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Review of *The Politics of Compassion: The Challenge to Care for the Stranger* by Edward U. Murphy

Daniel Liechty
Illinois State University, dliecht@ilstu.edu

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Edward U. Murphy, *The Politics of Compassion: The Challenge to Care for the Stranger*. Rowan & Littlefield (2019), 224 pages, \$38.95 (paperback).

Compassion, caring about the welfare of others: there is no question that compassion is a key social work value and, I would assume, a key value of all areas of the human services. But is there really a *politics* of compassion? I had never really thought about that before being introduced to the concept by this important and constructive book by Edward U. Murphy, a professor of Global Studies and International Affairs.

Much of the policy history Murphy takes us through in the opening chapters of this book will be familiar to those who have read other texts in policy history. But I found it very useful to review that material again through a Murphy's-eye view. His perspective includes an international scope that is often missing in histories centered mainly on England and then America. Attitudes that relate to economic and social welfare on the home front largely parallel attitudes toward international development. Very similar philosophies emerge, and it is very helpful to see these parallels laid out in one text. I have always been somewhat curious and perhaps confused as to why "social workers" outside of the U.S. and European context so often seem to be engaged in professional work that I think of as economic development work rather than social work proper. After reading this book, much of that fog in my thinking has cleared.

Another valuable aspect of reading this history through the perspective Murphy provides is the hermeneutic of compassion itself. So often when we think of policies and programs aimed at alleviating problematic human situations, we easily get sidetracked by influential issues such as cost effectiveness and efficiency. Indicative of the neoliberal environment within which we function, our attentions become too quickly focused only on economic issues. The focus of compassion that Murphy continually directs us toward is essential in reminding us of what is at stake in our wrangling over policies and programs. In reading this book I was repeatedly made aware of how important it is to keep the focus where it truly belongs when considering these issues.

Murphy incorporates a lot of material not usually found, or underemphasized, in many books written by academic social workers. One such example is a strong emphasis on the Human

Rights perspective and how this relates to and influences our thinking about responsibility toward others. This is not only useful in terms of how we move from attention on the domestic scene into international social work, but also deepens and strengthens our focus on the domestic scene itself. Currently, my colleagues and students are highly concerned with and moved by the situation on the southern border of the USA, in which migrant and refugee people are being treated, under orders of the current administration, with anything but compassion by immigration enforcement officers. Introducing a few concepts and experiences from the history of the struggle for Human Rights and making the connections between the compassion we feel with this larger history has sparked some very good thinking, discussion and commitment among my students that would otherwise have been largely missed.

Another area explored by Murphy that expands our usual horizons is that of compassion in religious versus secular thought. One might initially expect that "religious" thought, being soft and emotional, would lean strongly toward exhibiting compassion towards others, while secular thinking would lean toward more hard-nosed analytics less impacted by compassionate influence. And in some cases that is certainly correct. But Murphy demonstrates that the compassionate perspective flows through both religious and secular perspectives on our responsibilities to care for others (or to ignore the needs of others) in equal measure.

Perhaps the strongest thread running through the discussion is the expectation of caring for strangers. Most people agree (but not all!) that we have an obligation to care for people we know and with whom we are close. There is disagreement, however, as to the degree of caring and compassion we can be expected to exhibit toward those we do not know and with whom we do not have strong social bonds. Simply the fact that some 80% of American evangelical Christians, perhaps the most strongly religious-identified group in America today, appear to be standing firmly behind the current administration and its cruel policies on the southern border indicate that there is no easy equation between being religious and expressing compassion toward others. This same dynamic of confounded expectations when viewing this history through the hermeneutic of compassion is echoed in Murphy's presentation of the moral

politics of liberalism and conservatism. In fact, we could go as far as to say that viewing these ongoing contentions through the hermeneutic of compassion might well create the common ground we so desperately lack most of the time that will move the conversation forward.

Although one could easily be discouraged by the current state of impasse in social welfare politics in the world, and perhaps especially in the USA, there are a new voices coming forward pointing in some positive directions. One emerging influential voice is that of Astra Taylor, a young film maker and theorist who is looking for a language to move us beyond the restrictive assumptions that the pervasive neoliberal milieu imposes on us. In a recent writing, she suggests that a revival of the overarching concept of "solidarity" may be one pathway forward for the social thought of the new generation. I thought of that writing often in reading this book by Edward Murphy. One of the drawbacks of "solidarity" as it has been used in movements of history is that it too quickly can become a term of exclusion, creating an in-group and an out-group. Compassion in conjunction with solidarity would make solidarity a much more inclusive concept. I can only hope that Murphy's book receives the wider reading it deserves.

Daniel Liechty
Illinois State University

Cynthia A. Faulkner & Samuel S. Faulkner, *Addictions Counseling: A Competency-Based Approach*. Oxford University Press (2019), 237 pages, \$55.00 (paperback).

As a result of the emphasis on rising opioid overdose deaths and attempts at understanding and offering solutions, there is growing attention directed toward treatment for substance use disorders. Preparing clinicians to practice with competence across disciplines is an emerging necessity. In this welcome addition to the literature, Faulkner and Faulkner connect curriculum, practice, and certification standards of various professional tracks to the art and science of addiction counseling to embrace a broader context. Rooted in education and practice-based competencies,