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Social Work Practice in Nontraditional Urban Settings. **Melvin Delgado.**

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material is questionable. Even though the authors make a case that subjectivism pervades Hayek and Friedman's work, it is hard to accept their assertion that these writers are post-Enlightenment thinkers. Nevertheless, this book is essential reading for those interested in recent trends in social thought and their implications for social welfare.

Melvin Delgado, *Social Work Practice in Nontraditional Urban Settings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. \$45.00, hardcover, \$21.95 papercover.

One of social work's great strengths is its diversity. It is not only that social workers are a very diverse group in terms of their personal characteristics but that they use a variety of practice techniques to meet the needs of their clients. They also discharge their professional obligations through a rich variety of practice settings. As many commentaries on the social work profession have shown, social workers have many different functions in society and make different contributions to the enhancement of human well-being.

While the role of social workers in conventional social service agencies is now well documented, little attention has been made to their activities in what the author of this interesting book calls 'non-traditional settings'. Focusing primarily on urban communities comprised of people of color, he examines the roles that social workers can and do play in utilizing local indigenous institutions to address pressing social needs. These local institutions include bath houses, beauty parlors and barber shops, botanical shops, food establishments, ethnic businesses, places of worship, laundromats, liquor stores, night clubs and single occupancy hotels. These institutions are focal points for community interaction and thus provide an opportunity for social workers to reach local people and help them deal with a variety of challenges. For example, bath houses can be useful in delivering a variety of educational and other services that respond to the HIV/AIDS threat. Similarly, he provides numerous examples of how places of worship are not only concerned with spiritual needs of their members but with their material and social needs. The expansion of economic and social services by these places of worship offers an exciting opportunity for social work involvement.

The book is squarely based on a strengths perspective that emphasizes the capacities of low income urban communities to grow and develop and deal with adversity in positive ways. Delgado encourages social workers to recognize and utilize this capacity and to transcend their traditional focus on pathology and remediation. He also makes extensive use of network theory to show how social workers can integrate their services with local community responses. This is a challenging book which should be read not only by community practitioners but by all social workers who deal with clients from low income urban communities. Their practice will be greatly enriched by the a greater involvement in these non-traditional settings. This involvement will also fulfill the professions historic commitment to serving low income populations.