The Differences of Social Work Process in Faith-related and Secular NGOs

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Summary. *We analysed social work process in faith-related and secular NGOs. The objective of the study was to reveal the differences of social work process. We define social work process as an algorithm of actions that is proceeded in order to solve social and personal problems. There are five stages of social work process. At each stage the participants of social work organisation perform certain actions. In order to find out the differences of social work process, the actions were compared in faith-related and secular NGOs. The results of data analysis reveal the significant differences of social work process in secular and faith-related social work NGOs.*

Keywords: Social work process, non-governmental organisations, faith-related and secular organisations.

Introduction

The differences of faith-related[1] and secular social work NGOs are discussed by social work practitioners and academics in Lithuania. But there are no scientific studies about the differences between secular and faith-related social work NGOs in Lithuania[2].

The situation is different in other countries. In the comparative study Helen Rose Ebaugh, Janet S. Saltzman, Paula F. Pipes, Martha Daniels (2003) examined the differences between faith-related and secular NGOs. The examined variables were: *organisational goals, funding sources, programmatic priorities, the agency culture and the manner of social services provision*. The findings suggest that faith-related NGOs are more effective in social service provision. Philip

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[1] We use the term *faith-related* instead of *faith-based* social work NGOs. The discussion about the terms is provided below.

[2] A study "Secular and Religious Non-governmental Organizations in Helping to Address the Characteristics of Primary School Children Social Problems" was found by Reda Jonušauskytė (2010), but the research problem is different.

Giligan and Sheila Furness (2006) discussed the role of religion in social work. The researchers argue the importance of spiritual beliefs for persons in need[3] and discuss the possible benefits for social work practice. However, no specific influence of religion on social work intervention is mentioned. Leola Dyrud Furman, Perry W. Benson, Cirdelia Grimwood, Edward Canda (2004) studied the attitudes of social workers towards the integration of religious beliefs into the practice. M. Carlean Gilbert (2000) argues that the aspect of spirituality must be included to the social groups work's practice and education. He recognises that spirituality could be a useful resource. Maria M. Carroll (1998) recognises that spirituality is very important to client's potential in the whole process of accomplishment and creative transformation. Therefore, the impact of spirituality depends not only on the client but also on the social worker's view on spirituality.

To sum up, there are studies about the differences of secular and faith-related social work NGOs, about the role of religion and spirituality in social work, but the differences of social work process are not studied. The aim of the article is to reveal the differences of social work process in secular and faith-related NGOs.

The first part of the article is dedicated to the conceptualisation of social work process. We describe the existing conceptualisations of social work process and present the model of social work process that was analysed in the study. In the second part we conceptualise the faith-related and secular NGOs. First of all, we present the typology of social work organisational forms and discuss the differences in order to get the understanding of NGOs. Secondly, we describe the faith-related and secular NGOs. The research strategy, data gathering and data analysis tools are presented in the fourth part of the article. The results of data analysis and discussion are presented in the last part.

Social work process

There are a lot of ways to talk about social work. But essentially, the social work is an algorithm of special actions taken by the persons (social workers, clients, managers) in certain situations. Let's illustrate the proposed definition with the example of drugs abuse. A lot of different algorithms of actions are taken in that case. Police is trying to catch the drug dealers, doctors are trying to save the lives of drug overdoses or relive the biological aspects of drug dependency, teachers are trying to occupy kids in school activities and socialise not to use drugs in leisure time or in any other circumstances, and so on. From this point of view, social workers, clients and managers create and employ the social networks for the prevention of drug usage and social integration of ex-drug users. The algorithm of actions is called the process of social work in the literature of social work.

There are different conceptualisations of social work process. The differences are about the number of stages in social work process. The different conceptualisations of social work process are presented in table 1.

Martin Davies (2008) states that there are few questions to be discussed while analysing social work process, namely: *What happened? How it should be done?* And finally – *whether it was done*? The formal expression of these questions reveals five staged social work process. The question "*what happened?*" is transformed into two stages. First one is problem formulation and

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3   We use the term *person in need* instead of *service users*, *clients*, because the former is free of neoliberal ideo-
     logical connotations. More comprehensive discussion can be found in Colleen Vojak (2009).

Table 1. **Social work process according to different social work researchers**

	Martin Davies (2008)	**Dean H. Hepworth; Ronald H. Rooney; Glenda Rooney Dewberry; Kim Strom-Gottfried (2006)**	**Louise C. Johnson (1992)**
1.	Problem formulation and needs identification	Exploration and agreement	
2.	Case evaluation and analysis	Evaluation and planning	Evaluation
3.	Purposes and tasks setting		Planning
4.	Methods of work and intervention selection	Attainment of objectives and completion	Activity proceeding
5.	Participation and assessment		Completion

needs identification. Second one is case evaluation and analysis. The answer to the question "*How it should be done*" divides into purposes and tasks setting and intervention and methods selection. Finally we can give the answer to the question "*Whether it was done*" after the participation and assessment.

Dean H. Hepworth, Ronald H. Rooney, Glenda Rooney Dewberry and Kim Strom-Gottfried (2006) present three-staged social work process. The stages are: *exploration and agreement, evaluation and planning, attainment of objectives and completion*. Despite the differences with the Martin Davies' model, the meaning of social work process is the same.

Louise C. Johnson's (1992) presents four-staged social work process. The stages are: *evaluation, planning, activity proceeding and completion*. The absence of *problems formulation* or *exploration* stage is the difference between the models. Author argues the cyclic nature of social work process. The *completion* doesn't mean the end of social work process, but the possibility for the new *exploration* and *problem formulation*.

Based on the presented models, we propose the five-staged cyclic model of social work process (picture 1). The model was the object of our empirical research.
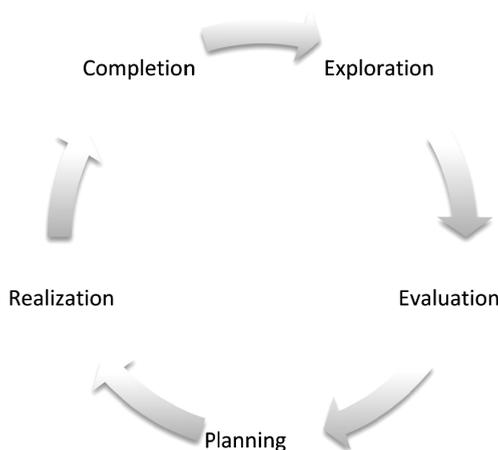
Picture 1. **Social work process**

Faith-related and secular NGOs

Social work can be performed in different organisational forms. The object of the research is the social work process in faith-related and secular NGOs. First, we will conceptualise the NGO as the distinctive organisational form of social work. Second, we will present and discuss the faith-related and secular NGOs.

Organisational forms of social work

There are at least four organisational forms of social work: *social movements, NGO, social services departments, and reformative state social work* (Dunajevas, 2009). The taxonomy of the organisational forms is built on two dimensions: *conflict – consensus* and *freedom – obligation*.

The *conflict – consensus* dimension[4] represents the theories how society works. The theories of the consensus argue for the social equilibrium or homeostatic state of society. The well-known representative of the consensus is the social theory of Talcott Parsons. The consensus implies certain social policies. The function of social work is to eliminate social exclusion. The theories of the conflict state that there are different social groups in society and there is constant conflict between them. The conflict is articulated through the critical theory, conflict sociology and Marxism. The proper task of social work is to trigger and develop social changes.

The *freedom – obligation* dimension expresses the origins of social work. Social work can be performed by free will or by the requirement of society. In the first case, the members of society do social work by their own decision. It's up to them whether to work socially or not. In the other case the members of society do social work because of society's decision.

According to the taxonomy, there are four ideal types of social work organisational forms (picture 2).

Picture 2. **The organizational forms of social work**

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4   That dimension of social work was clearly articulated by David Howe (1987). In his view, different theories create different social workers. There are *fixers, seekers after meaning*, *raisers of consciousness*, *revolutionaries*. The first two might be related to the consensus, and the second two – to the conflict.

The organisational form of *conflict – freedom* is social movement. In the case of social work that are human rights-based social movements. The goals of the social movements are the promotion and defence of human rights. The organisational form opens the set of collective actions that are restricted to other organisational forms[5]. The empirical reference of *conflict – obligation* is unknown for the authors, but this organisational form is logically possible. The goal of the organisational form is to change the society as a whole. The dominant organisational form of social work is *consensus – obligation*. The empirical reference is social service department. The organisational form of *consensus – freedom* is NGO. The goals of NGO are to fix and repair the malfunctions of society.

Faith-related NGO

There are several types of NGO (Fowler 2011). The faith-related and secular NGOs are at our interest. The term *faith-based* NGO is more common. Steven Rathgeb Smith and Michael R. Sosin (2001) argue that the general understanding of *faith-based* NGO is incomplete. Usually the *faith-based* NGOs are understood as organisations expressing their faith by the delivery of services for the public good. But as S. R Smith and M. R. Sosin (2001) emphasize there are a lot of organisations that are related to religion, but the relation is quite different. Gerald Clarke (2006) presents the different cases of the relations:

- Representative organisations or apex bodies which govern the faithful and represent them;
- Charitable or development organisations which mobilise the faithful in support of the poor and other social groups;
- Socio-political organisations which organise and mobilise social groups on the basis of faith identities in pursuit of some political objectives or uses religion as a means of uniting disparate social groups;
- Missionary organisations which spread key faith messages beyond the faithful;
- Illegal or terrorist organisations which engage in illegal practices on the basis of faith.

In order to combine the different cases, S. R Smith and M. R. Sosin (2001) propose the concept *faith-related* NGO. The indicators of the *faith-related* NGO are presented in picture 3.

Picture 3. **The indicators of the faith-related NGO (Smith, Sosin 2001)**

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[5]   Social movements can use revolution and radical forms of protest in pursuit of their goals.

H. R. Ebaugh, J. S. Saltzman, P. F. Pipes, M. Daniels (2003) discuss five areas of difference between faith-related and secular NGOs.

The first area of difference is self-identity. The faith-related NGOs usually represent them as religious. Or to say in another way, the faith-related NGOs are primarily motivated by their faith (Farris 2005). The actions of the faith-related NGOs are directed to reach religious goals. The secular NGOs are not guided by religion and the actions are related to certain goals.

The second area of difference is participants and leaders of organisation. The members of the faith-related NGOs are connected through formal and informal relationships. There are the same types of relationships in the secular NGOs. The distinctive feature of the faith-related NGOs is religious bonds – the members belong to the same religious community.

The third area of difference is material resources. Faith-related NGOs prefer the funding from religious sources. The religious sources of resources enable faith-related NGOs easily realise their mission. The secular sources would not finance the actions related to some transcendental mission.

The fourth area of difference is goods and services. The faith-related NGOs deliver a lot of religious services. It is important to remember, that the faith related NGOs always act in two ways. Apart from charity, terrorism, self-help, community organising, there is always the delivery of religious services. The secular NGOs usually deliver only secular services.

The fifth area of difference is governance. The faith-related NGOs are strongly governed by religious community hierarchs.

Research methods

The data was collected using a questionnaire. All examined variables in the form of questions were about social work process. The first set of the variables was concerned with the first stage of social work process – problem formulation and needs identification. There were questions about the goals, values and typical clients of organisation. The second set of the variables was about the case evaluation and analysis. There were questions about the case evaluation and decision making process. The third set of the variables was about the governance of social work process. The questions concerned the roles of social worker, client, manager and other staff in the decision making process. The fourth set of the variables was about the intervention methods – what intervention methods are used and what the distribution of responsibility for intervention method selection is. The fifth set of the variables was about the assessment of social work process – who participates in assessment process and what the indicators are.

The purpose of the research was to reveal the differences and multidimensional statistical analysis tool was selected – logistic regression. The type of an organisation (secular or faith-related) was a categorical variable. Also the descriptive statistical methods were used in order to describe the data.

62 social workers were interviewed – 29 from secular and 33 from faith-related social work NGOs.

In the article faith-related social work NGOs are equated to Christian NGOs. There are two reasons why it was done. First, Christian social work NGOs dominate the arena of faith-related NGOs in Lithuania. There are no official statistics about NGOs in Lithuania, but 85 % of Lithuanian residents are Christians (Report on the 2011 Population).
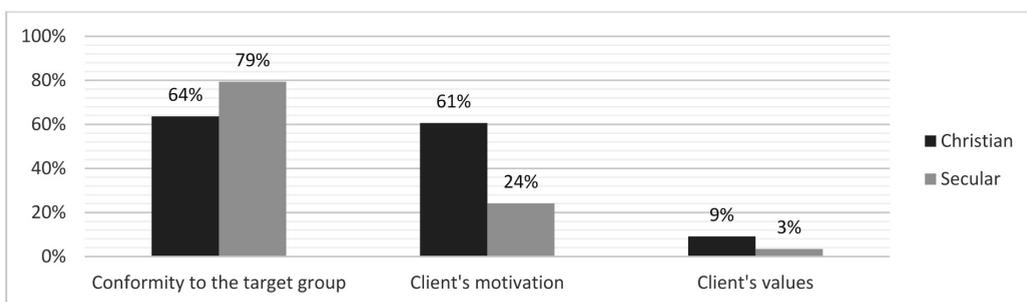
Results

Significant differences between secular and faith-related NGOs were noticed in the first stage of the social work process – problem formulation and needs identification. The problem formulation and needs identification largely depend on person's motivation to solve the problem. Results will be different if a person is motivated or unmotivated. The differences of the motivation are presented in picture 4.
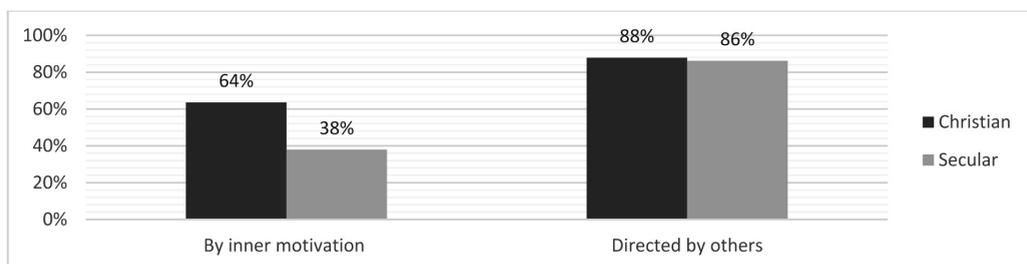
*Picture 4. **The differences of the motivation***

There are more people with inner motivation in faith-related than in secular NGOs. We can explain the results by the fact that the faith-related NGOs are more attractive to religious persons. Christianity, as a religion, spreads norms and values that motivate to solve the problems. For example, there is a possibility to be forgiven for the sins[6].

The difference was found in the second stage of the social work process – case evaluation and analysis. Social workers were asked about the possible factors that determine their decision to start doing social work. The distribution of answers is presented in picture 5.


*Picture 5. **The factors determining whether the help will be provided***

The results show that there are significant differences between secular and Christian NGOs. Person's in need conformity to the requirements of target group is more important to secular organisations. Person's in need motivation is more important to Christian organisations. There

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[6]   "Forgiveness is at the religious, theological, and ethical core of the Cristian tradition. It represents the possibility and reality of change and transformation of the individual in relation to others in relation to the individual" (Rye, Pargament, Ali, Beck, Dorff, Hallisey, Narayanan, Williams 2000: 31).

are several arguments for explaining this difference. The second Great Commandment *You Shall love your neighbour as yourself* (Matthew 22: 39)[7], implies altruistic behaviour – help has to be provided for everyone who needs it. The importance of person's in need motivation to Christian NGOs might be explained by the rejection of coercion and by the exaltation of free will: *Catholic moral teaching, like common civil law, presumes that mature human agents are capable of freedom of action unless there are serious mitigating factors* (Flinn 2007: 295).

The organisations differ in the way they perform the initial case evaluation. The differences between organisations are presented in the picture 6.
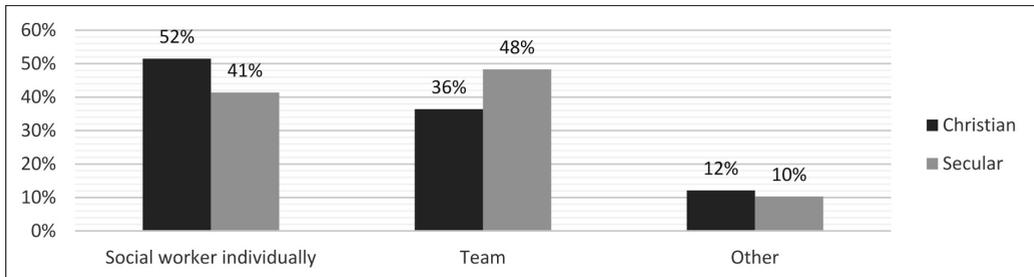
*Picture 6. **The initial case evaluation in secular and Christian organisations***

The initial case assessment in Christian organisations is likely to be performed individually, and in secular organisations – in team. The difference could be explained by the differences of trust in workers. The case assessment performed by team indicates the preference of collective decision making instead of individual. The need for collective decision making correlates with the lack of confidence. The members of faith-related organisation usually are committed to the same values (Farris 2005), what implies the higher level of confidence.

There are significant differences between organisations in the third stage of social work process – methods of work and intervention selection. The differences are presented in picture 7.
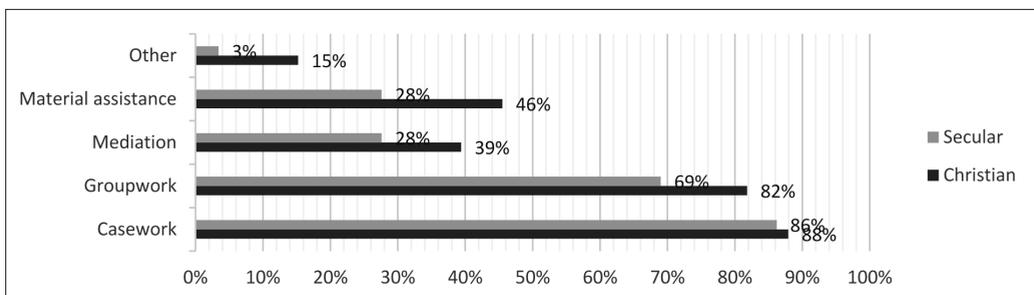

*Picture 7. **Social work methods and intervention in different types of organisations***

There are differences between organisations in the cases of *group work*, *mediation*, *material assistance* and *other* social work and intervention methods. The differences in *group work* and *material assistance* might be explained by the Christian value of communion. Material resources

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7   From The New Testament.

for assistance are easily received through community. Also the communion enables person to unite with God[8], so it is not a surprise why Christian NGOs prefer Group work. The differences in the case of mediation can be explained by the value of reconciliation[9], instead of conflict.

The other difference between Christian and secular organisations is religious mission. Christian organisation is seeking not only the salvation of material and psychological problems of people in need, but also is concerned with the spiritual world. It is taken for granted that the misery of this world can be overcome by faith and religious virtues. The differences between organisations in the use of religious practice are presented in picture 8.
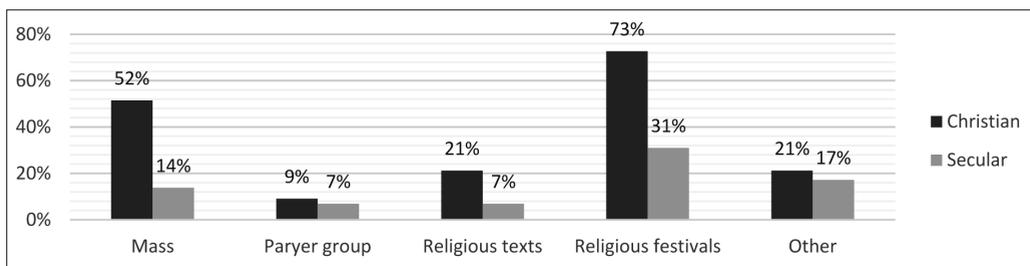
*Picture 8. **Religious practice in different organisations***

The surprise is that religious practice is used not only in religious organisations, but also in secular. Of course, we can ask the question: *are the secular ones are really secular*? But the dependency or independency of religion was chosen by the informants. There are at least two explanations of the problem. First, it is possible that the social workers of secular organisation are faithful and that reflects in the ways they are working. Second, it is possible that the religious practice is understood by the social workers as powerful tool for problem solving and it is used in practice.

The last stage of social work process is the assessment. The differences in assessment criteria between secular and Christian organisations are presented in picture 9.
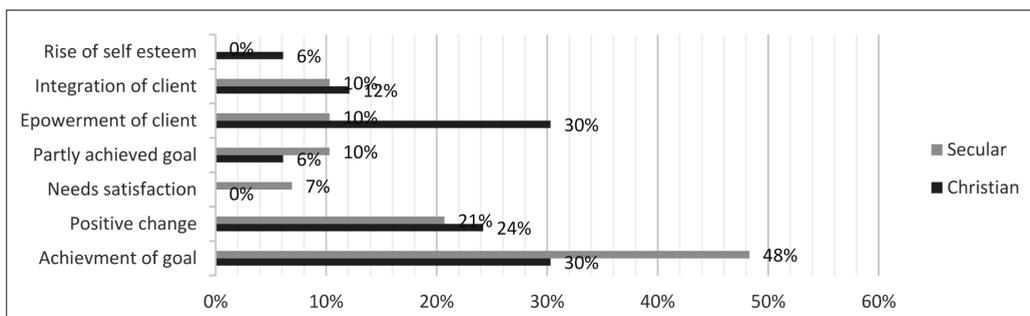
*Picture 9. **The assessment criteria in different organisations***

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[8] *Communion united the individual both vertically with God and horizontally with his or her neighbour in a fellowship with Christ* (Flinn 2007: 171).

[9] The presupposition behind the Christian concept of reconciliation is, however, that a real and comprehensive restoration of mutually amicable human relations has its ground and motive in the reconciliation of God with humankind (Van der Kooi 2002: 104).

We can see that secular and Christian organisations differ in such criteria as *achievement of goal* and *empowerment of client.* There are also differences in *rise of self-esteem* and *needs satisfaction*, but they are not so significant as the previous ones.

The differences in the case of *achievement of goals* can be explained by the fact that sources of resources of secular organisations are public funds, managed by the state or local government. The resources of public funds are allocated through the mechanisms of contracting in and contracting out. The effectiveness of resource use is governed through accountability, where achievement of goals is the main indicator. On the other hand, the sources of resources of faith-related NGOs are not only the state funds, but also the religious community. So there is more freedom for faith-related organisations, and that is why it is possible for them to concentrate on the *empowerment of client* rather than on the *achievement of goals*.

Further we will present the areas of differences between secular and Christian organisations. These areas are not connected to a single stage of social work process, but are inherited in social work process as a whole.

The first thing we want to discuss is the participation of different actors in social work process. The results are presented in picture number 10.
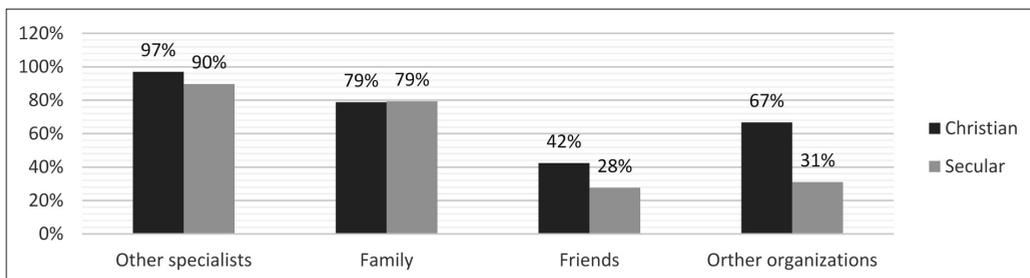
*Picture 10. **The participation of different actors in social work process***

As we can see from the picture 10 the most significant differences between Christian and secular social organisations are in the cases of *friends* and *other organisations*. A possible explanation for the differences in the case of *friends* is the value of communion, what is common among faith-related organisations. For example, Christianity postulates that we all are relatives[10]. The difference in *other organisation* can be explained by the fact that faith-related organisations from the same congregation are more likely to cooperate.

The other thing, which is not related to specific stage of social work process, is the attitude towards a person in need. The differences between organisations are shown in picture number 11.

The picture shows that there is an obvious difference between secular and faith-related organisations in an attitude towards person in need. The person in need is more important to Christian organisations. The results might be explained by the Christianity's emphasis of love[11].

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[10] *The Book of Genesis 2–4 portrays Adam and Eve as the first humans, and thus the parents of all humankind* (Flinn 2007: 5).

[11] For example St. Thomas Aquinas conception of love: *Charity of love is our friendship with God. The Holy Spirit is the motive force of love working in cooperation with human will. We are to love our neighbor because in so doing we love God's self, who is our greatest good and final end* (Flinn 2007: 10).
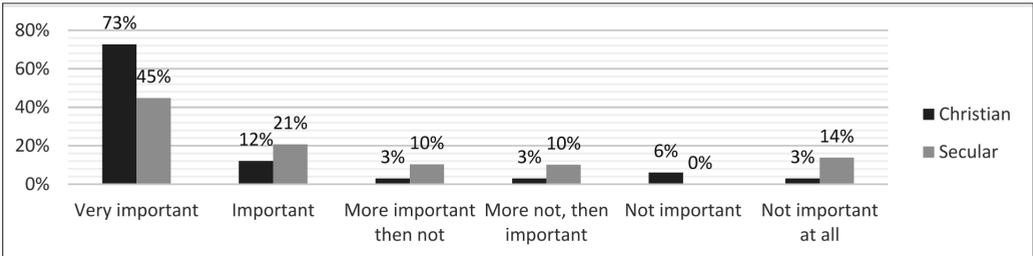
*Picture 11. **The importance of person in need***

To help the person in need is to come closer to God. Christian NGOs can be understood as a tool for Christians to express their love to others and they are totally person-centred.

The last thing that we want to stress is the difference of the human resource management. The differences between secular and Christian NGOs are presented in picture 12.
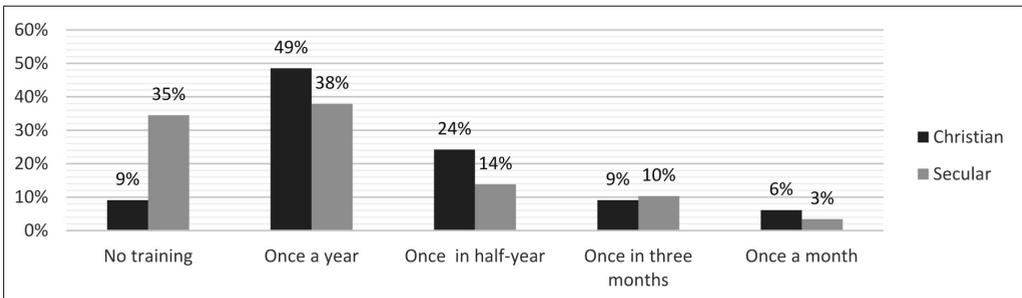
*Picture 12. **The frequency of workers training in secular and Christian organisations***

As we can see from the picture 12, Christian NGOs organise trainings for workers more frequently than secular NGOs. It is possible that there are more volunteers in faith-related organisations. Volunteers usually don't have the required skills, so trainings are organised.

To summarise, it is obvious that there are differences between secular and Christian social work NGOs. Mostly the differences were about the point of view towards a person in need. We decided to test this hypothesis. In order to find out the variables that differ significantly between secular and faith-related NGOs, the multidimensional statistical analysis tool – logistic regression – was used. The hypothesis states that an attitude towards person in need depends on the type of organisation.

The prime model was constructed. The dependent variable is the type of organisation, which can have two values: *secular* and *Christian.* The independent variables are the significance of person in need in the processes of *setting the goal of helping process* (var1)*, setting the duration of helping process* (var2)*, setting the tools and methods will be used in helping process* (var3), *accountability of helping process* (var4), *making decision to end the helping process* (var5). The equation of logistic regression (Field 2009) with our variables can be expressed in this way:

$$\ln \frac{P(Y = Christian)}{P(Y = secular)} = a + b_1 var1 + b_2 var2 + b_3 var3 + b_4 var4 + b_5 var5$$

The logistic regression analysis revealed that our prime model is not valid, because the values of Wald statistics to all variables are higher than 0.05 (see the column "Sig." in the table no. 2).

Table 2. **Social work process according to different social work researchers**

		B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Variables in the Equation							
Step 1[a]	var2	−,416	,258	2,594	1	,107	,660
	var3	−,318	,228	1,952	1	,162	,727
	var1	,266	,307	,754	1	,385	1,305
	var4	−,238	,224	1,129	1	,288	,788
	var5	,206	,208	,981	1	,322	1,229
	a	1,697	1,439	1,390	1	,238	5,458
a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: var2, var3, var1, var4, var5.							

The later manipulations with prime model excluded almost all variables, except **var2**, but such maximisation of prime model is not useful for us because of our goals.

Conclusion

The research revealed that there are significant differences in the social work process between faith-related and secular social work NGOs in Lithuania. The differences were identified in separate stages of social work process and also in social work process as a whole. Most of the revealed differences can be explained by the existing different values within organisations and relations to communities. The values that steam from the religion significantly impact the social work process.

The findings don't contribute to the statement that faith-related NGOs are superior to secular in any case, because of the small number of cases.

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SOCIALINIO DARBO PROCESO SKIRTUMAI RELIGINĖSE IR PASAULIETINĖSE NVO

Giedrė Renevė, Eugenijus Dunajevas

Santrauka

Lietuvoje neformalioje aplinkoje yra dažnai diskutuojama apie religinių ir nereliginių socialinį darbą dirbančių organizacijų skirtumus. Tyrimo tikslas ir buvo atskleisti bei įvertinti šiuos skirtumus. Socialinis darbas yra plačiai suprantamas reiškinys ir, siekdami konkrečiau jį užgriebti, tyrėme šio darbo proceso skirtumus. Socialinis darbas kaip procesas susideda iš tam tikrų veiksmų etapų, kurie atliekami tam tikra seka. Šie veiksmai ir buvo tyrimo objektas. Duomenų analizės rezultatai parodė, kad yra reikšmingų skirtumų tarp religinių (krikščioniškų) ir nereliginių organizacijų.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: socialinio darbo procesas, nevyriausybinės organizacijos, religinės ir nereliginės organizacijos.