpetuated social and economic injustice.

McKnight (1995) argues that the growth and professionalization of social work has become dependent upon there being enough people in need of services to validate the need for more social workers. For instance, he states that "We may have reached that point where there are more people in Chicago who derive income from serving the poor than there are poor people" (p. 97). He then raises the question, "Do [social workers] need the welfare clients more than the clients need their service?" (p. 97).

In the same vein, Specht and Courtney (1994) wonder if social work has abandoned its mission altogether. They point out that at a time when social problems have become more difficult and complex, too many social workers are practicing psychotherapy, and too many of them are in private practice. Meanwhile, instead of partnering with volunteers to define and address social problems, social work continues spending too much time and energy staking its claim as the profession that should be called upon to work with an ever-expanding list of populations. As we shall now discuss, there are two reasons why social work is wary of partnering with volunteers.

INSECURITY

Almost a century after the 1915 NCCC annual convention, there are several outward signs that the profession of social work is undeniably secure. Foremost, the job outlook for trained social workers is more optimistic than that for all other human service professions. Social workers are the main providers of social welfare and mental health services in the United States and are represented in growing numbers in other fields, such as substance abuse, aging, schools, health, and employment assistance (U.S. Department of Labor, 2006). Schools of social work have also increased in number. In 2003, there were over 450 BSW programs, almost 160 MSW programs, and 72 social work doctoral programs in North America (Council on Social Work Education, 2003). Moreover, state social work licensure laws and the work of large national membership associations such as the National Association of Social Work and the Council on Social Work Education have earned the public recognition of social work as a profession. Despite these accomplishments, however, social workers continue to allow Flexner's presentation to raise doubts about our professional standing. As a result, the profession remains preoccupied with its ability to develop discipline-specific knowledge.

Social work simply does not have its own theoretical knowledge base. For example, systems theory emerged from the field of biology; the ecological perspective is derived from anthropology, sociology, and psychology; life course theory is rooted in psychology and sociology; and social exchange theory evolved from psychology, anthropology, and economics (Robbins et al., 1998). Therefore, in this regard, Flexner was and is still correct in his assessment: the fields of professional social work are too numerous and diverse to identify or rely upon a single discipline-specific knowledge base. With this in mind, there are three important questions to consider concerning social work's relationship with volunteers: Should social workers continue searching for discipline-specific knowledge? Does social work need its own theoretical knowledge base to qualify as a profession? And how has social work's relationship with volunteers been affected by the profession's search for its own body of knowledge?

While social work has gained professional status by developing a unified code of ethics, establishing social work licensure and credentials, and implementing an agreed-upon criteria for social work education, it has been unable to develop a specialized body of knowledge. The inability to develop knowledge that is unique to social work is not the result of a lack of effort. In fact, many social workers remain preoccupied with the search. In some cases, social workers have attempted to claim different theories to be primary to social work practice. For example, Robinson (1931) advocated the psychoanalytic contributions to social work practice, Hollis (1970) the psychosocial approach, Smalley (1970) the functional approach, Thomas (1973) behavioral modification, and Saleebey (2002) the strengths perspective. Nevertheless, each theoretical framework is ultimately rooted in knowledge developed by another field. Other social workers have attempted to develop a unique social work knowledge base through scientific research. For example, Thyer (2002) candidly admits having spent his entire career searching for social work's unique knowledge base. After twenty-five years, he has reluctantly come to the conclusion that it is impossible to identify unique social work contributions in any given area of practice research.

The fact that social work cannot claim a unique theoretical knowledge base doesn't necessarily mean social work is not a profession. What it does mean is that the profession must decide how much credence it will continue to give to Flexner's presentation. The time has come for social work to leave Flexner behind. By all other indicators, social work is seen by society as a profession. There is no need for social work to continue evaluating its status other than for self-serving purposes. Yet at various points over the past three decades, major social work journals have published articles and entire issues dedicated to assessing social work's professional status. In each case there is usually some mention of Flexner's influence on the profession and in some cases his presentation is the focal point (see, e.g., Austin, 1983; Goldstein, 1990; Reamer, 1994; Thyer, 2001, 2002).

Flexner (1915) himself questioned his own ability to assess social work. He

admitted that his knowledge was too limited, and he doubted his competency in drawing a valid conclusion. Moreover, his six criteria represent only one approach to assessing professional status—an approach based upon a medical model of practice that emphasizes specialization (Austin, 1983; Specht & Courtney, 1994). Social work will never meet this criteria because its focus is the antithesis of specialization. Instead, social work is a profession that applies theories derived from other fields to enhance the well-being of individuals and advocate socially and economically just societies. Social work needs to abandon its preoccupation with identifying a discipline-specific body of knowledge, accept its position as an applied profession, and begin steering all its attention toward interdisciplinary efforts to develop knowledge that will help address specific social problems.

The lack of a unified knowledge base and the preoccupation with finding or claiming one have left social work insecure about its professional status. Gambrill (2001) suggests the profession's insecurity is evident in its reliance on information that is authority based rather than evidence based. As a result, social work remains apprehensive about expanding its relationship with volunteers because it fears it could jeopardize its professional status in society. In the same way, the social work profession has attempted to define itself as separate from its volunteer origins. Partnering with volunteers to deliver services and address social problems gives volunteers access to the social welfare turf that the profession has worked so hard to establish for itself and threatens the profession's perceived authority over that turf. Gambrill (2001) explains that social work has been “bamboozling the public and those who fund service programs into believing that professionals offer unique services that require specialized training and experience” (p. 170). The reality is that social work interventions steeped in psychotherapeutic strategies and a medical-model approach, while serving to protect social work's professional status, are of limited use when it comes to addressing social problems that affect the most vulnerable and oppressed groups of people—the stated emphasis of the work of the profession (National Association of Social Workers, 1999).

Partnering with volunteers is an alternative way for social workers to develop and deliver services. Social workers need to see volunteers as partners in their quest to bring about social change (Bruggemann, 2002). Instead of practicing as experts providing care or as agents representing large social service bureaucracies, social workers can work side by side with volunteers, helping to support and direct them in the promotion of social and economic justice. Expanding practice with volunteers, however, will require social work to gain a level of confidence that will allow it to abandon its obsession with its professional status.

AVOIDANCE

As a result of social work's professional insecurity, the profession has tended to avoid practice with volunteers. A decade after Flexner's presentation, Jane Addams

recognized social work's fascination with psychiatry, psychotherapy, and the medical-model approach to practice. While acknowledging their professional benefits, she tried reminding her colleagues of the importance of working with volunteers. Speaking to her colleagues, she posited the following request: "I should like now to ask a favor of the psychiatric social workers. They are the newest and most popular group among us. They are taking great care of the individual who is brought to them, whether he comes as a free nursery child, or whether he comes from the courts. Perhaps we can ask them that they go outside of this individual analysis and give us a little social psychiatric work" (Addams, 1926, p. 7). She then reminded them that, from a clearly ethical point of view, social work must always involve partnering with people in the community who are closest to the poor and are living as best they can.

It appears very few social workers listened to Addams. In fact, a few years later, in a famous address to the 1929 National Conference of Social Work, Porter Lee (1937), director of the New York School of Philanthropy, declared that training volunteers to lead and participate in social movements was no longer a function of social work. Instead, he suggested that social work's primary function was serving individuals through the use of primarily methods based on psychiatric and other psychotherapeutic interventions. His views represented the dominant position in the field. A quick glance at current employment trends indicate that his views are held by the majority of social workers today. Social workers are most likely to work in direct clinical roles that generally do not involve work with volunteers (U.S. Department of Labor, 2006).

The profession as a whole continues to avoid social work practice with volunteers and to ignore both calls for more practice with volunteers and scholarship demonstrating the value of volunteers to the social work profession. Theilen and Poole (1986) have argued that volunteer associations are one of the most effective yet frequently overlooked avenues that social workers have to achieve social change. They suggest that social work educators need to cover content on volunteerism throughout the entire curriculum. Other scholars have suggested that the profession's emphasis on facilitating transactions between the person and the environment makes social workers well suited to educate, support, and partner with volunteers to develop and implement effective services (Anderson & Ambrosino, 1992; Euster, 1984; Forte, 1997; Sherr & Straughan, 2005). Moreover, a few social work scholars, such as Ram Cnaan and Robert Wineburg, have spent their careers teaching students to practice with volunteers. Both have published numerous articles and books imploring the social work community to appreciate the possibilities of working with volunteers. Considering the concerted bipartisan efforts to encourage more volunteerism and localize social welfare services, Wineburg (2001) laments that the social work community has "virtually ignored one of the most important changes to hit local human services systems in many years" (p. 37).

SUMMARY

This chapter took a look at social work's relationship with volunteerism. Despite the origins of the profession in volunteerism, social work has spent the majority of the last ninety years attempting to distinguish itself as a profession that is different from the charitable efforts of people wanting to serve their communities. It is time for social work to stop justifying its own professionalism and begin focusing exclusively on fulfilling its stated mission of "meeting the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (National Association of Social Workers, 1999, p. 1).

Currently, social work has the potential to begin a new period in its relationship with volunteers. The landscape of social welfare services has shifted over the past two decades. The responsibility for providing social services is moving away from the federal government into the realm of public, private, and nonprofit organizations at the state and local levels. Along with this shift there has been a concerted effort to encourage volunteers to participate in addressing social concerns. As an important profession in the development, provision, and evaluation of social welfare services, social work's future as an effective and valued profession is significantly related to how successful we are in reclaiming our role as partners to volunteers. If we are to do this, social work must take a fresh look at one of the most important motivations for people to volunteer—religion.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND LEARNING EXERCISES

1. Think of any area of social work practice. Conduct a literature review to examine the early origins of the area of practice you have selected. What role did volunteers play? What role do volunteers currently play? What roles do you think they could play?
2. In 1908 Mary Richmond stated that social workers could never completely stand in as the social servants of the community. Instead, a basic responsibility of social workers was to guide and support the efforts of volunteers. Are Richmond's remarks relevant to social work today? Why or why not?
3. This chapter contends that the social work profession has attempted to separate and distinguish itself from volunteers due to its insecurity about its professional status. Do you agree? Why or why not? If you do not, can you give other reasons to explain the relationship?
4. In 1915 Abraham Flexner's presentation dramatically influenced the direction of the social work profession. In fact, it still continues to influence practice today. How might the social work profession look and operate today had it not given so much weight to his lecture? Describe what you think social work practice will look like in the future. What are the similarities? What are the differences?