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Combating Child Abuse: International Perspectives and Trends. Neil Gilbert (Ed.).

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Leon H. Ginsberg, *Careers in Social Work*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1997. \$ 16.50 papercover.

Despite the fact that social work has now evolved into a recognized profession, there is still confusion about social work's role, scope and mission. All too often, social work practitioners, faculty members and students complain that social work is poorly defined and it lacks a coherent identity. One often gets the impression that many social workers today do not know with certitude what social work is and what social workers do.

Leon Ginsberg's book should be consulted by those who continue to have questions and doubts about the nature of professional social work. It provides a straightforward account of the characteristics and history of social work, the role of professional education for social work practice and the employment (and self-employment) opportunities for qualified social workers. It examines six major fields of practice in which social workers are widely employed and which are often regarded as defining areas for professional intervention. These are the public social services, health and mental health services, services for children and older people, correctional programs, community organization and social work administration. Included in this discussion is brief but useful information on social work careers in international agencies, employee assistance programs and research institutes. The book also provides helpful information about job satisfaction, licensing and other credentials, salaries and employment conditions, burnout, union membership and many other aspects of a professional career in the field.

The book is brief but comprehensive and while some of the sections are rather truncated, it is an excellent introduction to the field. It should be widely read not only by those interested in becoming social workers but by those who already hold social work qualifications. There is much in this highly informative book which will be of interest and enlighten even those who have long experience of working in the field.

Neil Gilbert (Ed.), *Combating Child Abuse: International Perspectives and Trends*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. \$ 45.00 hardcover.

In recent years, the neglect and maltreatment of children has become a major public policy issue. While only the most serious

cases were previously dealt with by statutory agencies, growing public concern that children are being physically harmed on a significant scale has resulted in many more investigations and interventions that often result in the removal of children from their homes. This development has been fueled by often sensationalized media reports which have purportedly uncovered a hidden incidence of child abuse of epidemic proportions. As case after case has been brought to the attention of the public, more and more abused children have been identified and pressures on the authorities to be ever more vigilant have increased. While these developments have been most marked in the United States, there have been similar trends in other European countries. The recent sexually motivated murders of young teen-age girls in Belgium created a national scandal while in Britain, child sexual and physical abuse cases are perennial topics in popular national newspapers.

Neil Gilbert's edited collection of articles about child abuse policies and programs in Canada, the United States and eight European nations seeks to identify the different ways in which these industrial countries deal with the problem. It shows that there are significant differences in the incidence of child abuse between these countries and very different approaches to dealing with the problem. These differences reflect complex factors such as the definition of abuse, variations in statistical reporting and different cultural approaches which defining child maltreatment in different ways. The book's major conclusion is that the problem of child abuse is not simply a matter of responding to objective cases of maltreatment but a complex one which reflects broader societal conditions. It shows that the relative nature of the way child abuse is defined and dealt with is not widely appreciated by social scientists or policy makers. Although the book does not propose how these differences can be accommodated within a comprehensive approach for preventing and treating child abuse, it contains a wealth of interesting information about public child welfare programs in the industrial nations. As such it makes a useful contribution to the development of comparative social policy research.

P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn (Eds.),
Escape from Poverty: What Makes a Difference for Children?