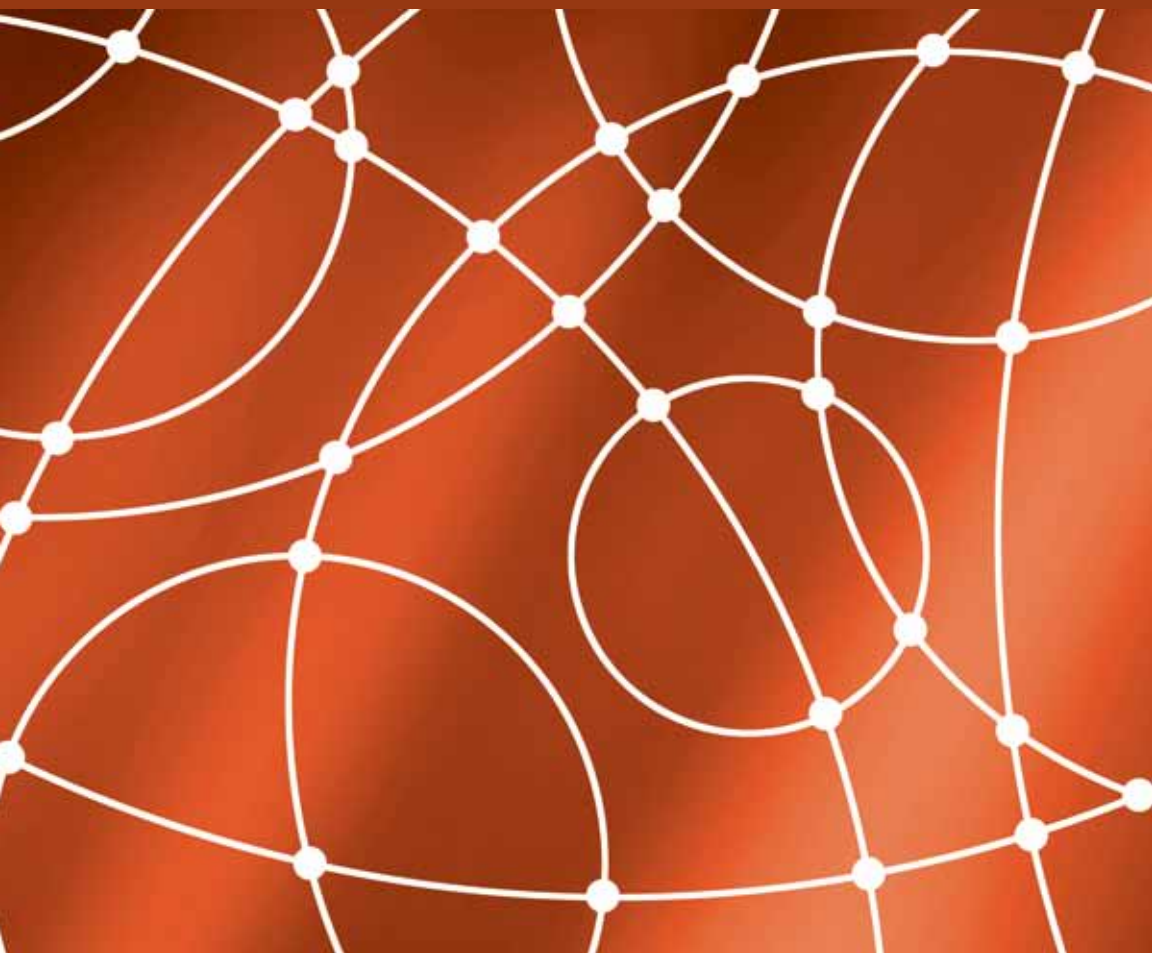


# Christianity and Social Work

*Readings on the Integration of  
Christian Faith and  
Social Work Practice*

FIFTH EDITION

T. Laine Scales and Michael S. Kelly  
Editors





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Mary Anne Poe,  
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# Introduction to the 5th Edition

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*Michael S. Kelly and T. Laine Scales*

For this 5th edition of *Christianity and Social Work*, we found ourselves reflecting on the many ways that the social work world has changed since the first edition of this volume was published, in February 1998. Since that time, we have seen an increasing recognition of the need to understand how faith and social work practice intersect, and how we can generate meaningful and rigorous scholarship to speak to the many social work practitioners who are trying to figure out how to integrate their own faith experience within the larger context of social work practice.

## ***Christianity and Social Work, 1998-2016***

From the outset with our first edition, published by NACSW and edited by Dr. Beryl Hugen, this book has focused on that integration of faith and practice. Our contributors, leading scholars and practitioners stationed in a variety of Christian and secular higher education settings, have always been aware of how complicated and ultimately rewarding the integration of faith and practice can be for social workers. Looking at the first edition of our book, we see a range of chapters that acknowledged that social work and the Christian church had deep historical roots (“Social Work’s Legacy: The Methodist Settlement Movement” and “Church Social Work”) even when there were tensions between social work as a profession and the Christian faith of the social worker (“When Social Work and Christianity Conflict,” and the “Battle Between Sin and Love in Social Work History”). The chapters for the first edition were written by some of the leading lights of NACSW, and some of those contributors (Rick Chamiec-Case, Diana Garland, Beryl Hugen, David Sherwood) have remained with us through all five editions of the text.

Through the first few editions of the book, it was clear that the editors and contributing authors were doing truly groundbreaking scholarship. While social work and Christianity had always been connected since the start of the profession, the tone of these first three volumes represented a new phase for the field, one that was gradually becoming more confident in asserting that social workers could do good practice informed by their Christian faith, and do so ethically. Authors like Cheryl Brandsen, Garland, David Hodge, Hugen, Mary Anne Poe, Sherwood, and Mary P. Van Hook were all trying to build on the nascent literature of faith and social work practice (embodied in the NACSW journal *Social Work & Christianity*, at the time in its 3<sup>rd</sup> decade). Their work on (among other topics) spiritual assessment, spiritual considerations in end-of-life care, and the impact of faith on family-centered social work interventions may seem today to be basic to any good social worker’s practice approach, but in the late 1990s, these were still rare within many social work contexts. For many, the

idea that ANY of these topics would have been covered in a textbook in a social work program would have been difficult to fathom. Now at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the field of social work and social workers who identify as Christian has begun to engage in a renewed exploration of how to best integrate faith and social work practice, and we have this volume to thank for helping to move that conversation along. As of 2016, there were approximately 750 MSW and BSW programs in the U.S, and many are housed in religiously-affiliated colleges and universities (CSWE, 2016). In addition, many Christians are educated within non-sectarian colleges and universities or practicing within both religiously-affiliated and secular agencies. We are excited that this 5<sup>th</sup> edition furthers that work in new and lasting ways.

As with previous editions, it is our intention to address the historical roots of Christians in social work and move our field into the future by employing a variety of perspectives from Christian authors. As multiple authors in this book will make clear, there is not one way to be a Christian social worker; rather it is our hope that the multiplicity of voices contained here will argue for how many ways there are to be a faithful Christian and effective social work practitioner.

Subsequent editions of this book (published in 2002, 2008, 2012, and now 2016) have furthered this exploration of faith/social work integration by adding new scholars to the book and bringing in ever more diverse and distinctive voices to the conversation. To date, the 5 editions of the book have seen over 50 different scholars contribute their unique perspectives to this growing field. We are determined to balance what has always made this book great with challenging ourselves to add new voices and topics to each new edition. This new edition does just that, with 13 chapters revised by returning authors addressing a range of topics that we've been covering since 1998, and 6 new chapters addressing topics as varied as working with military families, working with clients dealing with HIV/AIDS, assisting victims of human trafficking, and understanding how to apply a Christian perspective to evidence-based practice (EBP).

### **Decision Cases: Tools for Learning**

We are very excited to introduce three decision cases to this volume. Decision cases are a tool for learning that give readers practice at “thinking like a social worker” while applying concepts and theories. (Scales & Wolfer, 2006). These cases are real; that is, a social worker reported an actual situation he or she experienced to an author who created the decision case. Decision cases differ from other types of exemplars you may have seen. They are not designed to illustrate best practices, but rather, to leave readers with a “messy” problem or dilemma to analyze and discuss. Through this application and analysis, learners may practice skills of problem-solving and be reminded that there is not always one correct answer in practice; there may be several different responses to be considered and discussed (Scales & Wolfer, 2006). Teaching notes in the Instructor’s Resources (2016) will be helpful to discussion leaders. We are grateful to Terry Wolfer and Mackenzie Huyser for editing these three cases and guiding the case authors in this process.

## **Connection to the Educational Policy Accreditation Standards**

In organizing this 5th edition, we have carefully considered the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) from the Council on Social Work Education. These standards shape the core content of social work curricula and this book engages the EPAS in each chapter. It is important for schools of social work to show how they prepare students to demonstrate specific competencies in social work practice. To help with this integration we have included Appendices with charts that guide readers toward potential connections. The first chart is organized by the competencies listed in the EPAS. The second chart is organized according to the chapters in this book. We hope these tools be a helpful guide for students and instructors.

## **This Book, NACSW, And Our Own Faith Journey**

In the 18 years since this book was first published, NACSW has continued to be a major and lasting force within social work. Today NACSW has over 1,600 members from 60 different Christian denominations in the U.S. and Canada. Its annual conference, the journal *Social Work & Christianity* (now in its 43<sup>rd</sup> year), and its many online training offerings testify to its continuing impact on the field. NACSW is growing with students too, with 1/3 of NACSW members being students, many of them possibly reading these words right now. If that's you, we want you to know that both of us were once where you are right now, trying to make sense of our faith and our calling to become a social worker. We hope this volume gives you some further encouragement and ideas on your journey.

We both work in Christian colleges, informed by our specific Christian traditions (Laine at Baptist Baylor, and Michael at Jesuit Catholic Loyola Chicago). As teachers and researchers we are eager to see more Christian social work scholarship that we can draw on to help prepare our students for careers as practitioners. We both came to the field, in part, because of the calling of our Christian faith and, while we certainly don't require the same religious commitment of our students, we want to speak to those who are attempting to integrate their faith experience with their social work preparation. We know from our own experiences that it can be a challenge to even raise the issues that are in these pages with student colleagues, faculty members, and supervisors. As you read these chapters, we hope you will feel energized and encouraged by the abundance of scholarship for Christian social workers: you are far from alone if you endeavor to become a social worker rooted in your own Christian faith experience.

Perhaps most importantly for us with this edition, we hope that you are able to join us in remembering and honoring one of the most important scholars in the world on the topic of integrating Christianity and social work, the late Dr. Diana Garland. Diana was an inspiration and a friend to both of us, and it's fair to say that the five editions of this book and our involvement in it wouldn't have happened without her leadership and energy in promoting this work. As a Dean, as a researcher, as a scholar, and as a Christian, she gave so much to us and to our field. It's no accident that she has always had at least one chapter in

every edition of this book, and it's an honor to posthumously reprint an excerpt from her last book, "Social Work as Calling." We dedicate this book in loving memory to her legacy and pledge to honor her by continuing to build the foundation for integrating Christian faith and social work practice.

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# SECTION 1

## Christian Roots of the Social Work Profession

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# Good News for the Poor: Christian Influences on Social Welfare

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*Mary Anne Poe*

For the United States of America, the wealthiest and most powerful country in the world, the question of what to do about the poor in our midst is a haunting question. How do the poor impact our economy and political system – our freedom and well-being – our rights and privileges? How does American prosperity affect the poor? The United States has to address the problem because of concern for the very ideals that are American. It also has to address the problem because widespread poverty leads inevitably to social unrest.

For Christians, the question of what to do about the poor raises even more critical concerns. How does God want the poor to be treated? What does the Bible say? What is our responsibility as individuals and as part of the church to our poor neighbors? How should Christians try to influence the political and economic systems?

Social welfare programs and policies are a response to questions that arise in each generation. Why should we care about the poor? How do we determine who deserves help and who does not? Should we attempt to change individual hearts or change social structures in order to alleviate poverty? Who is responsible for the poor? Programs and policies always reflect our values about the nature of poor people and our responsibility to them. What we do as a society about poverty, what programs and policies we develop, depends on how we answer these questions.

Like music in a symphony, there have been themes that recur in the relationship between programs and policies that serve the poor and the belief systems that inform them. The political, economic, and social contexts give shape to particular programs and policies that emphasize specific beliefs that vary in different historic periods. Political, economic, and social conditions interact with belief systems in unpredictable ways at various times to influence views of poverty (Dobelstein, 1986). This chapter highlights some of those themes as they have been experienced through history and how Christian faith and practice have intersected with the public arena to address needs.

## **Biblical Principles Regarding the Poor**

The Bible records God's revelation to people and how humans have responded to God. The biblical record, taken as a whole, supports specific principles about what it means to be human and how humans should relate to God,

to other people, and to the environment. Some of the fundamental premises in the biblical record set the stage for social welfare history. These basic premises have been described in more detail by others (Keith-Lucas, 1989; Sider, 2007; Myers, 2011; Lupton, 2007), but generally include the following:

- Humans are created beings designed for relationship with others. They are interdependent.
- God is concerned for justice and right relationships among people.
- In these relationships humans can do great good or great harm.
- Humans have the ability and responsibility to choose, perhaps not their particular life circumstances, but how they will respond to their life circumstances.
- Humans have value and dignity.
- Work is a natural part of human nature and contributes to one's sense of worth and dignity.
- The ability to create wealth is a gift.
- Material and environmental resources should be shared. They do not "belong" to any one person or group. Stewardship is the human responsibility to share resources fairly.
- God has a special concern for those who are disadvantaged.

The earliest biblical records reveal distinctive guidelines for the care of the poor. The guidelines are shaped by the covenant relationship of a people with their God who represented love and justice. If God is Creator, then all human life should be treated with respect and care. This is a way to honor God. The guidelines apply not only to individuals and families, but also to the larger community and society.

The ancient Hebrew idea of charity, *tsedekah*, is directly related to the concept of justice (Morris, 1986; Keller, 2010; Poe, 2008). The helper benefited from the act of charity as well as the one receiving help. It was a reciprocal benefit that balanced relationships between people. In the Scriptures, God specified the need for interdependent relationships and charity as an aspect of this. The prophet Micah summed up this principle by stating, "He has showed you, O people, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). God intended that society benefit by sharing resources among all its members in a just and equitable way.

The Old Testament law specified how the community should provide care and to whom. God's people were supposed to be hospitable to strangers and foreigners (Exodus 22:21; Hebrews 13:2). The Sabbath and Jubilee years restored property and maintained a more equitable distribution of resources (Leviticus 25; Exodus 21: 1–11; Deuteronomy 15: 12–18). Those with wealth were supposed to leave grains in the fields for the poor (Leviticus 19: 9–10; Ruth). Communities and families cared for widows and orphans (Deuteronomy 14: 28–29; 26:12). They were to offer kind treatment to slaves and debtors and provide a means for them to gain their freedom (Deuteronomy 15). Lenders were to make loans without charging interest (Exodus 22: 25; Deuteronomy 15: 1–11).



God is known for avenging the mistreatment of the weak (Psalm 9:8, 12, 16; 10: 17–18). The prophets railed against the people and nations that failed to behave mercifully and justly with the poor. They voiced words of judgment when the laws were ignored (Isaiah 59: 15; Ezekiel 34: 1–6; Amos 4: 1–3; Amos 5: 21–24; Zechariah 7: 8–14; Malachi 3:5). Those who could work were expected to do so, but the laws were aimed at the community and required the kind of compassion toward the poor that God himself had demonstrated. God's word strongly asserts that God is just and wants people to behave in a just and caring way toward one another, and especially toward the weak (Sider, 2007).

The New Testament added a new and more challenging idea to the care of the poor. Jesus' life serves as a model for all to follow. The four Gospels record the behavior of Jesus toward those who were disenfranchised. The message to those who will hear it is to "follow Jesus," do what Jesus did. Jesus asked his followers to love others as he loved. The reason to care about the poor is not simply the reciprocal benefit of charity or obedience to the Old Testament laws, but one's commitment to God. One cares about others, especially the poor, not because it brings benefit but because that person in need is made in the image of God: "Whatever you do for one of the least of these, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).

The New Testament also proclaims God's concern for justice. Jesus announced his mission in his first public message in the synagogue in Nazareth. He read from the prophet Isaiah,

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18–19)

His ministry was characterized by attention to the weak and helpless and oppressed. The early church adopted the same standard of care so that "there was no poverty among them, because people who owned land or houses sold them and brought the money to the apostles to give to others in need" (Acts 4:34). The apostle James warned the church about unequal distribution of material resources (James 5: 1–6) and about prejudicial treatment based on one's social class (James 2: 1–17).

The Bible supports the value of work and the accompanying idea that one's ability to create wealth is a gift. Adam and Eve worked in the Garden even before their fall into sin. The story of Job shows that wealth can be transitory and is subject to God's control. Jesus himself worked as a carpenter. The apostle Paul admonishes believers to "settle down and get to work and earn your own living," and "whoever does not work should not eat" (II Thessalonians 3: 10–12).

## **Social Welfare History in Western Cultures**

Biblical principles about human relationships and God's will for humans have had a profound impact on social welfare history in the Western hemisphere. The earliest records of church life reveal radical efforts to be sure that material

and spiritual needs were met. The book of Acts states that material resources were shared in the community so that none were needy. The early church stressed the need to provide help to the poor even if some that were helped were not deserving of it. The church was a “haven of vital mutual aid within the pagan environment” (Troeltsch, 1960, 134).

The charity of the early church was formulated in small Christian communities that had little or no influence on the state in the early years under Roman rule. Christianity began with many, but not all, members from the poorer classes because most people were from these ranks (Stark, 1996). The aim was to show God’s love. The church was not a political movement and thus not necessarily directed at prompting social reform.

The human tendency of those with sufficient means to try to distinguish the deserving from the undeserving emerged regularly and in contrast to the earliest biblical teachings. Some early Christian leaders responded to this human tendency toward judgment. Chrysostom of Antioch in the fourth century was a strong advocate for charity based on the need of the giver to share. He was concerned with the heart of the giver and the need for those who had sufficient means to share with those who did not. Gregory of Nanzianus believed that a lack of care for the poor was a greater sin than giving to the undeserving poor (Keith-Lucas, 1989). The tension between the idea of charity as a need of the giver’s soul and charity to simply meet the needs of the poor has existed throughout social welfare history.

As Christianity spread through the Roman Empire and beyond, it began to exert more influence on political, economic, and social policies. Thus, by the time Constantine institutionalized Christianity as the “state” religion, biblical ideas of justice and charity held some political power. By the Middle Ages, the church and state were enmeshed with the church taking the lead role in the care of the poor as well as many other matters of political or economic interest. Over time the church’s initial interest in showing God’s care for the poor was overshadowed by interest in maintaining a seat of power in the political arena. After the Middle Ages, the church’s power diminished. The Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the Modern Era all had the effect of shifting political and economic power from the church to more secular entities. The locus of control for social welfare shifted as well.

### **Who Is Responsible for the Social Welfare?**

A major theme through history has addressed the question of who is responsible for the poor. As Christianity developed and became more institutionalized, the social welfare system also developed. The church provided social services—not always with compassion or justice—but nevertheless motivated by biblical imperatives. It amassed an enormous amount of property after Constantine’s rule and through the Middle Ages, some of which was to be used for the benefit of the poor. The bishop of each diocese was the patron for the poor (Troeltsch, 1960). Hospitals, hospices and sanctuary were typical services provided by the

church for those who did not get aid through the feudal system (Keith-Lucas, 1989). Tithing was a prominent aspect of life in the church. Usually one-third of the tithe was designated for the care of the poor (Dolgoff & Feldstein, 2003). The giving of charity became a way to earn one's salvation.

The state was reluctant to assume responsibility for the poor early in western history. In England, The Statute of Labourers in 1349 was the first law enacted that gave government the responsibility. The value of work and a person's responsibility to provide for family dominated its formulation. The law's intent was less charitable than a means to control labor and the behaviors of poor people (Dolgoff & Feldstein, 2003). A series of Poor Laws followed the Statute of Labourers from its passage in 1349 to the mid-1800s. The shift had begun from church responsibility for the poor to government responsibility. Beginning with the Poor Laws, the state gradually accepted a role in oversight. The church and its biblical understandings, though, helped to shape the laws because the bishops sat in the House of Lords and government officials were drawn from the clergy. As government involvement increased, church acceptance of responsibility slowly abated (Popple and Leighninger, 2005). However, individual church members or clergy continued to provide leadership and personnel for the actual work of relief.

## **Social Control**

The need for order has had great popularity during certain periods of time as a way to control the poor. Reasons and motives for helping the poor are numerous. On one extreme is the biblical imperative to love as God loved. Christian believers have Jesus as a model for how to care about the most marginalized and oppressed people. Biblical injunctions include doing justice, showing mercy, valuing every life regardless of circumstances, and personal responsibility and freedom to behave in a manner that contributes to the good of all. At the same time a reason for helping the poor developed out of a need to regulate the social and economic order, to encourage productive work and discourage dependency. The Poor Laws were, in part, designed to regulate labor and the migration of people from one community to another. Minimum wage laws and various tax laws are also a means to regulate poverty through control of the economic system (Piven and Cloward, 1993).

Reasons for helping the poor and efforts toward that end can begin with the best of intentions and after time become sidetracked. The poor can be hurt by the very efforts designed to help. Assistance given in the name of Christ but not in the spirit of Christ is perhaps capable of doing the greatest harm (Keith-Lucas, 1989; Perkins, 1993). Those who profess to help, yet are judgmental, patronizing, or cruel, do not reflect the manner of help prescribed by God. An argument can be made that the emergence of state-operated "help" for the poor tended to shift the emphasis from one of charity as outlined by the model of Jesus to one of social control.

## **Personal Responsibility**

During the period of the Protestant Reformation in the church, the culture changed from an agrarian one built on a communitarian spirit to an industrial society focused on individual rights and responsibility. Families were more isolated and less interdependent. Understanding of many biblical principles was shifting as well. Rather than the one Holy Catholic Church representing the biblical tradition and having authority to interpret biblical principles, the reform movement sanctioned individual responsibility to God for understanding and interpreting scripture and for how to live one's faith. Martin Luther, John Calvin, and the Anabaptists stressed personal salvation and church authority became less hierarchical. Anyone who had faith could relate to God and interpret the Bible. Though all Christian groups continued to give consideration to the poor, the emphasis on personal responsibility meant that the poor, too, were responsible to live holy lives. God would bless faithful believers (Keith-Lucas, 1989).

The reformers were outraged at the abuses of power perpetrated by the church. They decried the greed of the ecclesiastical establishment and sought to restore biblical concern for individual dignity and faith (Couture, 1991). The perspective on social welfare was also shifting. Biblical imperatives to show compassion and mercy had ebbed in relation to the need to urge the poor toward personal responsibility and labor. The "principle of less eligibility" established in the Poor Laws continued to ensure that those who labored would not have less material resources than those who received aid (Dolgoft & Feldstein, 2003). Rigorous scrutiny and early means tests prevented those who were considered "undeserving" from enjoying the benefits of aid. The theology of the Protestant Reformation focused on personal salvation and holiness, challenged church authority as it had been practiced by Roman Catholics, and encouraged hard work and thriftiness. The Protestant work ethic became the standard applied to poor people and to social welfare programs.

The English Poor Laws crossed the Atlantic and shaped the social welfare system in the American colonies (Trattner, 1998; Axinn and Stern, 2004). Still, the Judeo-Christian tradition provided the philosophical basis for treatment of the poor (Hugen & Scales, 2002). Biblical principles, though often misconstrued in actual practice, remained the rationale for the system that existed. The biblical belief in the value of work and the responsibility to care for one's family became the dominant philosophical basis for almost all social welfare programs. Principles that were powerfully informed by the life and work of Jesus and the early church, however, were weakened by the traditions of church and society.

## **Personal Regeneration and Social Change**

Two religious movements of the nineteenth century had particular influence on the administration of social welfare. The first of these was revivalism. The periods of the Great Awakenings stressed personal regeneration and holiness.

Those transformed by the power of God were called to service in the world. The goal for the revivalist was dynamic Christian faith that would change society as a whole. George Whitefield and George Muller established orphanages. Jonathan Edwards advocated for American Indians who were being exploited by settlers. Many leaders of the abolitionist movement were products of revivals, including Harriet Beecher Stowe, John Woolman, and Charles Finney (Cairns, 1986). Numerous social ministries emerged as a result of spiritual revivals. These included urban mission centers, abolitionist societies, the Salvation Army, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), and Volunteers of America (Timothy Smith, 2004; Magnuson & Magnuson, 2004; Cairns, 1986). The revivals sparked concern for the spiritual salvation of souls and also for the overall welfare of society (Cairns, 1986; Poe, 2002).

The second religious trend affecting social welfare practices in the nineteenth century was the social gospel movement (Trattner, 1998). Theological liberalism of the nineteenth century was an attempt to make the Christian tradition congruent with the prevailing scientific naturalism of the day. Theologians like Walter Rauschenbusch and Washington Gladden articulated this theology for the academy. Charles Sheldon popularized it with his novel, *In His Steps*. Interestingly, a phrase from this book, "What would Jesus do?" re-emerged in evangelical Christian circles in the last decade of the twentieth century (Poe, 2002). The social gospel focused on building the kingdom of God on earth. It adopted the popular scientific methodologies of the day and hoped for social change based on humanitarian ideals rather than regenerate hearts.

This more liberal theology called into question long-standing "fundamentals" of the faith. The nature of Scripture and the doctrines of creation and Christology were subjected to scientific analysis. Liberal theologies minimized the supernatural aspects of faith while more conservative theologies emphasized them. The divergent theologies caused the two groups to disassociate from each other in their works of service in the world. Whereas liberal theologies contributed to the rise of the profession of social work and increased governmental oversight of social welfare (Wenocur and Reisch, 2001), conservative theologies focused on church growth, evangelism and the future kingdom of God, and distanced themselves from secular attempts to reform society by good works.

Philosophies dominant in the twentieth century in the United States—naturalism, materialism, and capitalism—do not necessarily reflect a Christian worldview that demands care for others because they are valued creations of God. These philosophies emphasize productivity, the value of work and wealth, and order in society. The profession of social work, though, espouses values of celebrating the worth and dignity of every person regardless of their circumstances. As David Sherwood asserts, it is only fair to ask of the profession "where did these values come from and what gives them moral authority?" (Sherwood, 1997,122).

## **Social Casework and Social Reform**

The growth of the profession of social work in the late nineteenth century illustrates another recurring dilemma. Can poverty be eliminated by helping one person at a time – the social casework method? Or is poverty best fought by social reform as reflected in the settlement house movement? Through history, both approaches have been used by church and state. The early church functioned as a community in which no one had need (Acts 4:32–34). The Great Awakenings of the nineteenth century resulted in organized efforts to change aspects of the social order such as abolishing slavery. At other times, the focus was on one individual poor person at a time. For many Christians, poverty is simply a spiritual matter healed by spiritual regeneration. As people are converted, society itself will be transformed. This thinking especially dominates some forms of evangelicalism. For other Christians, poverty is a reflection of an unjust society that needs reform. Conversion of individual souls is not the focus for these Christians, but rather social action.

The state also has approached aid to the poor by addressing individual needs for change as well as changing social structures. Income transfer programs are directed at individual poor people who deserve aid to enable them to rise above poverty level. Programs such as Head Start, though, reflect a broader institutional effort to change the nature of the poor community to allow more equal opportunity in the market place. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 captured both of these methods to some extent, though the emphasis is clearly individual reform. In this Act, assistance is time-limited with expectations that the poor will enter the labor market quickly. Individuals can lose benefits if they do not comply with certain lifestyle rules. For example, a mother under age eighteen must live at her parents' home or in another adult-supervised setting and attend school. Welfare mothers must identify the fathers of their children and convicted drug felons need not apply. To encourage steady employment, states can use funds for employment supports like childcare. Tax laws and minimum wage laws are examples of addressing the economic system in order to reduce poverty. The Earned Income Tax Credit is an example of a policy that “helps the poor, rewards work, strengthens the family, and discourages welfare” (Sider, 2007, 103).

## **The Welfare State**

The early twentieth century was a period of growth and prosperity for the nation, which was still relatively young. As the free market economy matured, the United States clearly represented the land of opportunity. Immigrants flooded the borders. Natural resources abounded for the consumption of the relatively small population and a political system based on liberty and justice for all created an environment in which anyone supposedly could succeed. By the twentieth century the state was established as the primary caretaker for the poor and in

this role often overlooked the contributions made by faith-based organizations (Vanderwoerd, 2002).

A prosperous nation or person tends to have little tolerance for those who cannot or do not succeed. Though Judeo-Christian ideology was still a strong undercurrent for most American life at this time, the increasing strength of liberalism, materialism, and capitalism deeply impacted public welfare policy (Dobelstein, 1986). The American ideals of rugged individualism and hard work suggested that the poor simply needed the influence and advice of those who had succeeded. Material relief was viewed as more handicap than aid. Many felt that material relief and ill-informed charity promoted laziness and pauperism. (Wilson, 1996)

The Depression of the 1930's presented an occasion to question views that held individuals alone responsible for their poverty. American society confronted the reality that poverty often was a consequence of the condition of the economic system rather than simply believing that poverty resulted from immoral living or unwise personal decisions. Congress responded with the Social Security Act in 1935 and other New Deal legislative acts that addressed economic needs. The Social Security Act assured aid to the elderly, the needy, the blind, and dependent children. The New Deal established responsibility for the poor firmly in the seat of government (Trattner, 1998; Levitan, Mangum, Mangum, & Sum, 2003).

While faith-based groups continued to provide much relief, the ultimate authority in American society for developing social welfare programming was given to government. What had begun to happen in the latter part of the Middle Ages and during the Industrial Revolution with the Poor Laws was complete. Certainly the philosophical basis for society paying attention to the poor still had some connection with the Judeo-Christian tradition of charity, but in reality the principle of stabilizing the economy and maintaining social order guided policy making. Government had decided that poverty would always be an issue and that it was the role of government to give oversight (Levitan, Mangum, Mangum, & Sum, 2003).

Government policies and programs established rigorous means tests to determine a person's eligibility for aid. The presumption persisted that many recipients of aid were out to defraud the generosity of others. The "principle of less eligibility" remained. Aid provided subsistence support but nothing more. Processes for accessing aid were often designed to protect the system rather than serve the needs of the poor. Social welfare had changed quite dramatically from that demonstrated by early Christian believers of the first few centuries after Christ.

Welfare policies since World War II have tended to sway back and forth in levels of generosity. During the Johnson era, the War on Poverty had the lofty vision of eradicating poverty. While its goals were hardly attained, there is some evidence that this era established a safety net for most of the poor (Trattner, 1998). At least most could be assured of having food and basic medical care. In this period, solving the problem of poverty involved adjusting social and economic systems and providing services to support families.

The Reagan/Bush years of the 1980's emphasized different priorities. Poverty was still a problem, but the goal was to eradicate dependency. Programs and services were designed to relieve the federal government of responsibility for the poor and to turn welfare recipients into full participants in the regular market economy. When Clinton became President the goal was to "end welfare as we know it." Welfare reform legislation passed in 1996 with the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). This act essentially ended the federal guarantee of help for poor families with dependent children and signaled massive change in the structure and scale of the American social welfare system (Mink, 1999; Dolgoff & Feldstein, 2003; Boyer, 2006; Ozawa & Yoon, 2005). It shifted the administration of relief from the federal government to states in block grants. The act was predicated on the belief that poor relief could be better managed closer to home. The 1996 welfare reform legislation also assumed that the free market system was a level playing field where the poor could be motivated toward self-sufficiency (Wilson, 1996).

### **The Importance of Social, Political, and Economic Context**

By the 1990s, the years of the Depression that caused the nation to realize the need for a federalized system of public welfare had faded out of memory. Many people believed that the welfare system created in the 1930's spawned a different and dangerous set of values from the American ideals of work, independence, and family. Much in the United States had changed since the earliest European settlements. The economic system was mature and now dominated worldwide markets. Society had evolved from an agrarian one to an industrial one to a technological and global one. Furthermore, the nation that had begun with decidedly Judeo-Christian values had become more and more pluralistic and postmodern. These changes in culture influenced the treatment of the poor and the programs and policies formulated to address their needs. The evangelical Christian focus on personal salvation and holiness reinforced the American belief system that each person must be independent and self-sufficient. Conservative political and economic analysts, such as Charles Murray and Lawrence Mead, ascribed the ills of poverty to the "negative effects of welfare" (Wilson, 1996, 164).

The devolution of welfare policy administration from the federal to the state level that occurred in 1996 with PRWORA demonstrates on another level the power of context to influence how people experience the system. Constituent characteristics, such as race, ethnicity and economic well-being, and available resources that vary by state are factors that impact policies and programs of aid. Different approaches by the different states since 1996 reflect a wide range of values and priorities that drive social welfare policy. The combination of variables related to context creates distinct and unique policies and services (Fellowes & Rowe, 2004).

The twentieth century had ushered in welfare states, both in the United States and in Europe. A difference in the social welfare systems is found in the fundamentally different premises of American and European thought and the



very different political and economic contexts. The two contexts illustrated by the United States and Europe after World War II demonstrate the power of the political, economic, and social context in shaping social welfare policies. After World War II, Europe was devastated. The entire society needed to be rebuilt. The United States, in contrast, had not experienced as much loss during the war. The Depression that preceded the war had ended and American values of independence and productivity dominated. American welfare has tended to focus on particular groups, such as the aged, blind, disabled, or orphaned. The “doctrine of less eligibility” prevails and the valuing of rugged individualism dominates. The European system places more emphasis on a communitarian belief system. Consequently, social welfare in Europe tends to be more generous and more inclusive. Social benefits related to health care, housing, child care, employment, and income support tend to be applicable to the entire population rather than limited benefits targeted to particular groups as in the United States (Wilson, 1996; Pedersen, 2006).

### **Faith-Based Initiatives**

Those with biblical faith have always been concerned for the poor, but with the rise of the modern welfare states in the United States and Europe, the church has not prioritized a corporate responsibility for social welfare policies and programs. Charitable Choice provisions in the welfare reform legislation of 1996 created possibilities for partnerships between church and state that had essentially been closed since the New Deal of the 1930s. (Sider, 2007; Sherwood, 1998; Hodge, 1998; Vanderwoerd, 2002; Sherman, 2003). In January 2001, President Bush established the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI). President Obama changed the name to the Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships in 2009. The assignment for this office has been to strengthen the collaboration of government with faith-based and community organizations providing social services. This office appeals to the Judeo-Christian tradition of compassion and care for the poor and to the economic and political view that the poor are often best helped by non-governmental services. The question arises of who is responsible to care for the poor and how is help best given, and whether the state or faith-based initiatives should be the driving force behind social welfare policy (Belcher, Fandetti, & Cole, 2004).

### **Global Context**

While economic prosperity and tax cuts, education reform, and faith-based initiatives were Bush’s emphases upon taking the oath of office in January 2001, the terrorist events of September 11, 2001, radically changed the political and economic landscape. Global realities and needs took center-stage and displaced concern for domestic social welfare policy. Attention on the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, extreme poverty in much of the world, and the continuing ravages of

AIDS, Ebola, and other diseases has diverted much public attention away from the “compassionate conservatism” directed at domestic policy that carried Bush into office. With Obama’s election in 2008, the American public seemed to be seeking greater balance between concern for safety from terrorism and engagement with world problems and concern for the social and economic well-being of its own citizens in need. The contentious struggle to pass health care reform legislation in 2009, the economic downturn beginning in 2007, angry rhetoric about illegal immigration, the continuing global fight against terrorism, and the inefficiency in response to natural and human disasters such as the earthquake in Haiti, the flooding in Pakistan, and the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico all signify the challenges in finding just solutions to problems that affect the United States and extend globally.

Christians who heed the call to follow Jesus should be very concerned about global social welfare and how the actions of the United States impact the rest of the world. For the richest and most powerful nation on earth to be knowledgeable about devastating poverty and disease and war in some nations and continue to live in its ease evokes the prophetic voice of the Old Testament: “Away with your hymns of praise! They are only noise to my ears. I will not listen to your music, no matter how lovely it is. Instead I want to see a mighty flood of justice, a river of righteous living that will never run dry” (Amos 5:23). “I despise the pride and false glory of Israel, and I hate their beautiful homes. I will give this city and everything in it to their enemies” (Amos 6:8).

Biblical faith calls Christians to practice good citizenship by being engaged in the public discourse about social welfare policies and programs and the impact of all policies on the poor in the world. The reality for the twenty-first century is a global economy. It is this political and economic context that will shape U.S. policy in the years ahead. Today, social welfare policies are inevitably linked to the global marketplace. Minimum wage laws, immigration laws, labor and trade laws will all influence how the poor are treated in the United States as well as around the world. The relationship of faith-based organizations and their provision of social services with the government system of social services will also continue to be a dominant theme.

## **Conclusion**

The biblical narrative primarily challenges the non-poor to create conditions for the poor that are just and caring. God does not allow the prosperous to simply wallow in their comfort. In so doing, they become oppressors. Rather, God wants people to have open hands and hearts to the poor, to overflow with generosity and concern. The responsibility is given to family, friends, and community to offer “a liberal sufficiency so that their needs are met” (Sider, 2007, 70).

Details of time and place vary dramatically. Social, political, religious, and economic systems create contexts that warrant a variety of methods and approaches to dealing with poverty and influence understanding of the poor.

The Bible says that we will have the poor with us always (Deuteronomy 15:11; Matthew 26:11). The biblical imperative to care for the poor and the weak in a manner that empowers them and values their worth and dignity as persons has not changed. What distinguishes followers of Christ is a fundamental commitment to continually work to support the most vulnerable members of society for all are God's children and made in God's image. Whether it is organizing a soup kitchen or challenging tax policies, the call of God for Christians is to bring good news to the poor. This is the mission for social workers as well.

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# “To Give Christ to the Neighborhood”: A Corrective Look at the Settlement Movement and Early Christian Social Workers<sup>1</sup>

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The history of Christianity and social work is long-standing, dense, complicated, contested, and ever-evolving, all the way up to the present day. This article will certainly not settle all the myriad debates about the proper role of Christian belief in social work practice, nor will it attempt to comprehensively survey this nearly 130-year old history of Christianity and social work in the United States. Rather, by focusing on the early history of social work in the United States in two cities (Louisville and Chicago) we hope to show just how long-standing and complicated the relationship between Christian missionary work and social work practice has been, from the outset of social work's early attempts to identify its own professional identity.

In addition to discussing the efforts to address the needs of the poor in Louisville and Chicago, these diverse approaches to Christian and secular social work practice show how hard it was in those early years to draw strong distinctions between Christian and secular social workers in what they did, why they did it, and how they explained their work to others. Indeed these distinctions, while not unimportant to Charity Organization Society and settlement house workers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to be sure, have only become more sharply drawn in the last century, as our profession writes its own history into a reality that may not resemble much of what actually was happening in those early years.

We start this article with two brief overviews of the Charity Organization Society (COS) movement and settlement house (SH) movement; then move into a discussion of two Christian settlement houses: a Protestant example in Louisville, Kentucky, and a Catholic example in Chicago. Finally, we consider what these histories (largely unwritten or marginalized in social work scholarship and textbooks) tell us about the role(s) of Christians in social work practice.

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## Overview of Early U.S. Social Welfare History 1870-1920

Most introductory social work courses address some facet of our profession's early history, usually by discussing two early movements that largely predate what we consider now to be "professional" social work practice: the Charity Organization Society (COS) movement and the settlement house (SH) movement. Our recent content analysis of seven commonly-used introductory social work textbooks found that without exception, these two movements were addressed separately and often used to draw distinctions between the two different ways that early social workers were involved in helping the poor and changing society.

Indicative of the need for the kind of corrective emphasis we undertake in this article, none of the textbooks characterized the Christian roots of social work history in its actual complexity, preferring to identify COS workers as religiously-motivated and SH workers as secular change agents. While the focus of this article will be on settlement houses, a brief overview of the two movements will provide an important context for our claim that the story of our development as a profession is more complex than what is typically reported.

### The Charity Organization Movement

The charity organization movement that emerged in the United States in the late nineteenth century was inspired by a similar movement in Great Britain, in reaction to a perceived proliferation of charities that practiced almsgiving without investigating the circumstances of recipients. The movement's followers sought changes in the way charities responded to need based on three key assumptions: that urban poverty was caused by the moral deficiencies of the poor, that poverty could only be eliminated by the correction of these deficiencies in individuals, and that various charity organizations would need to cooperate to bring about this change (Ginzberg, 1990).

The COS movement flourished in the United States. In fact, by the 1890s, over a hundred American cities had charity organization societies. Journals like *Lend-a-Hand* (Boston) and *Charities Review* (New York) were created to promote ideas and annual meetings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections (one of the ancestors of today's National Association of Social Workers) provided opportunities for leaders to discuss common concerns (Boyer, 1978). Fearing misuse of resources, Charity Organization Societies typically did not give money to the poor; rather they coordinated various charitable resources and kept records of those who had received charity in order to prevent "duplicity and duplication" by "having the wealthy keep an eye on the poor" (Ginzberg, 1990, pp. 196-97).

Privileged women from the middle and upper classes (precursors of professional social workers) volunteered to establish relationships as well as investigate the circumstances of families in need. They employed the technique of "friendly visiting" which stemmed from their conviction that individuals in poverty could be uplifted through association with middle and upper class volunteers.

Friendly visitors were primarily Protestant women and their emphasis on the moral uplift of individuals was reinforced in Protestant churches by regarding the value of work to the soul and a focus on individual rather than communal relationship to God (Ginzberg, 1990).

As the movement grew, an insufficient number of volunteers led COS agencies to employ “agents,” trained staff members who were the predecessors of professional social workers. Leaders like Mary Richmond of the Boston COS and Edward T. Devine of the New York COS led the movement to train workers, which led to the professionalization of social work in the early twentieth century. In 1898, Devine established and directed the New York School of Philanthropy, the first formal training for workers, which eventually became Columbia School of Social Work. The case method, later used by the social work profession, is rooted in charity organization philosophies which were taught by Devine and his colleagues and focused on the individual, change through relationship, and investigation (Connaway & Gentry, 1988).

### **Charity Organizations and Christianity**

Many leaders in the COS movement were Christians and some were clergy. In spite of their commitment to Christianity, leaders cautioned against mixing evangelism with charity. Stephen Humphreys Gurteen, a clergyman and COS leader, warned workers in his *Handbook of Charity Organization* (1882), not to use their position for “proselytism or spiritual instruction.” Edward T. Devine, leader of the New York City Charity Organization Society was willing to include church-related organizations in charity work although he insisted that “friendly visiting should be done strictly for the sake of the family rather than as a means of winning converts, however desirable that also may be” (Devine, 1901, p. 99).

### **The Settlement House Movement**

Social work introductory textbooks often oversimplify descriptions of COS and SH movements as completely separate and opposing movements. In reality, Christian workers were involved in both the COS and SH movements, often at the same time, and leaders were not as opposed to one another’s philosophies as is often described in social work textbooks. In fact, some leaders, like Devine, carried out both COS and SH activities.

While supporters of the charity organization movement emphasized changing individuals, the settlement movement stressed societal reform and attempted to help those in need by changing institutions. Like the COS movement, the SH movement spread to the United States from England in the late 1800s in the midst of immigration, industrialization, and urbanization. Leaders of the movement like Stanton Coit, Robert Woods, and Jane Addams created settlements after visits to London’s first and most important settlement, Toynbee Hall, located in East London. Toynbee and some of the first American settlements relied on collaboration with local universities. Students lived among the poor

while professors visited to offer lectures and stimulating discussions. Although the movement in England was largely masculine, settlement leadership in the United States included both men and women. In 1889, a group of women, many of them graduates of Smith College, founded the College Settlement Association in New York City. In that same year, Jane Addams and Ellen Starr opened Hull House in a poverty-stricken area of Chicago.

Like charity organizations, settlement houses were established in urban areas, and particularly immigrant neighborhoods. The primary purpose of a settlement was to establish communication and relationships between the well-to-do and the working class. At the forefront of the SH philosophy was a democratic ideal or, as Jane Addams expressed it, settlements were based “on the theory that the dependence of classes on each other is reciprocal” (Davis, 1984, p. 19). Settlements focused their energies not exclusively on reforming individuals but on addressing urban problems. Residents researched economic and social conditions that informed social action to improve the neighborhood. In fact, settlements carried out the first systematic attempts to study immigrant communities, using their insights to initiate reforms in the area of child labor, sanitation, and women’s working conditions. Education and recreation were important activities of the settlement, including college extension courses, English language classes, vocational training, demonstrations of domestic skills, kindergartens, and playgrounds, all designed to improve the lives of neighbors (Davis, 1984).

### **Settlements vs. Missions: How Different Were They, Really?**

One of the first notions imparted in most social work introductory courses is that the COS movement focused on changing individuals (and maybe saving their souls too) and refused to engage with the larger macro-forces in society that might have made these individuals poor in the first place. While some of the COS literature bears this out, there is often a leap to assuming that all religiously-motivated mission-based work with the poor at this time was rooted in this view of the poor’s problems. Likewise, SH workers are identified so strongly with the secular focus of Addams and Starr at Hull House, that it becomes hard to believe that many SH workers were themselves motivated by a desire to serve the poor based on a religious calling (Davis, 1984). This dichotomy, while helpful in identifying macro- and micro-practice distinctions that persist to this day (Specht & Courtney, 1993; Pryce, Kelly, Reiland and Wilk, 2010), is ultimately too limiting in characterizing what was happening in social work, Christianity, and urban America at this time in our history.

If we take, for example, one city, New York City, and examine the landscape of settlements around the first decade of the twentieth century, we see the religious influence on SH at its earliest point in the U. S. There were approximately 82 settlement houses in New York, with several maintaining a religious focus. For example, East Side House was headed by Clarence Gordon, who wrote *The Relation of the Church to the Settlement*. He argued, “Humanitarians, socialists, philanthropists, may do settlement work and do it well.... but only on the foundation of Christ...



and His example, and grace to inspire and direct, can the settlement realize its highest possibilities.” (Gordon quoted in Davis, *Spearheads for Reform* p 14).

In order to exemplify how settlement houses may embody Christian values, we now offer short case sketches of two settlements to illuminate the complex relationship between Christians in social work and SHs at this formative time in our profession’s history. We will describe two important sites of social work innovation—Louisville, Kentucky, a river city with large immigrant populations, including Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish immigrants, and Chicago, Illinois, home to a largely Catholic immigrant neighborhood.

### **Louisville, Kentucky: the Baptist Training School Settlement**

By the early twentieth century, Louisville was home to several settlement houses, including Neighborhood House, established in 1896, and the Baptist Settlement House. The Baptist house, later named Good Will Center, was opened in 1912 and will be the focus of our case study (Scales, 2000). It was established by a school opened in 1907 for Southern Baptist women studying social work and missions: The Woman’s Missionary Training School for Christian Workers. The school’s purpose was to train Baptist women as missionaries to serve overseas or in the United States, as well as social workers and Sunday School workers. Students studied missionary methods, social work, fine arts, and domestic sciences, while also completing theological studies at the all-male Southern Baptist Theological Seminary a few blocks away (Scales, 2000). In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the school would narrow its focus to social work and in 1984 emerge as the Carver School of Church Social Work, the first school of social work located in a seminary to be accredited by Council on Social Work Education. The school survived 12 years before being closed in 1997 in the midst of conflicts among Southern Baptists. (Garland, 1999).

From the school’s beginning, the first principal, Maude McLure, had a vision for reaching out to Louisville’s immigrant and poor populations. In 1912, she set aside a summer to study in New York City with the famous Edward Devine in the New York School of Philanthropy (now the School of Social Work at Columbia University) and to live in a New York settlement house. Maude McLure brought back to Louisville a basic understanding of the settlement movement and ideas about activities and services that such an establishment might provide.

The settlement house she established in Louisville combined the typical methods of a settlement house, but did not emphasize the call for societal reform that undergirded many settlements. Instead, it became a site for students to practice a variety of missionary methods, including evangelism so important to Southern Baptist practices. The students and faculty of the Woman’s Missionary Union Training School (WMUTS) worked to evangelize the neighborhood and, like Hull House and other settlements, to socialize Louisville immigrants into American life. Undergirded by a Protestant ethic emphasizing hard work, and a Southern Baptist emphasis on salvation of the individual, women of Louisville’s Training School worked to change society, but also aimed to reform the indi-

vidual. The phrase used by WMUTS faculty to describe their program of social welfare was "personal service," a term reflecting the focus on individual persons.

The Personal Service program preceded professional social work, and served as the Baptist Woman's Missionary Union's (WMU) response to social need. The program was launched by WMU in 1909, just three years before the Baptist Settlement was established in Louisville and called on women to invest in "the Christian up-building of their own communities, acknowledging a spiritual duty to the poor, neglected, and outcast of their own neighborhood" (Allen, 1987, p. 215). Personal Service included an evangelistic dimension and had "the gospel as its motive and conversion as its aim" (Allen, 1987, p. 216).

The Louisville women joined others in the settlement movement to "rebuild the diseased social climate" but, in contrast to Jane Addams and others, they focused on reforming individuals while drawing on settlement house methods. WMU women were warned against placing "the ministry to the body before or apart from the ministry to the soul" (Allen, 1987, p. 215). In these ways, they viewed the neighbors as whole persons with spiritual as well as physical and social needs.

The emphasis of WMU on dual purposes of conversion of the individual and societal uplift was in line with the thinking of most Southern Baptists of the early twentieth century. However, a few Southern Baptists embraced the Social Gospel movement, clearly operating in the activities in and around Hull House in Chicago. The Social Gospel movement promoted the general improvement of society through church action. The minority of Southern Baptist leaders who believed that societal reform goals were proper religious concerns envisioned social improvement as a method of advancing the kingdom of God on earth (Sumners, 1975).

These leaders, both men and women, became involved in social reform groups such as the Southern Sociological Congress. Created in 1912, the Southern Sociological Congress brought together Southern leaders in education, social work, religion, and government. Its social program called for prison reform, the abolition of child labor, compulsory education, and solving of the race problem. In the 1913 Congress meeting, Walter Rauschenbusch, the best-known theologian of the Social Gospel movement, and a Baptist, urged Southern leaders to involve churches in reform efforts. A few Southern Baptist women leaders, including Maude McLure, founder of the Baptist Settlement in Louisville, attended congress meetings and may have been influenced by the drive to balance secular social reform efforts with decidedly evangelical aims (Allen, 1987). As we will see, this particular Southern Baptist theological stance contrasted with the Catholic theology of Madonna House in Chicago.

Although WMU did not embrace the aims of progressive social reform, leaders used the methods developed by reformers, social scientists, and settlement house workers in striving for evangelistic goals. Agencies in which WMUTS students did field work were typically missionary in purpose. Organizations such as the Hope Rescue Mission and the Salvation Army provided students with experience in personal evangelism to people in poverty.

While local agencies provided some opportunities for field work, Training School faculty and the school's board of managers wanted the school to have an agency of its own. Therefore, after her summer of study in New York, McLure created the Baptist Training School Settlement in 1912. Its purpose was two-fold: to provide service to the community through the settlement house, while training students in missionary and social work methods (McLure, 1913). It is interesting to note that the Training School chose the term settlement to describe the new enterprise, thus aligning itself with the SH movement. However, the evangelical purposes of the new venture also echoed the purposes of the charity organization movement—reform of the individual.

For these reasons, we chose the Baptist Settlement to exemplify how problematic the dichotomized descriptions of the SH and CO movements in current social work textbooks can be. These narrow descriptions deny the reality of organizations like the Baptist Settlement that combined the two philosophies of SH and COS along with a dose of their own theological understandings. The Baptist Settlement emerged as a hybrid, using the methods of the settlement movement to reach objectives that were commonly held by charity organization supporters. In 1913 McLure described the aims of the Baptist Settlement:

1. To reach the little children that their tiny feet may be started in the upward path.
2. To inspire the older boys and girls with ideals that shall help them to improve their environment and shall give them strength against the awful temptations that sweep over them.
3. To interest the young people in sane and wholesome pleasures that their energies may be rightly directed
4. To help the women to be better home makers, more careful wives and mothers, better Christians
5. To give Christ to the neighborhood.

To attain such ends, the settlement house, even without resident workers, remained open every day of the week and several nights.

McLure (1913, p. 2) wrote that the settlement was “opened in the belief that, with Christianity as a foundation, a settlement may be a feeder to the church and a mighty force in the coming of the Kingdom.”

### **The Training School: A Settlement or a Mission**

Southern Baptist women were not the only workers to form a settlement with clear missionary aims. Other groups, including Methodist women's missionary societies, were inspired by religious motives to create similar neighborhood centers, making it difficult to distinguish between a religious settlement and a mission. This is also clear from the activity going on at various religious settlements around the famed Hull House, including Madonna Center a few blocks away.

Allen Davis notes that the majority of settlement workers in the nation were religious persons. In 1905, a poll of 339 settlement workers showed that eighty-

eight percent were active church members and nearly all stated that religion had been a major influence on their lives (McClure, 1913). Therefore, the discussion about the relation of the settlement work to religion was kept alive in the settlement literature. (Davis, 1984). In the early 1920s, Mary Simkovitch argued from the Christian perspective that a settlement cannot be a mission because its purpose is not to pass on a particular conviction to others, as missions do, but to work out its own common conviction: a faith in democracy (Simkovitch, 1950). In a discussion entitled "Problems of Religion," Arthur Holden (1922) advised that settlements did not need to talk about religion or attempt to teach it. He argued that by simply living a life in service to others, the settlement worker embodied Christian principles.

Graham Taylor (1950), Congregationalist minister and founder of a Chicago settlement, noted that while religious individuals may be involved in settlements, the church and the settlement have two very different purposes. Taylor believed that a church must press the tenets of its faith, and if it does not, it ceases to be a church of that faith. A settlement, on the other hand, may not embrace any cult or creed lest it forfeit its place as being a common ground for all.

But what about a settlement that attempted to be both a spiritual home and a source of social and political support? Did these settlements "count" as actual settlement houses in this new era of secular social settlement house activity, or were they somehow assigned a different and possibly lower status? It's clear from the historical record that nearly 120 years later, social work history has emphasized the secular quality of SH activism over any spiritual and religious activity and has perhaps set up an over-determined dichotomy between a SH like Hull House and the religious missionary work going on in Louisville and Chicago. Embedded in Taylor's idea that settlements should be "common ground for all" is an assumption that this is the only way to effectively reach and serve the disadvantaged. While it is certainly arguable that religious organizations could proselytize or even coerce people while providing social services and support, it is unclear that this was going on in Louisville or Chicago in our case examples. Rather, it appears that in both cities the religious social workers had assumed an ethical commitment to their clients that resembled in many ways the efforts being adopted by Addams and her colleagues, to be sure emphasizing spiritual uplift but also civic engagement and social progress (Davis, 1984; Dobschuetz, 2004).

Still, some important differences in theology and behavior can be noted in looking at the Madonna Center in Chicago. In contrast to the work going on in Louisville and other SH related to Protestant denominations, Catholic SH workers in Chicago perceived the population they served as fellow believers who simply needed the same Catholic sacraments and services that they were already enjoying in their parish community. This theological/service distinction was crucial in understanding the diverse SH activity going on in the area around Hull House. It is also helpful in explaining why Jane Addams' team was able to coexist so peacefully with the Catholic SH workers around her: the heavily Catholic area was in no need of evangelizing to find more Catholic souls, and Addams herself was clear

that part of Hull House's mission was to avoid any proselytizing of their neighbors (Addams, 1912). If anything, as we shall see, the Madonna Center was founded to minister to and protect the Catholic traditions of the Hull House area immigrant population, in part as a reaction to the Hull House presence (Skok, 2004).

### **The Catholics of Chicago's Nineteenth Ward: Setting a Context for Madonna 1889-1898**

In 1889, Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr opened the social settlement Hull House on Halsted Street in the midst of one of Chicago's most dense and diverse neighborhoods. Their neighborhood, the nineteenth ward located on Chicago's near west side, was home to a wide array of recently-arrived European immigrants, including Poles, Italians, Russians, Jews from Eastern Europe, Germans, and Irish. Most, though not all, of these new immigrants were Catholic (Skerret 2001). Many of these immigrants arrived poor and found their American urban circumstances to be marked by severe economic and health hardships (Linn, 1935). The social settlement Hull House went on to earn worldwide attention for its efforts with the poor of the Hull House neighborhood. Jane Addams, in her tireless advocacy for immigrant rights, social justice, and labor, established herself as one of the preeminent social activists of her time. She was also an accomplished writer and used her skills as an essayist to argue for the plight of the poor in Chicago. In 1931, the cumulative efforts of Addams' life work were recognized by the Nobel organization, and she won the Nobel Peace Prize (Elshtain, 2002).

By 1898, the top five ethnic groups noted in Addams' 19<sup>th</sup> Ward by the Chicago school census were:

Irish	13, 065	(27%)
German	6,721	(14%)
American (Native-born citizens)	6, 184	(13%)
Italian	5,784	(12.5%)
Russian (including Russian Jews)	4,980	10.5%)
Other (Bohemian, English, Canadian, African-American, Greek, etc.)	11,400	(23%)

(Chicago Tribune, 1898)

With the exception of most of the Germans, the Americans, and some of the Irish, the majority of the 19th Ward were recent immigrants and most did not speak English (Chicago Tribune, 1898; Linn, 1935). This attracted Addams and her colleagues, as they were eager to use their Italian (Starr and Addams were both fluent in Italian from all their trips abroad) and they also wanted to focus their energies on helping these new Americans adapt to American urban life (Brown, 2004).

By 1890, the parish community of Holy Family near Hull House numbered 20,000 parishioners, leading James Sanders to call it "the single great Irish

workingmans' parish" (quoted in Meagher, 1986). The parish hosted numerous social and cultural events, and provided social services and education through numerous Catholic schools and settlement houses like the Madonna Center, housed nearby at the Guardian Angel Mission on Forquer Street (Lord, 1914). The economic, cultural, and political power of Irish Catholicism only increased with the arrival of new Catholic immigrants from Italy, Germany, and other parts of Europe. Irish Catholics, who, because of immigration patterns and facility with English were the dominant clerical class in Chicago, saw an opportunity to reach out to fellow Catholics and share their Irish Catholic culture with these new Americans. As Dobschuetz (2004) writes about the sisters and laywomen of the Madonna Center (a Catholic Settlement House) in the 19th Ward:

Chicago Catholics, however, saw the world differently from Addams and the Hull-House community. The settlement, for Addams, was a social experiment that did not foreground the religious dimension.... Catholic settlements sought to sustain a Catholic identity and affiliation that was more than a response to the social, physical, and educational needs of the poor. Catholic settlements would be a location for the exercise of a vigorous lay spirituality (Dobschuetz, 2004).

As we shall see, this strand of lay-Catholic social justice ministry formed one of several competing ideas about what it meant to be American in Chicago in the late 19th century.

### **Madonna Center Settlement House 1898-1962: A Competing (and Complementary) Vision Blocks Away from Hull House**

In 1898, Agnes Ward Amberg was attending a church retreat at the Academy of the Sacred Heart on Taylor Street, in the 19<sup>th</sup> Ward of Chicago, roughly half a mile away from Hull House (Skok, 2001; Amberg, 1976). A prominent German-Irish Catholic social activist, Amberg heard the Jesuit priest J. R. Rosswinkle exhort her and the other well-heeled Catholics at the retreat that to assure their own salvation in heaven, wealthy Catholics had to do more than pray and take care of their own families; they must recognize that "prayer must result in spiritually productive action" (Amberg, 1976, p. 40). After that day, in collaboration with her husband (who supplied financial backing) a new lay apostolate was born to minister to the poor Italian Catholic immigrants living among the more populous (and prosperous) Irish Catholics in the 19<sup>th</sup> ward. Fellow Jesuit Daniel Lord recounts the scene as Father Rosswinkle spoke:

If these ladies could be interested in the poor neglected strangers, of whose existence they hardly knew, if they could bring into the lives of these poor Italians something of the spirit of Catholicity that made peaceful their own lives; if they could teach the immigrants home-making, health-protection, true Americanism, a great stride

would have been taken toward the solution of a mighty social problem. It was worth a trial. He (Rosswinkle) spoke to them, and they responded generously... That was fifteen years ago. A small group of these ladies, diffident, uncertain of themselves and of their strange proteges [sic], entered the heart of the Italian district and gathered the first class of forty dirty, unkempt little youngsters for Catechism. To-day, the Guardian Angels' Mission [717 W. Forquer Street], with its flourishing clubs and Sodalties and catechism classes, counts two thousand Italian children as its members... (Lord, 1914, 285-86).

The success of the mission in offering Catholic education and other social services had an immediate impact on the Chicago Catholic hierarchy; just as they had done 40 years earlier with Holy Family, a church was constructed by 1899 (Holy Guardian Angel Church) to become the first church in the community ministering to Italian Catholic immigrants.

### **Jane Addams's Hull House and Its Response to a Neighboring Catholic Settlement**

As we have argued, social work textbooks have ignored settlements like the Madonna Center and emphasized secular SHs such as Hull House. With these two SHs located within a half mile of one another, we might wonder what interactions these two SHs may have had with one another. For her part, Amberg thought that Madonna Center and Hull House coexisted peacefully. Amberg and her mother both reported knowing Addams and her colleagues well, and that they had a friendly sense of spirit and competition with Hull House: "All of us had looked upon Hull House as a challenge, but we never experienced anything but kindness and cooperation from Jane Addams (Amberg, 1976, p.83)."

This distinction between the secular thrust of Hull House activities and religious sites like Guardian Angels/Madonna Center could be tracked not just in what they did with their time, but with what they built. While Hull House wanted to build a "Cathedral of Humanity," (Addams, 1912, p. 35) clearly Amberg and her colleagues were interested in building actual churches and bringing a heightened sense of Catholic identity to their immigrant clients.

It appears that many of the initial residents and lay leaders of the Guardian Angels Mission (later renamed the Madonna Center) were, like Addams, women of privilege. The first head resident of the Mission certainly was: she was Mary Agnes Amberg, the young adult daughter of the Ambergs (Amberg, 1976). Amberg lived and worked at the Mission most of her adult life, living there with her friend Catherine Jordan from 1913-1962 (Skok, 2004). Again, unlike the Training School Settlement in Louisville, most of the activities conducted at Guardian Angels were led by (mostly female) teachers who lived at the mission and/or who attended the parish in the community. Additionally, it's clear from the writings and works of Amberg that the Catholic social justice teachings embedded in Pope Leo's 1891 Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* resonated through the work that she and her colleagues did:

The ideas of *Rerum Novarum* were appropriated by Catholic laywomen as a basis for expanded activity through the creation of lay apostolates. The 1891 papal encyclical made the ideal of “stewardship” or consecrated benevolence a part of the League’s focus and contributed to the desire on the part of middle-class Catholic women to express their faith and maintain loyalty to the church through their ministering to the poor (Dobschuetz, 2004, para. 9).

Amberg writes repeatedly in her autobiography about the urgency of physical, spiritual, and citizenship needs of the immigrants she served. Indeed, it can be said that her efforts to “Americanize” her immigrant neighbors had as much to do with establishing Catholics as a legitimate group in American life as it did about helping them survive their rough new surroundings. Again and again in her autobiography, she strikes a chord of solidarity with the Italian-American Catholic immigrants she is serving, viewing them as needing social and religious support to avoid unwittingly selling out their “Roman Catholic birthright for a mess of proselytizers and humanists’ pottage” (Amberg, 1976, p. 39). She writes of the many established and prosperous Chicagoans (Catholic and non-Catholic alike) that came to serve at the mission:

In another way the influx of such assistants from all walks of life... and many from the higher strata of the city’s social and business life was a blessing for the mission. Mother often said that these people helped Father Dunne [the clergyman who helped lead the mission] impress upon our Italian Americans that Roman Catholics were as American as any of the social workers in the Protestant or secular social settlements hard by the mission (Amberg, 1976, p. 54)

Clearly it was not enough for Madonna Center to minister to the needs of Italian immigrants through Catechism and building a church where they could worship; the offering of citizenship courses, athletic teams, and scouting programs was all part of a concerted effort to help Madonna Center clients become more fully American while still retaining their Catholic identity in a place that a local Catholic writer characterized as one of “the parts of Chicago that are not Chicago” (Prindiville, 1903, p. 452). In this way, Madonna Center was similar to the Baptist Settlement and many secular settings. Americanization was an important objective.

### **Why isn’t Madonna House more Recognized as a Pioneer Settlement House?**

The Irish-American priest and sociologist Andrew Greeley has devoted a large part of his career to documenting the gradual assimilation of the Irish and other immigrant Catholic groups into American life. He writes about the late 19th century battles between reformers like Addams and Irish politicians like the corrupt Irish politician John Powers:

From the Irish point of view, reform was merely an attempt on the part of native-born Protestants to take what they had lost to



the Irish in a fair fight. Laments of reformers like Jane Addams in Chicago merely amused the Irish. The native-born reformers were at least as corrupt as the Irish and, in addition, they were hypocrites. All they were interested in were jobs for their own people, which meant taking back the jobs which the Irish had won in the polling place (Greeley, 1981, p. 110).

The Irish of the 19th Ward and the reformers of Hull House had a relationship that cannot be described fully, as it remains largely undocumented. However, we do have some facts. We know that over 13,000 Irish lived within the boundaries of the neighborhood that Jane Addams and her ambitious group of social reformers documented in 1895, but thanks to Addams and her colleagues, we know little about what the Irish population of the 19th Ward needed from Hull House at the time. As Skerrett (2001) has pointed out, it's entirely possible that we don't know much about how Hull House viewed their Irish neighbors because Addams decided that the Irish didn't "need" them (Skerrett, 2001). And while far from a prosperous neighborhood, it appears that at least for the Irish of the 19th Ward, life wasn't constantly marked by the same poverty and oppression that they had fled from in Ireland in the 1840s. (Skerrett, 2001).

The same could not be said for the Italian immigrants around Hull House, most of whom had recently immigrated, and many of whom suffered from extreme poverty and in the words of Amberg:

Here was a harvest [Italians in Chicago] that cried aloud for some practical Christians. But except for some devoted clerics and lay people, few cared to listen (Amberg, 1976, p. 29)

Interestingly, Amberg's writing is not complimentary of all Catholic lay and clergy leadership in their efforts to build parishes and minister to immigrant Catholics, and levies a strong critique that Catholic hierarchy missed a crucial opportunity to become more involved in Catholic SH work. Just as Addams did in criticizing the corrupt ward bosses in Chicago, Amberg writes about how social settlements were needed for Italian immigrants to fend off the undue influence of the "padrone" who would exploit Italian immigrants. She says that:

the social settlement could have been a valuable adjunct of Catholic immigrant Communities everywhere in America had there been fewer social intransigents among our clergy and laity and more pastors like Fathers Rosswinkle and Ponziglione [Clergy who led the first Madonna Center efforts] (Amberg, 1976, p. 45).

In some important ways, Addams may have struck a largely unspoken and unofficial "deal" with Amberg and the other Catholic lay leaders of SH and missions in the Hull House community: she would "minister" to the perceived social needs of the same poor Italians, Irish, and Germans they served, while those groups could also attend to the spiritual and material needs of this population.

While there is no written record of their working together (or even meeting), it's clear that these two incredible women brought much-needed assistance to their community, and lived less than a mile from each other for most of their adult lives.

### **Reclaiming the History of Christians in Social Work**

In all of the major textbooks used in Social Work Policy courses, history like what we have recounted here is completely absent. This raises some important questions: 1) why is early Christian social work history so marginalized? and 2) why does there appear to be so much effort by writers of social work textbooks to draw sharp distinctions between COS mission social work and the secular social work of Jane Addams, even though serious SH scholars acknowledge the religious motivations of many SH workers (Davis, 1984)? Unpacking these questions helps us identify some implications for Christian social workers today.

As indicated by the historical case studies in this chapter, the early history of social work is deeply rooted in religious belief and social action. The very real and important tension created by the potential of social work being used to convert or proselytize has also always been with us. Rather than exploring (and to some extent, embracing) these tensions and celebrating our historical roots in Christian social work, the whole topic has been usually confined to the COS movement and then quickly shuffled off to the margins. This is neither historically accurate or particularly helpful for our present day, as social work students continue to report being motivated by religious calling in serving their clients (Canda & Furman, 2009; Graff, 2007) and as of 2011, there are approximately 675 MSW and BSW programs in the U. S., and many of them are housed in religiously-affiliated colleges and universities. This history is an important part of social work's overall history and it needs to be reclaimed.

Secondly, the distinctions that have often been sharply drawn between the secular focus of proto-social workers like Addams and COS workers has often been overstated and discussed without the historical context we've attempted to provide here. While Addams herself eschewed religious teaching at Hull House, she was herself religious (Knight, 2005) and cared deeply about integrating the cultural traditions of the people she served into the larger American mosaic (Elshtain, 2002). And while the Baptist workers at their Settlement House were openly religious, they modeled their work after early secular SHs in New York in terms of their activities and programs. While it will always be important to note the excesses and potential ethical violations of Christian social workers working with vulnerable clients, it's important to also note that the Italian Catholic immigrants at Madonna Center wanted services from "professionals" who brought a religious lens to their work together.

The tension between secular and Christian social workers working together has never been completely resolved, even to this day. When social work authors and teachers set up sharp distinctions that were neither historically accurate nor very important to the clients they served, it is counterproductive to the need for Christian social workers and secular social workers to continue struggling

through the many challenges they may experience in their work together. One thing is clear from this corrective look at early social work history: without Christian social workers and their efforts to “give Christ to the neighborhood,” it is hard to imagine our “professional” identity being as strong as it is today. ❖

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# “Go in Peace and Sin No More”: Christian African American Women as Social Work Pioneers

*Tanya Smith Brice*

Professional social work is rooted in indigenous helping traditions; that is, helping grows out of the social and cultural contexts of each client system. As different cultures settled in the industrialized centers of the Northeast and Midwest regions of the United States, settlement houses were founded to help these mostly European immigrants become acculturated to their new life in the United States (Crocker, 1992; Kraus, 1980). These immigrants, as well as migrants from the American South, became the primary workforce in the growing industrial factories, resulting in an emerging working class, as well as increased social issues. Some of these issues included harsh working conditions, high rates of death and injury among children who worked in these factories, unsupervised children in the city streets, high crime rates, poor housing options and rampant health epidemics (Clapp, 1998; Hart, 2010; O'Connor, 2004; Stein, 1962).

Out of the need to address these social concerns, the profession of social work arose. Women formed philanthropic and charitable organizations as a part of their religious practices (Abramovitz, 1998; Ehrenreich, 1985; Simon, 1994). In 1898, the New York School of Philanthropy at Columbia University, began offering the first professional social work training program (Meier, 1954; Ravitch, 2000; Work, 1921). Unfortunately, White women and men created these organizations and training programs for Whites only (Carlton-LaNey, 1999; Lasch-Quinn, 1993). This chapter highlights the social welfare efforts of African Americans for African Americans, efforts often overlooked when social workers recount stories of our professional beginnings. Using the example of the North Carolina Industrial Home for Colored Girls in Efland, NC, the values and practices of African American social work pioneers will be illustrated.

## **African American helping tradition**

African Americans have an indigenous helping tradition rooted in African communal traditions (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; E. P. Martin & Martin, 1995). The values of the African community transcended the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the institution of chattel slavery, and the transition to life as free persons. The African community is characterized by the following values: (1) Group identity is paramount; and, (2) Spirituality is integral to understanding the world (Martin & Martin, 2003; 1985).

Group identity is an important value in African American cultures. There is an ancient African proverb that says, “I am because we are, therefore, we are because I am.” This proverb speaks to the interconnectedness of the individual and the community. In the African American helping tradition, addressing community needs is a personal task.

In addition, valuing one’s spirituality is an essential practice in African American communities (Billingsley, 1968; Blackwell, 1975; DuBois, 1909; McCluskey, 1997). There is an understanding that humans are spiritual, as well as physical beings. When addressing the physical and social needs of the African American community, spiritual needs are tended to as well. These two values: group identity and spirituality would become very important to African American social work pioneers.

### **African American women as helpers**

African American women played an integral role in the development of the social work profession, particularly as it relates to the African American community. In the African tradition, women are seen as the life-bearers of the community (Brice, 2007a). Because women are the sole bearers of new life, mothers have a revered place in the African community. Social work services, developed by African American women, focused on protecting African American womanhood. These services were characterized by four principles: self-help, mutual aid, race pride, and social debt (Carlton-LaNey, 1999). Self-help is the notion that African Americans were uniquely positioned to address most adequately the needs of the African American community. Mutual aid further supports this ideology; women were committed to helping one another and relied on support from the African American community. Pride in their race motivated these pioneers to serve the least of their race, as a means of uplifting the race. Just like their White counterparts, these women pioneers were of the upper socioeconomic classes. Their motivation for developing services to the lower classes was to pay a social debt. Based on the value of interconnectedness, these social work pioneers believed that they were obligated to uplift African Americans of the lower classes.

### **Lifting as we climb**

It is in this context that African American women, individually and through organizations, saw the need for an intentional effort to address the needs of the African American community, with particular emphasis on African American girls. The National Association of Colored Women (NACW), founded in 1896, developed in response to growing social concerns. While exemplifying the theme of social uplift through the motto, “Lifting as we climb”, these women were instrumental in creating a social order through their meticulous attention to education, benevolence, and social graces (Cook, 2001; Gilmore, 1996; Hodges, 2001; Salem, 1994). Made up of African American women in 40 states, the NACW collectively developed a private social welfare system that included

orphanages, old age homes, kindergartens, homes for working girls, homes for wayward girls, as well as other programs (Carlton-LaNey, 2001; Hodges, 2001; Lerner, 1974; Salem, 1994).

The work of African American clubwomen was an intentional effort to address the spiritual needs of the African American community. It has been described as a “socioreligious movement aimed at reforming society through the ‘uplift’ efforts of African American women” (Riggs, 2006, p. 865). Fannie Barrier Williams, a founding member of NACW, suggests that the African American clubwomen’s movement was born from church work. She clarifies by explaining:

The training which first enabled colored women to organize and successfully carry on club work was originally obtained in church work. These churches have been and still are the great preparatory schools in which the primary lessons of social order, mutual trustfulness and united effort have been taught...” (Williams, 1900, p. 383).

Mary Church Terrell, a founding member and the first president of the NACW, further describes these women as “women [who] were filled with the spirit of Christ...to save the race from immorality and vice; to put forth every effort to prevent the young from going astray” (Mary Church Terrell Papers, n.d., as quoted in Riggs, 2006, p.869).

Clubwomen across the nation formed state federations to coordinate the efforts of the national organization. Each federation was made up of individual clubs. The North Carolina Federation of Colored Women (NCFCW), founded in 1909, was instrumental in developing programs and services for African American girls (Gilmore, 1994) through the founding of the North Carolina Industrial Home for Colored Girls, also known as Efland Home for Girls. Dr. Charlotte Hawkins Brown, a prominent educator and founder of Palmer Memorial Institute, a finishing school for upper class African American students from around the nation, was the founding president of NCFCW.

In North Carolina, there was no state institution for African American girls deemed delinquent until 1943. During this time period, the term “female delinquency” meant sexual delinquency (Bloom, Owen, Rosenbaum, & Deschenes, 2003; Sedlak, 1983; Tice, 1998). Girls who were either victims of sexual violence or rumored as promiscuous, were at risk of being deemed delinquent. African American girls were particularly at risk of being labeled delinquent, as they were often viewed by Whites as being “innately promiscuous” and “erotic icons” (Brice, 2007b; D’Emilio & Freedman, 1998; Gilman, 1985; Russett, 1989; Weeks, 1986). This misperception was of particular concern for African American clubwomen. While the North Carolina’s juvenile court system handled an average of 192 cases of African American girls deemed delinquent between 1919 and 1939, many of these young girls were sent to adult penitentiaries or simply returned to their communities without supervision.

The NCFCW sought to address the needs of these young girls and to save African American womanhood. After years of fundraising, coalition building,

and lobbying for support from key policy makers and community members, this group of women purchased 142 acres of land, approximately two miles from Efland, North Carolina, for the purpose of building a facility to serve delinquent African American girls.

Efland Home began accepting African American girls deemed delinquent by the state in October 1925. The philosophy of Efland Home was “to save the young Negro girl who is on the verge of wasting her life”. It served as a mechanism “to give her a second chance.” The underlying mission of Efland Home was to “save Negro womanhood and we shall hope to surround these girls with the spirit of Jesus whose memorable words were ‘Go in peace and sin no more’” (North Carolina Industrial Home for Colored Girls, 1925). The mission embodies the values of African American women’s work—group identity, as well as an important spiritual component.

The first board of trustees was made up of an influential group of seven clubwomen, who were influenced by a “distinct religious, ethical tradition” (Collier-Thomas, 2010; Riggs, 2006; McArthur, 1998). The first chairwoman of the Board of Trustees was Fannie Yarborough Bickett, wife of a former North Carolina governor, and an active member of the North Carolina Federation of Women, the White counterpart to the NCFNW. Governor and Mrs. Bickett, both lawyers, were instrumental in establishing North Carolina’s juvenile court system, as well as advancing reforms in North Carolina’s education system. Minnie Sumner Pearson, a former teacher and active member of the NCFNW, served as co-chair of the Board of Trustees. Her husband, Dr. William G. Pearson, a professor of Business Education at North Carolina College for Negroes, in Durham, served as special treasurer to the Board of Trustees. Lula Kelsey, of Salisbury, was a licensed embalmer who owned two businesses with her husband, Noble & Kelsey, a fire insurance company, and Kelsey & Kelsey, a funeral home. Kelsey succeeded Brown as president of the NCFNW in 1928. Maude Cotton, of Henderson, was a Presbyterian missionary, a classically trained musician, and principal of Henderson Institute, a school for African American children (Vann, 2000). Ophelia Griffin, of High Point, was a teacher at the High Point Normal High School and was married to the vice president of Ramsey Drug Company. Lillian Mebane, of Rocky Mount, was an educator. Moselle L. Gullins, director of admissions at Brown’s Palmer Institute, served as corresponding secretary to the board. By 1930, the board had grown to thirteen members.

These board members appealed to the upper classes for funding by comparing the girls at Efland Home to the daughters of the elite classes. They asked potential donors a set of provocative questions: “Suppose it was your girl who had gone astray? Would you want to give her a second chance?” (North Carolina Industrial Home for Colored Girls, 1925, 1931). It was their ability to provide a different perspective of delinquency among girls, that raised North Carolina’s awareness of the need for “girl saving efforts” like Efland Home. As a result, the board members were able to raise funds from the African American community, through “nickel and dime” campaigns by churches and civic groups (Martin & Martin, 1985). These financial donations were often supplemented by in-kind



donations of farm animals, dishes and utensils, maintenance services, and clothes for the girls (Pearson, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929). Despite these fundraising efforts, the needs of the home quickly outgrew their facilities. Consequently, the board of trustees began lobbying for state support in 1929, and continued over the next ten years.

North Carolina Board of Public Welfare (NCBPW) and the county juvenile courts referred African American girls under the age of 16 to Efland Home. In addition to those referral sources, Efland Home's board and local community also participated in the admission process. For instance, the NCBPW identified a potential candidate, and would make a written presentation of the candidate, identified as being delinquent, to the Home's board of trustees. The Home's admissions subcommittee would determine if the candidate was suitable for Efland Home. If she were suitable, NCBPW would petition the juvenile courts for commitment orders to Efland Home. Upon admission, the young girl was paroled to the custody of Efland Home (Benton, 1931; Brice, 2011).

### **Life at Efland Home**

The goal of Efland Home was to "enable the young girls to prepare themselves for efficient service in obtaining a livelihood [sic]" ("Efland Home Charter," 1925). The curriculum provided the young girls with elementary school courses and industrial courses, such as farm work and food cultivation and preparation. They received 261 days of instruction annually. The academic instruction took place in the morning hours, and the industrial instruction took place in the afternoons. A number of individuals, organizations, and local Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were instrumental in providing consultation to Efland Home, particularly in curriculum development.

Like many early training schools, Efland Home had a working farm. The young girls were expected to participate in all aspects of growing and preparing food. For instance, in 1928, the young girls consumed 580 gallons of "fresh cow's milk", having produced 478 gallons at the Home's dairy. Of the 147 acres of land purchased for Efland Home, the young girls cultivated ten acres, producing vegetables and fruit for sustenance. The young girls also prepared and canned vegetables and fruit for future consumption.

The young girls were provided with recreation activities such as swing ball, croquet, jumping rope, basketball, as well as other games. Recreation was provided under the direct supervision of a teacher or matron and kept the young girls physically fit as well as providing some enjoyment,

Religious instruction was also a fundamental aspect of services provided at Efland Home. The young girls were required to attend church services every Sunday afternoon, to participate in morning and evening prayers, and to attend weekly prayer meetings. In a fundraising pamphlet, the clubwomen provided an additional explanation of the motivation for their work. They wrote, "In His name we are launching this effort to save Negro womanhood, and we hope to surround these girls with the spirit of Jesus whose memorable words were, 'Go

in peace and sin no more” (North Carolina Industrial Home for Colored Girls, 1925). Cultivating spirituality was viewed by these clubwomen as one strategy of protecting these young girls from further delinquency (Brice, 2011).

Efland Home was usually filled beyond capacity. Approximately 22 girls were admitted to Efland Home annually, although the intended capacity was 15 annually. The board of trustees decided that “it is better to start with a small group and make a success of the work than to take so many that criticisms will arise as to methods of treatment” (“Suggested plan for organization of Efland School for Girls,” n.d.). The Home accepted girls as young as six years old, however, the majority of the young girls were between the ages of 14 and 16. These girls were often discharged to working homes, parents or relatives, or to hospitals. Girls who ran away from the home were often consequently discharged.

A staff of three to four employees ran the Home, including a matron, superintendent, teacher, and farm supervisor. Each of these staff members lived at the Home. The Board of Trustees agreed that the superintendent must meet the following qualifications:

1. A woman who has had some training in social work;
2. She should have had experience in handling girls who are problem cases;
3. She should have executive ability and be resourceful and energetic; and,
4. She should have a sense of financial values and be able to make proper and just expenditures of money (“Suggested plan for organization of Efland School for Girls”, n.d.).

This requirement for social work training is extraordinary, as there were only thirteen trained African American social workers in the state of North Carolina during this time (Crow, Escott, & Hatley, 1992), and there were very few opportunities for African Americans to receive formal social work training (Carlton-LaNey, 1994). These limited opportunities were due to Jim Crow policies that restricted the daily activities and education of African Americans throughout the United States. The matron, who often served as the superintendent, supervised the daily operations. Due to budgetary constraints, the matron sometimes provided classroom instruction to the girls.

The Virginia Federation of Colored Women was founded in 1908 by Janie Porter Barrett, its first president. This group of clubwomen founded the Virginia Industrial School for Colored Girls with the same motive as their North Carolina counterparts (Peebles-Wilkins, 1995). This school provided services to African American girls labeled delinquent by the Virginia juvenile courts. The Efland Home was modeled after the Virginia school. Consequently, the matrons at Efland Home were trained at Janie Porter Barrett’s Virginia Industrial School for Colored Girls, for eight weeks to several years prior to coming to the Home. This ensured fidelity to the program model provided by the Virginia school.

There were one to two teachers at any given time employed at Efland Home, nearly all of whom were certified and formally trained to teach. Efland Home teachers received training primarily from the Teachers College in Winston-Salem,

the North Carolina Agricultural & Technical College in Greensboro, or from various normal schools around the state. Teachers often served as residential advisors, assisting the matron in providing daily care to the young girls.

The farm supervisor oversaw the industrial operations of the home and provided instruction in agricultural techniques. He was also usually the spouse of the Home's matron and served as a father figure to many of the young girls.

### **Impact of Efland Home**

Through Efland Home, the women of NCFCW carried out their African American helping traditions. They were able to provide a second chance for young African American girls deemed delinquent to lead a productive and meaningful life. These young girls were given the opportunity to develop skills that would enable them to seek gainful employment, as well as to maintain a morally respectable lifestyle.

Efland Home provided a respite to the families of these troubled girls. Before Efland Home, delinquent girls were often returned to the community with no treatment or sent to the harsh penitentiary system; however, this home provided services that equipped the girls with necessary life skills. So, while many of these girls did not return to their home of origin, the acquisition of these skills provided a peace of mind to the families that their daughters, sisters, or nieces would be able to live a moral and wholesome lifestyle (Brown, 1921, 1930; North Carolina Industrial Home for Colored Girls, 1925, 1931). In a 1931 Efland Home brochure, this process was described this way: “[Knowledge with efficiency is what will aid in transforming the idle mind into a fertile field for the production of healthy, happy, clean thinking”. The brochure further claimed that most of the girls paroled from the home “are able to earn a living and to become useful members of their communities” (North Carolina Industrial Home for Colored Girls, 1931).

Efland Home was seen as a necessary facility in the African American community. For clubwomen, it served as a mechanism to save the race. The young girls were provided with the opportunity to engage in a moral lifestyle, thus improving the image of the race to Whites, which was a major concern for many clubwomen. One motivation for this work was to “save true Black womanhood” (Aery, 1915; Blair, 1980; Terrell, 1900). To improve the image of these young girls in the eyes of Whites was to improve the image of the African American clubwomen. For the community, as a whole, it served as an example of the self-help principle inherent in the African American culture. The African American community made many contributions, both financially and in-kind, to Efland Home, through Sunday school collections, social clubs, sororities and fraternities, secret orders, business loans, as well as individual contributions. This support helped to ensure Efland Home's survival for over 14 years.

Efland Home had a positive impact on North Carolina's juvenile justice system. It served the state in two ways: (1) the home provided services to a neglected segment of the juvenile justice system; and, (2) it saved the state money by independently providing care to this neglected population.

By the time Efland Home was established in 1925, North Carolina had already invested in meeting the needs of delinquent boys of both races and to White girls. In 1907, Stonewall Jackson Manual Training and Industrial School was established in Concord for delinquent White boys under age 16; Samarcand Manor State Home and Industrial School for Girls was established in 1918 in Eagle Springs, for White girls under the age of 18; Morrison Training School for Delinquent Negro Boys was established in Hoffman, in 1921, for boys under age 16; and, Eastern Carolina Training School was established in Rocky Mount, in 1923, for White boys under age 18. There were no plans to establish a facility for African American girls, although the court system was inundated with cases involving this population (North Carolina Board of Public Welfare-Institutions and Corrections, 1920–1939).

The existence of Efland Home allowed the juvenile justice system to maintain a passive and distant position with regard to the treatment of delinquent African American girls. While the juvenile courts validated the necessity for such a facility, through the commitment of girls to Efland Home, there was a scant amount of financial support provided to the home. Efland Home received a state operational grant of \$2000 annually, which was reduced to \$1400 annually in 1933. The other four training schools in the state, although they all housed a comparable number of young girls, received much higher appropriations ranging from \$20,000 to \$35,000 annually at the inception of Efland Home and growing to \$50,000 to \$60,000 by the closing of Efland Home (Carolina Times, 1939; *Undated report written after March 15, 1939.*)

Despite consistent, organized lobbying efforts by the board of trustees, and other supporters of the Home, the state refused to provide appropriate funding (Bailey, 1931; Bost, n.d.; North Carolina Board of Public Welfare-Institutions and Corrections, 1920–1939). Efland Home was forced to close in 1939 because of inadequate financial support. It was not until 1943 that the state appropriated adequate funds for the establishment of the State Training School for Negro Girls, known as Dobbs Farm. It was because of Efland Home's reputation for successful intervention that Dobbs Farm was established and funded by the state (Carlton-LaNey, 1994b, 1994c; Carolina Times, 1939; Inman & Covington, 1981).

### **“Of Such is the Kingdom of Heaven”**

While these women were motivated by a quest to save “true Black womanhood”, they were guided by their Christian convictions. They relied on their faith, as they attempted to address the needs of delinquent girls. One club-woman declared,

But in connection with such work, let us not neglect, let us not forget, the children, remembering that when we love and protect the little ones, we follow in the footsteps of Him, who when He wished to paint the most beautiful picture of Beulah land it is possible for the human mind to conceive, pointed to the children and said—“Of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Terrell, 1900, p. 343).

In addition to expressing their Christian convictions, the women of the NCFCW and other organizations contributed to the development of the social work profession. They understood the need for a holistic approach to address delinquency among African American girls. They built coalitions with supporters of their efforts, both inside and outside of the African American community. These women engaged in policy practice by gaining an understanding of the juvenile court and child welfare systems. With this knowledge, they were able to use those systems to provide services to delinquent girls. These women understood the role of a social worker. Despite having a limited pool of candidates, they insisted on having a professionally trained social worker to oversee the daily operations of Efland Home. Indeed, the work at Efland Home was seen by these pioneering women as kingdom work and social work as they engaged in social uplift, encouraged mutual aid, girded by racial pride, and repaid their social debts.

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## SECTION 2

# Christians Called to Social Work: Scriptural Basis, Worldviews and Ethics

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# The Relationship Between Beliefs and Values in Social Work Practice: Worldviews Make a Difference

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*David A. Sherwood*

In some circles (including some Christian ones) it is fashionable to say that what we believe is not all that important. What we do is what really counts. I strongly disagree. The relationship between what we think and what we do is complex and it is certainly not a simple straight line, but it is profound. Social work values, practice theories, assessments, intervention decisions, and action strategies are all shaped by our worldview assumptions and our beliefs.

I believe that a Christian worldview will provide an interpretive framework which will solidly support and inform commonly held social work values such as the inherent value of every person regardless of personal characteristics, self-determination and personally responsible freedom of choice, and responsibility for the common good, including help for the poor and oppressed. And a Christian worldview will challenge other values and theories such as might makes right, exploitation of the weak by the strong, and extreme moral relativism. At the same time, other worldviews, including materialism, empiricism, and postmodern subjectivism can lead to quite contrasting conclusions regarding social work values.

## **Worldviews Help Us Interpret Reality**

### **What is a “Worldview?”**

Worldviews give faith-based answers to a set of ultimate and grounding questions. Everyone operates on the basis of some worldview or faith-based understanding of the universe and persons—examined or unexamined, implicit or explicit, simplistic or sophisticated. One way or another, we develop functional assumptions that help us to sort through and make some sort of sense out of our experience. And every person’s worldview will always have a faith-based component (even belief in an exclusively material universe takes faith). This does not mean worldviews are necessarily irrational, unconcerned with “facts,” or impervious to critique and change (though unfortunately they might be). It matters greatly how conscious, reflective, considered, or informed our worldviews are. The most objectivity we can achieve is to be critically aware of our

worldview and how it affects our interpretations of “the facts.” It is far better to be aware, intentional, and informed regarding our worldview than to naively think we are (or anyone else is) completely objective or neutral, or to be self-righteously led by our biases which we may think are simply self-evident truth.

These worldviews affect our approach to social work practice, how we understand and help people. What is the nature of persons—biochemical machines, evolutionary products, immortal souls, all of the above? What constitutes valid knowledge—scientific empiricism only, “intuitive” discernment, spiritual guidance (if so, what kind)? What kinds of social work theories and practice methods are legitimate? What are appropriate values and goals—what is healthy, functional, optimal, the good?

### **Worldviews and the Hermeneutical Spiral: A Beginning Place**

I like to use the concept of the “*hermeneutical spiral*” (the term is not original with me, cf. Osborne, 1991, Wood, 1998). We always come to the world, including social work practice, with our faith (worldview assumptions)—wherever we got it, however good or bad it is, and however embryonic it may be. This worldview faith strongly affects what we perceive (or even look for). But the world (God’s creation, in the Christian worldview) is not a totally passive or subjective thing. So, we run the risk of coming away from any encounter with the world having our faith and our categories somewhat altered, perhaps even corrected a bit. Then we use that altered faith in our next encounter with the world.

So, for me, the starting place for integration of my beliefs and social work practice is always at the level of basic faith, worldview assumptions. What are the implications of my core beliefs? And what are the implications of the idea, theory, interpretation, or practice that I am examining? To use a currently fashionable phrase, how do they “interrogate” each other? What kinds of assumptions about the nature of the world lie behind Freudian theory? Behavioral theory? The scientific method? The strengths perspective? The social work belief that all persons have intrinsic value (a radical notion not particularly supported by either modernism or postmodernism in their materialist, subjectivist versions)?

To put it another way, we all form stories that answer life’s biggest questions. As I become a Christian, I connect my personal story to a much bigger story that frames my answers to these big questions. For Christians, the biblical story of God’s nature and action in human history, culminating in Jesus Christ, is the “meta-narrative” that frames our personal stories and within which the meaning of our stories is rooted. Middleton and Walsh (1995, p. 11) summarize the basic worldview questions this way (with my illustrative additions):

1. **Where are we? What is the nature of the reality in which we find ourselves?**  
Is the nature of the universe meaningful or absurd? Created or accidental?  
Materialistic only, or also spiritual?
2. **Who are we? What is the nature and task of human beings?** What does it mean to be a person? What is human life? What is its source and value?  
Is there such a thing as freedom or responsibility?

3. **What's wrong? How do we understand and account for evil and brokenness?** And how do we account for our sense of morality, love, and justice? Is evil only stuff I happen not to prefer? Or are some things really good and other things really wrong? Is love only lust or well-disguised self-centeredness? Does justice have a claim on us and what we call "ours"?
4. **What's the remedy? How do we find a path through our brokenness to wholeness?** What kinds of things will help? Do we need a Savior or just a positive (or cynical) attitude? Will chemicals or incarceration do the trick?

### **Interpreting the Facts**

"Facts" have no meaning apart from an interpretive framework. "Facts" are harder to come by than we often think, but even when we have some "facts" in our possession, they have no power to tell us what they mean or what we should do.

That human beings die is a fact. That I am going to die would seem to be a reliable prediction based on what I can see. In fact, the capacity to put those observations and projections together is one of the ways we have come to describe or define human consciousness. But what do these "facts" mean and what effect should they have on my life?

One worldview might tell me that life emerged randomly in a meaningless universe and is of no particular value beyond the subjective feelings I may experience from moment to moment. Another worldview might tell me that somehow biological survival of life forms is of value and that I only have value to the extent that I contribute to that biological parade (with the corollary that survival proves fitness). Another worldview might tell me that life is a gift from a loving and just Creator and that it transcends biological existence, that death is not the end of the story. Different worldviews lend different meanings to the same "facts."

The major initial contribution of a Christian worldview to an understanding of social work values and ethical practice is not one of unique, contrasting, or conflicting values. Rather, a Christian worldview gives a coherent, solid foundation for the basic values that social workers claim and often take for granted (Holmes, 1984; Sherwood, 1993, 2000, 2007). Subsequently, a Christian worldview will shape how those basic values are understood and how they interact with one another. For example, justice will be understood in the light of God's manifest concern for the poor and oppressed, so justice can never be defined only as a procedurally "fair" protection of individual liberty and the right to acquire, hold, and transfer property that a libertarian worldview might hold (Lebacqz, 1986; Mott, 1982; Wolterstorff, 1983, 2006).

### **The Interaction of Feeling, Thinking, and Behavior**

Persons are complex living ecological systems—to use a helpful conceptual model common in social work—systems of systems, if you will. Systems within our bodies and outside us as well interact in dynamic relationships with each other. For example, it is impossible to meaningfully separate our thinking, feel-

ing, and behavior from each other and from the systems we experience outside ourselves, yet we quite properly think of ourselves as separate individuals.

The lines of influence run in all directions. What we believe affects what we experience, including how we define our feelings. For example, does an experience I might have of being alone, in and of itself, *make* me feel lonely, or rejected, or exhilarated by freedom, for that matter? Someone trips me, but was it accidental or intentional? I have had sex with only one woman (my wife Carol) in my life. How does this “make” me feel? Are my feelings not also a result of what I tell myself about the meaning of my experience? But it works the other way too.

All this makes us persons harder to predict. And it certainly makes it harder to assign neat, direct, and one-way lines of causality. The biblical worldview picture is that God has granted us (at great cost) the dignity and terror of contributing to causality ourselves through our own purposes, choices, and actions. We have often used this freedom to hurt others and ourselves, but this also means that we are not mechanistically determined and that significant change is always possible.

And change can come from many directions—thinking, emotions, behavior, experience. We are especially (compared to other creatures) both gifted and cursed by our ability to think about ourselves and the world. We can form purposes and act in the direction of those purposes. Our beliefs about the nature of the world, other persons, and ourselves interact in a fundamental way with how we perceive reality, how we define our own identity, and how we act.

If this is true in our personal lives, it is equally true as we try to understand and help our clients in social work practice. And it is no less true for clients themselves. What we believe about the nature of the world, the nature of persons, and the nature of the human situation is at least as important as the sheer facts of the circumstances we experience.

## **Worldviews Help Construct Our Understanding of Values**

### **Cut Flowers: Can Values Be Sustained Without Faith?**

One significant manifestation of the notion that beliefs aren't all that important is the fallacy of our age which assumes that fundamental moral values can be justified and sustained apart from their ideological (ultimately theological) foundation. Take, for example, the fundamental Christian and social work belief that all human beings have intrinsic dignity and value.

Elton Trueblood, the Quaker philosopher, once described ours as a “cut-flower” generation. He was suggesting that, as it is possible to cut a rose from the bush, put it in a vase, and admire its fresh loveliness and fragrance for a short while, it is possible to maintain the dignity and value of every human life while denying the existence or significance of God as the source of that value. But the cut rose is already dead, regardless of the deceptive beauty that lingers for a while. Even uncut, “The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the Word of the Lord endures forever” (I Peter 1:24-25).

Many in our generation, including many social workers, are trying to hold onto values—such as the irreducible dignity and worth of the individual—while denying the only basis on which such a value can ultimately stand. We should be glad they try to hold onto the value, but we should understand how shaky such a foundation is. A secular generation can live off its moral capital only so long before the impertinent questions (Why should we?) can no longer be ignored (Sherwood, 2007).

### **Doesn't Everybody “Just Know” That Persons Have Dignity and Value?**

But doesn't everybody “just know” that human beings have intrinsic value? You don't have to believe in God, do you? In fact, according to some, so-called believers in God have been among the worst offenders against the value and dignity of all persons (sadly true, in some cases). After all, a lot of folks, from secular humanists to rocket scientists to New Age witches to rock stars, have declared themselves as defenders of the value of the individual. Isn't the worth of the person just natural, or at least rational and logically required? The plain answer is, “No, it's *not* just natural or rational or something everyone just knows.”

I received a striking wake-up call in regard to this particular truth many years ago when I was a freshman at Indiana University. I think the story is worth telling here. I can't help dating myself—it was in the spring of 1960, the time the Civil Rights movement was clearly emerging. We were hearing of lunchroom sit-ins and Freedom Riders on buses. Through an older friend of mine from my home town I wound up spending the evening at the Student Commons talking with my friend and someone he had met, a graduate student from Iran named Ali. I was quite impressed. My friend Maurice told me Ali's father was some sort of advisor to the Shah (the ruling despot at that point in Iran's history).

The conversation turned to the events happening in the South, to the ideas of racial integration, brotherhood, and social justice. Ali was frankly puzzled and amused that Maurice and I, and at least some other Americans, seemed to think civil rights were worth pursuing. But given that, he found it particularly hard to understand what he thought was the wishy-washy way the thing was being handled. “I don't know why you want to do it,” he said. “But if it's so important, why don't you just *do* it? If I were President of the United States and I wanted integration, I would do it in a week!” “How?” we asked. “Simple. I would just put a soldier with a machine gun on every street corner and say ‘Integrate.’ If they didn't, I would shoot them.” (Believable enough, as the history of Iran has shown)

Naive freshman that I was, I just couldn't believe he was really saying that. Surely he was putting us on. You couldn't just do that to people. At least not if you were moral! The conversation-debate-argument went on to explore what he really did believe about the innate dignity and value of the individual human life and social responsibility. You don't just kill inconvenient people, do you?

I would say things like, “Surely you believe that society has a moral responsibility to care for the widows and orphans, the elderly, the disabled, the

emotionally disturbed.” Incredibly (to me at the time), Ali’s basic response was not to give an inch but to question *my* beliefs and values instead.

“Society has no such moral responsibility,” he said. “On the contrary. You keep talking about reason and morality. I’ll tell you what is immoral. The rational person would say that the truly *immoral* thing is to take resources away from the strong and productive to give to the weak and useless. Useless members of society such as the disabled and mentally retarded should be eliminated, not maintained.” He would prefer that the methods be “humane,” but he really did mean eliminated.

It finally sunk into my freshman mind that what we were disagreeing about was not facts or logic, but the belief systems we were using to interpret or assign meaning to the facts. Ali was a thoroughly secular man; he had left Islam behind. If I were to accept his assumptions about the nature of the universe (e.g. that there is no God, that the material universe is the extent of reality, that self-preservation is the only given motive and goal), then his logic was flawless and honest. As far as he was concerned, the only thing of importance left to discuss would be the most effective means to gain and keep power and the most expedient way to use it.

In this encounter I was shaken loose from my naive assumption that “everybody knows” the individual person has innate dignity and value. I understood more clearly that unless you believed in the Creator, the notion that all persons are equal is, indeed, *not* self-evident. The Nazi policies of eugenics and the “final solution” to the “Jewish problem” make a kind of grimly honest (almost inevitable) sense if you believe in the materialist worldview.

### **The “Is-Ought” Dilemma**

Not long afterward I was to encounter this truth much more cogently expressed in the writings of C. S. Lewis. In *The Abolition of Man* (1947) he points out that both the religious and the secular walk by faith if they try to move from descriptive observations of fact to any sort of value statement or ethical imperative. He says “From propositions about fact alone no *practical* conclusion can ever be drawn. ‘This will preserve society’ [let’s assume this is a factually true statement] cannot lead to ‘Do this’ [a moral and practical injunction] except by the mediation of ‘Society ought to be preserved’ [a value statement]” (p. 43). “Society ought to be preserved” is a moral imperative that no amount of facts alone can prove or disprove. Even the idea of “knowing facts” involves basic assumptions (or faith) about the nature of the universe and human beings.

The secular person (social worker?) tries to cloak faith by substituting words like natural, necessary, progressive, scientific, rational, or functional for “good,” but the question always remains— For what end? And why? The answer to this question always smuggles in values from somewhere else besides the facts.

Even the resort to instincts such as self-preservation can tell us nothing about what we (or others) *ought* to do. Lewis (1947, p. 49) says:



We grasp at useless words: we call it the “basic,” or “fundamental,” or “primal,” or “deepest” instinct. It is of no avail. Either these words conceal a value judgment passed *upon* the instinct and therefore not derivable *from* it, or else they merely record its felt intensity, the frequency of its operation, and its wide distribution. If the former, the whole attempt to base value upon instinct has been abandoned: if the latter, these observations about the quantitative aspects of a psychological event lead to no practical conclusion. It is the old dilemma. Either the premise is already concealed in an imperative or the conclusion remains merely in the indicative.

This is called the “Is-Ought” dilemma. Facts, even when attainable, never have any practical or moral implications until they are interpreted through the grid of some sort of value assumptions. “Is” does not lead to “Ought” in any way that has moral binding, obligation, or authority until its relationship to relevant values is understood. And you can’t get the values directly from the “Is.” We always come down to the question—what is the source and authority of the “Ought” that is claimed or implied?

The social work Code of Ethics refers to values such as the inherent value of every person, the importance of social justice, and the obligation to fight against oppression. It is a fair question to ask where those values come from and what gives them moral authority and obligation.

### **A Shaky Consensus: “Sexual Abuse” or “Intergenerational Sexual Experience?”**

For an example of the “Is-Ought Dilemma,” is child sexual abuse a fact or a myth? Or what is the nature of the abuse? Child sexual abuse is an example of an area where there may seem to be more of a consensus in values than there actually is. In any event, it illustrates how it is impossible to get values from facts alone. Some intervening concept of “the good” always has to come into play.

Fact: Some adults have sexual relations with children. But so what? What is the practical or moral significance of this fact? Is this something we should be happy or angry about? Is this good or bad? Sometimes good and sometimes bad? Should we be encouraging or discouraging the practice? Even if we could uncover facts about the consequences of the experience on children, we would still need a value framework to help us discern the meaning or practical implications of those facts. And to have moral obligation beyond our own subjective preferences or biases, this value framework must have some grounding outside ourselves. What constitutes negative consequences? And even if we could agree certain consequences were indeed negative, the question would remain as to what exactly was the cause.

In the last few years there has been a tremendous outpouring of attention to issues of child sexual abuse and its effects on adult survivors. I must say that this is long overdue and much needed. And even among completely secular social workers, psychologists, and other therapists there currently appears to

be a high degree of consensus about the moral wrong of adult sexual activity with children and the enormity of its negative consequences on the child at the time and in later life. As a Christian I am encouraged, especially when I recall the self-described “radical Freudian” professor I had in my master’s in social work program who described in glowingly approving terms high levels of sexual intimacy between children and each other and children and adults as “freeing and liberating” (that was the early 1970s).

However, if I look more closely at the worldview faith underlying much of the discussion of sexual abuse and its effects, the result is not quite so comforting to me as a Christian. The moral problem tends not to be defined in terms of a well-rounded biblical view of sexuality and God’s creative design and purpose or an understanding of the problem of sin. Rather, it tends to be based on a more rationalistic and individualistic model of power and a model of justice that pins its faith on reason. Sexual abuse grows out of an inequity in power which a person rationally “ought not” exploit. Why not, one might ask.

But what if we take away the coercive element and get rid of the repressive “body-negative” ideas about sexual feelings? What if much or all of the negative effects of non-coercive sexual activity between adults and children is the result of the misguided and distorted social attitudes which are passed on to children and adults? Defenders of “non-exploitive” sexual activity between adults and children can (and do) argue that any negative consequences are purely a result of sex-negative social learning and attitudes. Representatives of a hypothetical group such as P.A.L. (Pedophiles Are Lovers!) would argue that what needs to be changed is not the “intergenerational sexual behavior,” but the sexually repressive social values and behavior which teach children the negative responses. These values are seen as the oppressive culprits. Then, the argument might go, should we not bend our efforts to eradicating these repressive sexual values and attitudes rather than condemning potentially innocent acts of sexual pleasure? Indeed, why not, if the only problem is exploitation of power?

You should also note that this argument in favor of intergenerational sexual behavior is not exclusively scientific, objective, or based only on “facts.” It has to make faith assumptions about the nature of persons, the nature of sexuality, the nature of health, and the nature of values. By the same token, my condemnation of adult sexual activity with children is based on faith assumptions about the nature of persons, sexuality, health, and values informed by my Christian worldview. It is never just “facts” alone that determine our perceptions, conclusions, and behavior.

Right now, it happens to be a “fact” that a fairly large consensus exists, even among secular social scientists and mental health professionals, that adult sexual activity with children is “bad” and that it leads quite regularly to negative consequences. Right now you could almost say this is something “everyone knows.” But it would be a serious mistake to become complacent about this or to conclude that worldview beliefs and faith are not so important after all.

First, not everyone agrees. Although I invented the hypothetical group P.A.L. (Pedophiles Are Lovers), it represents real people and groups that do exist.

The tip of this iceberg may be appearing in the professional literature where it is becoming more acceptable and common to see the “facts” reinterpreted. In preparing bibliography for a course on sexual issues in helping some time ago, I ran across a very interesting little shift in terminology in some of the professional literature. One article was entitled “Counterpoints: Intergenerational sexual experience or child sexual abuse” (Malz, 1989). A companion article was titled “Intergenerational sexual contact: A continuum model of participants and experiences” (Nelson, 1989). Words do make a difference.

Second, we shouldn’t take too much comfort from the apparent agreement. It is sometimes built on a fragile foundation that could easily come apart. The fact that Christians find themselves in wholehearted agreement with many secular helping professionals, for example, that sexual activity between adults (usually male) and children (usually female) is exploitive and wrong may represent a temporary congruence on issues and strategy, much more so than fundamental agreement on the nature of persons and sexuality.

But back to the “Is-Ought” dilemma. The fact that some adults have sexual contact with children, by itself, tells us *nothing* about what, if anything, should be done about it. The facts alone can never answer those questions. The only way those questions can ever be answered is if we interpret the facts in terms of our faith, whatever that faith is. What is the nature of the world? What is the nature of persons? What is the meaning of sex? What constitutes health? What is the nature of justice? And most important—why should I care anyway?

## **Worldviews Help Define the Nature and Value of Persons**

### **So—Worldviews Have Consequences**

Your basic faith about the nature of the universe has consequences (and everyone, as we have seen, has some sort of faith). Faith is consequential to you personally, and the content of the faith is consequential. If it isn’t *true* that Christ has been raised, my faith is worthless (I Corinthians 15:14). And if it’s *true* that Christ has been raised, but I put my faith in Baal or the free market or the earth goddess (big in some circles) or Karl Marx (not so big these days) or human reason, then *that* has consequences, to me and to others. What are we going to *trust*, bottom-line?

In I Corinthians 15, the apostle Paul said something about the importance of what we believe about the nature of the world, the *content* of our faith. He said, “Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith is also in vain . . . If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins . . . If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied” (12-14, 17, 19).

I’ve been a student, a professional social worker, and a teacher of social work long enough to see some major changes in “what everyone knows,” in

what is assumed or taken for granted. “What everyone knows” is in fact part of the underlying operational *faith* of a culture or subculture—whether it’s Americans or teenagers or those who go to college or social workers—or Southern Baptists, for that matter.

When I went to college, logical positivism was king, a version of what C. S. Lewis called “naturalism,” a kind of philosophical materialism. It said that the physical world is all there is. Everything is fully explainable by materialistic determinism. Only what can be physically measured or “operationalized” is real (or at least relevantly meaningful). In psychology it was epitomized in B. F. Skinner’s behaviorism.

I remember as a somewhat bewildered freshman at Indiana University attending a lecture by a famous visiting philosophy professor (a logical positivist) from Cambridge University (whose name I have forgotten) entitled “The *Impossibility* of any Future Metaphysic” (his take-off on Kant’s title “Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysic”). I can’t say I understood it all at the time, but his main point was that modern people must permanently put away such meaningless and potentially dangerous ideas as spirituality, the supernatural, and any notion of values beyond subjective preferences. We now know, he said, that such language is meaningless (since not empirical) except, perhaps, to express our own subjective feelings.

In a graduate school course in counseling, I had an earnest young behaviorist professor who had, as a good behaviorist, trained (conditioned) himself to avoid all value statements that implied good or bad or anything beyond personal preference. When faced with a situation where someone else might be tempted to make a value statement, whether regarding spaghetti, rock and roll, or adultery, he had an ideologically correct response. He would, with a straight face, say, “I find that positively reinforcing” or, “I find that negatively reinforcing.” (I don’t know what his wife thought about this kind of response). Notice, he was saying “I” (who knows about you or anyone else) “find” (observe a response in myself at this moment; who knows about five minutes from now) “that” (a particular measurable stimulus) is “positively reinforcing” (it elicits this particular behavior now and might be predicted to do it again).

Above all, the idea was to be totally scientific, objective, and *value-free*. After all, values were perceived to be purely relative, personal preferences, or (worse) prejudices induced by social learning. And “everyone knew” that the only thing real was physical, measurable, and scientific. If we could only get the “facts” we would know what to do.

But this was, and is, a fundamental fallacy, the “Is-Ought” fallacy we discussed earlier. Even if facts are obtainable, they have no moral power or direction in themselves. If we say they mean something it is because we are interpreting them in the context of some values that are a part of our basic faith about the nature of the world.

## **Shifting Worldviews: The Emperor Has No Clothes**

In the meantime we have seen some rather amazing shifts in “what everyone knows.” I am old enough to have vivid memories of the 1960s and the “greening of America” when “everybody knew” that people under 30 were better than people over 30 and that human beings are so innately good all we had to do was to scrape off the social conventions and rules and then peace, love, and total sharing would rule the world. An astounding number of people truly believed that—for a short time.

In the ‘70s and early ‘80s “everybody knew” that personal autonomy and affluence are what it is all about. Power and looking out for Number One became the articles of faith, even for helping professionals like social workers. Maximum autonomy was the obvious highest good. Maturity and health were defined in terms of not needing anyone else (and not having any obligation to anyone else either). Fritz Perls “Gestalt Prayer” even got placed on romantic greeting cards:

I do my thing, and you do your thing.  
I am not in this world to live up to your expectations.  
And you are not in this world to live up to mine.  
You are you and I am I,  
And if by chance we find each other, it's beautiful.  
If not, it can't be helped.

If you cared too much, you were labeled enmeshed, undifferentiated, or at the very least co-dependent.

And here we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and, at least for awhile, it looks as though values are in. *Time* magazine has had cover stories on ethics. We have had occasion to feel betrayed and outraged at the exposure of unethical behavior on the part of corporate executives, accountants, stockbrokers, and especially government officials. Even more amazing, philosophy professors and social workers are not embarrassed to talk about values and even character again. “Family Values” are avowed by the Republicans and Democrats. The books and articles are rolling off the presses.

But we should not be lulled into a false sense of security with this recovery of values and ethics, even if much of it sounds quite Christian to us. The philosophical paradigm has shifted to the opposite extreme, from the modern faith in the rational and empirical to the postmodern faith in the radically subjective and relative, the impossibility of getting beyond our ideological and cultural horizons. Our culture now despairs of any knowledge beyond the personal narratives we make up for ourselves out of the flotsam of our experience and fragments of disintegrating culture (Middleton & Walsh, 1995). Postmodernism says each person pieces together a personal story through which we make sense out of our lives, but there is no larger story (meta-narrative) which is really true in any meaningful sense and which can bind our personal stories together.

It is remarkable, as we have seen, how rapidly some of these assumptions can shift. The seeming consensus may be only skin-deep. More importantly, unless

these values are grounded on something deeper than the currently fashionable paradigm (such as a Christian worldview), we can count on the fact that they will shift, or at least give way when they are seriously challenged. It's amazing how easy it is to see that the emperor has no clothes when a different way of looking is introduced to the scene. Remember, both enlightenment empiricism and postmodern subjectivity agree that values have no transcendent source.

### **What Is a "Person?"**

Controversies regarding abortion and euthanasia illustrate the profound consequences of our worldview faith, especially for worldviews that deny that values have any ultimate source. Even more fundamental than the question of when life begins and ends is the question: What is a person? What constitutes being a person? What value, if any, is there in being a person? Are persons owed any particular rights, respect, or care? If so, why?

If your worldview says that persons are simply the result of matter plus time plus chance, it would seem that persons have no intrinsic value at all, no matter how they are defined.

From a purely materialist point of view, it may be interesting (to us) that the phenomena of human consciousness and agency have emerged which allow us in some measure to transcend simple biological, physical, and social determinism. These qualities might include the ability to be self-aware, to remember and to anticipate, to experience pleasure and pain, to develop caring relationships with others, to have purposes, to develop plans and take deliberate actions with consequences, and to have (at least the illusion of) choice. We may choose to define personhood as incorporating some of these characteristics. And we may even find it positively reinforcing (or not) to be persons. But then what? In this materialist worldview there are no inherent guidelines or limits regarding what we do to persons.

Do such persons have a right to life? Only to the extent it pleases us (whoever has the power) to say so. And what in the world could "right" mean in this context? But what if we do choose to say that persons have a right to life? What degree or quality of our defining characteristics do they have to have before they qualify? How self-conscious and reflective? How capable of choice and action?

It is common for people to argue today that babies aren't persons before they are born (or at least most of the time before they are born) and thus that there is no moral reason for not eliminating defective ones, or even just unwanted or inconvenient ones. And there are already those who argue that babies should not even be declared potential persons until they have lived long enough after birth to be tested and observed to determine their potential for normal growth and development, thus diminishing moral qualms about eliminating "wrongful births" (Singer, 1996). After all, what is magic about the birth process? Why not wait for a few hours, days, or weeks after birth to see if this "fetal material" is going to measure up to our standards of personhood? And at any point in life if our personhood fails to develop adequately or gets lost or seriously diminished

through accident, illness, mental illness, or age, what then? Was my college acquaintance Ali right? Is it immoral to take resources from the productive and use them to support the unproductive? Do these “fetal products” or no-longer-persons need to be terminated?

### **A Solid Foundation**

If I balk at these suggestions, it is because I have a worldview that gives a different perspective to the idea of what constitutes a person. I may agree, for example, that agency—the capacity to be self-aware, reflective, remember and anticipate, plan, choose, and responsibly act—is a central part of what it means to be a person. But I also believe that this is a gift from our creator God that in some way images God. I believe that our reflection, choice, and action have a divinely given purpose. This purpose is summarized in the ideas of finding and choosing God through grace and faith, of growing up into the image of Jesus Christ, of knowing and enjoying God forever. All of this says that persons have a special value beyond their utility to me (or anyone else) and that they are to be treated with the care and respect befitting their status as gifts from God. Even when something goes wrong.

Having a Christian worldview and knowing what the Bible says about God, the world, and the nature of persons doesn't always give us easy answers to all of our questions, however. And having faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ doesn't guarantee that we will always be loving or just. But it does give us a foundation of stone to build our house on, a context to try to understand what we encounter that will not shift with every ideological or cultural season. I can assert the dignity and worth of every person based on a solid foundation, not just an irrational preference of my own or a culturally-induced bias that I might happen to have. What “everybody knows” is shifting sand. Even if it happens to be currently stated in the NASW Code of Ethics for social workers.

### **Some Basic Components of a Christian Worldview**

Space does not permit me to develop a detailed discussion of the components of a Christian worldview here, but I would at least like to try to summarize in the most basic and simple terms what I perceive to be quite middle-of-the-road, historically orthodox, and biblical answers to the fundamental worldview questions I posed at the beginning (cf. Middleton & Walsh, 1995). This suggests the Christian worldview that has informed me and has been (I would hope) quite evident in what has been said. This little summary is not the end of reflection and application, but only the beginning.

- 1. *Where are we?*** We are in a universe that was created by an eternal, omnipotent, just, loving, and gracious God. Consequently the universe has built-in meaning, purpose, direction, and values. The fundamental values of love and justice have an ultimate source in the nature of God which

gives them meaning, authority, and content. The universe is both natural and supernatural.

2. **Who are we?** We are persons created “in the image God” and therefore have intrinsic meaning and value, regardless of our personal characteristics or achievements. Persons are both physical and spiritual. Persons have been given the gift of “agency”—in a meaningful sense we have been given both freedom and responsibility. Persons created in the image of God are not just autonomous individuals but are relational—created to be in loving and just community with one another. Persons are objects of God’s grace.
3. **What’s wrong?** Oppression and injustice are evil, wrong, an affront to the nature and desire of God. Persons are finite and fallen—we are both limited in our capacities and distorted from our ideal purpose because of our selfishness and choice of evil. Our choice of selfishness and evil alienates us from God and from one another and sets up distortion in our perceptions, beliefs, and behavior, but we are not completely blind morally. Our self-centeredness makes us prone to seek solutions to our problems based on ourselves and our own abilities and accomplishments. We can’t solve our problems by ourselves, either by denial or our own accomplishments.
4. **What’s the remedy?** Stop trying to do it our way and accept the loving grace and provisions for healing that God has provided for us. God calls us to a high moral standard but knows that it is not in our reach to fulfill this standard completely. God’s creative purpose is to bring good even out of evil, to redeem, heal, and grow us up—not by law but by grace. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.” (Ephesians 2:8-10)

### Why Should I Care? Choosing a Christian Worldview

#### Moral Obligation and Faith: Materialism Undermines Moral Obligation

To abandon a theological basis of values, built into the universe by God, is ultimately to abandon the basis for any “oughts” in the sense of being morally bound other than for purely subjective or cultural reasons. Normative morality that is just descriptive and cultural (“This is what most people in our society tend to do”), subjective (“This is what I happen to prefer and do,” or “It would be convenient for me if you would do this”), or utilitarian (“This is what works to achieve certain consequences”) has no power of moral *obligation*.

Why should I care? On materialist or subjective grounds I “should” do this or that if I happen to feel like it or if I think it will help me get what I want. But this is using the word “should” in a far different and far more amoral sense than we ordinarily mean by it. It is a far different thing than saying I am *morally obligated or bound* to do it.



Many will argue that reason alone is enough to support moral obligation. This is the argument used by Frederic Reamer in his excellent book on social work ethics, *Ethical dilemmas in social services* (1993), based on Gewirth (*Reason and morality*, 1978). If, for example, I understand that freedom is logically required for human personal action, then this theory says I am logically obligated to support freedom for other persons as I desire it for myself. But I have never been able to buy the argument that reason alone creates any meaningful moral obligation for altruistic behavior. Why *should* I be logical, especially if being logical doesn't appear to work for my personal advantage? Any idea of moral obligation beyond the subjective and personally utilitarian seems to lead inevitably and necessarily to God in some form or to nowhere (Sherwood, 2007; Evans, 2004, 2006; Smith, 2003; Smith, 2010).

### **The “Method of Comparative Difficulties”**

Although it is logically possible (and quite necessary if you believe in a materialist or postmodernist universe) to believe that values are only subjective preferences or cultural inventions, I have never been able to completely believe that is all our sense of values such as love and justice amounts to. There are, in all honesty, many obstacles in the way of belief in God as the transcendent source of values. But can we believe, when push comes to shove, that all values are either meaningless or totally subjective? Elton Trueblood calls this the “Method of Comparative Difficulties” (1963, p. 73; 1957, p. 13).

It may often be hard to believe in God, but I find it even harder to believe in the alternatives, especially when it comes to values. It's easy enough to say that this or that value is only subjective or culturally relative, but when we get pushed into a corner, most of us find ourselves saying (or at least *feeling*), “No, *that* (say, the Holocaust) is really wrong and it's not just my opinion.” (Cf. C. S. Lewis, “Right and Wrong As a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe,” *Mere Christianity*, 1948)

Dostoevski expressed the idea that if there is no God, all things are permissible. C. S. Lewis (1947, pp. 77-78) said, “When all that says ‘it is good’ has been debunked, what says ‘I want’ remains. It cannot be exploded or ‘seen through’ because it never had any pretensions.” Lust remains after values have been explained away. Values that withstand the explaining away process are the only ones that will do us any good. Lewis concludes *The abolition of man* (1947, p. 91):

You cannot go on “explaining away” forever: you will find that you have explained explanation itself away. You cannot go on “seeing through” things forever. The whole point of seeing through something is to see something through it. It is good that the window should be transparent, because the street or garden beyond it is opaque. How if you saw through the garden too? It is no use trying to “see through” first principles. If you see through everything, then everything is transparent. But a wholly transparent world is an invisible world. To “see through” all things is the same as not to see.

## Looking for Christian Implications

A Christian worldview is not going to give us simple answers to all of our questions. It is not as though there is a simple translation of Christian values and principles into practice implications, or that there is a unitary “Christian” version of every human activity from French cooking to volleyball to politics.

Even though we may agree on fundamental values and principles, such as love and justice, as fallen and finite human beings, the more specific we get in terms of translating love and justice into particular attempts to solve concrete problems the more we are likely to honestly and conscientiously disagree with one another in our interpretation of what the problem is or what, in fact, might actually do more good than harm in attempting to deal with it (Sherwood, 1999).

I assume, for example, that if we are Christians and we have read the Bible, we have been impressed with our obligation to work for social justice and to help the poor. But what are the causes of poverty and what can we do to help the poor that will do more good than harm? Not simple and not obvious.

May I be so bold as to say that there is **no** simple, single “Christian” answer to those questions? We are going to be working to deal with poverty (and conscientiously disagreeing about how to do it) until Jesus returns. And I will submit that there is *no* policy or program to help the poor, individually or collectively, privately or publicly that will not *advance some* of the legitimate values that we have at the *risk or cost of some* of our other legitimate values.

So, everything we do will be a compromise of sorts and will need to be adapted as much as possible to the unique situation. But what we do needs to be an imperfect solution shaped both by our Christian faith and by our professional social work values, knowledge, and skills.

A Christian perspective is not always totally unique or different in every respect from what another perspective might offer, but it always informs and critiques these perspectives. An example from social work is the NASW Code of Ethics (2008). Even some Christian social workers may be laboring under the impression that it somehow contradicts Christian values. Far from it. Anyone who has this impression should take a closer look at the Code of Ethics. There is no principle in the Code that a Christian cannot strongly affirm. In fact, I would argue that a Christian worldview is quite compatible with the social work Code of Ethics, and in fact is the soil out of which much of the Code has sprung (Sherwood, 2000, 2002, 2007).

As we have discussed before, one of the core social work values in the Code is the inherent dignity and value of every person. Now, what in modernism or postmodernism gives such a value ground to stand on and to claim obligation over us? Not much. When push comes to shove, the inherent dignity and value of every person is pretty hard to sustain under assumptions of relativism, subjectivism, material determinism, and survival of the fittest.

At the same time that a Christian worldview upholds this core social work value, it also informs and critiques it. For example, a Christian perspective might say that individual freedom is not the only or necessarily always the highest value

when legitimate values come into tension with each other in a given situation. The good of others and the community (deriving from both love and justice) has a powerful moral claim in every situation. Yet individual freedom tends to be granted privileged status in most social work ethical thinking.

So, not all social workers, Christian or otherwise, will necessarily agree on how to prioritize legitimate values when they come into conflict with one another, which they inevitably do in complex cases. One of the admirable virtues of the current Code of Ethics is its clear recognition in the preamble and throughout that legitimate values **do** come into tension with one another in actual practice situations, that professional judgment will **always** be required to prioritize them, and that conscientious and competent professionals will **not always** be in agreement.

Furthermore (given the hermeneutical spiral), it must be remembered that other perspectives may inform and critique our Christian perspectives. Many contemporary Christians seem to need to be reminded, for example, that individual peace and prosperity do not necessarily rank high in the list of biblical virtues compared to sacrifice for the common good (Sherwood, 1999).

### **Seeing Through a Mirror Dimly: Real Values But Only a Limited, Distorted View**

So, I believe in God as the ultimate source and authenticator of values. I believe that real values exist beyond myself. And I believe these values put us under real moral obligation. To believe otherwise, it seems to me, ultimately makes values and moral obligation empty shells, subjective and utilitarian, with no real life or content. It may be true that this is all values are, but I find it very hard to believe. Belief in a value-less world, or one with only “human” (that is to say, purely subjective) values, takes more faith for me than belief in God.

But (and this is very important) this understanding of values as having ultimate truth and deriving from God is a very far cry from believing that I fully comprehend these values and the specific moral obligations they put me under in the face of a particular moral dilemma when these values come into tension with one another and priorities have to be made. Much humility is required here, an appropriate balance. At any given moment, my (or your) understanding of these values and what our moral obligations are is very limited and distorted. In fact our understandings are in many ways subjective, culturally relative, and bounded by the interpretive “language” available to us. And any particular place where I can stand to view a complex reality at best only yields a partial view of the whole. Remember the story of the blind men and the elephant (“It’s like a snake,” “It’s like a wall,” “It’s like a tree”).

We can see, but only dimly. God has given us light but we will only be able to see completely when we meet God face to face (I Corinthians 13:8-13). In the meantime we are on a journey. We are pilgrims, but we are not wandering alone and without guidance. We see through a mirror dimly, but there is something to see. There is a garden beyond the window.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. (I Corinthians 13:8-13)

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual. Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. Those who are spiritual discern all things, but they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny. "For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. (I Corinthians 2:12-16)

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit. (II Corinthians 3:17-18)

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# Calling: A Spirituality Perspective for Social Work Practice

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*Beryl Hugen*

In making a career choice, many Christian students find the social work profession a good fit with their religious faith. Or at least at first glance it appears so. For example, as part of the application process for the social work program I teach in, students are asked to explain why they have chosen social work as a major. What motivates them to enter this field of study? Some answer the question by relating past experiences with social work services or role models who were social workers, but almost all describe a moderate or fairly strong religious impulse to serve people and society.

Many specifically relate their faith to their choice of social work—stating something like this: In being loved by God, they in turn wish to share some of this love with those who are poor or hurting or are in need of help of some kind. Some of these students believe that to be a Christian in social work they must work in an agency under religious auspices, whereas others plan to work in programs that do not have a specific religious base or affiliation, but are part of the larger community of governmental social welfare responses to those in need. Despite these differences, almost all are interested in finding ways to integrate their faith and their newly chosen field of study.

But it doesn't take long in their social work studies for these students to begin to recognize the complex tensions between their religious faith, agency auspices, and the secular values of the social work profession. This discovery is not surprising; social work is, after all, a secular profession. At times, students find the profession very critical of religion, even suspicious of anyone who claims to have religious motives for helping others.

This feeling is understandable, for in the last 40 to 50 years, the social work profession has simply ignored religious insights and accepted the principle of separating the sacred and secular. Religion came to be seen as having no particular insight to offer or relevance for everyday professional practice. Because of this attitude, the recent professional literature does not offer much help to students in thinking through the relationship of religious faith and professional practice. It is ironic that social work, which claims as its unique focus the "whole person" in the whole environment, has for so long neglected the religious dimension of life.

Not only do students continue to come to the profession with religious motivations, but the roots of social work are largely grounded in religious faith (Devine, 1939). Social work originated and came of age under the inspiration of

the Judeo-Christian traditions and the philanthropic and service motivation of religious people. As Leiby (1985) indicates, the Christian biblical command to love God and to love one's neighbor as oneself was directly translated into a sense of moral responsibility for social service. As the social work profession secularized in the 20th century, these earlier religious rationales and models for service were replaced by doctrines of natural rights, utilitarianism, and humanistic ideology.

Dealing with human need apart from religious motives and methods is actually a very recent development in the history of charity and philanthropy. The notion of a secular profession focused on responding to human suffering would have struck many of our professional ancestors as quite inconsistent and confusing. Many of them were religiously motivated and expressed their faith by means of social work as a vocation, a calling from God to serve their brothers and sisters who were in need. With their perception of social work as a calling, a vocation, they formalized a link between their religious faith and social work practice.

What is meant by viewing social work as a calling? Several articles have addressed this "old fashioned" concept of calling or vocation, sensing its power and value for current social work practice (Gustafson, 1982; Reamer, 1992). However, these writers essentially have attempted to take the religious concept of calling and use it in a secular fashion. They have done so in order to provide a moral purpose for the profession—to counteract what they perceive to be the focus on self-interest inherent in the social work profession which has become increasingly professionalized, specialized and bureaucratic.

My intent in this chapter is to explain, or more accurately to reintroduce, the religious model of calling as used by Christian social workers, past and present, in linking Christian faith and professional social work practice. Both its attractiveness and shortcomings as a model will be addressed. My purpose is not only to help social workers and the profession understand or correct misunderstandings related to this model, but also help social workers better understand the broader issues related to the spirituality of social work practice, in that other religious models and spiritual traditions address many of the same integration of faith and practice questions. Also, reintroducing the model of calling will lead us to see the significance of how the perspectives and writings of our religiously motivated social work ancestors—of which there are many—can contribute to the profession's current discussions regarding spirituality and social work practice.

### **Religion, Faith, and Spirituality**

Before discussing the model of calling, it is helpful to define what is meant by the terms spirituality, religion, belief and faith. The profession has long struggled with this definitional dilemma. The dilemma has focused on how to reintroduce religious or spiritual concerns into a profession which has expanded beyond specific sectarian settings and ideologies to now include diverse sources of knowledge, values and skills, and how to respond to the needs of a much more spiritually diverse clientele. Addressing this dilemma, Siporin (1985) and Brower (1984) advocated for an understanding of spirituality that



includes a wide diversity of religious and non-religious expressions, with such an inclusive understanding of spirituality encouraging social workers to reflect upon their clients, both within and outside of particular institutional religious settings and ideologies.

From this beginning, Canda (1988a, 1988b) further developed a concept of spirituality for social work that incorporates insights from diverse religious and philosophical perspectives. He identifies three content components to spirituality—values, beliefs and practice issues—all serving the central dynamic of a person's search for a sense of meaning and purpose, developed in the context of interdependent relationships between self, other people, the nonhuman world, and the ground of being itself" (Canda, 1988a, p. 43).

In the same vein, the work of James Fowler, known more for his model of faith development, is particularly instructive. Fowler (1981) states that to understand the "human quest for relation to transcendence," the key phenomenon to examine is not religion or belief, but faith (p. 14). According to Fowler, who draws upon the ideas of religionist Wilfred Smith, *religions* are "cumulative traditions," which represent the expressions of faith of people in the past (p. 9). Included in a cumulative tradition are such elements as "texts of scripture, oral traditions, music, creeds, theologies," and so forth. *Belief* refers to "the holding of certain ideas" or "assent to a set of propositions" (p. 13). *Faith* differs from both religion and belief. Fowler describes faith as a commitment, "an alignment of the will...in accordance with a vision of transcendent value and power, one's ultimate concern" (p. 14). One commits oneself to that which is known or acknowledged and lives loyally, with life and character being shaped by that commitment. Defined in this way, faith is believed to be a universal feature of human living, recognizably similar everywhere, and in all major religious traditions.

What does faith consist of then? Fowler describes three components of what he calls the contents of faith. The first he terms *centers of value*, the "causes, concerns, or persons that consciously or unconsciously have the greatest worth to us." These are what we worship, things that "give our lives meaning" (p. 277). The second component of faith is described as our *images of power*, "the power with which we align ourselves to sustain us in the midst of life's contingencies" (p. 277): these powers need not necessarily be supernatural or transcendent. Finally, faith is comprised of "the *master stories* that we tell ourselves and by which we interpret and respond to the events that impinge upon our lives." Essentially, our master stories reveal what we believe to be the fundamental truths, "the central premises of [our] sense of life's meaning" (p. 277).

In discussing spirituality and faith, Fowler and Canda both emphasize its pervasive, all encompassing nature in an individual's life. Faith or spirituality is not a separate dimension of life or compartmentalized specialty, but rather an orientation of the total person. Accordingly, the three components of faith—centers of value, images of power, and master stories (Fowler, 1981)—and spirituality—values, beliefs, and practices (Canda, 1988a)—exert "structuring power" in our lives, shaping our characters and actions in the world, including our work. Faith and spirituality are defined here as the essence of religion. Faith

and spirituality take on a Christian religious meaning when the centers of value, images of power, and master stories of one's faith, the central dynamic of one's search for a sense of meaning and purpose, are grounded in the creeds, texts of scripture, and theology of the Christian tradition. I will attempt to present the Christian religious concept of calling within these more inclusive frameworks of spirituality and faith.

### **Calling in Action**

Perhaps the best way to develop an understanding of the religious concept of calling is to start with an illustration. Robert Coles, in his book *The Call to Service* (1993), tells of a 6-year-old black girl who initiated school desegregation in the South in the early 1960s. Tessie, a first grader, each day facing an angry and threatening mob, was escorted by federal marshals to school. The mob almost always greeted her with a litany of obscenities. Tessie's maternal grandmother, Martha, was the family member who usually got Tessie up and off to school each morning.

Coles reports that one day Tessie was reluctant to go to school—claiming to feeling tired, having slipped and fallen while playing in a nearby back yard, and having a difficult time with a current substitute teacher. Tessie suggested to her grandmother that she might stay home that day. Her grandmother replied that that would be fine if Tessie truly wasn't well, but if she was more discouraged than sick, that was quite another matter. She goes on to say:

It's no picnic, child—I know that, Tessie—going to that school. Lord Almighty, if I could just go with you, and stop there in front of that building, and call all those people to my side, and read to them from the Bible, and tell them, remind them that He's up there, Jesus, watching over all of us—it don't matter who you are and what your skin color is. But I stay here, and you go—and your mamma and your daddy, they have to leave the house so early in the morning that it's only Saturdays and Sundays that they see you before the sun hits the middle of its traveling for the day. So I'm not the one to tell you that you should go, because here I am, and I'll be watching television and eating or cleaning things up while you're walking by those folks. But I'll tell you, you're doing them a great favor; you're doing them a service, a big service.

You see, my child, you have to help the good Lord with His world! He puts us here—and He calls us to help Him out. You belong in that McDonogh School, and there will be a day when everyone knows that, even those poor folks—Lord, I pray for them!—those poor, poor folks who are out there shouting their heads off at you. You're one of the Lord's people; He's put His Hand on you. He's given a call to you, a call to service—in His name! There's all those people out there on the street. (p. 3-4)

Later Coles questions Tessie whether she understood what her grandmother meant by “how you should be of service to those people out there on the street.” She replied:

If you just keep your eyes on what you’re supposed to be doing, then you’ll get there—to where you want to go. The marshals say, ‘Don’t look at them; just walk with your head up high, and you’re looking straight ahead.’ My granny says that there’s God, He’s looking too, and I should remember that it’s a help to Him to do this, what I’m doing; and if you serve Him, then that’s important. So I keep trying. (p. 4-5)

The heart of what Tessie had learned was that for her, service meant serving, and not only on behalf of those she knew and liked or wanted to like. Service meant an alliance with the Lord Himself for the benefit of people who were obviously unfriendly. Service was not an avocation or something done to fulfill a psychological need, not even an action that would earn her any great reward. She had connected a moment in her life with a larger ideal, and in so doing had learned to regard herself as a servant, as a person called to serve. It was a rationale for a life, a pronouncement with enormous moral and emotional significance for Tessie and her grandmother. This call was nurtured by the larger black community, her pastor, family, and the biblical values of love and justice—the stories of exile and return, of suffering and redemption—the view of the powerful as suspect and the lowly as destined to sit close to God, in His Kingdom.

Coles himself recounts how ill-prepared professionally he was to understand this family and their sense of calling:

I don’t believe I could have understood Tessie and her family’s capacity to live as they did, do as they did for so long, against such great odds, had I not begun to hear what *they* were saying and meaning, what *they* intended others to know about their reasons and values—as opposed to the motivations and reactions and “mechanisms of defense” I attributed to them. Not that there wasn’t much to be learned by a psychoanalytic approach. Tessie and her companions, like human beings everywhere (including those who study or treat other human beings), most certainly did demonstrate fearfulness and anxiety; she also tried to subdue those developments by not acknowledging them, for instance, or by belittling their significance. Mostly, though, she clung hard to a way of thinking in which she was *not* a victim, *not* in need of “help” but someone picked by fate to live out the Christian tradition in her life. “I’m trying to think of the way Jesus would want me to think,” she told me one evening. When I asked how she thought Jesus wanted her to think, she replied, “I guess of others, and not myself, I’m here to help the others.” (p. 26)

## Calling: The Meaning of Work

For some Christians, like Tessie and her grandmother, connecting one's work to the divine intentions for human life gives another dimension to the meaning and purpose of one's work and life. Certainly adequate pay, financial stability, social status and a sense of personal fulfillment remain significant criteria in choosing a career, but they are not the central motivation. The central motivation is the means by which one's Christian religious tradition has tied one's work and faith together, this concept of vocation, or calling.

Martin Luther originally formulated the notion of vocation or calling largely in reaction to the prevailing attitude toward work in medieval society. Medieval thinkers devalued work. They believed that in and of itself, work had little or no spiritual significance. They held, like the Greeks earlier, to the idea that the highest form of life, the form in which humans can realize their noblest potential, is the contemplative life of the mind. By thinking, we liken ourselves to God. Work was thus a hindrance to an individual's relation to God, which could be cultivated only in the leisure of contemplation. Because peasant serfs did most of the work in medieval society, and because the earthly character of their occupations prevented them from participating directly in the religious life, they received grace through the church by means of the sacraments.

Not only the life of productive work, but also the practical or active life, consisting of doing good to one's neighbor, was viewed by many medievals as an impediment to the true goals of the religious life. The activity given precedence was always the contemplative life. An early church father, St. Augustine (1950) wrote: "the obligations of charity make us undertake virtuous activity, but if no one lays this burden upon us, we should give ourselves over in leisure to study and contemplation" (p. 19). The need for the active or charitable life was temporary, whereas contemplation of God was eternal.

Luther's concept of vocation or calling fits neatly within the compass of this thought since he draws a basic theological distinction between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of earth. To the kingdom of heaven belongs our relationship to God, which is to be based on faith; to the kingdom of earth belongs our relationship to our neighbor, which is to be based on love. A vocation, properly speaking, is the call to love my neighbor that comes to me through the duties attached to my social place or *station* within the earthly kingdom. A station in this life may be a matter of paid employment, but it need not be. Luther's idea of station is wide enough to include being a wife or a husband, a mother or a father, a judge or politician, as well as a baker, truck driver, farmer or social worker. Thus, the call to love one's neighbor goes out to all in general. All of these callings represent specific and concrete ways of serving my neighbor, as I am commanded to do by God Himself.

What do we accomplish when we discharge the duties of our stations in life, when we heed the call of God to serve our neighbor in our daily tasks? Luther believed the order of stations in the kingdom of earth has been instituted by God Himself as His way of seeing to it that the needs of humanity are met on a day-by-day basis. Through the human pursuit of vocations across the

array of earthly stations, the hungry are fed, the naked are clothed, the sick are healed, the ignorant are enlightened, and the weak are protected. That is, by working we actually participate in God's providence for the human race. Through our work, people are brought under His providential care. Far from being of little or no account, work is charged with religious significance. As we pray each morning for our daily bread, people are already busy at work in the bakeries.

Luther conceived of work as a way of serving others. He never recommended it as either the road to self-fulfillment or a tool for self-aggrandizement. We, of course, find it natural to assess the attractiveness of a particular job on the basis of what it can do for us. But Luther saw quite clearly that work will always involve a degree of self-sacrifice for the sake of others, just as Christ sacrificed himself for the sake of others.

During the time of Luther, and for many centuries preceding him, people thought of human society to be stable, static, and as incapable of change, as the order of nature itself. Shortly after Luther's time, however, European civilization underwent a dramatic transformation under the combined influence of a rapidly expanding market economy, accelerated urbanization, technological innovation, and vast political reorganization. In the face of these astounding changes on all fronts of social life, people soon saw that the structure of human society is itself in part a product of human activity, changeable and affected by sin. Once people recognized this fact, it became clear, in turn, that to the degree human activity is motivated by sinful desires and worldly ambitions, the society thus produced is also likely to be structurally unsound and in need of reform. For example, an economy based upon greed and a government based on the arbitrary use of power stand in just as much need of repentance as the individuals who are a part of them. For this reason, other reformers insisted that not only the human heart, but also human society must be reformed in accordance with the Word of God. The emergent vision of the Christian life at the dawn of modern social work practice, then, required not only that people obey God in their callings, but that the callings themselves be aligned with the will of God.

### **Calling Within Social Work**

Although historically there have been many models of spirituality in social work, the calling model perhaps has been the most prominent, or at least the most extensively referred to in the social work literature. In fact, in the very early years, it was the dominant model. This dominance is certainly related to the fact that Protestantism was the dominant religious form at the time. Many early social workers in their writings refer to the relationship of their spirituality and social work within this calling model. Their response is not surprising, since many of them grew up in devoted religious families, many had theological training, and still others were very active as lay people in their churches. All found in their spiritual experiences something which gave impetus, meaning, and value to their work of service.

The following examples illustrate the prominence of the calling model and how it has been articulated and practiced by a variety of different leaders within the profession.

Edward Devine, a leader in the Charity Organization Society and the first director of one of the first schools of social work, records in his book *When Social Work Was Young* (1939) the early experiences in social work education and summarizes these experiences as follows:

The real start towards the professional education of social workers as such was made in 1898, when the Society launched its summer school of philanthropy with thirty students enrolled.

For several years this summer school gathered from all parts of the country a substantial number of promising candidates, and a brilliant corps of instructors, who for one day, or sometimes for an entire week, expounded and discussed the fundamentals of the slowly emerging profession. Jane Addams, Mary Richmond, Zilpha Smith, Mrs. Glendower Evans, Graham Taylor, Jeffrey Brackett, John M. Glenn, Mary Willcox Brown, before and also after she became Mrs. John M. Glenn, James B. Reynolds, Mary Simkhovitch—a full roster of the lecturers in the school would be like a list of the notables in the National Conference of Social Work. Certainly no religious gathering could have a deeper consecration to that ideal of learning how to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly, which Micah described as being all that is required of us. (p. 125-6)

He ends the book by stating that in his opinion the spirit of social work finds its power, value, and purpose from the biblical Sermon on the Mount.

Richard Cabot (1927) addressed the model of calling more specifically in an article entitled “The Inter-Relation of Social Work and the Spiritual Life.” He writes:

Religion is the consciousness of a world purpose to which we are allied...when I speak of the purpose being a personality, I speak of the person of God of whom we are children... I think it makes absolutely all the difference in social work to know this fact of our alliance with forces greater than ourselves. If a person wants to find himself and be somebody he has got to find his particular place in the universal plan. In social work, we are trying to help people find themselves, find their places and enjoy them. The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. (p. 212)

Cabot also articulated several spiritual powers applicable to social work practice that come to those who hold this faith: courage, humility and the ability to stand by people. He goes on to explain that the goal of social work is to:

...maintain and to improve the channels of understanding both within each person and between persons, and through these chan-

nels to favor the entrance of God's powers for the benefit of the individuals....

Unblocking channels is what social workers do. The sort of unblocking that I have in mind is that between capital and labor, between races, or between the members of a family who think they hate each other....

Spiritual diagnosis, I suppose, means nothing more than the glimpse of the central purpose of the person, unique and related to the total parts of the world. Spiritual treatment, I suppose, is the attempt to open channels, the channels I have been speaking of, so as to favor the working of the world purpose. In this way social workers participate in the providence of God. (p. 215-16)

Perhaps the most prominent example of the power and dominance of the calling model is illustrated in Owen R. Lovejoy's presidential address to the National Conference of Social Work in 1920, entitled "The Faith of a Social Worker." In the speech he attempts to draw upon the foundations of faith of the members in order to aid in their approach to discussions during the Conference and to help create a real basis for unity. He begins by first disclaiming any intention of committing the Conference to any specific creed of social service. His desire, rather, is to discover "some of the underlying principles which bind people together."

He states that all social workers have a philosophy of life, a faith, a "basic enthusiasm," and those who act on this faith can choose to:

...regard this as a sacred ministry and claim their commission as the ancient prophet claimed his when he said: "The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, the opening of prison to them that are bound, to give a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Certainly this is not a slight task to which we are called, but the expression of a joyful faith carried with cheerfulness to those in the world most in need of it...a field of service based on the conviction that men are warranted in working for something corresponding to a divine order "on earth as it is in heaven. (p. 209)

He warns those "who look upon the visible institutions connected with their religion as the essential embodiment of faith," recognizing such a sectarian position frequently leads to imposing one's own values on others and proselytizing—similar issues we face today. He ends the address stating that the secret of their usefulness as social workers is found in the following litany.

God is a Father,  
Man is a brother,  
Life is a mission and not a career;  
Dominion is service,  
Its scepter is gladness,

The least is the greatest,  
Saving is dying,  
Giving is living,  
Life is eternal and love is its crown. (p. 211)

It is difficult to imagine an address on such a topic being given today. Such was the significance of spirituality and the calling model in the social work profession at that time.

The calling model's chief apologist, however, was Ernest Johnson, a prolific writer and interpreter of Protestant religion and the social work profession. His writings detail the principles which he hoped would govern efforts to bring Protestantism to bear through the social work profession in meeting human needs. Recognizing that Protestantism had a majority position and influence in the culture, he strongly advocated, with some exceptions, for a pattern of social work based on the calling model. The result was to minimize the operation and control of agencies and social welfare enterprises by churches or religious groups and maximize Protestant participation in non-sectarian agencies.

Later in life he recognized that Protestantism, particularly when its pre-eminent position was beginning to wane, would never obtain complete cultural dominance or create an approximation to the ideal of a Christian society—the *Corpus Christianum*. The result, he lamented, would be only a partial transformation of the culture—and regrettably, a partial accommodation on the part of Protestantism to the culture. But despite this limitation, he still believed the Protestant pattern or model of influencing social work enterprises and social movements “indirectly” (through the means of one’s calling or vocation) was essentially sound. Johnson (1946) states:

It [the calling model] affords the most effective channel through which our churches, in the midst of a religiously heterogeneous population, can bring to bear their testimony through community endeavor and make their impact on a secular culture. This means, however, a recovery of the sense of lay Christian vocation, which has been so largely lost. The major Protestant contribution to social work can be made, I believe, through the consciously Christian activities of persons engaged in non-sectarian enterprises and movements. In the existing situation in America a revival of a sectarian, possessive attitude toward social work would be definitely reactionary....

In a word, then, we need to devise our social strategy in the light of our Protestant history, with its emphasis on freedom, and in the light of our cultural situation, which puts a premium on vocational work as Christian testimony. We can make our best contribution without seeking to enhance Protestant prestige, seeking rather to influence contemporary life and to meet human need through the activities of those whose lives have been kindled at our altars and nourished in our fellowship. (p. 2-4)



As Johnson relates, the calling model has not always functioned as intended. Already in 1893, one leader of the new social work profession, responding to the widening gap between religion and the emerging influence of scientific models in social work, characterized social work as “a revolutionary turning of thought in our society from a religious service to God to a secular service to humanity” (Huntington, 1893). Along this line of thought, Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1932) grappled with the practical consequences of the calling model for social work. With three-fourths of social workers then functioning under secular auspices, many had become “inclined to disregard religion.” This development he regarded as a significant loss for social work—“destroying or remaining oblivious to powerful resources and losing the insights religion provided in keeping wholesome attitudes toward individuals” and “preserving the sanity and health in the social worker’s own outlook upon life” (p. 9). He believed social workers needed, therefore, a renewed sense of vocation or calling. In addition, this loss of calling partially contributes to what church historian Martin Marty (1980) later referred to as “godless social service,” or the migration (privatization) of faith or spirituality from social work.

## **Conclusion**

Because of our distance from the thoughts and assumptions of our predecessors in social work and perhaps from the language of spirituality itself, efforts regarding such historical reflections as these may seem awkward and archaic. The goal is not, however, to recreate the past, but rather to identify the models of spirituality that guided our social work ancestors and then to find ways to translate and apply the spirit of these models to our present situation.

This model of calling offers significant insight into current discussions relating spirituality and professional social work practice. Within this calling model, religious faith is not the private possession of an individual, but is grounded in tradition and divine revelation, permeating the whole of life, connecting public and private spheres, and linking the individual with the community. The model also places professional techniques and methods in the context of larger goals and values that give life meaning and purpose for both clients and practitioners.

Historically, religiously motivated persons and groups found their faith propelling them into actions of concern for others, especially the poor and the vulnerable in society. These social workers have affirmed in a variety of ways their shared belief that the faith dimension of life leads to a transcendence of individualism, and to a commitment to others—to social work practice motivated by a calling to a life of service.

The model presented is helpful to social workers from the Christian faith tradition, but also to others who seek to acquire a better understanding of the meaning and effects of spirituality in their own and their clients’ lives. A social worker’s own cultivation of spirituality is a crucial preparation for the competent application of knowledge and skills in practice. The model is particularly helpful in taking into account the distinctive values, sources of power and master stories

of one particular religious and cultural tradition, Christianity—represented by many persons like Tessie and her grandmother whom social workers daily encounter in practice, as well as by many social workers themselves.

Although the model does not resolve the tensions and conflicts which exist between the Christian spiritual tradition and the current largely secular profession, it does provide a beginning framework for integrating Christian spirituality and social work at both the personal and professional levels. The profession's roots are significantly tied to this particular model of spiritual/professional integration, and many social workers as well as clients continue to define their lives, personally and professionally, in the context of this Christian-based spiritual call to service. The Christian values of love, justice, and kindness; its stories related to the poor, the vulnerable, and those of liberation from oppression; and its emphasis on self-sacrifice, are the "passion of the old time social workers" that many find attractive and wish to bring back—albeit in a form more adaptable to a more diverse clientele and changed environment (Constable, 1983; Gustafson, 1982; Reamer, 1992; Siporin, 1982, 1985; Specht & Courtney, 1994).

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# Social Work for Social Justice: Strengthening Practice with the Poor Through Catholic Social Teaching

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This chapter focuses on the ways by which Catholic social teaching (CST), specifically the CST value of the “preferential option for the poor,” is present in social work education and practice. That this should require mention in a book devoted to Christian social work practice reflects the central argument advanced in this chapter. That is, despite clear calls to both social work education and Catholic social workers to put the needs of the poor in the foreground, the mission of social work practice seems to be partially characterized by viewing poverty as another aspect of “diversity” that, while respected, is not a career focus of social work students or of the programs training them. In this chapter, a brief discussion of the “preferential option for the poor” and its relationship to larger Christian teachings will lead to an analysis of how CST is reflected in current Catholic leadership, the social work Code of Ethics (COE), social work practice, and social work education. Finally, specific examples of ways to better integrate CST into social work practice and education will challenge social workers of all faiths to reexamine their own commitments to practice the preferential option for the poor.

## **Case Example #1: A Catholic Hospital Adrift?**

*Helen was a BSW student doing her field placement in the inpatient unit of a Catholic hospital. She loved the work and felt that her calling to be a hospital social worker was validated by the feeling of relief she saw in her patients as she helped them with discharge planning. However, she recently had been troubled by some changes she witnessed at the hospital. Along with her supervisor, she attended a meeting at the hospital where the Chief Operating Officer (COO) discussed the need for the hospital to market their services to potential patients from the newly gentrifying neighborhood around the hospital. These new neighbors were affluent and represented a stark contrast to the low-income, largely immigrant population that this Catholic hospital served over its 100 year history. During the meeting, the COO invited staff to join in the strategic planning process to “chart this new course” for the hospital. Following the meeting, Helen asked for an overview of the economic pressures facing the hospital at this time, and reviewed the particulars with another staff member. While at Mass in the hospital chapel later that day, Helen found herself*

wondering about the hospital's new direction and whether she should inquire about her supervisor's intentions in order to advocate that the hospital preserve its mission and prioritize serving the poor. "Isn't that the role of a Catholic hospital? Isn't that its purpose?" she wondered to herself. Subsequently, Helen considered how to advocate for ways by which the hospital could preserve its mission while responding to current financial pressures.

### **Perspectives on Change from the Frameworks of Christianity and Social Work**

Helen's experience might resonate with many social workers, whether Christian or not. They may share Helen's concern that the agency or site where they work is failing its patient population. This tension may be particularly strong within students like Helen, given her Catholic beliefs and the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) that informs her concerns. From the perspective of CST, the hospital's "new course" is not just about trying to make a profit; rather, it is about the hospital potentially abandoning a central aspect of its Catholic mission--the preferential option for the poor. As an approach, CST informs social work's core mission and is the basis for considering the intersection of CST and social work ethics.

The profession of social work has historically grappled with the ways by which change can occur at the individual and societal levels. Conversations between some of the mothers of the profession are well known for the struggle to identify the most appropriate way to address issues of justice among marginalized populations (Addams, 1911; 1990; Reynolds, 1934; 1951; Richmond, 1922). In more recent years, scholars have continued to consider the merit of addressing issues of social justice within social work curricula (Brenden & Shank, 2012; Finn & Jacobson, 2003; Daniel, 2011; Deepak, Rountree, & Scott, 2015; Funge, 2011; O'Neill & Miller, 2015; Vincent, 2012). Debates continue regarding the definition and nature of social justice (McLaughlin, Gray, & Wilson, 2015; Hawkins, Fook, & Ryan, 2001; McPherson, Terry, & Walsh, 2010; Vincent, 2012; Banerjee, 2011) and the contextual and political influences that contribute to its relevance at any given time.

In the midst of this struggle, the stated value placed by the profession on social justice via its Code of Ethics (COE) remains clear (NASW, 2008). The term "social justice" is referenced multiple times in the COE and is listed as one of the core ethical principles of the document (NASW, 2008). Further, social justice is referenced via a myriad of mission statements, both within secular and religious social work programs (Holosko, Winkel, Crandall, & Briggs, 2015). Primary professional conferences, such as the Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting, continue to reference "justice" in their core themes (CSWE, 2009).

Alongside the profession of social work, many Christian theologians and leaders have continuously prioritized the role of justice as core to their belief system, although the conceptualization has shifted over time. According to St. Augustine,

for example, the source of justice comes from within. In other words, justice is the connection between an internal faith and external action (Deane, 1963). Martin Luther, on the other hand, often conceived of justice in the context of education (Luther, Pelikan, Poellot, Hansen, Oswald, Grimm, Lehmann, & Hillerbrand, 1955). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the social gospel movement, which preceded Vatican II, represented a prominent Protestant Christian intellectual movement. This movement was based on the idea that justice was critical to facilitating the second coming of Christ. That is, without the amelioration of social ills in the context of social justice, the second coming of Christ would not occur. Although the peak of this movement occurred in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the principles of this movement continue to inspire more recent Protestant movements. These serve as just a few of many examples of the ways by which the founders of the Christian traditions have conceptualized social justice as central to the faith.

### **Catholic Social Teaching**

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is based on church doctrine and Catholic social movements that have been incorporated into church teaching since the late 19th century (Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, 2008). While all other aspects of CST are considered important for Catholics, most scholars and theologians agree that in the approach to social justice, the issue of the Catholic preferential option for the poor represents a central tenet (Pope John Paul II, 1995; Twomey, 2005).

In concept, the preferential option for the poor was initially discussed over a century ago, in the 1891 papal encyclical, “*Rerum Novarum*: On the condition of workers,” by Pope Leo XIII (Pope Leo XIII, 1891). Through this seminal work, *Rerum Novarum* addressed for the first time barriers that separated the church from the common worker. This encyclical’s comprehensive treatment of such social issues set it apart from its counterparts. The concept was again prominently articulated as part of the liberation theologies of Latin America, and was formalized in the Latin American Bishops Conferences (Medellin, Columbia, 1968; Puebla, Mexico, 1979) (Twomey, 2005).

In its application, this option for the poor served to organize peasants in Latin America into more self-reliant “Christian-based communities,” which began to create solidarity among participants. In the United States, however, consideration of the preferential option did not formally begin until the late 1970s, and has vacillated in its doctrinal centrality since then. The approach within the United States differed some from that of the liberation theology movement, focusing more on responsibility to the larger community than specifically to the poor (U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1986). In other words, while the church is supposed to show a special solicitude for the poor, it should not ignore those who are not poor. This reflects the continuing debate in the laity and institutional church worldwide regarding the role the church should play in advocating for the poor in political and economic terms (Cooney, Harrington, & Medaille, 2002; Twomey, 2005).

## **Pope Francis and the Resurgent Social Justice Mission of the Catholic Church, 2013–Present**

Jorge Maria Bergoglio—Pope Francis I—was inaugurated as the 266<sup>th</sup> pope on March 13, 2013, immediately replacing the recently resigned Pope Benedict XVI. As church leader of Catholics around the world, Pope Francis was given global responsibilities regarding living out church doctrine, preaching Jesus' word to all, and managing ecclesiastical systems of power throughout various regions, countries, and continents (Franco, 2013).

Francis's inauguration marked the first time in history that the church would be led by both a Jesuit priest and a Latin American. Prior to his papacy, the Catholic Church was guided by European leaders, which arguably marginalized the global south and other developing countries around the world (Franco, 2013). Recent popes, such as Pope John Paul II from Poland and Pope Benedict XVI from Germany, were known for visiting many countries, but largely within the confines of specific geopolitical values and shared cultural and religious ideals. Francis, emerging from the starkly impoverished and deeply spiritual Americas (Dionne, 2013; Duncan, 2014) in contrast, thus far has taken unique steps as a global pope (Franco, 2013).

Pope Francis's Argentinian roots and his familiarity and involvement with the Latin American Church have greatly affected his papacy thus far. Common themes emerging from Latin American Bishop Conferences in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century intertwine closely with Francis's revolutionary church mission. Massimo Franco (2013) writes that a Latin American pope means "skepticism towards capitalism and globalisation; cultural confrontation with the United States; [...] increased attention to the environment; and pacifism" (p. 74). As an example, prior to 2013, European Popes' call to 'social justice' often focused on class struggle, abortion, gay marriage, and usage of contraceptives (Dionne, 2013). In contrast, Pope Francis's focus on social justice challenges systematic powers, denounces wealth and materialism, and includes, cares for, and advocates for the poor (Cox, 2014; Dionne, 2013).

Analysis of influential church documents developed at these Latin American Bishop Conferences (i.e., in Puebla, Mexico; 1979 and Aparecida, Brazil; 2007) provide insights into the cultural and spiritual lenses that have helped to form Francis's narrative as Pope. At Puebla in 1979, the Latin American Bishops encouraged Church leaders to challenge political and economic injustices and focus strongly on the preferential option for the poor (Latin American Catholic Bishops, 1979). Years later, in 2007 at the Aparecida conference, which Bergoglio attended, bishops reaffirmed the necessity of standing in solidarity with the marginalized, protecting and preferring the poor and vulnerable, and promoting social reform and human rights (Duncan, 2014, p. 183; Latin American Catholic Bishops, 2007). These themes closely align with liberation theology (Gutiérrez, 1973), a theology developed and implemented in Latin America, in that they insist that preferential option for the poor not only requires charitable acts but mandates systematic change (Cox, 2014).



Likely this Latin American influence, along with his Jesuit identity (a priestly order known among Catholics for living out a faith that seeks justice, challenges beliefs, and stands in solidarity with the poor) (Currie, 2011), is the motivation for his choosing 'Francis' as his papal name. Days after becoming Pope, Francis told the press that, "[St. Francis of Assisi] is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation, the same created world with which we don't have a good relationship... How I would like a church that is poor and that is for the poor..." (as cited in Motte, 2013, p. 165).

The peaceful, poor, humble, and environmentally conscious influences of St. Francis of Assisi have affected Pope Francis's cultural and occupational adaptations in Rome. Pope Francis quickly rejected the regal papal traditions of wearing red shoes, the red cape, a gold cross, and residing in the papal apartment in the Apostolic Palace. Rather, he chooses to wear his worn-out black cap shoes, his own iron cross, and his white papal cassock, and he stays at the Vatican boarding house for visiting bishops and church leaders (Flamini, 2013). These rejections of traditions highlight the changes that Pope Francis hopes to make as leader of the church—changes that closely align with his consistent themes and aim to make a 'poor church' rather than a 'church for the poor' (Bilocura, 2013, p. 165).

Since Pope Francis's inauguration in 2013, he has quickly spoken on and thoughtfully questioned themes of poverty, globalization, social responsibility, and capitalism in a way that has been profoundly revolutionary. Regarding globalization, the pope has mentioned the people of the church currently existing within a "globalization of indifference" (Pope Francis, 2013, #54; Cox, 2014, p. 24). As citizens of the world, we should rather have a social sensitivity that is inclusive of all people—even (and specifically) the deeply impoverished in developing countries. In doing so, the church could "rebuild their shattered image [...] through renewed attention to poverty and inclusion" (Franco, 2013, p.73).

Pope Francis suggests that, in order to strive towards being a compassionate globe, the Church needs to be socially responsible and focused on breaking down, rather than building up, barriers (Dionne, 2013). According to Francis, to do so, the Catholic church must live as a horizontal church—one that values each leader and laity as an important member that will live out Jesus' word and gospel at home, at work, and in worship. Francis has discarded the belief that "baptism suffices for life of discipleship" (Sanneh, 2013, p. 166), and instead preaches that membership in the church means having an active and essential role in building bridges between the church and the world (Sanneh, 2013).

As a church, two of the largest obstacles faced in building these bridges are capitalism and materialism (of note, Pope Francis has stated that he is "all in favour of capitalism [...] as long as these opportunities are open to everyone and all benefit") (Duncan, 2014, p. 191). In Pope Francis's exhortation, titled *Evangelii Gaudium*, he merges social responsibility with our current state of economic policies by calling on all participants in the economy (i.e., property owners, business leaders, financiers, CEOs, politicians, policymakers, etc.) to live like Jesus and spread the gospel (Pope Francis, 2013; Norcross & Koopman, 2015). The Pope

emphatically states that Jesus says that money is the root of all evil; you cannot serve both God and money (Duncan, 2014, p. 178). This is proven, he argues, by our current unjust economic structures in which the “powerful feed upon the powerless” (Duncan, 2014, p. 189). Pope Francis insists that the measured outcomes of economic policies and development need to be based on how they have improved sensible life opportunities for all (Duncan, 2014). After all, failure to help the poor is the rejection of God (Norcross & Koopman, 2015).

It should be no surprise, then, that Pope Francis’s public addresses have shown an obvious shift towards social and economic justice. The Pope has made it a priority to shine the global spotlight on the poor (Bilocura, 2013), people who have been ignored and forgotten in these discourses for decades. Pope Francis calls Catholics to not only donate time, talent, and treasure, but to challenge systemic powers that result in people living in homelessness and isolation. Pope Francis urgently and often states that eliminating poverty is at the heart of the Christian mission and is the “central demand of the gospel” (Duncan, 2014, p. 192).

It should also be of no surprise that not all Catholics are enthusiastic about the focus of Pope Francis on systemic economic issues (Stourton, 2015; Erickson, 2015). American Catholic leaders and lay organizations whose social justice agenda primarily addresses charitable action and focuses more on issues like abortion and same-sex marriage, have expressed concern about Pope Francis “dropping away [the] focus” from these issues (Erickson, 2015, para. 15). Specifically, Pope Francis’s approach to economics has been called by some “a disruption” to traditional Catholic values (Erickson, 2015, para. 2). Some critics have gone as far as to accuse Pope Francis of distorting the teachings of the Church altogether, claiming that his view of CST has more in common with socialist and even communist ideas than CST (Stourton, 2015). This perspective on Pope Francis was in full view during the Pope’s visit to the United States in September, of 2015. In response to this visit, numerous conservative political sources protested the Pope’s message to Congress; one Catholic Congressman, Representative Paul Gosar, even declared that he was boycotting the Pope’s Joint Address to Congress (Gosar, 2015).

Despite this resistance from Conservative Catholics, only 45% of whom report favorable ratings of Pope Francis, Pope Francis enjoys a 90% approval rating from American Catholics at this time (Erickson, 2015). His urgent call for social justice resurges and re-centers the “preferential option for the poor and vulnerable” to the heart of the church’s mission. Pope Francis does not merely suggest that the Church treats the poor equally and lives in solidarity with them, but mandates that, as Christians, we are expected to do so. From his name choice to his rejection of regal papal tradition to his specific focus on social justice, Pope Francis has established a clear mission for us all: to challenge injustice and to be a poor Church for the poor.

## **Pope Francis's Impact on the American Social Work Context**

Although the call for social justice has re-centered the church, the uptake of the message in the field of social work is less apparent. When the Pope visited the United States in September 2015, the National Association of Social Work released an article highlighting specific issues he addressed that social workers and their clients are immersed in every day: racial inequality, immigration, economic injustice, and criminal justice (NASW, 2015). His mentioning of these issues highlights how pertinent his teachings and public discussions are for social workers.

Although the issues raised by Pope Francis highlight the natural overlap between his message and social work, he challenges the profession in stating that welfare projects are necessary, yet not enough, in alleviating poverty and working in solidarity with the poor. Rather, he says that, "as long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural cause of inequality, no solution will be found... inequality is the root of social ills" (Pope Francis, 2013, #202; Duncan, 2014, p. 193).

How social workers develop helping relationships with clients who are poor can be complicated by workers' desire to "save" the poor, rather than stand in solidarity with them to try to change the systems and structures that often create clients' impoverished conditions. When applying preferential option for the poor to real-life situations, roles can become muddled when workers view themselves as saviors rather than as partners and fellow travelers. "Bill," the social worker in our next case example, explores this tension when working with Catholic Charities to deliver mentoring programs to youth living in under-resourced neighborhoods.

### **Case Example #2: Mentoring At-Risk Youth: Saving or Solidarity?**

*Bill has recently graduated with his Masters of Social Work from a Catholic university. He was raised Lutheran, and is a convert to Catholicism. He was hired by Catholic Charities to provide training and supervision to three mentoring programs for low-income, African-American youth in suburban and rural areas in his region. While in graduate school, he was influenced by several teach-ins led by the university's Black Lives Matter (BLM) group. Through these educational opportunities, Bill became committed to using his social work degree to combat the "school-to-prison" pipeline through mentoring of African-American youth.*

*At his first meeting with mentoring coordinators of each site, the discussion quickly turned to the shared sense of the staff that many of the recently recruited mentors are not following the goals of vocational mentoring in the program. One of the mentor coordinators said, "It's like the mentors pity these kids and view them as needing a rescue from their families...one mentor told me last year that she returns home from her mentoring sessions feeling sad, because she wishes she could adopt her mentee to give her a better life." Another coordinator, acknowledging that her program serves youth who live in high-poverty, high-crime neighborhoods, shared*

*that she is struggling to find ways to get her mentors involved in the community and in the lives of their mentees' families. "It's like they just want to come to our building, do their mentoring, and get out of there as fast as they can." Bill observed that all three of the mentoring programs used the parish house of the local Catholic parish as their meeting space. He made a note to himself to talk to the parish priest and staff about how they might partner with the community to encourage stronger integration of the mentoring programs with the surrounding areas. Additionally, he told the group that he intended to address the mentors' approach through an improved training program informed by some of the ideas he had learned from his experience with BLM. The modified program would emphasize the importance of building healthy connections with mentees by focusing on mentees' strengths and dignity, rather than focusing only on their individual problems and the challenges of their environment.*

### **Social Justice and the Practice of Social Work**

As illustrated by the case example above, Bill is a Catholic social worker operating from the CST value of attending to the needs and strengths of the poor. Through this value base, he is actively seeking to make CST come alive in his social work practice by engaging the community and prioritizing its needs, rather than allowing it to remain marginalized and misunderstood. However, while Bill should be applauded for these efforts, it is also critical to explore the origins of these values. It is not clear how much Bill learned about the importance of CST as part of his MSW program at a Catholic school. As we will see in this next section, the infusion of CST in social work education is hardly a given, even when it involves teaching and learning about the poor.

The mission statements of Catholic schools of social work consistently reflect a desire to incorporate the values of faith and social justice into their curricula (Brenden & Shank, 2012). Similarly, scholars often promote the role of spirituality in professional education (Ai, 2002). The relationship between social work and religion is well documented through analysis of the literature (Graham & Shier, 2009), which specifically reinforces the importance of religion and spirituality in assessing the "person-in-environment" perspective of professional social work. However, the integration of religion and spirituality into professional education has continued to be a struggle (Barker, 2007), as the role of spirituality in formal education remains in tension with more traditional approaches to learning (Cohlic, 2006). Further complicating this struggle is the lack of guidance provided in the curriculum for social work students about integrating professional social work with faith and spirituality (Northcut, 2005; Praglin, 2004). Additional challenges come from others who suggest that preparing students as social workers should not include an explicit focus on faith as part of the human experience (Sheridan, 1994).

In the context of these tensions, we developed a content analysis focused on understanding what is being taught in Catholic schools of social work (Pryce, Kelly, Reiland, & Wilk, 2011). In so doing, our aim was to understand

how students are being prepared to grapple with concepts proposed by CST, particularly the “preferential option for the poor,” as social work professionals. Through this analysis, course syllabi of foundation level MSW courses were collected from 11 of the 12 accredited Catholic schools of social work. In total, 38 syllabi were included in the analysis. After developing a coding manual together and employing several additional methods to ensure rigor and trustworthiness (Pryce et al., 2011), the research team coded these syllabi with particular attention to the ways by which course content descriptions, assignments, and themes addressed poverty.

Findings from the analysis suggest that concepts such as “diversity,” “strengths,” and “social justice” are emphasized far more than explicit attention to poverty in the introductory-level core courses standard to first-year curricula within these programs. Not surprisingly, policy courses attend to economic and structural issues more often than their clinical and practice-focused counterparts, particularly in terms of the kinds of assignments offered to students. Unfortunately, analysis suggests that students are not receiving the kind of formal guidance and support in addressing issues of poverty in their courses, even in Catholic MSW programs. Instead, findings suggest that at this point, much responsibility is left to students themselves to systematically and critically engage issues of poverty within their education and practice (Pryce et al., 2011). These findings continue to suggest that Catholic social work education has work to do in placing the needs of the poor in the foreground.

## **Discussion**

The complex issues highlighted in this chapter outline some of the important challenges facing the profession of social work. Addressing these issues is imperative for our profession to provide effective service to those in economic need. Poverty continues to be the dominant social crisis in our society, and our current economic circumstances suggest it is of heightened concern (Reisch, 2013). Recent data from the Census Bureau suggest that the number of Americans living below the poverty line reached its highest level since the inception of the Bureau in 1959. Along the same lines, median household income levels in 2010 fell to levels similar to those of 1997 (Tavernise, 2011). Additionally, recent data indicate that income inequality has only accelerated in the past 40 years, with American families at the top seeing a 70% increase in income while the income of middle-class families stayed flat (Urban Institute, 2016). These data suggest a lack of growth within the middle class, and an even more dire situation for the poor in the United States.

As social work programs, we are also challenged by Pope Francis’s message, and to date, our response to his challenge is only minimally visible. In surveying Catholic MSW websites, the influence and presence of Pope Francis was limited to professors’ individual writings or campus-wide reflections on the Pope’s visit to the United States; little to no content was identified directly linking Catholic Social Teaching, solidarity with the poor, and social work. One notable excep-

tion is at the Catholic University of America, where a scholarship, called “Pope Francis Scholars,” has recently been developed. Each year, ten Catholic MSW students receive full-tuition to attend the university. In turn, the students are expected to serve the university and broader community in meaningful ways during and following their time as a student (CSWNA, 2015).

Pope Francis’s commitment to the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable inspires other important program changes focused on meaningful advances toward social justice. As individuals and as a profession, we are called to respond similarly to Pope Francis’s challenge with energy and enthusiasm. Social workers, while continuing to provide welfare services and community resources, need to more urgently and thoughtfully challenge structural causes of inequality in our country and world. As Christian social workers, we are reminded by Pope Francis’s message that this is essential in most accurately living out Jesus’ word and gospel. Until we can begin to question and devalue the complex systems that are perpetuating social ills, we will not make lasting impacts to eradicate poverty and further the gospel of joy and love.

### **Implications for Education and Practice**

The work of the social workers in our case examples need not be exceptional if the profession (and religiously-affiliated schools of social work in particular) take the initiative to return social work back to some of its first principles. For social work practice and education, we propose the following recommendations to students, faculty, and practitioners to strengthen programs and empower students in the efforts to increase attention to the needs of the poor.

1. *Students must be challenged to attend to poverty explicitly and systematically in their education and choice of social work career path.*

Although students bring hope and openness to the educational experience as aspiring social workers, they may not bring a specific desire to work with clients who are poor. This is not meant as a criticism of new social work students as much as a reflection on the reality that Specht & Courtney (1994) identified over 20 years ago: many incoming social work students are themselves coming from middle-class backgrounds and aspire to work as therapists, intending to focus on mental health concerns most explicitly, and possibly with clients possessing similar backgrounds to themselves (Perry, 2009).

It is critical for social work students to challenge themselves and their peers to reflect on their identity as social workers within the historic context of the profession. This attention to the role of economic status seems to be of particular salience at this point in American life, as our country faces ever widening gaps between the rich and poor (Reisch, 2013), and as awareness grows regarding the structural racism illuminated by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement.

One way to engage in this reflection is to initiate action as a student body on behalf of social justice, particularly among the poor (Funge, 2011). Social work students can join peers at their college or university to address justice issues. In a study of student writing (McPherson, Perry, & Walsh, 2010), the concept of action emerged as key to student understanding of social justice, despite the fact (according to the content analysis featured in this chapter) that the social work curricula does not seem to regularly engage in this action-oriented framework. One's role and identity as a student may allow social work students the support needed to leverage some of these values in service of the community and profession.

- 2. Students and instructors must explicitly include poverty in social work curricula, course assignments, and classroom activities, or it may go unexamined.* Although the chance to customize an assignment based on personal interests and comfort level is appealing and commonly offered, this approach, particularly within foundation level social work coursework and practice, will likely significantly limit a student's experience with issues of poverty, both in the classroom and in the field. In other words, despite the anxiety and discomfort that students and instructors often experience in taking on these complex issues (Funge, 2011; Daniel, 2011), it is critical that social work curriculum challenge students and faculty by incorporating issues of poverty into papers and group assignments.

To do so, departments and schools of social work must share the responsibility for teaching social justice across faculty and staff. This can help alleviate faculty concerns regarding conflicting with institutional norms, losing support of faculty, or jeopardizing one's position (Funge, 2011). Students must similarly experience a sense of institutional support for teaching this content (Funge, 2011) so that they can gain experience and confidence in effectively addressing these complex issues as Bill and Helen do in the case examples above.

Catholic scholars also encourage social work colleagues to make use of Catholic Social Teaching as an "articulate and well-developed system of social ethics" that describe and define social justice and can "fill a serious and compelling void in the social work profession" to guide social work in pursuit of social justice (Brenden & Shank, 2012, p. 130). This frame may assist students and faculty in grappling with the challenges presented by poverty and social injustice, challenges students will inevitably confront upon their entrance to the field (Davis & Wainwright, 2005).

- 3. Both students and faculty must avoid the diversity trap in dealing with social justice issues related to poverty and the preferential option for the poor.* Based on the content analysis presented above, it is clear that all MSW programs examined are supportive of student interest in social justice on

behalf of their clients. The problem, however, is that sometimes social justice is discussed under the concept of “diversity,” which may mask the structural and economic issues most powerful in addressing issues of poverty. Furthermore, although our Education Policy Accreditation Standards emphasize diversity and populations at risk (CSWE, 2008), other terms, such as social and economic justice and oppression, remain undefined, which makes measurement and monitoring of these ideas in curriculum more difficult. Finally, with the exception of Devore and Schlesinger (1999) and Longres (2000), few scholars address social class as a major variable or focus on the intersection of class and ethnicity. These limitations impede consideration of how diversity, social justice, and oppression are linked. They also fail to encourage faculty and students to contend with the development of strategies to change oppressive structures, particularly those disadvantaging the poor, who arguably suffer the most serious long-term negative life outcomes (e.g., health, life expectancy, educational attainment, exposure to violence), regardless of their race, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation (as cited in Iceland, 2006).

4. *All social workers, students, faculty, and practitioners must consider our commitment to the poor as critical to the future of the profession.*

In extending findings into the larger practice domain, it is important to consider the ways by which the absence of focus on issues of poverty may influence the profession of social work more broadly. At the professional level, our ongoing distancing from the needs of the poor place both the profession and the larger society at risk. If social workers fail to address the needs of the poor, a few questions will linger: can social work claim to be a profession that advocates effectively for the vulnerable when so little of our time is spent preparing new social workers to work effectively with clients in poverty? Without such an emphasis, what ultimately will distinguish social work from other helping professions that tend to offer psychotherapy as the main intervention to address client challenges?

## **Conclusion**

In sum, students, educators, and practitioners must consider creative ways to support one another in working with clients impacted by poverty. This support is critical within all social work contexts, including those religiously-affiliated programs that may traditionally and explicitly identify the unique importance of the poor. Such support can include facilitating collaboration, both at the student and professional levels, between more senior and junior social workers. Social work departments, including faculty and field staff, can work together to identify ways to enhance attention to issues of poverty in and outside the classroom. At a curricular level, improvements to syllabi can be complemented



with explicit attention within field education to support students in learning about and contending with issues of poverty among their clients. Further, given the impact of federal and state budget cuts on systems of care, it is critical that social work educators engage students in formal exposure to advocacy (Kilbane, Pryce, & Hong, 2013) as a means of addressing client needs within very serious fiscal constraints.

Beyond these suggested changes, it is worth considering ways that religiously-affiliated social work programs can engage issues of poverty explicitly around conversations regarding faith. For many social workers, a faith-based orientation toward working with the poor may prove more compelling than a secular approach. Each faith tradition has stated values regarding the importance of addressing the needs of the poor (Swatos & Kivisto, 1998). Through these traditions, social work students and practitioners may find inspiration or provocation to engage in work on behalf of the poor beyond what they may encounter in a secular framework.

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# Social Work As Calling<sup>1</sup>

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*Diana S. Richmond Garland*

If you were to ask people in line behind you at the grocery to name professions for a survey you are doing, they might look at you with uncertainty about your odd question. Then when they answered, they might list doctors, lawyers, nurses, teachers, pastors and perhaps a few others—perhaps architects and accountants. Unless there is a social worker in the line, or a family member of a social worker, no one might mention social work. People often have only a fuzzy idea of social work as a profession; they may assume that social work is primarily employment in public social service programs like child welfare and temporary financial assistance.

My preschool grandchildren play pretending to be teachers or doctors or ballerinas; I have not seen them play “pretend I am a social worker,” even though their parents have friends who are social workers, and Grandma is a social work teacher. Few entering college students start out fixed on majoring in social work; they just know that they want to help people, and through a friend or mentor, they find their way into an introductory class or elective in social work “the helping profession” (Action Network for Social Work Education and Research, 2009, p. 6)..

I am writing a book as one modest effort to change the misunderstanding of our profession, to describe the rich diversity and nature of this profession through the stories of the daily lives and professional journeys of 25 social workers chosen to represent the different people groups and human situations where social workers serve. They illustrate the breadth of social work as a profession, from public to private and from nonsectarian to religious congregational settings, and how faith finds a diversity of expressions in these settings. This chapter shares one of those stories. Telling the stories of real social workers describing their work and how their faith and calling informs that work provides a way to explore the relationship of faith and practice on personal, emotional and practical levels. The goal is to prepare social work practitioners who will practice ethically and effectively, anchoring their work in their religious beliefs and practices in ways that enhance and strengthen them for their work and at the same time, communicating respect for their clients’ religious and spiritual worldviews.

In order to understand social work as a Christian calling, we need first to back up and look at the concept of work—employment—as it relates to call-

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1 This chapter is an excerpt from the book, *Social Work as Calling* (Botsford CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work).

ing. Then we will move to considering one kind of work—*social* work—as a religious vocation.

This chapter is designed to complement the great work others have done to explore the integration of Christian faith with the profession of social work. I commend to you especially the writings of Alan Keith-Lucas, David Sherwood, and Rick Chamiec-Case (Chamiec-Case, 2012, 2013; Keith-Lucas, 1985; Sherwood, 2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). These scholars have described the landscape of social work practice from the perspective of a Christian worldview and deserve study as a framework for this chapter.

### **The Relationship of Christian Vocation and Work**

The concept of work—including social work—as a Christian vocation has emerged over the centuries of the Church's history. In the past century, the term "vocation" has taken on a much broader and secularized connotation, although Christian thought still sees that work is—or can be—a calling from God.

Christian leaders have not always considered work to be a religious calling, however. In the medieval world of the sixteenth century, the life of the mind and of contemplation was the highest order of human religious life. Work was necessary but had little spiritual significance. Religious vocation meant becoming a priest or monk or nun, devoting oneself to prayer and the study of the Bible. Those who remained in the world of work and family life rather than the cloister were less than fully Christian (Hardy, 1990).

During the Renaissance, a new attitude of work emerged as God became seen not just as Creator but a cosmic crafter of the world. Human beings became like God by also being productive, not just by thinking (Hardy, 1990). The belief that one's work could be an expression of one's Christian faith is one of the very tenets of the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther (1483-1546), himself a priest, posited that it is through our "stations" in life—our jobs, our roles as family and community members—that God bids us to serve our neighbors. Through our work, we serve others. Work can be a "vocation," God's calling. Christian vocation and calling were not limited to work life; God calls Christians to serve others through all the relationships of life (Hardy, 1990; Kolb, 2009). Much later, as documented in Pope John Paul II's *Laborum Exercens*, the official Catholic theology of work became congruent with the Protestant position at every major point (Pope John Paul II, 1981).

Theological frameworks for understanding work—employment - as Christian calling emerged (e.g., Volf, 1991). Both Protestant and Catholic thought saw human work as a way we bear the image of God. Through our work, we participate in God's ongoing creation. Work is an opportunity to live the example of Christ in serving others and sometimes suffering for them (Hardy, 1990).

Over the centuries since the Reformation, European and American societies became more secularized, and so did thought about vocation and work. The scope of "vocation" diminished and came to connote simply the paid work a person does. Now people use terms like vocational training, vocational

schools, and vocational counseling to talk about one's preparation for the work world. (Schuurman, 2004). In fact, vocational training has come to connote the trades—car repair, welding, and plumbing—in contrast with the “professions” that require college and often advanced academic degrees. The secular meaning of “vocation” has strayed far from Martin Luther's theological understanding.

American Christian parlance has translated that secularized understanding of calling back into the church, also missing the meaning that Luther gave to the world of work. In the church world in which I grew up, we used the language of “being called to full-time Christian service,” referring to paid full-time employment in a congregation or another church organization—being a pastor or another church staff member or a missionary. The term assumes that a work-life in or through the church is the highest form of Christian service, and that people who work in other settings can still do Christian service when they volunteer in the church's mission projects and programs. Amy Sherman says that we have “shrink wrapped” the Kingdom of God, limiting it to work internal to the church rather than recognizing that all are called to partner with God in the redemption of the world (Sherman, 2011). Once again, a life work outside of the church was perceived as somehow less “Christian,” echoing medieval thought that elevated cloister over work in the world of community and family.

In fact, freedom of choice about what kind of paid occupation we will take up is a luxury not enjoyed by most people in the world historically or currently. The circumstances and society into which we were born, the opportunities and limitations life deals us, and the expectations of others border and sometimes block our choices, not just our own gifts and interests.

Biblical texts that address “calling” are limited neither to church work nor to choosing a path of paid employment. The concepts of calling and God's choosing us (election) are closely associated (e.g., Romans 8:30, 2 Peter 1:10, Isaiah 41:8-9). God is the chooser, the caller; we are responding to the Holy Other. Similarly, Jesus taught his disciples that *he* chose *them*, not the reverse, and he chose them to send them to “bear much fruit” (John 15:16).

For Christians, all of life is to be lived following our bidding from Christ; part of life is the work we do. We cannot meet all of our own needs; we depend on others, and they depend on us. According to Hardy, this need for one another is a sign that God intends us to live together in society, bound together by our common needs and mutual service (1990).

Wherever people work, they can live the teachings of Jesus—doing unto others as they would want done for them. Those “others” are those who will purchase a product a factory worker is assembling; or the citizens who will drive across the bridge an engineer is designing; or the people who eat the produce a farmer sends to market; or the ill patient a doctor is treating; or the customers a store clerk is assisting. Some work may not be especially meaningful per se in itself; most of us have found ourselves at one time or another in our lives doing work because we needed the income, not because the work itself was the expression of our gifts—waiting tables, stocking inventory, running a cash register. Still, we are part of the fiber of the community, with opportunity to contribute to the

wellbeing of others. The focus of the Christian vocation is not self-satisfaction or enjoyment in the work per se, but rather, in relating to others as Jesus taught, including fellow employees as well as those who receive our work.

We are all part of a body, creating the communities and neighborhoods and providing one another with the goods and services we need to survive and flourish—or not. Ideally, our work is an expression of the special gifts and talents God has given us. As much as you may love playing music and singing, if you have no real natural talent at either, it is doubtful that your best work will be in professional music performance. If you are good at math and love organizing spreadsheets, you may do your best work as a financial manager. Paul was clear that no part of the body is more important or more vital than any other part; we are all “called” to do our part (1 Corinthians 12).

For those of us with the luxury of choosing a work career, the vocational paths that often pull us along are those we enjoy (i.e., we find joy in them) because they use us well. Researchers have found that those people who view their work as a calling are more satisfied and committed to their work, struggling less with depression and stress than those who do not (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Steger, Pickering, Shin, & Dik, 2010). Frederick Buechner has often been quoted: “the place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet” (Buechner, 1993, p. 95). That is, God usually calls us to the kind of work that we need to do and that the world most needs. He suggests that if we find joy in our work, we have met the first requirement. If our work is writing commercials for potato chips or making violent video games, we probably have missed what the world really needs from us. At the same time, if we are working at jobs that we find boring or depressing, we probably have missed what would bring us deep gladness—and we probably are not helping those we are serve very well either.

When the work fits our gifts and abilities, we can keep at the work because we are well suited to the task. Because we enjoy the work—most days—does not mean that our motivation is self-fulfillment, however. Rather, we feel meaning and purpose because we catch glimpses that God is using us for God’s purposes. We are tools of God’s ongoing creation. The gifts and abilities that God created in us and define who we are fit with the needs of others—and we experience that “fit” as confirmation that our feet are on the right path. According to 1 Peter, we are to use whatever gifts God has given us to serve our neighbors (1 Pet. 4:10). In so doing, we experience the joy of being God’s coworkers (Palmer, 1991; Sherman, 2011).

Sometimes the very work that brings us the joy of lives of purpose also is deeply demanding and even depleting. There are times that we sacrifice a part of ourselves for the sake of the others we serve through our work. Every social worker has heard someone say, “I could never do what you do.” That is true; some people do not have the gifts and abilities that social work requires. Those who do, however, may experience the joy of serving even in situations that lead to fatigue, disappointments, and sometimes tears.

Moreover, sometimes God calls people to tasks for which they are quite unqualified or that they do not want to do. Think of Moses with his speech



impediment and objections to confronting Pharaoh; Jonah called to prophesize to a people he despised, fleeing from the task God put before him; Esther not wanting to risk her life by speaking for her people; the small boy David with his slingshot and stones facing a giant; and even Jesus asking God to take away the terrible task God put before him in the Garden of Gethsemane. The biblical narratives teach that when God does call people to something they are unable or unwilling to do, a display of God's power will follow.

Christian calling, then, is our work, but it is more than our work at the same time. Because God loves the world, our calling is always about our contribution to that world—in all the ways we live in a physical place and a human community. Calling is far more than the profession for which we prepare or the title we put in our e-mail signature or on our doors. Calling does not end when we retire from paid employment. We walk our calling all our lives, with all the ups and downs and twists and turns, never finished until we finish this life.

### **The History of Social Work as Christian Vocation**

Some professional paths are intrinsically more directly in service of neighbors than others, and social work is one such profession. Many of those who shaped the beginnings of the social work profession in the late nineteenth century were religious leaders, applying the new social sciences of psychology and sociology to the mission outreach activity of the church. Specht and Courtney have suggested that even the name “social work” derived from the religious term “good works,” a Christian concept (1994, p. 21).

Many of the earliest schools of social work combined social work and religious education. At a time in which women were denied access to established church institutions like denominational seminaries and colleges, they founded these social work schools to prepare to serve as church workers and missionaries both in this country and in overseas missions (Garland & Yancey, 2014). For them, social work *was* a Christian mission, so it certainly *had* a Christian mission. Early male leaders of the social work profession also grounded the very purpose of the profession in Christian teachings. In 1920, the president of the National Conference of Social Work described the *calling* of social work to work for God's order “on earth as it is in heaven” (Lovejoy, 1920, p. 209). He grounded the profession in the words of Jesus, announcing his calling to bind up the broken hearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, and open the prisons of those that are bound, saying “this is not a slight task to which we are called” (p. 209). He *de facto* equated social work with sacred ministry grounded in the life of Jesus. Two decades later, Edward Devine, a leader in the Charity Organization Society, wrote a historical reflection on the earliest years of the social work program and concluded that the power, purpose and value of social work derive from Christian teaching (Devine, 1939). These two examples represent the heart of early social work.

During the middle decades of the twentieth century, however, new theoretical approaches of the social sciences that left no room for religion and spirituality

came to dominate the helping professions—psychology, social work, nursing, and psychology. These approaches saw religion and faith as unscientific and so a threat to professions that saw themselves as the expression of the social sciences. Social work, particularly social work education and academic scholarship, became increasingly secularized—and the academy has strong influence on the profession as it prepares each generation of new leaders. In 1952, Bisno expressed the common sentiment of the academy that a Christian understanding of sin was in direct competition with social work's valuing of an individual's worth and dignity. He argued that Christianity, as he saw it expressed, at least in Catholic social work, is "outside the main stream of social work thought" (p. 3).

Professional social work and religious service agencies grew to ignore or even be openly hostile toward one another, even though professional social workers motivated by Christian faith continued to serve in public and private nonsectarian settings, quiet boundary crossers from the secularized profession to the religious agencies where they served. The concept of calling was virtually ignored, leading church historian Martin Marty to comment that social work had become "godless" (Marty, 1980, p. 463). For a student to talk about Christian motivation for choosing social work as a profession could have meant rejection from social work school (Keith-Lucas, Kuhlmann, & Ressler, 1994). Even so, Christians quietly continued to enter the profession as a way of living their faith, often underplaying their religious motivations for choosing the profession because of the profession's growing suspicion and hostility toward all things religious. Christian organizations and agencies continued to provide social services as expressions of the mission of the church, ignored and often marginalized by the social work profession (Garland & Yancey, 2014).

It took half a century before the social work profession rediscovered the church and the role of religious faith and spirituality in the lives of social workers and their clients. Positivism, the philosophy of science that limited truth to that which we can verify empirically—what we can observe—was challenged by new postmodern theories that questioned our ability to know the social world objectively. By our very observations and description of the world around us, we actually construct it, said the postmodernists. Our observations are always incomplete; we cannot assume that because we do not observe some reality that it does not exist (Hutchison, 1998; Jeavons, 1998; Meinert, 1998; Pardeck, Murphy, & Min Choi, 1994; Weick & Saleebey, 1998). There was room again for religion and spirituality—and God.

At the same time that scientific theoretical thought was changing, so was U.S. government policy. The federal government was dismantling its social welfare policies and programs and instead making grant funding available to private social services organizations. Those organizations included religiously affiliated agencies and even congregations through legislation such as the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). The legislation launched the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (Chaves, 1999; Farnsely, 2004; Farris, Nathan, & Wright, 2004). Social work academics and educators were also rediscovering the importance of religious faith and spirituality in the lives of clients, if not yet in the lives of

social workers (e.g., Belcher & Cascio, 2001; Canda, 1999; Canda & Phaobtong, 1992; Cnaan, Boddie, & Danzig, 2005; Cornett, 1992; Derezotes, 1995; Netting, 2002; Sherwood, 1999; Walsh, 1995).

Social work education was also recognizing the role of religious institutions in the preparation of social work professionals. In 1985, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) first accredited a social work program that overtly prepared social workers for practice in church settings, the Carver School of Church Social Work located in The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kentucky. It took a threat of legal action charging religious discrimination on the part of the seminary to reach the outcome of accreditation, however.<sup>2</sup> CSWE had been accrediting social work programs in denominationally affiliated universities for many years previously, since the beginning of accreditation, although many schools de-emphasized their religious affiliation in the processes of accreditation and even in their classroom teaching. Accrediting a program overtly focused on social work education for the church had never happened before. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, CSWE had accredited almost 200 undergraduate and graduate social work programs that were identified as “religiously affiliated,” many of them now overt about their integration of faith and spirituality with social work practice (Council on Social Work Education, 2012).

During this same period at the end of the twentieth century, social work thought leaders began revisiting the concept of vocational calling, although they couched that calling in secular terms. They were concerned that the profession was losing its commitment to social justice, public welfare, and to serving persons in situations of poverty, or otherwise disadvantaged and oppressed. In the late decades of the twentieth century, increasing numbers of social workers were less interested in care for populations historically of concern to the profession, and more interested in providing clinical services in private practice settings with paying clients. Leaders feared that social work was losing its calling (e.g. Reamer, 1987; Specht & Courtney, 1994). Because of this concern, Canda and others found an audience in the profession when they described how many social workers come to the profession seeking to live into a religious calling on their lives (Canda, 1989, 1995, 1999).

In the decades when religious motivation was highly suspect in the mainstream of the profession, the North American Association of Christians in Social Work, founded in 1954, had provided a haven for Christians who sought to integrate their faith with their professional practice (Keith-Lucas et al., 1994). In 1974, NACSW began publishing the journal, *Social Work & Christianity*, that provided an opportunity for publications that addressed the relationship of social work and Christian vocation. NACSW published two important books by Alan Keith-Lucas on the topic of Christian calling and social work as a profession that continue to be relevant today (Keith-Lucas, 1972, 1985).

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2 The basis for this historical account is my personal experience as a member of the Carver faculty during those years.

## Understanding Social Work as Christian Vocation Today

Rick Chamiec-Case has provided a conceptual framework for how Christian social workers think about the integration of Christian faith and social work practice (Chamiec-Case, 2009). He describes the *latent integration* model, in which Christian faith permeates whatever the Christian does and so influences professional practice whether or not the social worker is intentional about it. In other words, the social worker simply integrates faith into practice because one's self is the primary tool in social work practice, and if that self is Christian, then practice is an expression of Christianity. Latent integration does not necessarily require intentionality or reflection.

Chamiec-Case's second model of integration is the *calling* model, in which a social worker has experienced God calling them to social work. The Chamiec-Case model of calling implies a beckoning into—first comes calling and then comes the choice of social work as a path of living that calling. But according to the social workers I have interviewed, they have been operating from a latent integration model, only to reflect back along their life journey to experience afterwards what they perceive to be God's calling all along the way. Calling for them is not a beckoning so much as a reflection backward to see God at work in their lives.

Chamiec-Case also describes a *sustaining/coping* model of faith and practice integration (Chamiec-Case, 2009). The conviction that God calls Christians to care for persons who are vulnerable, poor, or in distress gives them energy and strength for work that is often stressful and even discouraging. For these Christians, they are social workers not because that they believe their efforts will result in a changed world broadly or even perhaps the worlds of the clients they serve. More fundamentally, they believe that God calls them to show their devotion to God through service to people and advocacy for justice—even when their efforts seem fruitless.

There is much more depth and breadth to Chamiec-Case's research on calling; I commend to you his original work as a parallel reading with this book.

In an exploration of the integration of faith with social work practice, some of my colleagues at Baylor University interviewed our students, practitioners, and faculty colleagues. They described this integration as “the road trip of a lifetime” (Scales, Harris, Myers, & Singletary, 2012, p. 130). They found that students found their way into social work in a variety of ways. For some, parents modeled service during their childhoods. Some walked through doors and opportunities that presented themselves. Some found themselves drawn to serving a particular population or addressing a human problem, and social work was the way to best go at that task. For some, their goal was church ministry, but they were seeking the skills and knowledge that social work would provide them for that ministry. Some seemed unclear, still looking for a compass. Confirmation often only came long after school, when they had opportunities to work in the profession and realize that it fit (Scales et al., 2012; Singletary, Harris, Myers, & Scales, 2006).

How do you understand calling? Does our call come from outside ourselves—is something or Someone calling us into this path? Or does it come from within, in a process of discerning what looks like a path that fits what brings us joy in life and what fits our gifts and aptitudes? In fact, most of us have a multitude of motivations for what we do, some of which we may only be dimly aware, if aware at all.

Bible stories present a variety of examples of God calling people to a task or a lifework. Most often, there seemed to be an actual audible voice. God spoke to Abram who left home and kindred to answer. God spoke to Moses from the burning bush. An angel spoke to Mary. A great flash of light and thundering voice knocked the angry Pharisee Saul down blind. These biblical callings suggest calling is a onetime voice calling in the night—or day—heralded by bright lights and burning bushes.

Other stories suggest that God speaks to us in our dreams or in dreamlike states. Joseph received a warning in a dream to take Mary and Jesus and flee in a dream. The boy Samuel heard a voice in the night, mistaking it at first for Eli; it took Eli's guidance before Samuel believed his own ears.

Still others heard no voice directly but chose a direction because they trusted another to have a word from God. Esther acted based on the urging of her Uncle Mordecai. Sarai went with Abram to a new country because Abram told her God had called them; it took decades of trusting a husband that often proved untrustworthy before she could reflect back and see God's work through her life (D. E. Garland & Garland, 2007).

Many of these biblical narratives imply that calling comes at a defining moment in time as the one great task to which God calls us. But for many of us, calling seems more a process over a lifetime of listening to the stirrings in our souls in response to scripture and the world around us, of listening in the silence of prayer, of dreams waking and sleeping, of the voices of others telling us how they see our gifts and possibilities. Bankson has said that calling begins with a feeling of connection to something or someone (Bankson, 1999). We walk by the ocean, hear a choir sing gloriously to God, catch a new meaning in an old Bible story, experience anger at an injustice on the streets of our town or in the evening news—and we may feel a longing that we intuit comes from beyond ourselves. Sometimes those intuitions only come as we look back on the events of our lives and see that we were not just wandering aimlessly—our steps brought us to where we are because it seems that is where we were supposed to be.

### **One Social Worker's Story—Patricia Cummings<sup>3</sup>**

I found it difficult to select one story for this chapter from the 25 stories I have been living with as I am finishing the book, *Social Work as Calling*. Each has lived a different journey, each working in one (or more) of the many fields

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3 I have changed all names of persons, locations, and organizations to protect the identities and confidentiality of clients and the privacy of social workers, so that they could speak freely about their experiences. My co-author for this case study is Charis Dietz.

of social work practice—child and family services, adoptions, schools, marriage counseling, older adults and adults with disabilities, community practice, community organizing, advocacy for immigrant and refugee populations, missions internationally, nursing homes, hospice, legislative advocacy for human rights, workforce development, criminal justice, and the military. I took the easy way out, therefore, and simply selected the first chapter in the book, Patricia Cummings.

Patricia Cummings grew up knowing that she was adopted. Even before she understood the concept of adoption, her parents read her a children's book that explained that adoption means that they had chosen her; that she was special. She always felt loved and secure. Because of that life experience, she thought she would grow up to work as an adoptions social worker.

Her parents were active members and leaders in their congregation, and as a teenager, Patricia says she felt called to ministry. Her denomination did not allow women to serve as pastors, however, and she did not know of any other route into ministry open to her. She completed her associate's degree and left college for marriage at the age of 19. In the years that followed, she and her husband struggled with infertility. Month after month of not being pregnant was painful; she deeply wanted to be a mother. She finally came to the place of saying, "Okay Lord, you and I both know there are a lot of children that need someone to love them and care for them." She and her husband adopted their son. And the experience of deep disappointment and then the joy of becoming an adoptive mother herself after living with the reality of her own adoption fed her sense of calling to care for children vulnerable to the loss of family.

In those early years, Patricia worked in the office of a middle school in their small town, where she also functioned as the school nurse, even though she does not have a nursing degree. But there was no school nurse and so when teachers sent sick children to the office, Patricia did what needed to be done. She reflects back,

I saw so many kids that really weren't sick, but they were sick at heart. If they were sick, I would call their family to pick them up. If there were problems, I tried to help them—but I really did not know how to help. I just cared.

That experience of caring without being able to help sent her back to school to obtain the tools she perceived she needed for helping children, and even more, the families of children. Believing that families needed counseling, she completed a BA in psychology at a Baptist college within commuting distance of her home. After graduation, she worked for four years in the state child protective services agency. The agency provided the *training* she needed for working with situations of abuse and neglect, but she wanted more *education*. That is, she knew how to do the tasks assigned her, to conduct an assessment, to make decisions about the safety of children, and to follow procedures. She wanted to use her experience to create ways to help families before child protective services became involved—to think creatively and with a wider vision.

Patricia started her MSW degree at the state university, but once again, family responsibilities presented what seemed like a barrier to her education.

Both of her parents were ill, and she had the responsibility for their care, so she dropped out of her graduate degree program. After time at home providing care for her parents, she once again was looking for a job, and this time found employment with Presbyterian Family Services. Her employment came with the promise of the agency's support—and the condition that she complete her MSW. Her son was now grown, and she jumped at the chance. Presbyterian Family Services sent her to a religiously affiliated university close enough she could commute, because they wanted her to have a degree that integrated religious faith with professional social work. Working full time at Presbyterian, it took her three years of commuting to campus to complete her degree part-time. She graduated in 2003, at the age of 47. It may have taken her awhile, but she found her route into ministry.

### **Presbyterian Family Services**

Patricia began the Family Care program for Presbyterian while she was an MSW student; she still supervises the program almost two decades after that first employment conversation, where she was offered a job and the support she needed to complete her MSW. Her staff works to provide families the services they need to help children flourish, whatever that may mean. Although they receive some of their referrals from the state children protective services agency where Patricia began her career, they only serve voluntary clients—no family can be required by a state agency or a court to receive their services.

Presbyterian has tried to remove all barriers that would keep families from benefiting from their counseling services. As a denominational agency, it is able to offer the services for free, supported by the Presbyterian Church. The social workers provide services in client homes because they believe they can be more effective providing services in the family's own context. Therefore, transportation is never a barrier.

I asked Patricia to tell me about the kind of work that the agency does, and she told me about a family with whom she worked almost a decade ago and who still drops by to say hello and let her know how they are doing. Patricia received a referral from the high school about Beth and Carrie Porter, sisters ages sixteen and seventeen, both juniors in high school, since Beth had to repeat a grade. Beth and Carrie were living alone with their younger brothers, who were in elementary school. When Patricia visited, she learned that their dad had left them in a house for which he paid the rent, but he had provided nothing else.

There was no furniture in the house, and no electricity or heat. When their mother died nine years previously, their father took over their care. He was an alcoholic and went through a number of partners and marriages, and the children received little supervision or even provision for basic necessities. Not only did he leave the girls with their own two brothers to parent, but also four other children to care for, the children of his current girlfriend. He had plugged an extension cord with one light on the end of it into the house next door so that they had that single light at night. Before the extension cord, the girls had

been holding a flashlight for each other to do their homework in the long dark evenings. The girls took jobs at Dairy Queen in order to buy groceries. They alternated evening schedules so that one of them could be home to take care of the younger children.

One night, the house next door burned down, and Beth and Carrie lost their light. The next day, Beth began to cry at school, and when a teacher probed, she found herself telling about their situation despite all the warnings not to share the family's situation.

She was afraid because her dad had always told them, "If you ever tell anyone, what is happening, CPS will come and split you all up, and you'll never see each other again." So they had this huge fear all their lives of losing one another. So when I received calls from the school, I went to the home. As I assessed the situation, I realized that Beth, almost eighteen, really had the capacity to parent her brothers. We arranged to move the girlfriend's children out of the home.

I asked Beth what was her greatest need, and she said she was trying to figure out how to get to the elementary school to get her little brother's report card, because you had to have a teacher conference to get a report card. She rode the bus to school, and she was trying to figure out how to get to the elementary school to have that teacher conference.

Patricia helped Beth to move into a rent-subsidized apartment and arranged for furniture supplied by a congregation. She helped Beth with the legal processes of obtaining custody of her siblings. She arranged to transfer her mother's Social Security benefits from the dad to Beth so that they had some income. Patricia stayed in close touch with the girls as they completed high school. She helped Carrie to apply for and receive a full scholarship to the state university.

They were good students; they went to school every day. Carrie went to college, and Beth found employment and parented her little brothers. I worked with them for three years, developing their life skills such as Carrie's learning how to write a resume and apply for jobs, and how to budget. I was the adult with whom Carrie and Beth could discuss parenting the boys and making life decisions they both faced. I provided them with counseling. Carrie had been sexually abused during those early years by a relative who had been temporarily living in the home, and although the perpetrator was prosecuted, she never received any counseling.

Carrie and Beth were very active in their church, but because people there knew their father, they had been hesitant to reach out for help. Patricia became the adult in their lives on whom they could lean for those years, until they believed they could do it on their own.



No one wants a social worker in their life forever, and when they reached the point that they felt like they could do life on their own, we mutually agreed that we would close the case. I was here if they ever needed me. So from time to time, they always have called me or come back by just to see me. A couple of years ago, they came back by, and a church here had asked me if I had a family to refer to them for a program called Open Table, where people in the congregation agree to walk alongside a family living in poverty and help them with life decisions, providing support. So I talked to Carrie and Beth, and they both wanted to participate. They still lived in poverty; they had food and electricity, but they wanted more for themselves.

Patricia participated with the church group, at Carrie and Beth's request, now in the role of a volunteer mentor, not their social worker.

The family of siblings has done well. Carrie graduated from college and has a very good job. Beth completed a vocational nursing program and is employed as a nurse. Their incomes have lifted the family out of poverty. The older brother received an athletic scholarship and is on track to graduate from college. The younger brother is a junior in high school, playing football and staying on the academic honor roll.

They faced challenges, though, and that is what the Open Table church group helped them through. Carrie has Lupus, and she became very ill during her junior year and quit college; she had no insurance. Beth did not pass the final nursing test. So the church group helped them with resources and encouragement to return to school until they both graduated and obtained stable employment, had reliable cars to drive, and knew how to budget their money. Most of their family members had not graduated high school, and they were the first to attempt college. They have done so well.

Patricia said that she has learned that change does not come through programs; it comes through relationships.

I really see that change comes about through that relationship, the professional relationship and empowering the families; the program just provides a context for a relationship to form. Through the relationship, the family learns to trust us, to trust enough to learn from our education and expertise that we can share.

## **Working with Families**

In some ways, Carrie and Beth's family was exceptional, since Beth was close enough to eighteen that Patricia could work with them toward their being responsible for their family without having to place them with adult relatives or

in foster care. Few children can live on their own, obviously; they have to have parental figures in their lives. Patricia began her social work practice wanting to work with children. Soon she began to realize that she could help children by counseling with them for a few weeks or months, but if she worked with their parents, she could create change in the family systems that would help children far more than anything she could do in individual counseling with the children themselves. Her focus shifted to parents, guiding them in supporting the healthy development of their children. That is what she did with Patricia and Beth, and so prevented placing their brothers in foster care. The goal of the agency is to keep families together whenever possible.

Patricia is proud of how flexible the agency is, with capacity for addressing most of the needs of families, even when their needs are outside their usual services. To illustrate, she told me how not long before we talked, Randy Poage walked into the office; it is not unusual for people to show up without an appointment. Another agency had sent Randy to Patricia because he was going through a divorce and needed a social study done for a court custody hearing. Patricia had done lots of custody work in the past, but she no longer offers this service. But someone had given Randy her name and said she could help him. She wanted to say that she was sorry, that she does not do social studies for the court anymore. But she also knew that she did not know his situation.

I did not know how fragile he might be; I have seen people just crumble if I tell them I can't help them. So I invited him into my office, all the while thinking to myself, "I know I'm not going to do that social study; I should tell him now and save his time."

Fidgeting nervously in the seat, he asked her if she wanted him to tell her his story. Clients often have to tell their story over and over in order to receive the services they need, and she wanted to spare him that, knowing already that she would not be able to help. She asked Randy if anyone had given him a list of professionals who now are doing custody work. Instead, he launched into telling her the story anyway—and she listened. His heart was breaking at losing his wife and children. He works at a minimum wage job, struggling to pay child support; he really did not have the resources to pay an agency for the social study he needed so desperately if he were to keep visiting rights with his children.

After listening to his heartbreak and his longing for a relationship with his children, Patricia decided to contact a colleague at another agency, asking if a social worker there would at least talk with him.

I told her I would try to help find a way to pay for her services through another agency. Instead, she offered to do the social study pro bono, saying "If you tell me he needs it done, I will do it; don't worry about the money." I was so surprised; social studies take a lot of time and usually cost a lot of money.

So she made an appointment, hung up the phone, and handed Randy the slip of paper with the social worker's name, address and the appointment date

and time. When she stood and shook his hand, Randy said, “Thank you; you are the only person who would help me.” Then he thought, lifted his eyes and looked her squarely in the face, and said, “No wait; you didn’t just help me. You are the only person that *listened* to me.” For him, as much as he needed the help, he needed also to have someone care enough to hear his story. Patricia thought about how she had not wanted to take the time or put him through the emotion of telling his story, and realized she had been sensitive enough to realize that he needed and wanted the connection with another person who cared enough to listen. Because of her work, Randy’s children would have their father back in their lives.

### **From Families to Community Practice**

In the early years, Patricia worked directly with client families, and she still works with a few families herself, even though it is a fulltime responsibility to supervise the social workers on the agency’s staff across the region for which she is now responsible. She likes staying grounded in work with families so that she can readily understand what her staff experiences. There are also times that there is a good reason for the regional social worker not to work with a specific family—perhaps they are related in some way or are friends—and so Patricia takes those clients herself.

She also loves providing training for staff and experiences deep satisfaction in helping them work through challenges, growing and flourishing as professionals under her supervision.

In addition to providing counseling services in homes, Presbyterian’s social workers also advocate for their families in the community. Patricia helped to develop a child advocacy center in her town and served as director of the board for four years. The center is still thriving; she is pleased that it was built strong, proudly stating, “They no longer need me.”

In the months just before our last conversation, the agency promoted Patricia to Regional Director, one of four in the state. She now travels much of the work-week and is often is gone three or four nights each week when she is opening a new program in another city or dealing with a challenge. When programs are running smoothly, she is away only a night or two a week.

The agency is expanding their community-based programs and is able to do so because they have closed two residential programs. The teenagers being referred now to residential programs have significant mental health issues, and the agency is not equipped to provide those services. Instead, Presbyterian has decided to close those programs and instead expand what they do best, which is to work with families in the community and with foster care. As part of that expansion, Patricia described a new residential program she oversees that she just opened:

In one house, there will be seven single moms and their children.  
The other home is for six girls transitioning out of foster care at age

eighteen and who have no families to support them as they move into adulthood. They can stay with us for up to eighteen months, with the goal of achieving self-sufficiency. They must be working or going to school or part-time of both of those.

## **Rural Social Work**

One of the most significant challenges Patricia faces is living in a rural community. She inevitably runs into clients at the grocery store or in church. Because of the close working relationship she develops with families and the mutual affection that develops through the work together, she is careful to explain that she cannot be their friend, and she will not even speak to them if she runs into them in the community unless they speak to her first. But she says, “they don’t remember that—or they don’t want to remember that.” One evening she took a client’s baby to the hospital and there encountered three former clients—the nurse who cared for them, another patient in the emergency room, and then the x-ray technologist. All three wanted to catch her up on their lives, but the context was not appropriate, and when Patricia did not encourage their sharing with her, at least one former client’s face fell in disappointment.

On the other hand, there are great advantages in rural social work. Patricia knows the agencies and knows the other professionals in town, and they know and trust her—like the congregation that provided Beth and Carrie with furniture and, later, with the Open Table program, and the colleague who provided pro bono services to Randy. That is a real asset for Patricia’s clients—she can obtain resources that otherwise might not be available to them.

## **The Reward**

It gives Patricia joy when she sees clients regain hope that their lives can be better, even when others have given up on them, when they have burned bridges in the past. It is rewarding to see clients make progress and change their lives as a consequence of the agency’s involvement.

Just before our initial conversation, Patricia and a social work colleague had organized her community’s involvement in a community-wide school supply drive for the fourth year. In previous years, every congregation and every agency had doled out a few school supplies to children who could not afford them—Patricia had identified sixteen different places that gathered donations and then handed out supplies for families requesting them. Families had to be savvy in knowing where to go, and not all families received what their children needed. Patricia asked, “Could we serve more children more effectively if we all worked together?”

Not everyone was enthusiastic—some were not sure they wanted to give up their own service project. In the end, though, Patricia was excited to see that all the congregations and agencies joined in to raise the funds for 2,400 backpacks with needed supplies in them, by grade level. Every child who needed one re-

ceived one. And the community took pride in their strong collaboration. Many people participated, and they had different ideas about how they should tackle the project. There were conflicts. But, Patricia says with a broad grin, “We did it together; and we are already talking about what we learned and how we can improve for next year.”

## **The Role of Faith**

When Patricia and her staff conduct an initial assessment with families inquiring about services, they ask about their faith, what role it plays in their lives if it does, and whether or not they are part of a congregation. Some clients want to talk about spiritual issues, trying to find the meaning in the suffering they are experiencing. Others do not. Some have come from very different perspectives, and Patricia has learned to say, “Teach me about your faith.”

Ms. Schmidt came to Patricia for help when she learned that a family member had sexually abused her daughter. Coming to Presbyterian was a big risk for Ms. Schmidt; she belonged to a non-Christian faith tradition, and her community expected her to keep the family’s troubles within the community. Patricia needed to understand the teachings and values of the community in order to help Ms. Schmidt decide how to help her daughter and also relate to her community. Since her faith community was part of the crisis, Patricia asked Ms. Schmidt to teach her about her community and their faith beliefs and practices as they relate to the crisis in Ms. Schmidt’s family.

Patricia always makes the focus on the client’s faith, not her own. When the session ended, Ms. Schmidt surprised Patricia by asking, “Would you pray for me?” Since the woman assumed Patricia has a Christian perspective since she was sitting in a Presbyterian agency, Patricia asked for clarification—did Ms. Schmidt want her to pray for her in the coming days, or was she asking for prayer together now? Ms. Schmidt responded, “I want you to pray for me this week because this next week is going to be really hard.” Patricia responded,

I said, “I would be honored to pray for you, if that is what you want.” Ms Schmidt smiled, and said to me, “I’m pretty sure that we’re praying to the same God.”

Presbyterian’s mission statement says that it provides Christ-centered services to children and their families. Patricia is a Christian but not a Presbyterian, and her staff members come from a variety of Christian traditions. They may not agree on some of what Patricia calls the nuances of doctrine, but they do agree that Jesus focused on people’s strengths. She referenced the story of Jesus talking with the woman at the well (John 4). When the woman told Jesus that she had been married five times, he responded by saying that she was telling the truth. Patricia notes that Jesus point out the woman’s strength—her truthfulness. Jesus encouraged people, Patricia says, and so that is what she and her staff try to do—identify people’s strengths, honor their experiences, and encourage them in their own paths.

Even if I never bring up the Lord or faith or anything, if I'm building on their strengths, and that is what social workers do, then that's also what Jesus did. It is really about what they want and need, and not my trying to make them think like I think.

After our last interview, Patricia reflected more on the meaning of her faith in her work. She sent me the following message in an e-mail:

In the midst of crisis, clients often have so few that believe in them. Maybe they have broken relationships or lost hope that things can ever be different than they are. I believe that people can have a better future regardless of where they have been, the crisis they find themselves in, or the consequences of their decisions. There is no condemnation in Christ; He loves us and gives us opportunity every day to change and live a more full and meaningful life. During times of deep hurt and hopelessness, God has always been faithful to “carry” me when I felt helpless to walk the difficult path. In the same way, I pray to be so “present” with a client or staff member that they see there is no condemnation but rather hope and encouragement, and that my hope for their future can carry them until they can recover their own personal hope.

Now, in addition to her responsibilities at Presbyterian, Patricia has returned to her graduate program as a part-time teacher. For more than seven years, she has been teaching a course on professional practice with children and families. As varied as her responsibilities are, they all relate to caring for children—through her own work with children and families and their communities, in her supervision of the work of other professionals, and now in the teaching of future professionals. When she felt the tug of a calling on her life to ministry more than forty years ago, she had no way of imagining the path on which that calling has led her.

### **Reflecting on Patricia's Story**

Patricia would never suggest to you that her story is some sort of model of social work practice. She shared her story with me, trusting that others could use it to reflect on how her own journey informs their own path as Christians seek to live the calling on their lives to this profession of social work. Her story raises many questions for pondering: What does her life illustrate about vocation and calling? How is the story of Carrie and Beth's family a story of the integration of faith and professional practice? Why did Patricia not want to hear Randy's story, and why did she listen anyway? What does this story suggest about professional social work and Christian faith principles? What principles did Patricia use in shaping how she engaged in conversations about religion and faith with Ms. Schmidt? How is her story like—and different—from your own?

## Final Thoughts

When I began this project, I thought I would be describing fields of practice and how social workers related their faith to their practice in those settings. What Patricia's story illustrates is that instead, I found myself describing faith journeys, from one professional setting to another, placed in the context of lived life—career interruptions for the births of children or care of ill parents or sieges with cancer. Even when a social worker stayed in the same setting, as Patricia did, they often changed their focus and level of practice from direct practice to supervision and management. In short, calling is not to a field of practice—a place—but instead to a journey through life—a path. That path has twists and turns that keep us from seeing where we are going to end; it requires trust in the One who calls us and leads us step by step, whether we are aware of that leading along the way or simply follow where the path seems to lead.

Before I interviewed them, the social workers whose stories I have collected may or may not have given systematic thought to the concept of Christian vocation, to what motivates them, or to how their work and their faith intersect. To ask them about their “calling” meant going back to think about the path they have come and what led them along the way. For some, the sense of God beckoning them into this path was very real. Some heard what they describe as the voice of God, perhaps in their thoughts or dreams if not as an external sound. Others have trusted intuitions that come in their experiences of holy quiet, expressive worship or searching scriptures and inspired readings. For others, they seemed to stumble along, only becoming aware of a sense of purpose - or calling—by looking backward. They did what they did because a path opened before them and they simply took it.

Is it less a calling if we are only dimly aware, or not at all aware, that God is leading us? Or does God intervene in our lives by actually directing us, or are we simply called to be faithful to the teachings of Jesus wherever our paths wander?

Trust in the Lord, and do good ... Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.... Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him (Psalm 37: 3-7).

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# Doing the Right Thing: A Christian Perspective on Ethical Decision-Making for Christians in Social Work Practice<sup>1</sup>

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*David A. Sherwood*

You are on the staff of a Christian Counseling Center and in the course of a week you encounter the following clients:

1. A minister who became sexually involved with a teen-age girl at a previous church several years ago. His current church is not aware of this. He says he has “dealt with his problem.”
2. A Christian woman whose husband is physically abusive and who has threatened worse to her and their young child if she tells anyone or leaves him. She comes to your office with cuts and bruises, afraid to go home and afraid not to go home. She doesn’t know what she should do or can do.
3. A single mother who is severely depressed and who is not taking adequate care of her two young children, both under the age of four. She denies that her personal problems are affecting her ability to take care of her children.

The list could easily go on. Helping professionals, Christian or otherwise, are daily confronted with issues that are immensely complex and which call forth judgments and actions that confound any attempts to neatly separate “clinical knowledge and skill,” our preferred professional roles and boundaries, and, fundamentally, our world-view, faith, moral judgment, and character. Much as we would like to keep it simple, real life is messy and all of a piece. All kinds of things interconnect and interact. How would you respond to clients like the ones I just mentioned?

Christian social workers need to know who they are and what resources they have to do the right thing as children of God—personally, socially, and professionally. What are our resources and limits in choosing and acting ethically as Christians who are placed in helping relationships with others? I will try to review briefly a Christian perspective on:

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<sup>1</sup> Material in this chapter has been adapted from two articles previously published in *Social Work & Christianity*—(1993). Doing the right thing: Ethical practice in contemporary society, 20(2), 140-159 and (2002). Ethical integration of faith and social work practice: Evangelism, 29(1), 1-12.

- When we have a moral problem.
- Conditions under which we choose and act.
- Faith and the hermeneutical spiral (understanding God's will).
- How the Bible teaches us regarding values and ethics.
- The Principle/Practice Pyramid—using fundamental values, guiding principles, and moral rules to make character-driven judgments in case-level ethical dilemmas
- A decision-making model that integrates the deontological (ought) dimensions with the teleological (purpose and consequences) dimensions of a problem.
- Evangelism and ethical professional social work practice as a case in point.
- The fundamental role of a character formed through the discipleship and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We cannot devise or forcibly wrench out of the scriptures a set of rules that will simply tell us what to do if we will only be willing to obey. It appears that God has something else in mind for us as He grows us up into the image of Christ. Ultimately, “doing the right thing” results from our making judgments which grow out of our character as we are “changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (II Corinthians 3:18).

### **When Do We Have a Moral Problem?**

When do we have a moral “problem?” I would argue that value issues are so pervasive in life that there is virtually no question we face that does not have moral dimensions at some level. Even the choice regarding what brand of coffee to use (or whether to use coffee at all) is not a completely value-neutral question. However, for practical purposes I think it is helpful to realize that moral “problems” tend to be characterized by the following conditions:

**1. More than one value is at stake and they are in some degree of conflict.**

This is more common than we would like to think. It need not be a conflict between good and bad. It is more usually differing goods or differing bads. A maxim that I drill into my students is “You can’t maximize all values simultaneously.” Which is to say life continually confronts us with choices, and to choose one thing *always* means to give up or have less of something else. And that something else may be a very good thing, so serious choices are usually very costly ones. A familiar, lighthearted version of this is the adage “You can’t have your cake and eat it too.” This is one of life’s truisms which is very easy to forget or tempting to ignore, but which is at the heart of all value and moral problems. No conflict, no problem.

**2. There is uncertainty about what values are, in fact, involved or what they mean.**

For example, what are all the relevant values involved in a decision regarding abortion? And what, exactly, is meant by choice, right to life, a

person? Where do these values come from? What is their basis? How do they put us under obligation?

**3. There is uncertainty about what the actual facts are.**

What is the true situation? What are the relevant facts? Are they known? Can they be known? How well can they be known under the circumstances?

**4. There is uncertainty about the actual consequences of alternative possible choices and courses of action.**

Often we say that choices and actions should be guided by results. While it is true that their morality is at least in part influenced by their intended and actual consequences, Christians believe that God has built certain “oughts” like justice and love into the creation and that results always have to be measured by some standard or “good” which is beyond the naked results themselves. It is also crucial to remember that consequences can never be fully known at the time of decision and action. The best we can ever do at the time is to *predict*. We are obligated to make the best predictions we can, but we must be humbled by the limitations of our ability to anticipate actual results. However, unintended consequences turn out to be every bit as real and often more important than intended ones, especially if we haven’t done our homework.

### **Under What Conditions Do We Have to Choose and Act?**

Given this understanding of a moral “problem,” it seems to me that real-life value choices and moral decisions are always made under these conditions:

**1. We have a problem.**

An actual value conflict is present or at least perceived. For example, we want to tell the truth and respect our dying father’s personal rights and dignity by telling him the prognosis but we don’t want to upset him, perhaps hasten his death, or create possible complications for ourselves and the hospital staff.

**2. We always have significant limitations in our facts, knowledge, understanding, and ability to predict the consequences of our actions.**

What causes teen-age, unmarried pregnancy? What policies would lead to a decrease in teen-age pregnancy? What other unintended consequences might the policies have? Correct information and knowledge are very hard (often impossible) to come by. As Christians we know that human beings are both finite (limited) and fallen (liable to distortion from selfishness and other forms of sin). The more we can do to overcome or reduce these limitations the better off we’ll be. But the beginning of wisdom is to recognize our weakness and dependence.

**3. Ready or not, we have to decide and do something, at least for the time being, even if the decision is to ignore the problem.**

Life won’t permit us to stay on the fence until we thoroughly understand all the value issues, have all the relevant data, conduct a perfectly complete

analysis, and develop a completely Christ-like character. So, we have to learn how to make the best choices we can under the circumstances. (“You can’t maximize all values simultaneously” but you have to give it your best shot!)

**4. Whatever decision we make and action we take will be fundamentally influenced by our assumptions, world-view, faith—whatever that is.**

“Facts,” even when attainable, don’t sustain moral judgments by themselves. They must be interpreted in the light of at least one faith-based value judgment. Where do my notions of good and bad, healthy and sick, functional and dysfunctional come from? Never from the “facts” alone (Lewis, 1947, 1943).

**5. We would like to have definitive, non-ambiguous, prescriptive direction so that we can be completely certain of the rightness of our choice, but we never can.**

Not from Scripture, not from the law, not from our mother. We want to *know* without a doubt that we are right. This has always been part of the allure of legalism, unquestioning submission to authorities of various stripes, and simplistic reduction of complex situations. The only way (to seem) to be saved by the law is to chop it down to our own puny size.

**6. We may not have legalistic, prescriptive formulas, but we *do* have guidance and help.**

Doing the right thing is not just a subjective, relativistic venture. God knows the kind of help we really need to grow up in Christ and God has provided it. We need to be open to the kind of guidance God actually gives instead of demanding the kind of guidance we think would be best. What God has actually given is Himself in Jesus Christ, the story of love, justice, grace, and redemption given witness in Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and the community of the church, historically, universally, and locally.

**7. Ultimately, doing the right thing is a matter of identity and character.**

While both the Bible and the social work Code of Ethics give us useful rules for applying our values to practice, we will always have to make character-driven judgments based on our core values. In the last analysis, our morality (or lack of it) depends much more on *who* we are (or are becoming) than what we know or the procedures we use. We must become persons who have taken on the mind and character of Christ as new creations. And it turns out that this is precisely what the Bible says God is up to—growing us up into the image of Christ, from one degree of glory to another. The “problem” of making and living out these moral decisions turns out to be part of the plot, part of God’s strategy, suited to our nature as we were created. Instead of fighting and resenting the hardness of moral choice and action, maybe we should *embrace* it as part of God’s dynamic for our growth.

## **Faith and the Hermeneutical Spiral**

### **Walking By Faith Is Not Optional**

Christian or not, consciously or not, intentionally or not, we all inevitably approach understanding the world and ourselves on the basis of assumptions or presuppositions about the nature of things. Walking by faith is not optional. All human beings do it. We do have some choice (and responsibility) for what we continue to put our faith in, however. That's where choice comes in.

Is love real or a rationalization? Does might make right? Do persons possess inherent dignity and value? Are persons capable of meaningful choice and responsibility? Are human beings so innately good that guilt and sin are meaningless or destructive terms? Is human life ultimately meaningless and absurd? Is the physical universe (and ourselves) a product of mindless chance? Is there a God (or are *we* God)? These are a few of the really important questions in life and there is no place to stand to try to answer them that does not include some sort of faith.

### **Interpreting the Facts**

Like it or not, the world, life, and scripture are not simply experienced or known directly. Things are *always* interpreted on the basis of assumptions and beliefs we have about the nature of the world that are part of our faith position. Knowingly or not, we are continually engaged in hermeneutics, interpretation on the basis of principles.

My interpretation of the meaning of scripture, for example, is strongly affected by whether or not I believe the Bible is a strictly human product or divinely inspired. It is further affected by whether or not I assume the Bible was intended to and can, in fact, function as a legal codebook providing specific prescriptive answers to all questions. My beliefs about these things are never simply derived from the data of the scripture only, but they should never be independent of that data either. In fact, a good hermeneutical principle for understanding scripture is that our interpretations *must* do justice to the actual data of scripture (Osborne, 1991; Swartley, 1983).

The same is true regarding our understanding or interpretation of the "facts" of our experience. The same event will be seen and interpreted differently by persons who bring different assumptions and expectations to it.

On the day of Pentecost, the Bible records that the disciples "were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:4). Some in the crowd didn't know anything about the Holy Spirit, but were amazed by the fact that they heard their own native languages. "Are not all of these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his native tongue" (Acts 2:7-8). Some, however, heard the speech as drunken nonsense and said, "They have had too much wine" (Acts 2:13). Different interpretive, hermeneutical frameworks were in place, guiding the understanding of the "facts."

As a child, I occasionally experienced corporal punishment in the form of spankings from my mother (on one memorable occasion administered with a willow switch). The fact that I was on rare occasions spanked is data. But what did those spankings “mean” to me? Did I experience abuse? Was I experiencing loving limits in a way that I could understand? The experience had to be interpreted within the framework of the rest of my experiences and beliefs (however formed) about myself, my mother, and the rest of the world. And those “facts” continue to be interpreted or re-interpreted today in my memory. In this case, I never doubted her love for me or (at least often) her justice.

### **The Hermeneutical Spiral**

We come by our personal faith position in a variety of ways—adopted without question from our families, friends, and culture; deliberately and critically chosen; refined through experience; fallen into by chance or default. Or, more likely, it comes through some combination of all of these and more. However it happens, it is not a static, finished thing. Our interpretation and understanding of life proceeds in a kind of reciprocal hermeneutical spiral. Our faith position helps order and integrate (or filter and distort) the complex overload of reality that we confront. But at the same time reality has the capacity to challenge and at least partially modify or correct our assumptions and perceptions (Osborne, 1991; Sherwood 1989).

Once, the great 18th century English dictionary-maker, writer, conversationalist, and sometime philosopher Samuel Johnson was asked by his biographer Boswell how he refuted Bishop Berkeley’s philosophical theory of idealism (which asserted that the physical world has no real existence). Johnson replied, “I refute it *thus*.” He thereupon vigorously kicked a large rock, causing himself considerable pain but gaining more than enough evidence (for himself, at least) to cast doubt on the sufficiency of idealist theory as a total explanation of reality.

*This* is a hermeneutical spiral. You come to interpret the world around you through the framework of your faith, wherever you got it, however good or bad it is, and however embryonic it may be. It strongly affects what you perceive (or even look for). But the world is not a totally passive or subjective thing. So you run the risk of coming away from the encounter with your faith somewhat altered, perhaps even corrected a bit, or perhaps more distorted. Then you use that altered faith in your next encounter (Osborne, 1991; Pinnock, 1984; Sire, 1980). Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that the alterations are corrections. But, *if* the Bible is true, and *if* we have eyes that want to see and ears that want to hear, we can have confidence that we are bumping along in the right general direction, guided by the Holy Spirit.



## **How Does the Bible Teach Us?**

### **The Heresy of Legalism**

For Christians, the desire for unambiguous direction has most often led to the theological error of legalism, and then, on the rebound, to relativism. Legalism takes many forms but essentially uses the legitimate zeal for faithfulness to justify an attempt to extract from the Bible or the traditions of the elders a system of rules to cover all contingencies and then to make our relationship to God depend on our understanding and living up to those rules (Sherwood, 1989).

It is theological error because it forces the Bible to be something that it is not—an exhaustive theological and moral codebook yielding prescriptive answers to all questions. It distorts the real nature and meaning of God's self-revelation in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures, and even nature. Taken to its extreme, it effectively denies the gospel of justification by faith in Jesus Christ and substitutes a form of works righteousness. It can take the good news of redeeming, reconciling love and distort it into a source of separation, rejection, and condemnation.

The paradigm case in the New Testament involved some of the Pharisees. Jesus had some very strong words for them. When the Pharisees condemned the disciples for breaking the Sabbath by gathering grain to eat, Jesus cited the example of David feeding his men with the temple bread, also a violation of the law, and told them, in effect, that they were missing the point of the law. "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:23-28). In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector Jesus warned about those who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others" (Luke. 18:9-14). He talked of those who strain out gnats and swallow camels, careful to tithe down to every herb in their gardens but neglecting the "weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith" (Mt. 23:23-24). When a group of Pharisees condemned the disciples because they didn't wash their hands according to the Pharisees' understanding of the requirements of purification, saying, "Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?" Jesus answered, "And why do you transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? . . . For the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. Hear and understand: not what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth" (Matthew 15:1-11).

### **The Heresy of Subjective Relativism**

If the Bible isn't a comprehensive law book out of which we can infallibly derive concrete, prescriptive directions for every dilemma, what good is it? Aren't we then left to be blown about by every wind of doctrine, led about by the spirit (or spirits) of the age we live in, guided only by our subjective, selfish desires? This is a good example of a false dichotomy, as though these were the only two alternatives. Either the Bible is a codebook or we land in total relativism. Yet

this is the conclusion often drawn, which quite falsely restricts the terms of the discussion. Once we cut loose from the deceptively certain rules of legalism it is very easy to become the disillusioned cynic—"I was tricked once, but I'm not going to be made a fool again." If the Bible can't give me all the answers directly then it's all just a matter of human opinion. So the false dilemma is stated.

### **The Orthodoxy of Incarnation—What if God Had a Different Idea?**

Such conclusions assume that, to be of any practical use, God's revelation of His will can only be of a certain kind, an assumption we are more likely to take *to* the Bible than to learn *from* it. It assumes that divine guidance must be exhaustively propositional, that what we need to be good Christians and to guide our moral lives is either specific rules for every occasion or at least principles from which specific rules can rationally be derived. What if such an assumption is wrong? What if it is not in keeping with the nature of God, the nature of human beings, the nature of the Bible, or the nature of the Christian life?

What if the nature of Christian values and ethics cannot be adequately embodied or communicated in a book of rules, however complex and detailed? What if it can only be embodied in a life that is fully conformed to the will of God and communicated through the story of that life and its results?

What if God had to become a man, live a life of love and justice, be put to death innocently on the behalf of others, and raise triumphant over death to establish the kingdom of God? What if the Bible was a book about that? A true story of how to become a real person?

The point I am trying to make is that if we go to the Bible for guidance on its *own* terms, not deciding in advance the nature that guidance has to take, what we find is neither legalism nor relativism but precisely the kind of guidance that suits the kind of reality God actually made, the kind of creatures we actually are, the kind of God with whom we relate.

We learn that ethical practice has more to do with our identity, our growth in character and virtue, than it does with airtight rules and that the Bible is just the kind of book to help us do this. It may not be as tidy as we would like. It may not be as easy as we would like to always tell the good guys from the bad guys. We may not always be able to act with the certain knowledge that we are doing just the right (or wrong) thing. But we will have the opportunity to get closer and closer to the truth of God, to grow up into the image of Christ. Growth is not always comfortable. However, the Bible tells us *who* we are, *whose* we are, and *where* we're going.

### **God is Bigger Than Our Categories but the Bible is a Faithful Witness**

The reality of God and biblical truth shatters our categories. At least, none of them, taken alone, can do the God of the Bible justice. Taken together, our categories have the potential to balance and correct each other. Human language can only carry so much divine freight in any particular car.

We are *all* susceptible to distorted use of Scripture. We need the recognition that we (*all* of us) always take preconditions to our Bible study that may seriously distort its message to us. In fact, we often have several *conflicting* desires and preconditions at work simultaneously. For example, we have the hunger for the security of clear-cut prescriptive answers (“Just tell me if divorce is always wrong or if I have a scriptural right to remarry”) *and* a desire to be autonomous, to suit ourselves rather than submit to anyone or anything (“I don’t want to hurt anyone, but my needs have to be met”).

So, how do I think the Bible teaches us about morality? How does it guide us in making moral judgments in our professional lives? Struggling to rise above my own preconditions and to take the Bible on its own terms, to see how the Bible teaches and what the Bible teaches, I think I am beginning to learn a few things.

### **God’s Project: Growing Us up into the Image of Christ**

It seems to me that God is trying to reveal His nature and help us to develop His character. And it seems that the only way He could do that is in *personal* terms, creating persons with the dignity of choice, developing a relationship with a nation of them, becoming one of us Himself, revealing His love, grace, and forgiveness through a self-sacrificial act of redemption, and embarking on a process of growing persons up into His own image. The process requires us to be more than robots, even obedient ones. It requires us to make principled judgments based on virtuous character, to exercise wisdom based on the character of Christ. Neither legalism nor relativism produces this.

According to the Bible, growing us up to have the mind and character of Christ is an intrinsic part of God’s redemptive project. We are not simply forgiven our sins that grace may abound but we are being rehabilitated, sanctified—being made saints, if you will. The theme is clear, as the following passages illustrate.

In Romans 6:1-2, 4, Paul says that, far from continuing in sin that grace may abound, we die to sin in Christ, are buried with Him in baptism, and are raised that we too may live a new life. Romans 12:2 says that we do not conform to the pattern of this world but are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds which makes us able to test and approve what God’s will is. II Corinthians 3:17-18 says that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom and that we are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory. Ephesians 4:7, 12-13 says that each one of us has been given grace from Christ to prepare us for service so that the body of Christ might be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. I John 3:1-3 marvels at the greatness of the love of the Father that we should be called children of God and goes on to affirm that, although what we shall be has not yet been made known, we do know that when Christ appears we shall be like Him. In Philippians 2, Paul says that, being united with Christ, Christians should have the same servant attitude as Christ, looking out for the interests of others as well as ourselves. Then he makes this remarkable conjunction—“Continue to work out your own

salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.”

And in I Corinthians 2, Paul says that we speak a message of wisdom among the mature, God’s wisdom from the beginning, not the wisdom of this age, revealed to us by His Spirit. He explains that we have received the Spirit who is from God that we might understand what God has freely given us. He concludes, “Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God’s Spirit for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned . . . But we have the mind of Christ.”

### **A Key: Judgments Based on Wisdom Growing Out of the Character of Christ**

It would seem that the key to integrating Christian values into professional practice (as in all of life) is making complex judgments based on wisdom growing out of the mind and character of God, incarnated in Jesus Christ.

In our personal and professional lives we face many complex situations and decisions, large and small. Real-life moral dilemmas confront us with having to make choices between (prioritize) values that are equally real (though not necessarily equally important—remember Jesus’ comments on keeping the Sabbath versus helping a human being). Whatever we do, we cannot fully or equally maximize each value in the situation. (If the father embraces the prodigal son and gives him a party, there will be some who will see him as rewarding irresponsibility.) Whatever we do, we have to make our choices on the basis of limited understanding of both the issues involved and the consequences of our actions. Moreover, our decision is complicated by our fallen nature and selfish desires.

In situations like this, the answer is not legalism (religious or scientific) or relativism. The *mind* of Christ helps us to figure out *what* to do and the *character* of Christ helps us to have the capacity (i.e., character or virtue) to actually *do* it. It seems to me that in the very process of struggling through these difficult situations we are dealing with a principle of growth that God has deliberately built into the nature of things. The people of God are continually required to make decisions based on principles embodied in our very identity—the character of who we are, whose we are, and where we are going.

These virtues are not just abstract ones but rather they are incarnated in the history and *character* of Jesus Christ. Love and justice are the fundamental principles but we learn what they mean because Jesus embodies them. (Yes, keep the Sabbath but don’t let that keep you from helping someone.)

How should a Christian social worker respond when a client says she wants an abortion? How should parents respond when an unmarried daughter tells them she is pregnant? How should a church respond to a stranger’s request for financial aid? Should I be for or against our Middle Eastern policy? Should my wife Carol and I invite my mother to come and live with us? How much money can I spend on myself? It appears I have some complex judgments to make in order to live a life of love and justice.

So, one of God's primary dynamics of growth seems to be to place us in complex situations which require decisions based on judgment. These decisions require our knowledge of the character of Christ to make and they require that we be disciplined disciples at least beginning to take on the character of Christ ourselves to carry them out. It seems to me there is a deliberate plot here, daring and risky, but the only one that works, which fits the world as God made it.

### **Can the Preacher Have a Boat?**

Permit me a personal example to illustrate the point. I remember a lively debate in the cafeteria as an undergraduate in a Christian College over whether or not a preacher (i.e. completely dedicated Christian) could have a boat. The issue, of course, was stewardship, our relationship and responsibility toward material wealth, our neighbors, and ourselves. How should faithful Christians spend money?

Being mostly lower middle class, we all easily agreed that a yacht was definitely an immoral use of money and that a rowboat or canoe was probably o.k. But could it have a motor? How big? Could it possibly be an inboard motor? How many people could it carry? It was enough to cross a rabbi's eyes. Since we believed the Bible to contain a prescriptive answer to every question, we tried hard to formulate a scriptural answer. But we found no direct commands, approved apostolic examples, or necessary inferences that would nail it down.

What we found was much more challenging—things like:

- The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof (Psalm 24:1).
- Give as you have been prospered (I Corinthians 16:2).
- What do you have that you did not receive (II Corinthians 4:7)?
- Remember the fatherless and widows (Jas. 1:27).
- Don't lay up treasures on earth (Mt. 6:19-20).
- Follow Jesus in looking out for the interests of others, not just your own (Phil. 2:1-5).

Plenty of guidelines for exercising love and justice, lots of examples of Christ and the disciples in action—in other words, no selfish relativism. But no ironclad formulas for what to spend or where—in other words, no legalism.

Instead, every time I turn around I am faced again with new financial choices, fresh opportunities to decide all over again what stewardship means—plenty of chances to grossly rationalize, distort, and abuse the gospel, to be sure. But also plenty of opportunities to get it right this time, or at least better. To grow up into the image of Christ.

### **Gaining the Mind and Character of Christ**

So, only persons of character or virtue can make the kind of judgments and take the actions required of us. To do the right thing we need to be the right kinds of persons, embodying the mind and character of Christ (MacIntyre, 1984; Hauerwas, 1981).

The most direct route to moral practice is through realizing our identity as Christ-Ones. In Galatians 2:20 Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” and in Galatians 5:13-14 He said “You were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

The mind and character of Christ is formed in us by the Holy Spirit as we submit to God’s general revelation in creation (Romans 1-2), written revelation in Scripture (II Tim. 3:15-17), and, ultimately, incarnated revelation in Jesus Christ (John 1:1-18; Col. 1:15-20). We can only give appropriate meaning to the principles of love and justice by knowing the God of the Bible, the Jesus of incarnation, and the Holy Spirit of understanding and power. This happens best (perhaps only) in the give and take of two living communities—Christian families and the church, the body of Christ.

What we have when this happens is not an encyclopedic list of rules that gives us unambiguous answers to every practical or moral issue we may ever encounter. Neither are we left in an uncharted swamp of selfish relativity. And, it should be noted well, we are not given a substitute for the clear thinking and investigation necessary to provide the data. The Bible and Christ Himself are no substitute for reading, writing, and arithmetic (or practice wisdom, theory, and empirical research)—getting the best information we can and thinking honestly and clearly about it.

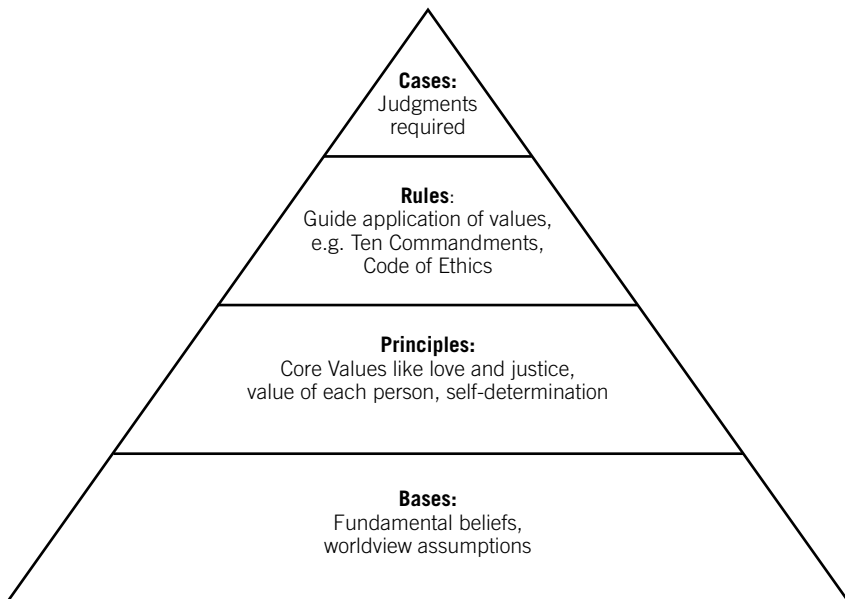
Instead, what we have then is the enhanced capacity to make and carry out complex judgments that is more in harmony with God’s love and justice than we could make otherwise (Hauerwas & Willimon, 1989; Adams, 1987). We are still limited. We still know in part and “see but a poor reflection as in a mirror” (I Corinthians 13:12).

We may be disappointed that the Bible or Christ Himself doesn’t give us the kind of advice, shortcuts, or easy black-and-white answers we would like, but what they give us is much better—the truth. Do you want to live a good life? Do you want to integrate your Christian values and your professional helping practice? Do you want to do what is right? The only way, ultimately, is to know God through being a disciple of Christ. This doesn’t mean that only Christians can have good moral character—God’s common grace is accessible to all. But it really is *true* that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). God is the one who gives *content* to the idea of “good.” The mind of Christ is really quite remarkable, filling up and stretching to the limit our humanity with God.

Lord, help us to know  
**who** we are,  
**whose** we are, and  
**where** we are going.

## **Applying Values in Practice: The Principle/Practice Pyramid**

As I think about the relationship between basic faith (worldview assumptions and beliefs), core values or principles that grow out of our faith, the rules that we derive in order to guide our application of those principles to various areas of life, and the application of those values and rules to specific day-to-day ethical and practical decisions we must make, it helps me to use the image of a “Principle/Practice Pyramid.” The shape of the pyramid gives a rough suggestion of the level of agreement and certainty we may have as we go from the abstract to the concrete. You can turn the pyramid whichever way works best for your imagination—sitting on its base or balanced on its top. I put it on its base (Sherwood, 2002).



### **Principle/Practice Pyramid**

#### **Fundamental Worldview and Faith-Based Assumptions**

The base or widest part of the pyramid represents our fundamental worldview and faith-based assumptions (religious or not) about the nature of the world, human beings, values, and God. All persons, not just “religious” people or Christians, have no choice but to make some sort of faith-based assumptions about the nature of the world and the meaning of life. These are the basic beliefs that help us to interpret our experience of life. This is part of the “hermeneutical spiral” we spoke of earlier. It is on this level that Christians are likely to have the broadest agreement (There is a God, God is creator, God has given human beings unique value, values derive from God).

## **Core Values or Principles**

On top of and growing out of the faith-based foundation sits our core values or principles. What is “good”? What are our fundamental moral obligations? As a Christian I understand these to be the “exceptionless absolutes” of love and justice (Holmes, 1984). God is love. God is just. There is no situation where these values do not apply. And we must look to God to learn what love and justice mean. The social work analogy would be the core values expressed in the Code of Ethics: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence (NASW, 2008).

Christian and social work values largely agree at this level, though there might be significant differences at the more foundational level of worldview. What supports these values and makes them binding or obligatory, something we “ought” to seek?

## **Moral or Ethical Rules**

On top of and growing out of the “principle” layer are the moral rules that guide the application of the principles to various domains of life. These are the “deontological” parameters that suggest what we ought to do. Biblical examples would be the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and other Biblical teachings that help us to understand what love and justice require in various spheres of life. Tell the truth. Keep promises. Don’t steal.

In the Social Work Code of Ethics (NASW, 2008), there are many ethical rules that define boundaries and responsibilities in particular practice settings. These would be the specific standards relating to responsibilities to clients, colleagues, practice settings, as professionals, the profession itself, and the broader society. Each of these categories in the Code has a set of fairly specific and prescriptive rules. Don’t have sexual relationships with clients. Maintain confidentiality. Avoid conflicts of interest. These rules are very important in giving us guidance, but they can never provide us with absolute prescriptions for what we should always do on the case level (Sherwood, 1999, Reamer, 1993).

## **Cases Involving Ethical Dilemmas**

At the top of the pyramid sit the specific cases involving ethical dilemmas in which we are required to use the principles and rules to make professional judgments in the messiness of real life and practice. It is at this very concrete level that we will find ourselves in the most likelihood of conscientious disagreement with each other, even when we start with the same values, principles, and rules. The short answer for why this is true is found in what we have discussed before. It is that we are fallen (subject to the distortions of our selfishness, fear, and pride) and finite (limited in what we can know and predict). And even more challenging, our principles and rules start coming into conflict with each other on this level.



It is here that we have to resolve ethical dilemmas in which any actual action we can take is going to advance some of our values (and the rules that go with them) at the expense of some of our other values (and the rules that go with them). For example, the Code of Ethics tells us both that we must maintain confidentiality and that we have a duty to warn. Good rules. They will give us clear answers in many situations, but not when we have a client who suggests he *might* hurt his wife or child. Both practice skill and the ability to make good judgments are required to sort out dilemmas like this. Our ability to know relevant facts and to predict the consequences of various courses of action is severely limited, yet some choice must be made and some action taken, now.

### **An Ethical Decision-Making Model**

Given this understanding of the human situation, how God is working with us to grow us up into the image of Christ, and the proper role that the Bible plays in giving us guidance, I would like to briefly introduce an ethical decision-making model for Christian helping professionals. It is a simple “problem-solving” model that assumes and is no substitute for developing the mind and character of Christ. It is simple only in concept, not in application. And it is what we need to do in all of our lives, not just in our work with clients.

### **Deontological and Consequentialist/Utilitarian Parameters**

Ethical judgments and actions can generally be thought of as being based on two kinds of criteria or parameters—deontological and consequentialist/utilitarian. These are philosophical terms for describing two types of measuring sticks of whether or not something is good or bad in a moral sense and either ought or ought not to be done.

#### *Deontological Parameters—The “Oughts”*

Deontological parameters or criteria refer to moral obligation or duty. What are the moral imperatives or rules that relate to the situation? What are the “oughts?” For the Christian, it can be summed up by asking “What is the will of God in this situation?” Understanding the deontological parameters of an ethical dilemma we face is extremely important. But it is not as simple as it may first appear. Some think that ethics can be determined by deontological parameters only or that deontological parameters operate without consideration to consequences in any way. For example, the commandment “Thou shalt not lie” is taken to be an absolute, exceptionless rule that is to be obeyed in all circumstances and at all times, regardless of the consequences. By this principle, when Corrie Ten Boom was asked by the Nazis if she knew of any Jews, she should have led them to her family’s hiding place.

Trying to answer all moral questions by attempting to invoke a particular deontological principle in isolation, even if the principle is biblical, may wind up leading us into actions which are contrary to God’s will. That is the legalistic

fallacy that we discussed before. Normally we have an ethical dilemma because we are in a situation in which more than one deontological principle applies and they are in conflict to some degree. Do we keep the Sabbath or do we heal? The Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount, for example, contain deontological principles that are vitally important to helping us understand the mind of Christ and doing the will of God. But they cannot be handled mechanically or legalistically or we will become Pharisees indeed. Does “turning the other cheek” require us to never resist evil in any way?

Most Christians properly understand that God’s will is fully embodied only in God’s character of love and justice, which was incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ. Love and justice are the only “exceptionless absolutes” in a deontological sense. The moral rules and principles of scripture provide important guidelines to help us to understand what love and justice act like in various circumstances, but they cannot stand alone as absolutes nor can they be forced into a legal system which eliminates the need for us to make judgments.

#### *Consequentialist/Utilitarian Parameters—The “Results”*

For God and for us, moral reality is always embodied. Part of what this means, then, is that the deontological “oughts” can never be completely separated from the consequentialist/utilitarian parameters. The consequentialist/utilitarian parameters refer to the results. Christian ethical decisions and actions always have to try to take into account their consequences. What happens as a result of this action or that, and what end is served?

Many people (quite falsely) believe that moral judgments or actions can be judged exclusively on the basis of their results. Did it have a “good” or desired result? Then it was a good act. Many believe that if we value the end we implicitly accept the means to that end, no matter what they might be (say, terrorism to oppose unjust tyranny). This is just as much a fallacy as the single-minded deontological judgment. Pure utilitarianism is impossible since there must be some deontological basis for deciding what is a “good” result, and this can never be derived from the raw facts of a situation. And “goods” and “evils” must be prioritized and balanced against one another in means as well as the ends.

It is a fact that some adults engage in sexual activity with children. But so what? What is the moral and practical meaning of that fact? Is it something we should encourage or prevent? Without some standard of “good” or “health” it is impossible to give a coherent answer.

Another major limitation of consequentialist/utilitarian criteria in making moral judgments is that at best they can never be more than guesses or *predictions* based on what we *think* the results might be, never on the actual consequences themselves. If I encourage my client to separate from her abusive husband, I may think that he will not hurt her or the children, but I cannot be sure.

So, ethical and practical *judgments* are always required. They aren’t simple. And they always involve identifying, prioritizing, and acting on *both* deontological and consequentialist/utilitarian parameters of a situation (Sherwood, 1986).

## **The Model: Judgment Formed By Character and Guided By Principle**

### **1. Identify and explore the problem:**

What issues/values (usually plural) are at stake? What are the desired ends? What are the alternative possible means? What are the other possible unintended consequences?

### **2. Identify the deontological parameters:**

What moral imperatives are there? What is the will of God, the mind of Christ? What are the principles at stake, especially in regard to love and justice? Are there any rules or rule-governed exceptions, biblical injunctions, commands, or codes of ethics that apply? What does the social work Code of Ethics say?

### **3. Identify the consequentialist/utilitarian parameters:**

What (as nearly as can be determined or predicted) are the likely intended and unintended consequences? What are the costs and benefits? How are they distributed (who benefits, who pays)? What must be given up in each particular possible course of action? What values will be slighted or maximized?

### **4. Integrate and rank the deontological and consequentialist/utilitarian parameters:**

What best approximates (maximizes) the exceptionless absolutes of love and justice?

### **5. Make a judgment guided by character and act:**

After gathering and analyzing the biblical, professional and other data, pray for wisdom and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Make a judgment and act growing out of your character as informed by the character of Christ.

Refusing choice and action is choice and action, so you must do the best you can at the time, even if, in retrospect it turns out you were "sinning bravely."

### **6. Evaluate:**

Grow through your experience. Rejoice or repent, go on or change.

## **Evangelism and Ethical Professional Social Work Practice: A Case in Point**

Ethically integrating our Christian faith and our professional social work practice is never a simple matter. A case in point would be how we apply Christian and social work values and practice principles regarding evangelism in ways that maintain integrity for both our clients and ourselves.

## **Not Just an Issue for Christians**

Figuring out how to have integrity and competence in handling our own beliefs and values as we work respectfully and ethically with clients is not just an issue for Christians. Every single one of us comes to our work profoundly

influenced by assumptions, beliefs, values, and commitments that we hold in part on faith. That is part of what it means to be a human being. Our reason and our science can only take us so far, but they can never take us to the bottom line of values and meaning. “Facts,” to the degree that we can ever really discern them, never answer the “so what” question. Values are never derivable from facts alone.

The first level of self-disclosure and informed consent that every social worker owes is critical personal self-awareness. This can be spiritual, religious, ideological, or theoretical—any “meta-narrative” that we use to make sense out of our experience of life. “Hello, my name is David and I’m a Christian.” Or, “I’m a Buddhist,” “I’m an agnostic,” “I’m an atheist,” “I’m a logical positivist,” “I’m a behaviorist,” “I’m a post-modernist.” Or a Punk or a Goth or a Democrat or a Republican, for that matter. I’m not saying that we should greet our clients this way, but I am saying that we need to be aware of our beliefs and be self-critical in regard to how they affect our work.

What are my fundamental assumptions, beliefs, and values? How do they affect my practice? The way I interact with my clients? My selection of theories and interpretation of facts? It is not simply a matter of *what* I believe (important as that is), but *how* I believe it, how I handle my beliefs, which in itself comes back around to the nature of my value commitments.

Lawrence Ressler, veteran social work educator and NACSW member, frequently tells the story of his first day in an MSW class at Temple University with Jeffrey Galper, who announced, “I am a Marxist, and I teach from a Marxist perspective.” I hope this meant that he had achieved this critical personal self-awareness that I am talking about and that his self-disclosure was in the service of facilitating informed consent on the part of his students. The proof of the social work practice pudding, of course, would be in his conscientiousness in not imposing this view on his students, his willingness to permit or even facilitate disagreement. Of course, the more deeply held the beliefs and the greater the disagreement, the more difficult it is to support self-determination. This is true even when self-determination is one of the core values one accepts.

So—integrating faith and practice is not just a Christian thing. It is a human thing. Those who don’t understand this basic truth are the ones who may pose the greatest risk of all of “imposing their beliefs on others,” precisely because they may think that they are not susceptible to the problem (Sherwood, 2000). However, the rest of my comments are going to be addressed primarily to Christians in social work, even though I think the basic principles will apply to those who are not Christians. Many of us may feel tempted to “evangelize” in more way than one.

### **Addressing Spiritual and Religious Issues with Clients Is Not (Necessarily or Normally) Evangelism**

“Talking about God” with clients is not necessarily or normally evangelism. This is an important distinction. For too long social workers (secular and otherwise) have tended to “solve” the problem of evangelism by avoiding spirituality and religion and offering a blanket condemnation—“Thou shalt not

discuss spiritual and religious issues with clients.” If you do, it is automatically presumed that you are “imposing your own values on clients.” This happens in spite of overwhelming evidence that issues of meaning and purpose are central in the lives of clients, that spirituality and religion have great importance to many people, and that religiously based groups, congregations, and organizations are vital sources of support for people (as well as barriers, at times).

Well, sometimes social workers do impose their values (religious, political, or otherwise) on clients and it is an ethical violation when they do. I would stress that when this happens it is a violation of Christian ethics as well as social work ethics. But deliberately avoiding spiritual and religious issues is professional incompetence. The presumption has often been that spiritual and religious issues should simply be referred to chaplains or other clergy. In what other important area of life would social workers condone such a policy of withdrawal and referral? How can we say we deal with the whole person-in-environment while ignoring one of the most important dimensions of people’s lives (for good or ill)? Or how can we claim competence in dealing with diversity while ignoring or misunderstanding such a fundamental kind of diversity (Sherwood, 1998)?

The short answer is that we can’t and shouldn’t ignore spiritual and religious issues. The key is that we must do it from a client-focused and client-led perspective. This normally means that we may *not* ethically engage in evangelism with our clients. Exceptions would typically be when we are practicing in a faith-based context with a clearly identified Christian identity and with clients who clearly express informed consent. Even then, it is not transparently obvious that evangelism would be appropriate. I hope I can make it clear why I say this.

### **Proclamation Versus Demonstration of the Gospel**

A perhaps simplistic but none-the-less useful distinction is this: It is always ethical and appropriate to demonstrate the gospel to our clients, but it is seldom ethical to proclaim the gospel to them in our professional role as social workers.

The Bible describes evangelism in the sense of demonstrating or living out the gospel as the calling of every Christian. “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us” (Ephesians 5:1-2). “We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help” (1 John 3:16-17).

The profession of social work provides us all with unique opportunities to demonstrate the gospel of Christ—to give to our clients the grace-filled gift of knowing what it feels like to be treated with love and justice, what it feels like to experience caring, grace, forgiveness, trustworthiness, honesty, and fairness, what it feels like to be treated with respect and dignity as a person with God-given value. Often our clients have few opportunities in their lives to be in a respectful, non-exploitive relationship. The power of this experience can be transforming. It can even be a form of “pre-evangelism,” preparing the soil for the good seed of the gospel proclaimed.

We do not all have the same part to play in God's work in a person's life. The New Testament frequently talks about varieties of gifts among the various parts of the body, and evangelism is one of them (Romans 12:3-8, I Corinthians 12:4-31, Ephesians 4:11-16). "What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth" (I Corinthians 3:5-6). As Alan Keith-Lucas wrote (1985, p. 28):

Paul said that faith was the gift of the Spirit, which is true, but what we can do as social workers—and we do have a wonderful opportunity to do so—is to show such love and forgiveness that a confused and desperate person can understand the Spirit's message when it comes.

A consideration of the Parable of the Sower may be helpful here. The seed only grows to maturity when there is good ground to receive it. But stony or even shallow ground can be converted to good ground by the addition of nutrients (love) or ploughing (facing reality) or breaking up of clots (getting rid of blocks) and perhaps what social workers can do for the most part is to be tillers of the ground, rather than the Sower, who must in the long run be God Himself. It is true that certain men and women, powerful preachers or prophets, may act, as it were, for God as sowers, but even they have for the most part audiences that have some readiness to listen.

On the other hand, explicit evangelism of clients (proclamation) in professional social work is almost always unethical. Why? What are the values and ethical principles involved?

At this point, we try to apply the principle/practice pyramid and model of ethical decision-making discussed above. We are trying to apply our core values and ethical rules at the case level.

### **The Use and Limits of the Code of Ethics (and the Bible: Ethical Judgments Are Required Because Legitimate Values Come Into Conflict**

Ethical analysis and decision making is required when we encounter an ethical problem and at the case level we cannot maximize all values simultaneously. In my paradigm, the definition of an ethical problem or dilemma is that we have more than one legitimate moral obligation that have come into some degree of tension in the case that we find ourselves dealing with.

For example, I believe in client self-determination (one legitimate moral obligation) and I believe in the protection of human life (another legitimate moral obligation). Most of the time these values do not come into conflict. However, now I have a client who is threatening to kill his wife. I now have an ethical problem in which any action I take will compromise one or more of my moral obligations. Values and ethical principles can and do come into conflict on the case level.

It is important to realize from the beginning what the Bible and Code of Ethics can do for us and what they cannot. They can give us critical guidance and direction, but they can never give us prescriptive formulas that will tell us exactly what to do in every case, precisely because in the particular instance not all of the values can be fully achieved and not all of the rules can be completely followed. The Code of Ethics (2008, pp. 1, 2-3) says it very well:

Core values, and the principles that flow from them, must be balanced within the context and complexity of the human experience... The Code offers a set of values, principles, and standards to guide decision making and conduct when ethical issues arise. It does not provide a set of rules that prescribe how social workers should act in all situations. Specific applications of the Code must take into account the context in which it is being considered and the possibility of conflicts among the Code's values, principles, and standards.

Sometimes one of these biblical rules or Code of Ethics standards may have to give way to another in order for us to come as close to love and justice as the situation allows. At the case level, we are always going to have to take responsibility for making judgments that prioritize our values and approximate the good we seek as closely as we can.

## **Ethics and Evangelism**

So, what are some of the core values and ethical principles from the Bible and the Code of Ethics that relate to evangelism with clients? I'll try to list a few and give some comments, although several of them overlap and interact with each other. And I would say that they all fall under the Biblical absolutes of love and justice.

### **1. The Great Commission:**

Well, what Christians call the "Great Commission" is certainly one of these core values, the reason we are exploring this issue in the first place. While the imperative "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) was given to Jesus' original disciples, the New Testament makes it quite clear that bearing testimony to the good news about Jesus' healing and saving work on behalf of humankind is in some sense the responsibility of all of us who are disciples of Jesus Christ. And if the gospel of Christ is true, what could be more important for people to hear? This value is real for us and explains why we struggle with the question of evangelism in our professional roles.

### **2. My Calling and Role:**

Remember our discussion above about demonstration and proclamation? While it is true that not only evangelists bear witness to the gospel, it is

also true that our particular calling and role in a given situation has a great impact on what is appropriate to do. If you are convinced that your calling from God is evangelism in the sense of direct proclamation, then you should be an evangelist and not a social worker (or a nurse, or a car salesman, or a loan officer). Under what auspice are you working? What are the functions associated with your role? My father-in-law for many years demonstrated the grace and love of Christ in his role as a bank teller at the Potter's Bank and Trust in East Liverpool, Ohio, including taking money out of his own pocket to make sure that certain poor customers were able to get at least a little cash at the end of the month. But he could not, and did not, use his position to hand them tracts with the cash. As a social worker you may at times find it appropriate to share your faith directly, but most of the time you won't.

### **3. Self-Determination:**

From the first chapter of Genesis on, the Bible presents a picture of human beings endowed with the gift and responsibility of choice with consequences. We are presented with the paradox and mystery (on our level of understanding) of God's sovereignty and our freedom. God is depicted as calling us, but not coercing us, warning us, but not protecting us. Conscience and commitment cannot be compelled, even though external behavior might be. Self-determination is also a standard of the Code of Ethics (2008, p. 7), growing out of the principle of the inherent dignity and worth of the person. If ever a social work value stood on a theological foundation, it is belief in the inherent dignity and worth of every person. While I may have my perceptions of what might be best for my clients, I have no right to compel or manipulate them to that end. I do have a responsibility to help facilitate their ability to exercise their self-determination, including the exploration of available alternatives and their possible consequences, so that their choices are as informed as possible. God grants us the fearful dignity of self-determination; we can hardly try to deny it to our clients, explicitly or implicitly.

### **4. Informed Consent:**

A fundamental component of informed choice is informed consent, another standard of the Code of Ethics (2008, pp. 7-8). Informed consent essentially means that people should know what they are getting into and agree to it. This principle interacts intimately with the next one—integrity. Informed consent is one of the key determinants of whether or not evangelism with clients is ethical. Related concepts are agency auspice and client expectations. Why are clients coming to your agency or to you? What expectations do they have? Is there anything upfront that would lead them to understand that the sharing of your religious beliefs or evangelism would be a likely part of their experience with your agency or you? I have found that even in explicitly faith-based agencies there are surprisingly few times when direct evangelism is the appropriate focus or outcome of interaction with clients.



Christian clients struggle with the same kinds of issues as other clients. Sometimes we can help them sort through how their beliefs are resources or barriers for them. But frequently religious clients want to use “religious talk” to avoid coming to grips with their issues. There would be almost no cases in a public or secular private agency when direct evangelism is an appropriate focus or outcome of interaction with clients.

### **5. Integrity:**

Honesty and integrity are core Biblical and social work values. A number of “rules” derive from this value, such as truth-telling, trustworthiness, and keeping agreements. Some of the standards in the Code of Ethics deriving from this principle come under the general heading of “Conflicts of Interest” (2008, pp. 9-10). These rules are particularly relevant to the question of engaging in evangelism with clients. These rules say, “Social workers should be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgment” (2008, p. 9). They speak to the importance of setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries and being careful of dual or multiple relationships with clients. Of particular relevance to the issue of evangelism is the standard that says, “Social workers should not take unfair advantage of any professional relationship or exploit others to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests” (2008, p. 9).

### **So, What About Evangelism?**

The main reason that evangelism in the context of a professional social work relationship is normally unethical is that it almost always involves the risk of exploitation of a vulnerable relationship. It usually involves taking advantage of our professional role and relationship with our clients. It lacks the integrity of informed consent. And even when there seems to be a certain consent or even request from the client to go through the evangelistic door, it is the social worker’s responsibility to be the boundary keeper. I am not saying that there can never be a legitimate open door under any circumstance, but I am saying that the social worker, acting in the professional capacity, bears a heavy weight of responsibility to avoid taking advantage of the client’s vulnerability.

I think most Christians have little difficulty understanding the analogous rule in the Code of Ethics that says, “Social workers should under no circumstances engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with current clients, whether such contact is consensual or forced” (2008, p. 13). We also understand that it is the social worker’s responsibility, not the client’s, to maintain these boundaries. I hope no one is offended by my comparison of sexual exploitation to evangelism. Clearly there are significant differences. I believe in evangelism and I do not believe in sexual exploitation. However, we also need to understand the way in which evangelism in the context of a professional relationship does have some significant likeness to sexual exploitation, or any other taking advantage of the professional role.

For example, evangelizing a client coming to a public Rape Crisis Center would be unethical and, I would say, un-Christian. She is in a physically and emotionally vulnerable situation, there is nothing about the sign on the door that would lead you to believe that her coming is even giving implied consent to evangelism, and she is trusting you for specific kinds of help. The nature of your role and relationship means that you have a special responsibility not to exploit that role. What you can most certainly do with her is to give her the opportunity to experience what it is like to receive “grace,” love and justice; what it is like to experience respect, caring, support, trustworthiness, honesty; what it is like to not be taken advantage of.

It would also probably be going much too far to ask her, “Are you a Christian?” Even if she said no, and you quietly moved on, the question would hang in the air, coming from a representative of the Rape Crisis Center to a person in a state of vulnerability who had a very particular reason for coming to this agency. How would she read that? How would it affect her response?

However, it might be quite competent and ethical professional practice to use a more appropriate probe that could be stated in “non-religious” terms—“This must be hard. Is there anything in your life that helps you get through things like this?” Then if she mentions something about her spiritual or religious beliefs, you are in a position to make a better judgment about how you might help her, even perhaps including engaging spiritual and religious resources. That could be good “spiritually-sensitive” social work practice (Sherwood, 1998).

Even then, you would be faced with the necessity of using good assessment skills, discernment, and judgment. For example, you would think that praying with clients in Christian agencies would be obviously the right thing to do. However, some clients are “religious” manipulators, and consciously or unconsciously use the appearance of spirituality to avoid dealing with hard issues. When a client says, “Let’s just pray about that,” or “I think we just have to trust the Lord,” you have to try to discern whether doing that is helpful or their way of avoiding dealing with their anger, fear, abusive behavior, or whatever else they may need to face.

### **No Prescriptions, but Guidance**

You will have probably noticed that I have avoided words such as “never” or “always” in what I have said. This is quite deliberate, and goes back to my earlier comments about what ethical principles and rules can do for us and what they can’t. They can give us meaningful guidance but they can’t give us simple formulas to prescribe our response to every situation. Although I might have come close to it, I have not argued that evangelism is never compatible with our professional role as social workers. I have tried to suggest ethical considerations as we try to make our best judgments about how we relate to our clients.

Morally and practically, a sense of certainty is highly attractive. Who doesn’t want to be sure that they are “right” and that they are doing the right thing? But that level of certainty is often not available to us as human beings. And yet we do

have to decide and act. These judgments always require prioritizing our values based on the best understanding we can achieve at the time regarding the relevant values involved and the potential consequences of the choices available to us.

### **Character Formed through Discipleship and the Guidance of the Holy Spirit**

Ultimately, ethical Christian practice depends on one thing—developing the mind and character of Christ. It depends on our growing up into the image of Christ. This begins in the new birth as we become new creations in Christ. We are filled with the Holy Spirit and called to a life of discipleship in which we bring every thought and action in captivity to Christ (II Corinthians 10:5). We present our bodies “as a living sacrifice,” not conformed to this world, but “transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Rom. 12:1-2). We hunger and thirst after righteousness. We seek to know God’s will through scripture, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the community of the church. We identify with Jesus and the saints of God down through the ages. We daily choose to follow Christ as best we know and can. We repent and confess to our Lord when we fall. We thankfully receive his grace. We choose and act again.

Certainly piety is not a substitute for the discipline of professional training, careful research, and thoughtful analysis. Rather, the use of all of these is simply a complementary part of our stewardship and discipleship. The most solid possible assurance that we will do the right thing in our personal lives and in our professional practice is our discipleship, growing to have more and more of the character of Jesus Christ, as we make judgments more in harmony with God’s character and Spirit.

We become a “letter from Christ . . . Written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts, . . . ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life . . . Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (II Corinthians 3:3, 6, 17-18). Lord, help us to be people who hunger and thirst for your “more excellent way” (I Corinthians 12:31).

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# The Helping Process and Christian Beliefs: Insights from Alan Keith-Lucas<sup>1</sup>

Helen Wilson Harris

*Alan Keith-Lucas devoted his life to helping that was difference- making through his work with children, consultation with more than 80 children's homes, and teaching and writing about effective social work (Powell, 1996). He believed that helping means coming along side someone with support, not telling someone what to do. "Helping is not a technique. It is an investment of one's self" (Keith-Lucas, 1994, p. 17). That statement begins this journey into understanding the nature of professional helping according to one who has written most practically and profoundly about the helping relationship in social work. Clinician, consultant, and author, Keith-Lucas understood and communicated what actually makes a difference when "professional helpers" encounter clients, patients and consumers. The modern buzz word is evidence-based practice. We are tasked to discover and demonstrate how we as social workers engage our clients to produce change. Keith-Lucas taught principles of helping essential to effectiveness and positive outcomes. "This is a difficult and skilled business. If we are going to attempt it, we need to have some skill in helping." (p. 31).*

## **Themes Identified by NACSW**

*The work of Alan Keith-Lucas continues to inform and inspire practice in social work and children's welfare services far beyond his death. At the 2010 national conference of the North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW), focus was given to the writings and teachings of Alan Keith-Lucas applied to current practice; these are reflected in a special edition of the NACSW journal, *Social Work and Christianity* (2010), 37(3). Themes identified continue to resonate with social workers whose faith informs their practice.*

**Theme 1:** *The ethical integration of Christian faith and social work practice is possible, though not without its challenges. "It must be intellectually rigorous, con-*

<sup>1</sup> Readers wishing to cite this work should do so understanding and noting that a substantive portion of this chapter is taken from the following work:

Keith-Lucas, Alan. (1994), Chapters 5 and 10, *Giving and Taking Help*. Revised Edition. (Editor: David Sherwood). St. Davids, PA: The North American Association of Christians in Social Work. The original work was published in 1972. Italic font is used when the author, Helen Harris, is speaking and not used for original material quoted from Alan Keith-Lucas. The author would like to thank Dr. David Sherwood who edited *Giving and Taking Help* and reviewed this manuscript. His commitment to respecting Keith's words and wishes made this chapter possible.

ducted by people who are amateurs neither in religion nor social work. It will have to deal with the 'hard paradoxes' rather than the 'easy correspondences'" (Powell, 1996, p. 248). Sherwood (2010) recognized that Dr. Keith-Lucas believed and taught that "our Christian faith should greatly enhance our ability to be of help to those we seek to serve; sincere Christian faith provides us with a source of inspiration, insight and skill" (p. 262). Sherwood identified Keith's belief that "our fundamental assumptions about values and the nature of persons are always a matter of faith and worldview, whether religious or secular..." (p. 270). Harris (2010) summed up Keith's belief that good helping by the Christian always proceeds from the concepts of grace and forgiveness (p. 297).

**Theme 2:** Helping in social work practice is grounded in respectful relationships, one of the fundamental parallels between theology and social work values. It was Keith-Lucas who first wrote about the concept of client self-determination as God's gift of choice and unconditional love. Powell highlighted this statement from *Giving and Taking Help*: one principle of good helping is that "helping people find their own way is better than controlling them, however subtly" (p. 266). Sherwood (2010) highlighted "the importance of respectful relationships in which the client is the 'expert,' valuing client self-determination rather than manipulation or control" (p. 270). Even with mandated clients, Keith-Lucas recognized that they must be given the right to "decide what to do with the help offered" (p. 274). Harris (2010) noted that Keith-Lucas understood these as "shared values of both secular social work and religion, including the worth and dignity of all human beings, a commitment to self-determination, the need for kindness and understanding, and the importance of ethical and just principles" (p. 296).

**Theme 3:** All good helping involves three interlocking concepts of reality, empathy and support. In fact, these concepts were part of Keith-Lucas' definition of helping before he came to faith in Christ and were part of his ability to understand God as Father, God as Savior, and God as Holy Spirit (Ressler, p. 247). Harris (2010) identified the following description of Keith's triune helping model:

*I have tried to show that these are the three ways in which God works with us, as Father, the One who plans the circumstances of our lives and gives us rules for living; as the Son who shared our life and 'was tempted in all ways as we were,' so that He understands our troubles, and as the Spirit who is always with us. (p. 297).*

This concept became part of an organizing paradigm on the helping relationship. Kuhlman (2010) summed it up this way:

*It distinguishes 'help' from 'control,' focuses on the 'helping relationship,' and attempts to specify the 'helping factor,' that is, the combination of 'reality, empathy, and support' in order to make the basic principles of helping accessible to a wide variety of professionals and non-professionals" (p. 314).*



**Theme 4:** *Child Welfare Services should be Family Services.* “Keith thought that residential care could be creatively used to benefit both children and families. It should be family centered. . . .” (Powell, p. 259). Keith believed that we would do better to focus on “patching up homes rather than patching up children” (p. 261). The social workers at the conference who knew Keith recognized in his work the precursor to the current kinship care movement, summed up in this comment by Harris (2010): “Instead of trying to rescue children from poor or dysfunctional families, Alan Keith-Lucas recommended that families be understood as important to their children and a resource for planning for care for the child” (p. 299). Dr. Keith-Lucas believed in client self-determination and in the strengths perspective as integral to good helping.

*One cannot live other peoples’ lives for them. One cannot know what steps other people may have to take to live a more abundant life, what it will cost them, mistakes they may have to make and learn from, but one can sometimes remove some of the stumbling blocks to this journey. In fact a good deal of helping consists in doing exactly that (1994, p. 1).*

The speakers, authors, and colleagues of Alan Keith-Lucas, on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth, identified the inspirational, prophetic messages that still inform social work practice and helping today. The time honored and practice-validated principles of this visionary leader are worth remembering and emulating. I am more motivated than ever to share the timeless wisdom of this leader with social workers who are newly trying to integrate their faith and practice and those who are discouraged with the effort.

### **Unpublished Monographs**

After his death, Dr. Keith-Lucas’ family donated his unpublished manuscripts and notes to Roberts Wesleyan University, which graciously made them available to scholars committed to exploring and sharing his wisdom related to helping. Five of those previously unpublished manuscripts are referenced here as they provide additional insight into the concepts of helping from a Christian perspective.

### **Keith-Lucas Remembered**

Alan Keith-Lucas was born in 1910 in London, England. His youth was influenced by the death of his father when he was six years old and by the tumultuous years of the Second World War. He served as headmaster of the Hidden Oaks School in England and moved to the United States to continue his education and earn a PhD in Philosophy. His work in the United States included administration in state level child welfare services, teaching social work, and research in child care, faith and practice, grief and loss, and work with families. His retirement in 1975 was followed by 20 years of consultation, research, writing, and leadership with more than 80 children’s homes, most affiliated with Christian denominations.

I first met Alan Keith-Lucas almost 40 years ago. I was a caseworker at the South Texas Children’s Home where “Keith” (as he asked to be called) was a con-

sultant who was invited by our administrator to the campus periodically to help us figure out faith-based residential child care. Dr. Keith-Lucas (Keith) was, on first inspection, an odd looking man with his thin brushy goatee, his tweed jacket with the patched pockets, and his unlit pipe in one hand. The old gentleman appearance and British accent gave him a distinguished air though he never seemed formidable to me. I went to the first meeting with him more than a little skeptical that this outsider could offer any insight of value to those of us who lived and worked among these children every day. He captured my imagination and my respect by the end of our first five minutes together. Here was a man who read and wrote widely, thought deeply, and loved children simply and completely. He was able in a few days on the campus to connect with the most intractable of the children and give us direction for working with them. He gently helped the staff look with new eyes into the hearts and potential of children instead of the scars from their damaged lives. He drew as much from Uncle Remus stories as he did from scripture. He, like another great teacher and minister to children, communicated through stories the most amazing truths. He was unorthodox in many ways. Keith saw and responded to the wounded child inside each of us. Remarkably, he left us with the tools to do the same for the children in our care and perhaps more importantly, for their parents and families.

I continue to regularly read what Alan Keith-Lucas wrote and left behind and I ask my students to do the same. He was a visionary, prophetic social worker, and the consummate educator. He wrote 50 years ago, about concepts we are beginning to understand and use in child care and in social work practice today. Keith understood the importance of the whole person with all of his or her history, the value of concrete services, the lifelong impact of separation and loss, and the Biblical mandate to love and respect others including (perhaps especially) those different than we are. He understood “that man has neither the right nor the ability to judge his fellows in terms of what they deserve, that feelings and personal relationships matter and that helping people find their own way is better than controlling them, however subtly” (Powell, 1996, p. 91).

I do not propose in this chapter to improve on what Keith has written about the helping relationship. I propose to gather from his writing clarifying insights that provide the reader with both a glimpse and deep baptism into his wisdom as we discover more about being a helper in relationship with the wounded we are called to serve.

### **Giving and Taking Help**

In his book, *Giving and Taking Help*, Alan Keith-Lucas asks us to consider anew our motivation and our preparation for entering into a helping relationship with others. We move away from formulaic helping because focusing on the application of a particular technique can result in poor outcomes when we forget the main thing, the client. That, more than anything, sums up his central premise: The client is the expert of his/her own experience. The client is the specialist in the helping relationship, the person who must, in the end, make the decisions and be invested in the process. Keith explained that we begin as helpers by respecting our client's right and ability to make the choices that lead to change. It is the client who must live out

the choices that are made and the results that are set in motion. So the client must be engaged in making active choices. An active, willing choice is one that brings with it commitment and the energy and potential to deal with life's circumstances. What then is the helping person's role? It is in mutual relationship; the helper and the "helped" are mutually engaged in a relationship focused on choice and change. Having a helping relationship does not mean having a social relationship like a friendship or a relationship that is focused on being pleasant. While effective helping professionals care deeply about their clients, that caring means avoiding prescribing what the other person should do and staying engaged in the helping relationship even when the circumstances and the decisions are difficult or different than we would make.

### **Defining the Helping Relationship**

Keith-Lucas told us: "The defined purpose of the helping relationship is to help a person or group to make choices about a problem or situation and about the help they are willing to take about it" (1994, p. 51). This by necessity means learning how to hear what the client is saying to us and believing that only the client can make a real choice about what course of action will have meaning to him or her. Even in situations where the social worker also represents the agenda or interests of the agency, there can be no significant helping without the client's engagement and involvement. It is possible through effective helping to secure that engagement and involvement, to break through the barriers of distrust and agency power and prescription. It works when we let go of the notion of social control and engage in the kind of helping in which clients understand their own responsibility for their lives and the impact of their decisions on the lives of others. Keith-Lucas compared helping a client to trying to move a stalled trolley up against a coiled spring. All of the pushing in the world will only increase the resistance and likelihood of ending up further away from the stated goal. Instead, our role as helpers, according to Keith, is to help "uncoil the resistance" or in effect, address the negative experiences and negative feelings that may be keeping the client from being able to make progress. Keith presented a fascinating model for working with clients who have experienced loss of all kinds. He addressed the most important question in helping those who have experienced loss: What makes the difference in coming out of the crisis or loss experience with resilience and mastery instead of despair and lifelong disengagement? Most clients have encountered tragedy and loss. Keith adapted the standard grief and loss model to clarify that those who overcome and are able to turn tragedy into triumph are those who are empowered to address the loss and the feelings that come with it, a phenomenon he called protest. The helping person is then, not the person who makes everything seem fine, but the person who permits, even facilitates, the expression of the pain and outrage generated by the loss. The theme again of the helping relationship is authenticity and acceptance of clients even when they are crying or angry or tired or unpleasant.

What follows is the substantive text from Chapter 5 and Chapter 10 from the 1994 Revised Edition of *Giving and Taking Help*, in Dr. Keith-Lucas' own words. Some of the original text has been abridged in order to make space for materials

*from both chapters. My comments and reflections are in italics and include material from several of Keith's unpublished manuscripts. I do this in the belief that Keith's work will be transforming in the life of the social worker who is called of God to professional helping. I'm not sure anyone can improve on Keith's words. My reflections are intended to lift up the concepts and add my own voice and experience to his.*

*Keith has much more to say about the nature of helping than I have been able to provide for you here. This material has been chosen because it captures his core idea that all good helping involves the skillful use of reality, empathy, and support, and reflecting the very nature of God with humanity.*

## **The Helping Factor (Giving and Taking Help, Chapter 5)**

### **Various Theories**

There must be something which the helping person brings into the relationship through which help is actually given. The relationship we have discussed cannot do this by itself. It is resultant and not something that can be created apart from what goes on between helper and helped. We cannot set up such a relationship and then sit back and expect help to flow from it without some positive action or contribution on our part. *Helping happens when we invest ourselves in the lives of others, when we are engaged with them in the here and now as they understand it. We bring ourselves to the process understanding that we may well be changed as much as the person we are committed to helping. This active participation is the key to effective helping. Keith understood that "most people do not want help-in fact they resist it...so the core of helping is making decision possible in relationship with another"* (Keith-Lucas, nd, *Some ideas*, p. 2).

Quite clearly, too, the helping factor is something more than the material things with which help often deals, such as money, a job, housing or medical care, although it is a mistake to think that these things are unimportant. It was one of the misapprehensions of many nineteenth-century helpers that to give material things was wrong, or at best a necessary evil. *Many helping persons today seem to miss the tremendous importance of concrete helping. The model of Jesus as helper includes many examples of his provision of material needs presented to him in the moment including money and food.*

A job, a house, an opportunity are very important to people. They may be completely necessary to the solution of their problems. Yet, there is something more to helping than this. While there are obvious situations in which they are all that are needed, in which case helping would seem to consist solely in their provision, in the majority of situations something else has to happen, either in the actual giving or possibly before it, if a person is to make full use of them. And even then their mere provision can be done in such a way that their use is enhanced or limited. The dignity of the application procedure, the concern shown for details, the promptness of their provision, even the setting in which they are given, all contribute to or deduct from their helpfulness.

There have been many attempts to isolate or define the primary helping

factor. The nineteenth century, by and large, relied on moral exhortation, friendliness, and encouragement. Later a more rationalist approach relied on careful case study and appropriate treatment, which in general meant manipulation of the environment and the supplying of influences which the helped person was thought to lack. A little later, in the late twenties and early thirties of this century, it was believed that listening alone was perhaps the primary helping factor. The helper became little more than a mirror against which the helped person projected his concerns. *“Taking help means recognizing that something is wrong within oneself...giving up the known for the unknown”* (Keith-Lucas, nd, *Some ideas*, p. 5).

### **Knowing “Why”**

With the advent of psychoanalysis, interpretation of unconscious motives was given first place. It was believed that the rationality of the conscious brain, brought face to face with the apparently infantile reasoning which the unconscious seems to employ--its tendency, for instance to identify wholly unlike things--would reject this irrationality in favor of sensible behavior. Insight would lead to change.

So deeply is this concept ingrained that many people will uphold that one cannot modify one's behavior unless one knows exactly why one has misbehaved in the first place, which is clearly not always so. Some understanding of one's motives may be very helpful in coming to a decision but many of a person's most fruitful decisions and commitments are made without knowing exactly why.

The belief that understanding motive is critical to behavior change once caused a class of mine to insist that the purpose of an interview with a delinquent girl [called Mary Ann] we were studying could be no other than to find out “why” she ran away from home. They were quite shocked when I said that this might be quite helpful, if it could ever be known, although I doubted that it would ever tell us more than the precipitating factor. The actual causality would be probably almost infinitely complex and involve many factors outside both their and Mary Ann's control, a recognition which is being increasingly made by students of epidemiology. If they were interested in trying to create conditions in the community which would minimize delinquency, such an analysis might have value.

But this was not the purpose of the interview as it was held. It could have only one purpose. That would be to find out ways by which Mary Ann would be able to handle her impulse to run away again.

I do not mean that the epidemiological approach, the desire to control or alter conditions so that other Mary Anns might not need to run away, is something with which a social worker should not be not be concerned. I do mean that to help Mary Ann in the here and now. the knowledge of her action's complicated causality is probably not enough. Even if Mary Ann could say, and even be convinced, that she ran away because of any number of factors, there is still her will, her image of herself, her fears, and the reality of her present

situation to take into account. Humans are not simple rational creatures, and a fourteen-year-old girl perhaps not always an exemplar of logical thinking.

If Mary Ann were a very sick child, or if her impulse was such that it was uncontrollable by any conscious act on her part even with some change of attitude on the part of her parents, psychotherapy with interpretation might have been necessary. The need for this would have shown up, perhaps, in a more total disorganization than this girl was presenting, or in her failure to make use of the helping process that most people can use to some extent. Even here her problems might have been solved by psychiatric treatment not involving interpretation.

Her particular behavior might be amenable to conditioning or to drug therapy. This solution would involve a "why" or a sort-knowledge at least that her condition could become manageable if certain tensions were relieved, which is not so much a "why" as a "how." Sometimes by handling one factor in a complex situation a person may be brought to a condition below, as it were, the critical point at which symptoms appear.

However, a preoccupation with causality would have failed to engage Mary Ann's capacity to face her situation and to do something about it herself. It is all very well to know that one behaves badly because one has been rejected or unloved. There is no doubt that to be rejected makes it harder to behave well. But it does not remove the responsibility of a person to do something about his behavior. *In his manuscript, Self-respect in the child institution,* Keith-Lucas goes on to describe the client's insight into their own need to manage their challenges: "...to take away someone else's problem is to disarm them, to take away his means of coming to terms with life. It is to judge him a weakling. Children, in fact, need their problems. As one little girl said to her superintendent who was planning to solve the problem of her disturbance every time her mother called by cutting down on the mother's visits: 'What you don't understand is that this is something I need to be disturbed about'" (nd, *Some ideas*, p. 4).

### **Reality, Empathy, and Support**

Doing something about her impulse to run away is what Mary Ann needs to struggle with now. To help Mary Ann do this the worker must start with the reality of the situation, the fact that she has done something illegal; the possibility that the judge might send her to a correctional school, or let her go home only under supervision, which she might find difficult to bear; even the fact that she might find it impossible not to run away again. In order to decide what she wanted, what she could bear, what use she could make of whatever was decided, and what help she needed to do this, Mary Ann would need to be held to facing these facts and possibilities.

She would also need to be free to discuss and explore her feelings about them, and in fact be reassured that her expression of these feelings would not get her into trouble. Part of these feelings might be anger, at her parents, at the judge or at the probation officer. The last is particularly true if the worker has done her job in holding Mary Ann to the reality of the situation; but since this

anger is something which Mary Ann cannot help feeling about the situation, and since to repress it, or “bottle it up” will only make it more important and harder to deal with, it may need to be expressed.

Lastly, if Mary Ann is to take help in her situation, she must know that the worker will be available to her, will not turn against her when she is troubled, and will provide as far as she can what Mary Ann needs to carry out her decisions. *Keith made it clear in his work across four decades that relationship must be a real facing of facts in which the worker does not give false reassurance and does not threaten withdrawing support but communicates that to say ‘yes’ sincerely always means one can say ‘no’ (nd, Some ideas).*

This situation may serve, despite its particularity, to help us see what it is that the helping person must convey to any person in trouble. What has to be conveyed can be phrased as a “statement” which the helping person makes, although it is much more than this. It is not simply something said. It is something conveyed by words, feeling, and action. But in terms of a statement it could be phrased in three sentences, as follows:

“This is it.” (Reality)

“I know that it must hurt.” (Empathy)

“I am here to help you if you want me and can use me,” or more succinctly,

“You don’t have to face this alone.” (Support)

These three sentences in turn may be expressed in terms of what is actually offered through them. In this form the helping factor is composed of three complex, interrelated and important elements which we may call *reality, empathy, and support*.

These three elements are always necessary in any helping process and the three together do in fact constitute the helping factor. I know of no piece of helping that cannot be analyzed in these terms, and no piece of unsuccessful helping that does not show a weakness in at least one of these elements. Reality has been partial or empathy and support conditional.

We will examine first each principle by itself and then try to bring them together. The order in which they are presented here does not necessarily mean that one introduces them, in helping, serially or in this order. One may start with an expression of empathy or even of support, and in any case they are interwoven. One does not stop where another starts. But if there is an order, reality often does come first.

## **Reality**

Reality means a number of things, some of which have already been touched on. It means, first, not discounting another’s problem, not taking it away from him by believing it unimportant. This is a thing we are particularly likely to do to children, whom we cannot believe, for some reason, feel as deeply as we do. How often we say, “Oh, they’ll soon forget it,” or “They’re too young to be affected much,” when everything that we really know about them points to the

fact that their despair, their fear, and their anger are not only intense but can leave permanent scars. To be real, on the other hand, means to face the problem with someone in all of its ugliness or terror. It means doing him the honor of taking his problem seriously. And, with children, in particular, but with adults also, this is the first requirement if a relationship is to grow. Another form of taking away a person's problem is to solve it for him or to insulate him from it. We either produce a quick solution or we help him to evade it, to forget it, not to come into contact with it often to spare him the pain or disturbance.

But, while it might be necessary to allay some forms of disturbance temporarily, disturbance has about it some of the qualities that are now recognized in a fever. It used to be good medical practice to allay all fevers. Now there is growing understanding that a fever is the body's way of fighting an infection. A child once, in a Children's Home, was very much disturbed by her mother's visits. The social worker suggested solving the problem by restricting the mother's visits. The child said, with a good deal of anger, "What you don't understand is that this is something I need to get disturbed about."

People need their problems if they are to solve them for themselves. Sometimes they need to be disturbed. Not to permit them to become so, when they are trying to tackle their problems, is to encourage nonchoice. *In his manuscript, Social work in Administration (nd), Keith stated: "I am not speaking of Christianity as an institution or of codes of behavior imposed on those we serve, but on the way in which we as helpers behave, of such matters as the increasing use of manipulative techniques or of anesthetizing people from the pain of making difficult decisions in the name of relieving every form of discomfort in life" (p. 8). Helping is not about removing problems. It is about acknowledging the reality of the problem and clarifying the options available.*

### **False Reassurance as "Nonreality"**

A common form of nonreality is reassurance. False reassurance is an attempt to palliate reality by telling the person in trouble that "things will be all right" when there is no reason to think that this will be so, or when the present hurts so much that this is wholly unimportant. We can recognize obvious cases of it. No wise parents today would tell their child that the dentist won't hurt. The dentist very well may hurt, and the parent be proved a liar. But we still, some of us, will tell a child that he will be happy in a foster home when this may not be so and when in any case all he can think of at the moment is his pain at leaving his own parents.

We use this kind of reassurance for two reasons. In the first place, we cannot stand the child's present unhappiness and are willing, although we may not know it, to try to dispel it even at the cost of greater unhappiness later. And, in the second, we are apt to be a little defensive because a foster home, in this case, or some other service, is what we have to offer him and we do not like the idea that he might not like the only thing that we have to give him. It makes us feel very inadequate. I have seen a welfare worker "reassure" a client that the termination of her grant does not really matter, since she ought to be able



to get support from a recently located absent husband, when her lights and gas were to be turned off that afternoon. False or unrealistic reassurance does not strengthen a person's ability to handle his problem. It effectually disarms him and robs him of the anger or despair he may need to deal with it.

Another reason for false reassurance is our natural protectiveness toward those we consider vulnerable or lacking in real strength. We feel that the person we are helping would be hurt by coming face to face with the truth. There may be some instances in which the helped person could not possibly face the truth, but more often the helping person is only too glad to have a good reason not to face the helped person with the truth. The genuine cases where the truth is so horrible that it would be more harmful than helpful are rather rare.

### **Protecting People from the Truth**

To protect someone from the truth is to make a very serious judgment about him. It is to say that he is incapable of being helped with his real problem. As a minister expressed it to me once, it is to deny him his chance for an "abundant life," fully experienced.

The truth, too, is often much less harmful than what the imagination puts in its place. Some years ago I was approached by a teacher who was concerned about a fifteen-year-old boy, the adopted son of an apparently stable and loving family, who had begun to run away. There seemed to be nothing in the home to suggest a need to escape from it, and although the boy was adolescent, he did not appear to be particularly rebellious. The boy was plainly running "to" rather than "from," and when I was told that the town he was running to was his birthplace, I was fairly safe in assuming at least tentatively that he was doing what so many children away from their own parents have to do, which was the answer the question, "Why did my parents give me up?"

I therefore asked the teacher why the boy's parents had done so and was told that the boy was illegitimate. It was quite hard for her to take when I suggested that if she wanted to help the boy, someone had better tell him the truth. To her surprise the boy was greatly relieved. As the boy expressed it, "Of course she had to find another home for me." Later the boy confessed that he had been for several years tortured by two alternative fantasies, one that his parents were murderers; the other that he had an unbearable odor. We are much too ready to assume that another person cannot bear the truth. Only when an untruth has become so necessary to a person that he or she cannot live without it, is it wise not to face the truth. We must remember, however, that reality is only one of the three helping elements. It cannot be introduced without empathy and support.

### **Reality as Difference**

We sometimes call a piece of reality deliberately introduced into a helping situation a piece of difference. It may be a fact. It can conceivably be an opinion, although we need to be careful that it is not a prejudice or a personal point of

view irrelevant to the helped person's need. Unskilled workers are, as we have said, full of inappropriate difference, and they introduce pieces of difference in inappropriate ways. *We do this when we blame others for their situations and preempt their problem solving with advice and with prescriptive instruction. Inappropriate difference is what happens when we set ourselves up as good and moral and imply that others could be too if they were just like us.*

How do we know when difference is appropriate? I would suggest at least four criteria for appropriate difference. The first, and perhaps the most important, of these is that there is sufficient likeness – understanding, common purpose – to assure the helped person that the difference is not a personal attack. People can, after all, say things to other people who know that they love them that they could not possibly say to a stranger.

Secondly, the difference must be expressed in the helped person's terms. Often the most useful little bits of difference can be expressed by using the helped person's own words. A welfare worker was interviewing a deserting father, who rather naturally was trying to excuse his desertion. His statement was that he could not bear not being master in his own house. "You know," said the worker, "that's the strangest way I've ever heard of being master in your own house, to run away from it." *In Some New Concepts in the Helping Professions (ca. 1980) Keith identified that a large barrier to change is ambivalence, i.e. feeling two ways at the same time" (p. 4). Keith recognized that true change comes from the inside and part of the helper's responsibility is to, without judgment, accept where the client is in the change process.*

Thirdly, there is a somewhat elusive quality about the person who is ready to accept difference. There is an element of challenge, of projecting an image and watching to see how you are going to respond to it. This was very obvious in the deserting father's words. This is perhaps the least concrete of our criteria. It is a sense one gets, an understanding of the process of image projection, a knowledge that a projection is being made for a purpose. The helped person is really saying, "Will you buy this image of me?" and if you do, you only strengthen the image and make the real self less accessible. The last criterion has to do with empathy and support. It is briefly that one has no right to introduce difference or reality unless one is prepared to help the person one is helping with the shock. Reality by itself is harsh. It is only reality approached with empathy and support that is a true helping process. Indeed we might restate the whole method of help as "facing people with reality with empathy and support." To face someone with reality and leave them to handle it alone is cruelty, not help.

### **Problems in Using Reality**

The fear of not being able to handle the repercussions is one of the chief obstacles to introducing appropriate difference. Obviously to tell even a small percentage of those one is trying to help that they are unpleasant people would be a poor rule in practice. In most cases it would result in the very reverse of helping. It could only be done when the worker is sure that the client recognizes

her desire to help. Just as people can tell “home truths”- in itself an interesting term- to those who are sure of their love and interest, so a helper can risk difference with someone who trusts her. Sometimes one can pick up an inherent contradiction in what the seeker for help may say or do. Sometimes one may have to say to someone, “You say you enjoy doing this but you don’t sound like it.” Body language, too, often betrays what a person is feeling. So does tone of voice. The classic example is that of the counselor who told a mother that her child needed more loving if he were to behave better. The mother came to the next session dragging the child into the office and said, “You were wrong. I’ve half killed this brat loving him and it hasn’t helped a bit.” *Keith addressed the power of the client in determining how effective our suggestions are in Some New Concepts in the Helping Professions. “In any helping profession we must never lose sight of the fact that the people we are helping are the ones who really decide whether our help will work or not” (ca. 1980, p. 10).*

### **Playing Devil’s Advocate**

Another form of difference which can sometimes be of help, providing again that it is kept within a framework of likeness, consists in the speculative assumption of exactly the opposite of what the helped person is asserting, so that he may gain strength in demolishing your argument. This is in fact the function of the devil’s advocate in a canonization procedure. What a devil’s advocate says is, in effect, “Have you considered the possibility that we’re on the wrong track altogether? Let’s look at that possibility.” This is a form of difference that can only be used when the helped person is fairly sure of himself; when, in fact, all that he needs is to move from a tentative statement to a forthright claiming of what he knows and believes.

### **Reality and “Tact”**

Reality also means being direct. Helping persons, unfortunately, have acquired something of the reputation of being rather “wily birds” who tread delicately and never quite say what they mean. This is sometimes described as “tact” or “consideration” but so easily becomes either evasion or a way of gently manipulating someone else to do what you want him to do and at the same time think that it was his own idea. One area in which the reality of the situation needs to be very clearly expressed is that of the helping relationship itself. It includes what will or may happen, the probable consequences of actions, the authority and rights each person has in the situation, who can tell whom to do what, and the conditions under which help is being offered. Concealed power is both unfair and generally unhelpful. The worker from the juvenile court who minimizes its authority and presents it only as wanting to be “of help” without making clear that it will enforce this “help” is trying to buy relationship at the cost of the truth, and she will end up having neither.

## **Do Not Justify Reality**

A further requirement of reality is that it must be presented as it is, without attempts at justification. The moment one does this to reality, one robs it of its primary helping value, which is that it exists outside both helper and the helped person and is something that they can both look at together, as a fact, and without a predetermined mental attitude toward it. To justify, or to explain, means that one claims the reality as “good” and that the helped person is wrong in being angry at it. It raises the possibility that it could be different and nearly always ends in a wrangle between the helped and the helping person about what might be instead of about what is. Helper and helped person need to be on the same side of reality.

## **The Right to Fail**

But there is one use of the word “reality” which helpers should avoid. Unfortunately, the word is often used in professional social work literature to mean the social worker’s estimate of the client’s capabilities. A course of action is seen to be unreal if, in the social worker’s opinion, the client is attempting something beyond his power. But this assessment, although it may be common sense, is not reality for the client. It is merely a judgment on him. What is real is what such plans would cost him and the very real possibility that he might fail. As David Soyer points out, people have the right to fail and may not in fact be satisfied with a second best until the impossible has been attempted. Sometimes, too, people surprise one. To elevate into reality a diagnosis, however careful, is presumptuous and is in all too many cases a disguised form of protectiveness. *Keith identified frequently the respect that helpers show clients when we do not presume what will be best for them and more importantly, when we do not reject clients who decide differently than we might decide for them, or in similar circumstance, for ourselves.*

## **Being Nice**

Reality is perhaps the hardest of the three elements to hold to for any sensitive person. None of us likes to be the bearer of bad news. We do not like seeing people hurt, and reality often hurts. Americans in particular find great difficulty with it, since American culture puts a high premium on considerateness and on not “hurting people’s feelings,” which makes plain speaking very difficult. If anyone doubts this – and paradoxically many Americans think of themselves as outspoken – one need only compare American and British book reviews or political comment. There is a deep tradition in our culture of being “nice.” Really to face reality with someone often feels like being “mean,” although it can be tremendously helpful. Even professions which have something of a tradition of “toughness” and “no nonsense” about them have apparently developed a need to show themselves gentle and understanding.

## **Empathy**

In order to help someone else with reality one has to show empathy for him. Empathy is the ability to know, or to imagine, what another person is feeling and, as it were, to feel it with him without becoming caught in that feeling and losing one's own perspective. It is not, let us be very clear, a way of softening reality. Empathy needs to be clearly distinguished from two other responses to people in trouble, sympathy and pity. The three responses have sometimes been described as feeling "like" someone (sympathy), feeling "with" someone (empathy), and feeling "for" someone (pity), but I find these prepositions somewhat difficult. The real difference between them lies in the amount and the kind of difference from the helped person that the helping person maintains.

In sympathy there is little difference. The helping person feels as does the person she is helping. She shares the same feelings, identifies herself with his interests, becomes aligned with him, loves and hates the same things. The helper who feels empathy on the other hand, understands the feelings that the other has about the situation, knows, as we have said, that "it must hurt," but does not claim these feelings herself. The helper who feels pity also retains her difference. She does not get overwhelmed by the troubled person's feelings. Emphasis is on the difference between her and the person she is helping, and the likeness, or understanding, is for the most part lost. Sympathy, as we have described it, is not entirely useless. There is some value in the precept to "rejoice with those that do rejoice and weep with those who weep." It is good to know that one is not alone and there are others who feel as you do. This may seem like an exaggerated sympathy. But this is one of sympathy's problems. We often hear it said that one can have too much sympathy for such and such a person (or such and such a group of persons). This is perfectly true. Sympathy can very easily become a weak emotion, and it can confirm a weak person in his weakness. Empathy is both a strong and a strengthening emotion. Because of the difference that the person who has empathy retains, she never condones or confirms weakness but enlists the troubled person's feelings in the attempt to overcome it. One cannot have too much empathy. But – and here, perhaps is the rub - empathy very easily slops over into sympathy. Sympathy is much the easier emotion. It is very easy to get caught in someone else's feeling system and to begin to identify with it.

### **An Act of the Loving Imagination**

I have spoken of empathy as an emotion, and purposely so. It is, of course, formally an act, but an act based on feeling. The best description I know of it is an "act of the loving imagination."

Both "act" and "imagination" are important words here. Empathy is much more than knowing intellectually what another must be feeling. It always involves the ability to enter into this feeling, to experience it and therefore to know its meaning for the other person and the actions that are likely to flow from it.

There is in fact a paradox here which is very hard to explain in ordinary, rational terms. Both to feel and to know is necessary if the purposes of empathy are to be fulfilled. Nothing carries less conviction, or is likely to fall so wide of the mark, as an attempt at empathy that is purely intellectual. The purpose of empathy is to convey feeling, not knowledge. But because feeling is communicated by so much more than words – by gestures, tone of voice, facial expression, and bodily posture, which are too complex to be capable of dissimulation – an assurance of feeling can only be communicated if this feeling actually exists.

In my experience, the facility of empathy can be trained, if not fully taught. While there are certainly people who have a natural empathy for others, there are also those who can release a great deal of loving imagination once they can free themselves from stereotyped reactions to people and once they become aware of their tendency, in some situations, to respond negatively, or sympathetically rather than empathically.

To learn empathy one has to be free from the kind of blocks that are thrown in one's path by liking and disliking people, by lining oneself up either for them or against them, instead of just caring about them, whether one likes or dislikes them. And this comes largely from self-knowledge. It is not so much that a person stops liking and disliking as it is that he or she learns to control the consequences of such feelings. Empathy also depends on knowledge, and on encounters with people who are quite different from oneself.

Knowledge of social conditions and some of the causes of feeling can also be of help. But empathy does not in fact need to be too precise. There is always something of the tentative about it, an acknowledgment that feeling must be present, and probably within a given range, and an invitation to the helped person to express his feeling more precisely. That is why the statement which we have used to typify empathy is not, "I know how it hurts," but "I know that it must hurt."

The empathy which is needed, at least in the beginning of a relationship, is largely directed toward the struggle through which the helped person is going, his fear of help, his wanting and not wanting to get well, the frustrations of his efforts to solve his problem by himself, and this is common human experience, although not always recognized as such. There are times when one can convey empathy in a subverbal manner, but generally it needs to be expressed verbally. I find that many young helping people can feel empathically, but they find it difficult to put their feeling into words. *Empathy seems at some level to be born out of relationship. In Some New Concepts in the Helping Professions (ca.1980), Keith stated that true helping can only be motivated by the giving of help, not the desire to be liked, or the wish for a particular outcome. "True help is always a matter of letting myself be used, never using another person even for the best of ends" (p. 7). Keith believed that could only happen when we recognize our similarity to our clients, i.e. how we are like them and our differences, i.e. how our circumstances can never be exactly the same.*

### **Support, No Matter What**

The third element in the helping factor is support. This has two aspects, material and psychological. Material support, the means to accomplish the task, may or may not be present in the helping situation. It is not generally part of either psychotherapy or problem-related counseling. When it does occur in these, it takes the form of technical know-how of some kind, whether this be marital techniques or where to find a school for one's child. In some helping it is, however, the most visible part and is thought of by many people as all that there is to help. It is what helping gives, whether this be money, opportunity, or know-how. Nor, as we have said, can it ever be considered unimportant. People need money, opportunity, education, and technical assistance to implement their decisions.

But people also need psychological support. They need to know that they are accepted and that the helping person will not give up on them. She will not be shaken in her desire to help. Even if helping proves impossible, she will still care about the person she is helping, "no matter what."

### **Support Even When Help is Not Possible**

Particularly she will not desert the person she is trying to help because that person disappoints her or makes what she believes to be an unwise or immoral decision. It is true that there are two or possibly three situations in which this decision or failure may mean an inability on the part of the helping person to go on being the primary helper. One situation occurs when the decision, or some limitation in the helped person, removes him from contact with the particular source of help with which he has been working. A student may fail and be required to leave a school; a child's behavior may be such that for the protection of others he must leave a Children's Home; or a client may no longer be eligible for assistance. There is also always the possibility that the helped person's problems may be such that no one knows at present how he can be helped. His resistance to help may be so strong or his ability to act so lacking that no skill that we have at present would be enough to provide any help. He may need, for his own protection or that of society, to be institutionalized, or control measures may have to be substituted for help. This decision would, however, have to be made with the greatest reluctance and with the knowledge that the helped person had not so much proved himself unhelpable as we [were] unable to help him.

But even should one of these conditions separate helped person and helper, the principle of support means that the separation is not accompanied by rejection. The helping person still cares. She still respects and is concerned about what happens to the other. Sometimes indeed it is in this very act of separation that helping really begins. I once knew a child in a children's home for whom all attempts to help her had seemed unsuccessful. When she faced trial in another city, the housemother, rather than rejecting her, asked the administrator to allow her to support the child through the trial. It was, not unnaturally, to the

housemother who had shown concern for her at her worst that this child turned later in life. It was she whom she consulted over the problems of working and marriage. And six years later when her younger sister, who had remained at the Children's Home, became restless, she offered her sister a home and help.

It goes without saying that support is also hard to practice. It is very easy to reject those who have let one down, especially where this has been accompanied with anger, blame, or ingratitude. Hard, but possible. *This confidence that the client can respond to our empathy and support and integrate it into helping responses to others is central to Keith's helping relationships. It highlights the mutuality of helping.*

### **To Support is Not to Condone**

It is extremely difficult for human beings to get away from the idea that to care about a person in trouble is to condone what he has done. It does not seem sufficient to allow someone to suffer the consequences of his act or to take his punishment for it. We seem to need to reinforce societal sanctions by disassociating ourselves from those who have offended against them, instead of seeing these people as those who need our help the most. Part of this is reaction against unrealistic helping. To be concerned about a delinquent is not to approve of delinquency. Nor is it to excuse it, to throw all of the blame onto conditions or onto society. Poor conditions, poor heredity, undoubtedly make it harder for acceptable decisions to be made, but not all people make such decisions under these strains. The helper whose support is a disguised form of exculpation, who believes that the delinquent had no choice but to act as he did, is being unrealistic. She is indulging rather than helping.

But in part our unwillingness to try to help rather than to punish the delinquent is our fear of ourselves. It is a strange reflection on how delicately balanced our "good" and "bad" decisions must be that we get so angry at the bad ones. This anger has its roots in fear. We fear that we too may be tempted. It has long been known to psychiatrists that those who are most violently opposed to some social ill are often those to whom it is secretly most attractive, and that the faults we see in others are often the ones we are most prone to ourselves.

Support may be indicated in a number of ways. Sometimes the mere fact of being there is sufficient. Sometimes it is indicated by physical contact, particularly with a child. Sometimes it includes a direct offer of help, or making clear that one is available. Sometimes it is a matter of giving someone an introduction, of "breaking the ice" for him in facing a new experience. One must, however, remember that the statement is not simply, "I am here to help you," but "I am here to help you if you want me and can use me." Support is at its best when it is consistent but unobtrusive and it must be always be unconditional. *Keith believed that this sums up Christian helping; the model of Jesus' unconditional love for us in that while we were still sinners, he gave himself for us. He consistently encouraged helpers to understand that we do not ask clients to behave in certain ways so that that they will be loved, but to understand that they are loved and therefore may choose to behave.*



## **Using the Elements**

Reality, empathy, and support, then, are the three elements of the helping factor. They still do not tell us how to help in any given situation, which is perhaps something no one can tell another, but they do give us some idea of how we need to approach the problem. But even here they are not prescriptions. No one can go into a helping situation saying to herself, "I will be real. I will be empathic. I will offer support." The very effort would distract her from listening to the person she wanted to help.

But they do offer a way of looking at our own helping efforts. In every helping situation that has gone wrong, or been less than productive than one hoped, it is good to ask oneself three questions:

1. Have I been able to face reality with this person, or have I glossed over the truth or offered false reassurance?
2. Have I been able to feel and express real empathy, or has empathy been lacking, or limited ("You can share your feeling with me as long as you don't feel so and so")?
3. Have I offered real support, or has it been conditional support ("I will continue to try to help you as long as you don't do this or that")?

An honest answer to these three questions often shows us what has gone wrong.

All three elements are necessary to each other. Reality without empathy is harsh and unhelpful. Empathy about something that is not real is clearly meaningless and can only lead the client to what we have called nonchoice. Reality and empathy together need support, both material and psychological, if decisions are to be carried out. Support in carrying out unreal plans is obviously a waste of time. The three are in fact triune, and although in any one situation one may seem to be predominant, all three need to be present. *For Alan Keith-Lucas, this was a spiritual revelation. Keith found significant connections between the concepts of reality, empathy and support and the roles of the Trinity in Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Effective helping requires all of the components of relationship with the God who provides ultimate helping. He said without apology that he intended to show that God works with us as Father, the One who plans the circumstances of our lives and gives us rules for living (reality); as the Son who shared our life and 'was tempted in all ways as we are' so that he understands our troubles (empathy) and as the Spirit who is always with us (support) (2010).*

## **The Triune God and Triune Helping**

God the Father, the Creator, is in Christian thought certainly the author of reality – both the reality of things and that of the moral and natural law, as well as of the laws of causality and consequence. God is also the Wholly Other, the One who is different, who is "God, not man."

Biblical history, as Christians read it, certainly suggests that this reality was not enough. Human beings alone could not, of their own will, face reality and change in relation to it. There was needed an act of empathy, and there is no more characteristic or total act of empathy than that described in the Incarnation – God who became human and yet remained God, “who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning.” Indeed, the whole theology of “very God and very man,” the refusal to consider Jesus as either less than God and not wholly human, or part human, or part God and part human, the insistence that he is a single person, is a struggle with the problem – how a person can feel another’s pain and yet remain separate from it. Both require the concept that in doing two apparently different things at the same time, one does not do either less completely.

Again, the name given to the Spirit, both in the King James Version and in the Prayer Book, is the Comforter. Although the word “comfort” has suffered a weakening of meaning since the seventeenth century, its derivation is from *cum*, meaning “with” and *fortis*, meaning “strong.” A comforter is therefore one who is “strong with you,” and there is no better one-sentence definition of support.

Reality, empathy, and support – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – the analogy may seem blasphemous at first. It is, however, logical that if the person asking for help is analogous to the recipient of grace, then the helping person must, as far as it is possible for a finite, fallible being to do so, model her helping on the actions of God. Help becomes in a new sense the expression of one’s religion, not just as the term is often used, one’s general but unspecified goodwill toward others, but what one actually believes. It follows too that the helping process is real, that it is not merely a collection of pragmatic principles, that it deserves much closer study than it has received to date, and that where we have got it right, it is much more than a set of useful techniques.

### **How Might We Distinguish a Christian Helper from A Secular One?**

A Christian of Grace will not...

- Pass judgment because she is conscious of herself as a sinner dependent on grace.
- Practice direct evangelism or witness unless involved with members of her own faith or people who are seeking a Christian solution to their problems as witnessing is often not good helping. People rarely change and grow because they are told that they should. Most people one helps do not as yet trust the helper. The best witnessing occurs in service responding to the client when the client is ready to deal with spiritual matters. Many clients’ life experience has been such that they have no reason to believe the Word of God. If one’s only knowledge of having a father is that he beats one or deserts one, how can one believe in a Heavenly Father?
- Focus on spiritual help rather than tangible concrete help. Christianity is the only religion whose founder prayed for daily bread, and in

Matthew 25, Jesus did not say, "I was in need of counseling and you counseled me," but "I was hungry, thirsty and naked."

- Ask if someone deserves to be helped. Jesus was more concerned with the character of the person who gives aid than the character of the person who receives aid.

Qualities of a Christian Helper...

- Looking for evidence of grace in those she helps
- Steadfastly standing by people and caring even when help seems impossible
- Standing by her values despite current culture
- Holding institutions accountable for justice, kindness, and walking humbly with God
- Staying tough enough to deal with reality with clients
- Continuing to exhibit true humility and willingness to learn, grow and discriminate new practice trends

In his monograph, *Social Work in Administration* (nd), Keith clarified his definition of Christianity and Christian helping: "I am not speaking of Christianity as an institution or of codes of behavior imposed on those we serve, but on the way in which we as helpers behave, of such matters as the increasing use of manipulative techniques or of anesthetizing people from the pain of making difficult decisions in the name of relieving every form of discomfort in life" (p. 8). The call on the Christian helper is to focus on the helper's behavior rather than the client's behavior and to help others as they have been helped.

### **Drawing it all Together**

In the last several chapters of *Giving and Taking Help*, Alan Keith-Lucas helped us to understand that not everyone is called and gifted to helping, particularly professional helping as articulated here. Helping persons are human persons with our own needs and interests. This makes self-awareness or self-knowledge even more important as we consider our own areas of prejudice, woundedness and personal challenge when working with clients. Awareness of our similarities and differences is the beginning of good helping. Helping persons use specific knowledge, values and skills, but not to the exclusion of spontaneity and natural helping. Keith identified that helping persons particularly need courage to be real with clients, to take risks that they won't be liked, to give clients the right to fail. We also need the kind of humility, awareness of sameness, that lets us relate to clients without judging their differences and stay grounded in serving others, knowing that ultimately our treatment of others as persons worthy of respect and care will bear fruit. It is not necessary that we like all of our clients. It is necessary that we care for them and about them and that our concern includes respect rather than control as Powell, Sherwood, and Ressler so powerfully pointed out in their recent writing about his work (2010).

Understanding the nature of the helping relationship and process allows us

then to incorporate specific guidelines for our professional helping. Keith suggested that we always start with what the client is asking us for rather than what we think they should be asking for from us. We must tune in then to the feeling behind or underneath the words even before the client articulates them. Good helping means not taking the client's feelings personally and recognizing that feelings are neither good nor bad – they simply are. So we focus on the issues rather than denying the feeling by reframing the situation. Real helping, according to Keith, means letting clients choose even when the choice includes failure and then continuing in the helping relationship to formulate the reality, the problem, the alternatives, and the opportunities. Clients can become overwhelmed by the enormity of their reality. Partializing the problem or concern allows them to focus on work that can be done now and in subsequent meetings when the helper and helped can explore how well the choices and resultant actions are working out. This evaluation of practice with the client allows modification of the plan of action in response to ongoing results. So the helper, rather than offering imperatives and control, may offer advice that the helped can consider and that can be modified as needed. This early definition of client self-determination is essential to the Christian social worker.

For Keith, helping another person is more like consultation than it is diagnosis and treatment. The helper comes alongside the person who is facing a difficult reality and helps the person figure out exactly what it is and what the available options might be, including what they each would take or cost to pursue. The helper tries to support the person in making what Keith calls “choice” rather than “non-choice” responses to the difficult situation. “Choice” responses include responding to difficulty and changing when change is possible or accepting and using the difficulty when change is not possible. “Non-choice” responses on the other hand include denying the reality or being crushed by the reality. The helper cannot fully know when change is possible nor take responsibility for the outcome of choices.

In his monograph, *A Wholly Different Experience* (ca. 1980), Keith recommended a co-planning model in which the helper is not identified as the strong expert but rather as the partner or colleague of the person seeking help. So, “we are in no position to judge or assign blame. What we need to do is to help people make sense of the world, see their options, make their decisions, experience something other than censure and defeat” (p. 11).

The key to helping is not the answer to “why?” but the answer to “given your current circumstances, what next?” When we help clients to modify choices and decisions that are not working and celebrate those that are, we bring with us movement toward long term success for those clients. Helpers cannot help everyone and must use self-awareness and discernment to know when to refer clients for more specialized help. Even in those cases, the helper can often assist with immediate needs while the referral is being made. Keith-Lucas also identified ways in which the principles of helping contribute to positive outcomes in more adversarial settings including court, business, arguments among colleagues and in therapeutic settings, including work with children and families. His bottom line: “The helping process, in fact, works” (1994, p. 157). Recent attention both to his principles and his practice affirms the importance of work with families and the importance of respect for clients in all circumstances.

The values that drive the helping process, according to Alan Keith-Lucas, are centered in the value of each person and the person's freedom to choose without being judged, leading to the use of feelings and relationship to help people find "their own way." He found those values for himself grounded in and growing out of Judeo-Christian values, even as he acknowledged that the values of the helper have significant influence over the process. Helpers are frequently agents of social systems with power; the helper's willingness to empower clients rather than exacerbate the power differential is key to successful helping.

Alan Keith-Lucas described God, the Father, as the author of reality; Jesus, the Son with us, as empathy; and the Holy Spirit as comforter and supporter. The use of the helping factors of reality through empathy and support sums up the professional use of self that is taught in so many helping programs and models the integration of Christian faith and professional helping practice.

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# Models for Ethically Integrating Faith and Social Work

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*Rick Chamiec-Case*

## **Introduction**

Over 30 years ago I was a new, eager, and inexperienced MSW student in my first practicum placement. This first placement was in a state mental health hospital with locked psychiatric wards secured by large, heavy metal doors. I was assigned to work with adolescents, many of them victims and perpetrators of sexual abuse. Many had a history of suicide attempts, and most were considered a threat to themselves and others.

To be honest, I didn't have much of an idea what I was doing, especially considering the complex challenges posed by these clients. But I was fresh and enthusiastic and raring to go, committed to being a positive, encouraging influence in the lives of these boys and girls. I was also pretty naïve.

So when I was singled out and asked to meet with several senior treatment team members at the hospital, I assumed it was because they saw something special in me - a diamond in the rough, so to speak! It turns out, however, that what they were really interested in was the fact that I was a dual degree student - and that the other program in which I was enrolled was Yale Divinity School. What this said to them was that in addition to being a social work student, it was likely that I was "religious." The members of this senior treatment team wanted to communicate to me a clear and direct message. They wanted me to know that while they didn't hold it against me that I was a person of faith, it would be unacceptable for me to let my faith have any direct influence on how I practiced social work in their institution.

Now almost 30 years later, it seems clear to me that the members of that treatment team had a particular picture in their minds about what it would mean for my faith to shape my social work practice. And clearly it was not a pretty picture, one that possibly included my trying to convert the clients in their hospital to my understanding of Christianity, or running roughshod over their beliefs and values if they happened to differ from my own.

Now looking back, I can understand how with *this* particular picture in mind, the members of the treatment team felt so strongly that I would have to - as they said - "check my faith at the door" if I were to practice in their program setting. It is possible some of them had prior experiences working with Christians who

were convinced that their faith compelled them to work tirelessly to convert even uninterested clients and colleagues alike. At that time, however, I was only aware that my faith served as a powerful reason for becoming a social worker and my wanting to reach out to others around me that were struggling and needed support – to be the hands and feet of Jesus, serving others in our community.

In my current role as Executive Director of the North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW) and with 30 years of practice and teaching experience, I have learned that the issue of integrating faith and social work is much more nuanced than my intern supervisors were able or willing to consider when they warned me about not letting my faith affect my work in their program. There are, in fact, a large number of ways in which the faith of Christians in social work can have an impact on their social work, most (though not all) of which are positive and healthy and which potentially add value to their work. And, as I will contend throughout this chapter, the key question is not *whether* the faith of Christians in social work interacts with their practice – I will argue such interaction is unavoidable – but rather *how thoughtfully, competently, and ethically* Christians in social work handle these interactions. At the same time, I have discovered that social work, in turn, often has a vital and positive impact on how Christian social workers understand and live out their faith as well.

In an attempt to organize the many ways faith and social work can potentially interact with each other, this chapter will explore three broad categories for organizing a variety of approaches to ethically integrating Christian faith and social work:

1. The Effect of Integration on Motivation and Character/Identity Formation (how both faith and social work affect the development and strengthening of social workers' personal identity, character, inner strength and motivation).
2. The Effect of Integration on the *Understanding* of Faith and/or Social Work (how faith affects the way Christians in social work *understand* social work theory and practice, as well as how social work affects the way they *understand* their Christian faith).
3. The Effect of Integration on *the Practice of* Faith and/or Social Work (how faith affects the way Christians in social work *carry out* social work practice, as well as how social work affects the way they *practice or live out* their Christian faith).

But before launching into a description of these three categories and the various integration approaches that fall under them, it will be helpful to explore what exactly the phrase “the integration of faith and social work” means, and why might Christians in social work be interested in the integration of faith and social work in the first place.

### **Defining the Integration of Faith and Social Work**



To set the context for this chapter's discussion about the integration of faith and social work, it will be helpful to provide working definitions of at least three terms: faith, social work, and integration.

"Faith," for the purposes of this chapter, will refer to:

being related to God in a particular way, indeed, being in right relationship to the true God. . . . That relationship depends on the prior activity of God, who takes initiative in making the divine nature and presence known and accessible to human beings. Thus, faith is primarily a response to a gift, an activity of recognizing and accepting God's grace, which gives rise to a way of life—a way of believing, trusting, committing, and orienting all one's thoughts and actions (Dykstra, 1999).

It is important to notice that this definition of faith includes emphases on both knowledge/understanding (Christian theology), and practice/action (the ways Christians live out their faith).

"Social work," for the purposes of this chapter, will refer to:

"The professional application of social work values, principles, and techniques to one or more of the following ends: helping people obtain tangible services; counseling and psychotherapy with individuals, families, and groups; helping communities or groups provide or improve social and health services; and participating in legislative processes. The practice of social work requires knowledge of human development and behavior; of social and economic, and cultural institutions; and of the interaction of all these factors" (NASW, n.d.).

It is important to notice that this working definition of social work also includes emphases on both knowledge/understanding, and practice/action, as well as practice addressing a wide range of areas including direct practice with individuals, direct practice with communities and organizations, social work education, social work research, social policy, etc.

To "integrate," according to the Merriam-Webster *Online Dictionary* is "to form, coordinate, or blend into a functioning or unified whole" ("Merriam-Webster online", 2006). Integration, for the purposes of this chapter, will be defined quite broadly to mean the way in which the faith of Christians in social work affects, influences, shapes, or contributes to their understanding and practice of social work, as well as the way in which social work theory and practice has a similar effect on how Christian social workers understand and practice their Christian faith – with the goal of bringing the two together into a functioning or unified whole<sup>1</sup>.

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1 It should be noted that some social workers of faith otherwise committed to bringing faith and social work together express caution regarding the use of the term "integration" to describe the relationship between Christian faith and social work because

*Answering the ‘So What?’ Question: Benefits of Integrating Faith and Social Work*

What might be some of the reasons for or benefits of integrating faith and practice? For one thing, in contrast to the assumption of my internship supervisors that faith and social work inevitably work at cross purposes, many social workers of faith share the conviction that the thoughtful, sensitive integration of faith and social work offers the potential of generating a rich *synergy* that can add considerable value to both our work and our faith. Synergy in this context refers to: “two or more things working together in order to create something that is bigger or greater than the sum of their individual efforts” (“Synergy”, 2014). From this perspective, a key benefit of the thoughtful integration of faith and social work is that for people of faith it can contribute to outcomes (that is, the accomplishment of valued goals for clients and communities, as well as growth in faith and faithfulness for social workers) that are potentially greater than the sum of what can be achieved through just social work and faith on their own).<sup>2</sup>

There are additional reasons that proponents of the integration of faith and social work have offered for its importance and value - reasons that reflect a “growing awareness that people’s religious faith should inform and impact their life at work” (Russell, 2007, p. 72). First of all, for many Christians in social work, their faith is a powerful asset that provides motivation, sustenance, resilience, and strengthens their ability to cope with the many challenges and stress associated with being a social worker. Put another way, for many people of faith, integration involves tapping the resources of their faith to be the best social workers they can be – resources that can be especially valuable when the going gets tough, as if often does in social work.

Second, many Christians in social work believe that the content of their faith provides perspective and unique insight (for example, about the human condition) that is not part of their social work training, but which can be extremely helpful when applied thoughtfully to social work practice:

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they believe: a) the term “integration” is used as a buzz word reflecting an attempt minimize the central and foundational role faith should play in every aspect of life, thereby domesticating “faith” in an effort to make it more respectable and palatable to the larger social work profession; or b) that too strong a focus on “integration” could prevent social workers from serious consideration and application of social work knowledge and theories generated outside of the faith community; or c) that the concept of “integration” seems to imply that Christian social workers have something called faith on the one hand, and something one does, social work, on the other – as if faith and what we do in social work are wholly independent of or separable from social workers themselves, rather than seeing them both as “bubbling up from the very center of the social worker” (Brandson & Hugen, 2007, p. 351).

2 Although many social workers of faith see the integration of faith and social work as primarily positive and synergistic, there are some social workers, both social workers who embrace faith as well as social workers who do not, who view faith and social work as dichotomous, non-overlapping, and in some cases, in significant tension or conflict with each other. These positions will be introduced later in this chapter. In an effort to be transparent, however, it should be acknowledged up front that this chapter primarily focuses on the potential for synergy associated with the thoughtful integration of faith and social work.

Christians believe that in the person of Jesus, in the text of the Bible, and in the historical experience of the Church God has revealed important truths that would otherwise be largely hidden from view (Jacobson & Jacobson, 2004, p. 28).

The same can be said about the content and practice of social work, which provides perspective and unique insight which can be extremely helpful in supporting Christians' efforts to understand and live out their faith (for example, when seeing up close the pain and marginalization of our clients enables us to understand faith's compelling call to serve the "least of these" (Matthew 25) in a deeper and more robust way).

Third, there is an increasing recognition within the social work profession of the importance of providing spiritually sensitive practice (an important subset of cultural competence), which includes a commitment to competently assessing and incorporating, when indicated, clients' spiritual beliefs and values in our practice. In a recent study, Oxhandler et al. found that one of only two variables significantly related with social workers addressing clients' spirituality and religion in clinical social work practice is the intrinsic religiosity of social workers themselves (H. K. Oxhandler, Parrish, Torres, & Achenbaum, In press). In Oxhandler's study, the degree to which one's religious or spiritual beliefs carry over into all areas of the social worker's life (including professional practice) had the highest correlation with the integration of clients' religion/spirituality in practice. This finding confirms social workers' intrinsic religiosity as a critical predictor for the integration of clients' religion/spirituality in practice, a crucial component of spiritually sensitive social work practice.

Finally, for many Christians in social work, faith forms a core part of their identities, and is not something that can simply be "checked at the door" when they practice social work. Attempts to bracket their faith as they engage in social work practice often feel forced and stilted, and potentially contribute to social workers feeling inauthentic and/or leading to an unsatisfying and unproductive disconnect between their personal and professional selves. Bottom line, Christians in social work – like all persons regardless of their worldviews – to be psychologically healthy cannot avoid seeking integrity, authenticity, wholeness, and continuity between their overall body of beliefs on the one hand, and their actions on the other (Wolterstorff, 1984). As such, as mentioned above, the question is not *whether* the faith of Christians in social work interacts with their social work practice, but rather how *thoughtfully, competently, and ethically* Christians in social work handle these interactions.

### **What's Still Missing from the Integration Discussion?**

Although there has been a significant amount of attention paid to the integration of faith and social work (as well as faith and psychology) over the past several decades, there are still a number of important areas that have been largely absent from this discussion to date including: a) there is currently very little empirical research exploring which approaches to integration are currently

in use, by whom, under what circumstances, in which settings, under whose auspices, with which populations, and to what measurable effect; b) more efforts need to be made to explore what the distinctive theologies and practices of the various Christian denominations and traditions contribute to our understanding of the integration of faith and social work; c) more efforts need to be made to compare and contrast how faith traditions *other than* Christianity understand and work out the integration of faith and social work (what do Christians in social work have to learn from and contribute to the efforts of Muslims (Ragab, 1992), Jews, and Hindus, for example, interested in the interaction of faith and social work); d) more attention needs to be paid to the extent to which integration is a *communal* practice (Brandsen & Hugen, 2007, p. 352) – as opposed to something simply explored at a personal, individual level; e) this chapter's focus on the positive synergy that can be developed through the integration of faith and social work should not anesthetize us to the fact that in at least some cases, integration can be approached in such a way (outside of the bounds of ethical practice) that could negatively affect social work practice, potentially even causing clients or clients systems harm; developing a clearer understanding about what differentiates healthy, positive integration from unethical integration should be an important research priority; f) more attention needs to be paid to the rich and varied ways that social work theory and practice contribute to how Christians in social work understand, experience, and practice their faith – to balance the current focus of the literature which focuses primarily on how faith contributes to social work.

### **Proposed Categories for Organizing Approaches to Integration**

So how concretely does the faith of Christians in social work potentially influence, shape, or contribute to their understanding and practice of social work, and how does social work theory and practice potentially do the same with regard to how Christian social workers understand and live out their faith?

The next section of this chapter will explore three basic categories that can be used to organize a variety of approaches to integrating Christian faith and social work, including:

- Category 1: The Effect of Integration on the Christian Social Worker's Motivation and Character/Identity Formation
- Category 2: The Effect of Integration on the *Understanding* of Faith and of Social Work
- Category 3: The Effect of Integration on *the Practice* of Faith and of Social Work

#### **Category 1: The Effect of Integration on the Christian Social Worker's Motivation and Character/Identity Formation**

The first broad category for organizing approaches to integration focuses on how the faith of Christians in social work affects the development and

strengthening of their personal identity, character, inner strength and motivation in ways that impact the way they understand and practice social work. Reciprocally, this category also focuses on how social work affects the development and strengthening of the personal identity, character, inner strength and motivation of Christians in social work in ways that contribute to influence they understand and practice their faith. Some examples of integration that fall within this first category include the calling, virtues, and wonder & worship models of integration.

### *Calling Model of Integration*

There are many ways that the interaction of faith and social work potentially contributes to and supports the formation of the identity, character, and motivation of Christian social workers. For example, for many, faith informs, drives, confirms, or clarifies their decisions for choosing the vocation of social work as a career. It grounds their belief that God has called them to their careers as social workers in order to serve people who are hurting and to further social justice and human flourishing in our world, a central aspect of the Christian life. Beryl Hugen writes that:

Historically, religiously motivated persons and groups found their faith propelling them into actions of concern for others, especially the poor and the vulnerable in society. These social workers have affirmed in a variety of ways their shared belief that the faith dimension of life leads to . . . a commitment to others—to social work practice motivated by a calling to a life of service (Hugen, 2008, p. 39).

Janie, a social worker tells her story of feeling called to social work:

I loved history, and believed that people would be wiser if they understood the past. I planned to be an archeologist focusing on ancient Greece. I was happy to work hard, and assumed that if I did I would “win.” My job. My goals. My achievement.

One evening during my senior year in high school, I was invited to a Bible study. The study leaders pointed to Jesus, the Son of God, and told us that God wanted us to reorder our futures based on His call for our lives. As I continued in the study, I came to realize that Jesus’ priorities for my life would need to be my first priorities as well. That would mean following the command to love God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength...and to love my neighbor as I love myself” (Matt: 22:37-39).

After a period of extensive wrestling, I came to believe that God was asking me to engage with the **present** world rather than focusing primarily on the past. I came to realize that many without access to power in our society were being harmed by those with more power and control. I felt God calling me to empower those who

are left at the margins of society. The call to “do justice, love mercy and walk humbly” (Micah 6:8), burned its way into my soul and my actions. I switched my major to social work.

Once in practice, God showed me the richness and joy that come from embracing those whom the world ignores. God has put me far from the world I had planned for myself. God has given me new eyes. With these eyes, I have been able to discern what *God* was calling me to do with my life. Now, by God’s grace, I’m not just a “nice” person, I’m His person (Hoyt-Oliver, 2013).

The belief that God has called them to social work, in turn, often motivates, nurtures and sustains the commitment of Christians in social work to the rigorous demands of their work even during the most challenging and stressful times and circumstances.

Reciprocally, for some, social work contributes to a person’s call to a life of faith. Dr. Alan Keith-Lucas, an early pioneer in the integration of faith and social work, came to the Christian faith somewhat later in life after he was already an established social work scholar. Keith-Lucas was not reluctant to share how his becoming a Christian was heavily influenced by the resonance of the central features of the helping process – and how this influenced his understanding of what God must be like. He describes this resonance in one of his unpublished works:

Some time ago . . . I was asked by the Florence-Darlington (South Carolina) Mental Health Society to address them on the subject of the nature of the helping process. . . . Were there, for instance, any universal rules that applied to all efforts to be helpful? . . .

In the more successful cases I had managed, without realizing it, to bring three things to my client. One was reality . . . – that is, I had told my clients the truth. . . . At the same time, I had been very much aware of what my clients were going through, and was feeling what it would be like to be in their shoes, and thirdly, I had made myself available to them. I hadn’t given up on them when they didn’t take my advice or made a mess of things.

These three factors, which I called reality, empathy and support . . . did and do seem to me to have something universal about them. But I was unprepared for the revelation that came to me one day, on my way back from work, that these are essentially the ways in which God has dealt with us.

I had already called them the trinity of helping. I’d even insisted that they were triune, three things that were essentially one. But there’s another Trinity, spelled this time with a capital T, three Persons . . . who were at the same time One. There is God the Father, the Creator of all reality . . . . And what did this God do in His passionate desire to bring us to salvation, a word that originally

meant health and happiness, both in this world and the next? He came, as one of my Texas friends puts it, ‘smack dab down here,’ to be tempted in all ways as we are, yet not to sin himself – the greatest act of empathy the world has ever seen. And what did He promise us when He left us? . . . That He would send a Guide, a Counsellor, a Comforter . . . – today we might say a supporter. . .

Working with people, trying to help, deepened my understanding of what God is about. . . . Finding the need for empathy with my clients and seeing it work helped me see what it was that God really did when He humbled Himself and came down among us, and how great His Love was for Him to do it. (Keith-Lucas, ca. 1980, pp. 6-8, 14)

### *Virtues Model of Integration*

There are other examples of ways that the interaction of faith and social work potentially contributes to the formation of the identity and character of Christians in social work, an interaction that can have a direct and beneficial impact on their provision of social work practice. For example, for many Christian social workers, integration consists of engaging in a variety of Christian disciplines and practices (Ripley, Garzon, Hall, Mangis, & Murphy, 2009, p. 6) that nurtures the development of Christian virtues such as faith, hope, humility, hospitality, gratitude, selflessness, and love, which transform not just what they *do*, but even more fundamentally who they *are* (and *are becoming*). These changes, in turn, permeate all aspects of their lives, including their work as they strive to become conformed to the image of Christ, who is viewed as “the *telos* of human development” (Yangerber-Hicks et al., 2006, p. 344).

In his “Selflessness as a Virtue in Social Work Practice,” Denis Costello describes the spiritual discipline of reading the Psalms as an intentional faith practice to nurture the virtue of selflessness, a prerequisite for strong clinical practice (Costello, 2013). This approach to integration wrestles with questions such as:

- What character traits, dispositions, commitments and virtues ought to be nurtured in social workers of faith to equip them to engage with and serve their clients and communities well?
- Which Christian disciplines and practices serve best to nurture the development of these traits and/or virtues?
- What is the role of social workers’ faith traditions in the character and virtue formation of Christians in social work?

In my own life, as part of my preparation for each day of work, I engage in daily readings and reflection that provide guidance on how to cultivate and nurture the kinds of Christian virtues that help me grow in my faith, and which in turn bring focus and purpose to my life and work. For example, Robert Robert’s *Spiritual Emotions: A Psychology of Christian Virtues* (2007) provides

a rich and nuanced account of a range of Christian virtues such as humility, hope, joy, peace, contrition, compassion. One key focus of Roberts' book is on the profound impact these virtues can have on our desire for and ability to live a life characterized by a deep love for God and neighbor, and by a yearning for justice and human flourishing – which in turn can have a profound impact on the work that we do as well.

### *Wonder and Worship Model of Integration*

Still one more way that the interaction of faith and social work potentially contributes to the formation of the identity and character of Christians in social work involves how they *respond* to what they observe, learn and experience in their work, especially the progress and positive change that occurs in the lives of their clients or client systems. In particular, many Christians in social work describe a sense of wonder or awe they sometimes experience when they see glimpses of God's grace and work of healing, reconciliation and transformation in and through their work - ultimately leading to a response of heartfelt praise and worship (Glanzer, 2008). Indeed, for some people of faith who have finely honed their capacity to see and experience God's grace working in and through their practice, it might be said that their *doing* of social work, in fact, often becomes for them an act of adoration and worship.

Early in my social work career I worked as a house parent at a group home for adolescents with disabilities. Being a houseparent meant I lived in the group home in a room in the same hallway as the residents there. It was very difficult work that sometime required extremely long hours. I remember one time when I stayed up all night with a young man who was going through a very difficult transition in his life. The transition was causing him a great deal of pain and frustration, and the only way he knew how to deal with what he was feeling was to engage in severe self-abuse - slapping himself in the face and head until he drew blood.

On this particularly difficult evening, we had spent most of the night up together, my simple goal being to prevent him from seriously hurting himself. I remember vividly how as morning approached after what seemed like an endless night, much of this young man's anxiety and tension began to ease, and we were able to play a few simple games together. At one point, he flashed a broad smile just as I caught a glimpse of the rising sun through the window behind us. Although I knew this young man still had many challenging days still ahead of him during this difficult transition in his life, I remember having this sense that I was watching and perhaps even in a small way participating in God's work of bringing healing to the life of this distraught young man. As physically and emotionally drained as I was at that time, I remember feeling this wave of awe and wonder roll over me, leading to this profound experience of gratitude. It was truly a sacred moment in my life.

Table 1 provides some examples of statements that attempt to operationalize the effect of integration on the social worker's motivation and character/identity formation.



**Table 1: Statements Operationalizing the Integration of Faith and Social Work**

<b>Category 1: The Effect of Integration on Social Worker's Motivation and Character/Identity Formation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My faith played an important role in my decision to become a social worker.</li> <li>• My faith supports my on-going commitment to being a social worker.</li> <li>• Exercising Christian virtues (e.g., faith, hope, and love) strengthen my social work practice.</li> <li>• My faith helps me to cope with challenges in my social work practice.</li> <li>• My social work practice strengthens me as a Christian.</li> <li>• Finding meaning in my social work practice strengthens my faith.</li> <li>• My social work supports my commitment to being a Christian.</li> <li>• Social work helps me to cope with challenges in the practice of my faith.</li> <li>• Social work virtues strengthen my faith.</li> <li>• Observing powerful change in my clients' lives leads me to experience a deep sense of awe and wonder.</li> <li>• I view change in my clients' lives as an indication of God's grace.</li> <li>• Social work helps me to cope with challenges in the practice of my faith.</li> </ul>

**Category 2: The Effect of Integration on the Understanding of Faith and of Social Work**

The second broad category for organizing approaches to integration focuses on how faith affects the way Christians in social work *understand* social work theory and practice. Reciprocally, this category also suggests focuses on how social work theory and practice affects the way they *understand* their Christian faith. Some examples of integration that fall within this second category include the latent and cognitive models of integration.

*Latent Model of Integration*

There are many examples of ways that faith influences and contributes to the way Christians understand social work, sometimes even when they are not *deliberately intending* to do something they would call integration or are even *consciously* aware of it - at least until they take time to reflect on it. C.S. Lewis, in his essay on "Christian Apologetics," in *God in the Dock* (1970, p. 93), refers to this as Christians acting with their "Christianity latent" (p. 93), and Jacobson and Jacobson similarly describe the sense in which a Christian's faith is sometimes "unconsciously embodied" (Jacobson & Jacobson, 2004, p. xi) in the way they live their lives.

Early in my career I was working for an agency that operated group homes for adolescents with developmental disabilities. Straight out of college with only a degree in philosophy, I knew very little about either residential care or developmental disabilities. But I remember with remarkable clarity my strong

resistance to a component of the treatment plan for one of the more challenging residents in that system. According to the terms of this resident's behavior plan, he was not allowed to go home to visit his family on weekends unless he met a number of prerequisite behavioral targets during the course of the week. Simply put, if his behavior was not "good enough" during the week, there would be no family visit for him on the weekend. In spite of my lack of work experience in this field, I was fiercely opposed to this component of the resident's behavior plan.

Although I couldn't have clearly articulated at that time why I felt this strategy was likely to cause more harm than good, upon reflection many years later, I began to understand my strong reaction. It had to do with the fact that this component of the behavior plan clashed irreconcilably with how I believe God treats us, and in turn, how God asks us to treat each other. At the heart of my understanding of Christian faith is this: if God required us to meet a series of "prerequisite behavioral targets" before He would allow us to have a relationship and fellowship with Him, we would all be in serious trouble! Instead, it is only *because* God loves us first that we are able to begin becoming the kind of people who live and behave in the ways God intends for us. As I understand it, this is what the Christian concept of grace is all about. It seems clear to me now that my Christian faith had a strong impact on my opposition to this component of this resident's behavior plan, but not in a way that was conscious, intentional or overt - I came to this issue with my Christianity latent.

### *Cognitive Models of Integration*

There are many other examples of ways that faith affects – in a more intentional way – the way Christians in social work *understand* social work, as well as the way social work reciprocally affects Christians' understanding of their faith. For instance, the respective beliefs and values of faith and social work can:

- a. affect which particular aspects or priorities of the other discipline become a significant concern or emphasis for the social worker
- b. strengthen, reinforce, support, refine, or complement the beliefs and values of the other (Jacobson & Jacobson, 2004, p. 16)
- c. retain their validity, but only within their own separate spheres ("The truth of each discipline is to remain separate and contextualized within the discipline from which it came" (Eck, 1996, pp. 108-109)
- d. act as filters to help sort out from the other discipline what the person is and is not able and willing to embrace- (Brandsen & Hugen, 2007; Chamiec-Case, 2008; Jones, 2006)
- e. make a contribution to the other, but only after one or the other is in some way changed, altered, reconstructed, reinterpreted, transformed, or subsumed within the other to deal with initial or apparent tensions or inconsistencies ("Data from the other discipline must be altered to become acceptable as data for the process of integration" (Eck, 1996, p. 104)
- f. lead to new, fresh insights in the both disciplines that would likely not be found in either other discipline in and of itself and which are richer and/or more nuanced than either discipline could be on its own.

What would be some illustrations of these examples of how faith affects the way Christians in social work *understand* social work? In their article “Social Work for Social Justice: Strengthening Social Work Education through the Integration of Catholic Social Teaching,” Mary Ann Brenden and Barbara Shank describe a process through which the Colleges of St. Catherine/St. Thomas went about “thoughtfully and systematically integrating Catholic Social Teaching (CST) into the social work curriculum” with the result that through this process “the School has strengthened the social justice content of its programs” (Brenden & Shank, 2012, p. 354).

As another illustration, in his article “Who Cares?” (2008), Jim Vanderwoerd proposes several biblical principles (which would not be found in the social work literature) to serve as a foundation for the development of a uniquely Christian view of social welfare, including: a) that God creates and upholds all the different societies that have and do exist; and b) that the purpose of societies/social structures is to facilitate God’s intent for humans in creation – which is to have abundantly flourishing relationships in harmony.

As one last illustration, Alan Keith Lucas shared how biblical insights helped reinforce for him that his practice was “on the right track”:

How do we use them <insights from the Bible> in our practice? To me, perhaps, what they have done first and foremost is to confirm, or, in a few cases deny, my own gropings towards understanding what helping people really entails. I get an idea from practice. It looks good. But is it? Let’s look at God’s helping process, as the Bible records it. Yes, it is there. I must be on the right track. Or no, it isn’t consistent with God’s actions as I understand them from the Bible. I need to think again.

That is, I don’t start with the Bible and try to follow it in my practice. I don’t think the Bible is a manual on helping, but I do find that its insights deepen my understanding of what I am thinking and doing (Keith-Lucas, ca. 1980, p. 13).

Reciprocally, what would be some illustrations of how social work affects Christians’ understanding of their faith? Although there has been a dearth of scholarship within social work circles of the effect of social work on faith, groundbreaking research in related fields over the past 15-20 years has confirmed a strong, positive correlation between spirituality/religion on the one hand, and health/mental health on the other (George, Larson, Koenig, & McCullough, 2000; H. G. Koenig, King, & Carson, 2012; H.K. Oxhandler & Pargament, 2014). The empirical confirmation of this correlation, long believed by most faith traditions, provides an illustration of how “modern learning at its best might . . . reinforce . . . the truths of faith” (Glanzer, 2008, p. 45).

As another illustration, Nick Wolterstorff, though not a social worker, describes how his experience working with groups of South African blacks (during the time of apartheid), and later Middle Eastern Palestinians, brought into sharper focus that a crucial part of being faithful is to be passionately commit-

ted to working against injustice in its many ugly forms in our world (Brandsen & Hugen, 2007, p. 352). In a significant way, Wolterstorff's understanding of the Christian faith has been shaped by his experience of working with people enduring terrible suffering and injustice.

Table 2 provides examples of statements that attempt to operationalize the effect of integration on the understanding of faith and of social work.

**Table 2: Statements Operationalizing the Integration of Faith and Social Work**

<b>Category 2: The Effect of Integration on the Understanding of Faith and of Social Work</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My faith affects my priorities within my social work practice.</li> <li>• My faith deepens my understanding of social work.</li> <li>• My faith filters the social work theories/interventions I choose to embrace</li> <li>• My faith forms the foundation from which I build my understanding of social work.</li> <li>• My faith provides insight into social work that I would not find in other sources.</li> <li>• Social work contributes to God's work of bringing healing and justice to the world.</li> <li>• My understanding of social work affects how I prioritize different aspects of my faith.</li> <li>• Social work deepens my understanding of my faith.</li> <li>• Social work provides valuable insight into my faith that I would not find within my faith tradition alone.</li> <li>• Social work acts as a filter that limits the faith beliefs and practices I choose to embrace.</li> <li>• What I learn from my faith and from social work are both useful, but are only applicable within the context from which they originally come.</li> <li>• I bring together insights from both my faith and social work that inform the other.</li> </ul>

**Category 3: The Effect of Integration on the Practice of Faith and of Social Work**

The third broad category for organizing approaches to integration focuses on how faith affects the way Christians in social work *carry out* social work practice, as well as how social work affects the way they *practice or live out* their Christian faith. Some examples of integration that fall within this third category include the *Life of Service, Intrapersonal, Spiritual/Religious Sensitivity, and Bridging Models of Integration*.

There are a number of examples of ways that faith affects the way Christians in social work *carry out* their social work practice in which there is little or no direct interaction between the spiritual beliefs and values of the social worker and those of the client/client system. For instance, for many Christians in social work, their faith drives and sustains their efforts to deliver the highest-quality of services possible - primarily because their ultimate goal in their work is to honor God (Brandsen & Hugen, 2007) and to meet what they understand to be God's standards for service, not merely the profession's: "Whatever you do, work at it

with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters. . . . It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Colossians 3: 23-24, New International Version).

### *Life of Service Model of Integration*

There are other examples of ways in which the faith of Christians in social work affects how they *carry out* social work practice, as well as how social work affects the way they *practice or live out* their Christian faith. Many Christians in social work seek to offer acts of loving service through which a social worker identifies with and bears witness to Jesus and His love for all (Keller, 2012). The focus here is not so much on analyzing *intellectually* how faith contributes to social work (like in the cognitive models of integration), but rather on putting faith into action by humbly serving others, and by so doing, identifying with and being the hands and feet of Jesus – agents of His love in the world.

The illustration often given in the Mennonite tradition (though certainly not exclusive to the Mennonite tradition) of such loving witness through service is Jesus’ humble washing of the disciple’s feet at the Last Supper:

. . . the starting point for Mennonites has more to do with holistic living than with cognition and more to do with ethics than with the intellect. . . . For when Mennonites “focus on hands and heart,” they remind us that human life is more than cognition. . . . They take seriously Jesus’ words when he counseled his followers to abandon self in the service of others and especially in the service of the poor . . . to emulate Jesus in his ministry to “the least of these” (Hughes, 2005, pp. 55, 56, 60).

Often this life of “following Jesus in the way of service and obedience” (Wolfer, 2011, p. 158) is modeled for us by Christians who exemplify what it means to live out their faith by serving others. These Christian exemplars serve “to help others have spiritual and religious models as well as to provide inspiration and direction” (Yangarber-Hicks et al., 2006, p. 343), and can inspire us to imitate the way faith has made a difference in their work. This is true whether they are persons we know well (co-workers or colleagues), or people about whom we have read or heard (notable figures like Mother Teresa or Martin Luther King Jr, for example). A poignant illustration of the Life of Service model appeared in a recent post to NACSW’s blog, *Shared Grace*:

When I was 15 years old I saw a social worker kneel in front of a weeping, pregnant 13 year old. She assured this frightened unwed mother-to-be that despite what it seemed in the moment, there were hope and a future for her. The incident happened in a Cleveland, OH welfare office and not a church. Still that Christian who was also a social worker engaged in the work of ministry. That day I vowed I’d become a social worker (Bridgeman, 2013).

### *Intrapersonal Model of Integration*

Another example of how the faith of Christians in social work affects how they *carry out* social work practice would be the way some Christians in social work engage in one or more spiritual practice or discipline to help them focus and prepare for the work they do as social workers. For some this might include: a) engaging in private prayer or meditation as they prepare for (or even during) their work with their clients (Walker, Gorsuch, Siang-Yang (2004), p. 71); b) reflecting on passages of Scripture or other religious texts that serve to encourage or inspire them, help them cope more effectively with situational anxiety or work-related stress, and/or enable them to focus their energies and attention; c) participating in other forms of individual or corporate worship, especially when the content, liturgy, or expression of that worship reinforces the purpose and value of their work.

### **More Direct Interaction of Beliefs and Values**

Given the level of concern expressed by some within the social work profession that Christian faith potentially poses irreconcilable differences with social work (Dressel, Bolen, & Shepardson, 2011; Spano & Koenig, 2007; Todd & Colholic, 2007), it is important to note that up to this point, the examples of integration discussed thus far in this chapter arguably carry a fairly low risk of being in ethical tension with social work. That is primarily because these initial examples of integration have focused on ways that faith motivates or inspires Christians to become social workers, nurtures the development of their characters, forms a basis or rationale for their core values (many of which, such as dignity and worth of persons, justice, service, overlap with the values of the social work profession), helps them center themselves in preparation for practice, etc. – none of which readily pose a challenge to the codes and standards of the social work profession.

There are, however, other examples of integration in which the potential risk of ethical tensions between faith and social work become more relevant, for example, models of integration that involve interactions between the spiritual beliefs and values of social workers and those of their clients/client systems (Tan, 1996). Of course, such interactions (and the potential tensions that can arise out of them) are not unique to social workers who are Christians. Research has shown that religion and spirituality are important to many clients (Eun-Kyoung & Barrett, 2007; H.K. Oxhandler & Pargament, 2014), and in fact, some clients express a clear preference that service providers initiate discussion of their (the clients') religious and spiritual beliefs in the helping process (H. G. P. Koenig, 2005; Stanley et al., 2011). Since social workers are committed to "starting where the client is," incorporating clients' spiritual and religious interests, strengths, and beliefs when this is an important dimension in their lives is good social work practice. However, since social workers do not come to their work as a spiritual "blank slate" –as all social workers have spiritual worldviews that they bring with them to their practice (Hodge, 2008) - interactions between the spiritual worldviews of social workers and clients is often an unavoidable part of helping relationship.

In this regard, it is important to note that Christians who make a commitment to become social workers (like all social workers) agree in good faith to abide by the ethics and standards of the social work profession including respecting clients' rights to self-determination (NASW, 2008, Section 1.02) and providing services that are sensitive to clients' beliefs and cultures (including spiritual and religious cultures), as well as to differences among people and cultural groups (NASW, 2008, Section 1.06). As such, social workers have the responsibility to be sensitive to and respectful of the spiritual and religious beliefs and values of their clients, and not to impose or let their own beliefs and value overwhelm those of their clients - especially those with religious beliefs and values that are different than their own.

An important aspect of maintaining this responsibility is for Christians in social work (as for all social workers) to be keenly aware of their own spiritual and religious beliefs and values, and the different ways they can potentially impact their work. It is only when they are conscious and mindful of their own beliefs and values that Christians in social work can be intentional about how to integrate them into the helping relationship – in a way that is characterized by sensitivity and a willingness to exercise the capacity for self-criticism and change if necessary. The challenge then for Christians in social work – and indeed for all social workers, since everyone, religious or spiritual or not, brings basic worldview beliefs and values to their work - is to “figure out how to have integrity and competence in the handling of our own beliefs and values as . . . [they] work respectfully and ethically with clients” (Sherwood, 2008, p. 409).

### *Spiritual/Religious Sensitivity Model of Integration*

So what are a couple of examples of ways that faith affects the way Christians in social work *carry out* their social work practice in which there is more direct interaction between the spiritual beliefs and values of the social worker and those of the client/client system? One important example would be Christians in social work drawing upon their own experience of faith to heighten their sensitivity to and understanding of the spiritual or religious interests, strengths, and concerns of the clients, client systems, and colleagues/supervisees (Gingrich & Worthington, 2007; Okundaye, Gray, & Gray, 1999) with whom they work.

An excellent illustration of this example can be found in David Hodge's “Constructing Spiritually Modified Interventions: Cognitive Therapy with Diverse Populations” (2008), Hodge, a Christian social work scholar, proposes a strategy for modifying or adapting cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) in a way that he argues is spiritually and religiously sensitive to clients whose spiritual worldviews are in conflict with some of the values underlying traditional cognitive behavioral therapy. Hodge's argument goes something like this:

1. Every social work intervention is informed by an underlying set of values and worldview (no interventions are value-free) (p. 179).
2. The use of interventions whose underlying values and worldview are incongruent with clients' values may have limited effectiveness, and/or be offensive/disrespectful of the clients' autonomy (or even cause some harm) (p. 179).

3. Many western counseling interventions – such as cognitive behavioral theory - have been strongly influenced by “Enlightenment-based” values and worldview assumptions such as individualism, independence, self-actualization, and secularism (p. 180-181).
4. Many clients embrace spiritual value systems and/or transcendent worldviews that are incongruent with some of these Enlightenment-based values and worldview assumptions: “Islam, for instance, tends to affirm values such as spirituality and community as opposed to secularism and individualism” (p. 182).
5. For these clients who do not share Enlightenment-based values and worldview assumptions, interventions like traditional, western cognitive therapy may pose significant value conflicts, and therefore may have limited effectiveness and/or be offensive to and/or disrespectful of the these clients.
6. Therefore, to address these potential value conflicts in a way that exhibits spiritual and religious sensitivity, “practitioners trained in western cognitive procedures might consider constructing spiritually modified interventions with clients who affirm spiritual worldviews” (p. 183).

In this way Hodge shows how spiritually modified CBT can be more spiritually sensitive to and respectful of – and therefore more effective with – clients who are Christian, or for that matter, Muslim, because it resonates with the spiritual beliefs and values more congruent with their worldviews. In this example, it is the client’s spiritual worldview (rather than the social worker’s) that remains the primary emphasis in the helping relationship (focused on “starting where the client is”), though it is important to note that much of the motivation and competence for Christians in social work to be spiritually and religiously sensitive to their clients is supported by the social worker’s faith.

### *Bridging Example of Integration*

An example of how Christians in social work can draw on both their connections to and understanding of faith and social work emphasizes their ability to serve as valuable bridges between the faith community on the one hand, and the social work community on the other. For although these two communities often share a similar commitment to reaching out to people in need, often they find it difficult to understand, trust and work cohesively with one another. Social workers of faith are often able to take advantage of their affiliations with and commitment to both communities to help bring them together to help clients/client systems flourish and meet valued outcomes.

The following illustrates a Christian in social work serving as an effective bridge between the social services community on the one hand, and faith-based organizations and congregations on the other. During the late 1990s, Bill Raymond, an MSW- level social worker and person of faith, was the executive director of Good Samaritan, a faith-based organization located in Ottawa County, Michigan. As part of its “Project Zero,” Ottawa County officials approached



Good Samaritan about partnering to help individuals receiving welfare to obtain employment. Under Bill's leadership, Good Samaritan, which had long-standing relationships with many congregations in the area, mobilized over local 50 churches and helped these churches develop teams of trained mentors to work with interested welfare recipients. The Ottawa County welfare office, after screening clients in their system, would refer appropriate candidates to Good Samaritan, which would facilitate matches between the Ottawa County clients and church mentor teams, as well as provide on-going training and support for these teams. This partnership, in which Bill served as a key bridge builder between government officials and a wide range of congregations from the faith community, contributed to Ottawa County becoming "the first locality in America to put every able-bodied welfare recipient to work" (Sherman, 1999). Table 3 provides examples of statements that attempt to operationalize the Effect of Integration on the *Practice* of Faith and of Social Work.

**Table 3: Statements Operationalizing the Integration of Faith and Social Work**

<b>Category 3: The Effect of Integration on the Practice of Faith and of Social Work</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Providing high quality, ethical social work practice is an important way of living out my faith.</li><li>• Learning about Christians who serve others effectively inspires me to be a better social worker.</li><li>• Understanding my own faith helps me better understand my client's spiritual belief system.</li><li>• Modifying established social work interventions using spiritual principles is helpful in social work practice.</li><li>• Incorporating spiritual practices (e.g., use of prayer or Scripture) in social work practice is helpful for clients who desire such incorporation.</li><li>• My social work practice motivates me to practice my faith conscientiously.</li><li>• Learning about social workers who serve others effectively inspires me to practice my faith more conscientiously.</li><li>• Social work motivates me to respect my clients' spiritual beliefs and values.</li><li>• Incorporating social work techniques (e.g., for example, conducting a religious influence genogram) is helpful to my faith.</li><li>• I help faith and social work communities work together to better help those in need.</li></ul>

### **Concluding Thoughts on Integrating Christian Faith and Social Work**

The examples of integrating faith and practice outlined in this section only represent the tip of the iceberg when it comes to describing the many and varied ways faith and social work can come together to build powerful synergy contributing to efforts to support our clients and communities. It is interesting to note that in recent years, the social work and related professional literature

has begun to articulate a number of compelling reasons for social workers to strengthen their commitment to the thoughtful integration of their faith (or spirituality) and social work (Furman, Zahl, Benson, & Canda, 2007; Hodge, 2011; Hodge & Bushfield, 2007; Hugen & Scales, 2008; H.K. Oxhandler & Pargament, 2014; Sheridan, 2012; Stanley et al., 2011; Williams & Smolak, 2007) – mirroring a trend found in, of all places, business and organizational leadership circles, which for more than 30 years now have been arguing that people’s faith and spirituality does and *should* inform and impact their life at work (Eleanor, 2007; Robert, Robert, & Carole, 2008; Russell, 2007, p. 72).

It is important to note this trend in the literature because there remain some within the profession of social work who continue to hold the position that one can’t teach or practice social work as a Christian because the fundamental aim of Christianity is to proselytize, and/or that Christians are inescapably discriminatory when it comes to issues related to sexual and gender diversity. This chapter, with its focus on the plurality of examples of integrating faith and social work, attempts to contribute to the argument articulated more and more frequently in the literature that it is possible for faith to be integrated with social work in ways that are consistent with, complement, reinforce, and in many cases strengthen core social work values of client self-determination, respect for diversity and pursuit of social justice and equality. At the same time, this chapter provided a number of examples of ways in which the faith of Christians in social work is affected and enriched by social work. All of this suggests that far from working at cross purposes, the thoughtful, sensitive integration of faith and practice offer great potential for generating rich and powerful **synergy** that can be an important value-added to both our work and our faith.

This chapter’s description of the ethical integration of Christian faith and social work is not intended to be “the final word” on this subject – far from it. There is still a great deal that we need to learn about the reciprocal influence of Christian faith and social work on each other. My hope that this chapter will serve as both a resource and an impetus for continued discussion about the many ways faith can make a positive, healthy difference in the work of Christians committed to the ethical integration of Christian faith and professional social work, as well as the many ways social work can have a significant impact on the way Christians understand and practice their faith.

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## SECTION 3

# Human Behavior and Spiritual Development in a Diverse World

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# Spiritual Development

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*Hope Haslam Straughan*

Within the social work profession, there is a growing movement that affirms that spirituality and religious beliefs are integral to the nature of the person and have a vital influence on human behavior (Hugen, 1998). Canda (1988) identifies spirituality as a basic aspect of human experience, both within and outside the context of religious institutions. If a social worker is going to approach a person in a holistic manner, he or she must be willing to consider each person as a wondrous compilation of bio-psycho-social-spiritual elements. In this way, workers will have an extremely broad base from which to approach the strength and resiliency in the people with whom they interact. Spiritual development, a component of this broad understanding of a person, seems to occur both in a measurable, outward, predictable manner, as well as in a less tangible, personal journey. These complex and intertwined spiritual growth markers will be explored within this chapter, primarily from a Christian point of view.

Smith (1997-1998) claims that Christians are ‘meaning makers,’ taking “the raw material of lived experience – the gladness and the sorrows – and trying to seek the deeper meaning, see the larger picture, understand the levels and layers of life in all its fullness and intensity. We live, and then in faith we try to discover meaning” (p. 2). Faiver, Ingersoll, O’Brien, and McNally (2001) note:

Spirituality may be described as a deep sense of wholeness, connectedness, and openness to the infinite . . . We believe spirituality is an innate human quality. Not only is it our vital life force, but at the same time it is also our experience of the vital life force. Although this life force is deeply part of us, it also transcends us. It is what connects us to other people, nature and the source of life. The experience of spirituality is greater than ourselves (p.2).

Spiritual deepening, or development, then, is about becoming more consciously aware – being attentive, present in the moment, and paying attention to life as we seek meaning. Gaining understanding of this broad, yet unique set of guiding beliefs and thought frameworks is central to working with children, adolescents, and adults of any age. By “incorporating spirituality and religion when addressing a client’s needs, the social worker broadens the client’s resources and support base and is given an opportunity to collaborate with the client’s spiritual and/or religious leaders” (Furman, Zahl, Benson, & Canda, 2007, p. 252).

On a global scale, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1991) indicates that spiritual development is a factor in children’s lives (Scott, 2003). The UNCRC accepts spiritual development as a category of

human development and health worthy of rights protection. Article 27 recognizes “the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development” (p. 14). Article 17 identifies the right of “access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health” (p. 8). Article 32 claims children have the right “to be protected from economic exploitation” (p. 16) or any development, including spiritual development. Spirituality is seen in these articles as a “distinct aspect of human experience that is not contained by categories of moral or mental or social development” (Scott, p. 118).

The Council on Social Work Education (2000) added the concept of spirituality to the required list of content areas to be addressed within the curriculum of accredited schools of social work in 2000. There are many important ways in which to incorporate this information in the overall social work curriculum. For instance, the role of religious institutions in society can be investigated, while considering the impact of their presence, and the potential natural support networks such entities might lend for some persons. In addition, techniques utilized by social workers that value a variety of possible religious experiences or spiritual beliefs might be explored in a practice course (Cascio, 1998; & Russel, 2006). One aspect of the growing self-awareness of social work students might be focused on their personal faith or spiritual experiences, including awareness of their own beliefs, and the impact of these on the people and their environments with which students will interact. Finally, one might argue that spiritual development content must be included in a course in which community is considered, as many religious traditions feature a strong cultural and communal identity and experience.

Incorporating spirituality within the Human Behavior and Social Environment life span content is a foundational attempt to honor holistic personal development. One can consider the development of an individual’s spirituality from gestation through the years of life to death, while considering the socio-economic, political, racial, ethnic, and greater societal influences impacting a person’s faith journey. This approach is based on a clear assumption that an individual’s spiritual capacity and awareness is not stagnant, but indeed develops, changes, and potentially increases. This type of thinking immediately causes us to consider whether spiritual information is best presented utilizing a traditional stage-based theoretical approach, or if the concepts lend themselves to a more fluid consideration in which particular themes are revisited throughout life. James Fowler (1981) and others have drawn from a deep psychological understanding of human development and crafted models of spiritual development containing multiple stages of faith, which hold true to many of the assumptions of the traditional stage-models. Joan Borysenko (1998) and others have proposed more fluid approaches to spiritual development and have recognized that spiritual themes may be re-occurring throughout the life span. This concept is consistent with the spiral approach to growth and development. These ideas, often building upon the familiar concepts of the stage-based developmental

patterns, will be presented in a later portion of this chapter.

Social workers commonly work within community-serving agencies, while seeking to help people who often have few choices about the conditions under which essential human needs are met. In this role, we must ensure that every protection is given the client and that his or her helplessness is not exploited (Spencer, 1961). "Certainly, in the light of the high value the social work profession has always placed upon the client's right to solve his [or her] own problems in the way that seems right to him [or her], it is assumed that any considerations of the social worker's role in the area of religion would be set in this context" (pp. 519-520).

In order to accomplish this, a level of spiritual competency must be developed. This competency is based upon the workers' own awareness of his/her spirituality and belief systems, an acknowledgement of the spiritual nature of all persons, an open stance when hearing the stories of clients, and paying attention to the language used and the meaning the client attributes to spiritual components of their lives (Guadalupe, 2005). In addition, spiritual competency demands a level of growing knowledge and understanding of the spiritual experiences of diverse populations.

## **Definitions**

The roots of social work contain many religious and spiritually based components, lending motivation, direction, foundation, and location for social service provision. When approaching the issue of spiritual development and the impact of this on an individual, family, group, community or organization, it is crucial to define the terms that create the backbone for this important discussion. Sue Spencer (1961) was one of the first to attempt to define religion and spirituality from the perspective of a social worker. She identified three major hurdles experienced by those desiring to discuss spirituality and social work. "The first of these is the wide variety of religious beliefs held by individuals and by organized church bodies" (p. 519). The second hurdle is the difficulty of looking at the issue of religion and spirituality in an objective, yet comfortable and sympathetic way, as any discussion of religion is likely to be colored by considerable feeling and emotion that often stem from one's early experiences with organized religion. The third difficulty is found in our cultural bias, which celebrates the freedom to express religious impulses and to meet religious needs as persons see fit. This hurdle thereby cautions persons against infringing upon the right of spiritual or religious freedom of others.

"From the rain dances of Native Americans to the celebratory dances of Hasidic Jews, from the whirling dervishes of Islam to the meditating monks of Zen Buddhism, from the ecstatic worship services of charismatic churches to the solemn, silent meetings of the Quakers, spirituality takes on many expressions" (Elkins, 1999, p. 45). Given the hurdles identified by Spencer, and the rich descriptions of spiritual expression listed by Elkins, it is crucial that when discussing spirituality and social work practice, we define terms consistently and clarify what

is meant by spirituality. Edward Canda (1988), a social work educator who has made significant contributions to conversations about spirituality and practice, has provided a definition that will serve as the cornerstone for this chapter and be continually integrated with our discussion of spiritual development. Canda suggests an understanding of spirituality that encompasses human activities of moral decision-making, searching for a sense of meaning and purpose in life, and striving for mutually fulfilling relationships among individuals, society, and ultimate reality (however that is conceptualized by the client). “In that these aspects of human activity are common to all people, they are necessarily relevant to all areas of social work practice” (p. 238). Canda further delineates this spiritual component, by stating that the “professional helping relationship must be a genuine expression of the social worker’s spiritual commitment to compassion and social justice – an ‘I’ who empathically relates with a ‘Thou’” (p. 245). Hodge (2003) describes the development of a persons’ spiritual orientation as it engenders a distinctive worldview, a spiritual worldview. Though Canda does not limit his approach to a particular religious tradition such as Christianity, the focus of this chapter is that of Christian faith and a Christian understanding of God as the foundation for a person’s spiritual worldview.

### **Approaches to Thinking about Spiritual Development**

Schrivier (2004) utilizes a very helpful delineation of traditional and alternative paradigms as a way to structure thinking about people and their environments. The traditional paradigm, characterized in this chapter as those theories based on stage-based, predictable, ladder-oriented development, has sometimes led to a belief in only one route to only one answer rather than many routes to many answers. These theories have offered very important concepts that are often utilized and expanded within broader or alternative ways of thinking about development. “Alternative ways of viewing the world such as interpretive, consensual, non-Eurocentric, and feminist perspectives can add much to what we know and what we need to know to *do* social work” (p. xix). Building on these assumptions, the remainder of the chapter will be organized in such a way as to demarcate particular spiritual development approaches. These approaches will be divided between those which seem to follow traditional paradigms, and those which lend themselves to alternative processes of understanding the spiritual journey of people, all the while acknowledging the crucial and unique role of their environments.

### **Traditional Ways of Thinking about Spiritual Development**

Many researchers have found that a stage-based model of development, whether psychosocial, cognitive, spiritual, or moral, is descriptive and informative when considering the normal development of human beings. The work of two such researchers, Erik Erikson and Lawrence Kohlberg, will be considered in this chapter in relation to James Fowler’s proposed stages of spiritual devel-

opment. Erik Erikson (1950) proposed a theory of psychosocial development comprising eight stages. These established eight stages were later expanded to include a ninth stage by his wife, Joan, after Erikson's death (Erikson, 1997). In reviewing their life's research and writings, as well as experiencing life into her 90's, she found cause to expand to a ninth stage which encompasses the realities of persons living into their eighth and ninth decade into very old age. The key component in Erikson's work is the development of the sense of self by going through a series of crises. He proposes that the society within which one lives makes certain psychic demands at each stage of development, and that the individual must adjust to the stresses and conflicts involved in these crises in order to move to the next stage of development. Lawrence Kohlberg (1969) proposed a series of six stages through which people progress as they develop their moral framework. A summary of the stages presented by Erikson, Kohlberg, and Fowler can be seen in Table 1.

According to stage theorists, the growth in authentic self-transcendence that results from the individual's taking responsibility for him or herself, "moves from infant, impulse-dominated self-centeredness to a conformist identity with one's social group and finally to post-conventional self-determination and integration of internal and external reality" (Helminiak, 1987, p. 77). Helminiak proposes James Fowler's work as *the* stages of spiritual development, "at least within middle-class American and equivalent cultures" (p. 84). A summary of James Fowler's (1981) stages of faith development across the lifespan will be utilized as a point of reference for a discussion of spirituality as it relates to Erikson's and Kohlberg's research. Following Fowler's stages, the five stages of faith developed by Rabbi Terry Bookman will be discussed for additional insights on adult spiritual development (Bookman, 2005).

### *James Fowler: Stages of Faith*

Perhaps the most recognized contributor to the stage-theory approach to considering spiritual development is James Fowler (1981). A theologian and religious psychologist, Fowler set off a new wave of thinking about faith, basing it on the work of such renowned developmental psychologists as Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. "He claimed that faith, like life itself, goes through distinct stages as a person matures" (Kropf, 1991, p. 12). Jung (1933) and Fowler (1981) view spirituality as a person's "soul or essence which contains a potential needing to be fulfilled through a developmental process," providing the energy for this life-long process beginning at birth, of "actualizing and realizing one's potential" (Carroll, 2001, p. 14). Fowler's (1981) concept of 'faith' is based on a sense of meaning and purpose in life, as well as the belief in an ultimate reality, and is closely linked to the concepts Canda (1988) presents in his definition of spirituality. Fowler considers the interface of the religious/spiritual dimension with other psychosocial aspects of the person (Joseph, 1988). Marra (2000) describes this phenomenon as developing sequentially. As in other stage-based developmental theories, it is possible to accelerate growth, or impede it, but steps cannot be skipped.

Fowler (1981) discerns six stages in faith development. A pre-stage called Undifferentiated Faith is reflective of the infant up to about one and a half years of age, and is unavailable to empirical research (see Table 1). The faith of early infancy is characterized by the mutuality between infant and nurturers (Helminiak, 1987). "The emergent strength of faith in this stage is the bond of basic trust and the relational experience of mutuality with the one(s) providing primary love and care" (Fowler, p. 121). Looking at Table 1, we can see obvious similarities in the descriptions of Erikson's Stage-1 of psychosocial development, Basic Trust versus Basic Mistrust, and Fowler's pre-stage. Both researchers identify the most important task during the first 18 months of life as the development of trust due to the infants' needs being met by nurturers. Erikson discusses religion and notes that children may not need a religious upbringing. But, says Erikson (1950), they do need a sense of basic trust, a feeling not only that their fundamental bodily needs will be met and that their parents love them and will take care of them, but also that they have not been abandoned to the empty haphazardness of existence. The trust of the infant in the parents finds its parallel - and takes its mature form - in the parents' trust in God (Brandt, 1991).

Fowler (1986a) states that "faith begins in relationship. Faith implies trust in-reliance upon another; a counting upon or dependence upon another" (p. 16). If one is to accept the basis for Erikson's stage progression, crisis completion, it raises a basic question related to spiritual development. At this early point in one's life, what impact would a child's inability to successfully reach basic trust or mutuality have on his or her spiritual development? Canda (1988) and Guadalupe (2005), also define spiritual development partially as striving for mutually fulfilling relationships among individuals, society, and ultimate reality.

The transition to Stage-1, according to Fowler, begins when children are three to seven and are beginning to use symbols in speech and ritual play (1981). This occurs with the convergence of thought and language. Stage-1 Faith, called Intuitive-Projective Faith, involves a child thinking of God only in literal terms. This fact coupled with Kohlberg's (1969) suggestion that the moral development of children at this age is motivated by avoidance of punishment, can lead to behavior based on fear.

Stage-2 Faith, Mythic-Literal Faith, is normative for children from the age of six to twelve, but as with all the subsequent stages of faith, they may remain in that stage throughout life. Robert Coles (1990) asked a class of fifth graders to respond to the following question: "Tell me, as best you can, who you are" (p. 308). One boy wrote that "I was put here by God, and I hope to stay until He says OK, enough, come back" (p. 312). A Puerto Rican girl who usually did not say much responded with "Well, how *does* He decide? How can He possibly keep track of everyone? I asked our priest, and he said all kids want to know, and you just have to have faith, and if you don't, then you're in trouble, and besides, you'll never know, because that's God's secret. . . But I still can't see how God can keep His eyes on everyone, and my uncle says it's all a lot of nonsense" (p. 312). This child fully embraces the idea of God keeping track of

so many persons, informed by the stories, beliefs and words of their families, faith communities, and spiritual leaders.

Some adolescents begin to evolve into Stage-3 Faith, Synthetic-Conventional Faith, and tend to see God as personal and relational, in a more spiritual sense than before, assigning great value to religious symbols (Fowler, 1981). Teens in this stage of faith may find great attachment to a cross necklace or earrings, as a symbol of their beliefs, or find value in the ritual of the Lord's Supper or communion, even if they are unable to specify the deep connection through words.

Erikson (1950) describes adolescence as a transition period from childhood to adulthood, when people examine the various roles they play, and integrate these roles into a perception of self, or identity, in his Stage-5, Identity versus Role Conflict. Fowler assumes that the teen has an ability to think abstractly which allows for a new level of thinking critically in relation to the stories and myths that one has been told in relation to one's belief.

In Kohlberg's (1969) Stage-5, Morality of Contract, of Individual Rights, and of Democratically Accepted Law, the adolescent is moving to an internally controlled morality which parallels Fowler's and Erikson's stages. Teens at this stage in life are moving to a more internally-driven and personally informed way of living. Consequently, developmental factors that lead to Stage-4 Faith, Individuate-Reflective Faith, include beginning to clash with external authority (most often parents in this case); leaving home physically and/or emotionally, causing the examination of self and theology; and the influence of adult models at Stage-4.

According to Fowler (1981) the optimum time to enter Stage-4 is during the traditional college years, age 18-22. Life situations encountered during these years typically cause people to think about their religious and spiritual identity and beliefs. The power of reason and critical analysis comes to the forefront cognitively, and is also often the case in a person's quest for understanding related to the spiritual self as well. In Stage-4 Faith, Individuate-Reflective Faith, the relocation of authority within the self and the interruption of reliance on an external authority both occur (Fowler, 1981). Concurrently, Kohlberg (1969) identified the center for moral decision making during adulthood, Stage-6, Morality of Individual Principles and Conscience, as *internal* ethical principles. Decisions made from this perspective are made according to what is right versus what is written into law, honoring this newly relocated authority within the self, as Fowler described.

Reaching Stage-5 Faith, Conjunctive Faith, is rare before middle age, largely due to an emerging awareness that reality is more complex than what one's Stage-4, highly rationalized view can contain (Helminiak, 1987). Externally, Conjunctive Faith realizes the validity of *systems other than one's own* and so moves away from seeing a situation as a dichotomy, as seen in Stage 4's either-or thinking. Persons using Conjunctive Faith realize that the deepest truths are inconsistent, resulting in what is often described by others as a sweeter spirit than previous stages. Sawatzky, Ratner, and Chiu (2005) support this shift in their findings that a person's conceptualization of spirituality is related to their quality of life. Erikson (1950) describes Stage-7, Generativity versus Stagna-

tion, which is concurrent in the lifespan with Fowler's Stage-5, as a time when a person is concerned with helping, producing for, or guiding the following generation. Both researchers emphasize the external focus of this stage of life. During this stage of life, this search for meaning and purpose often culminates in the extension of oneself for the support and development of others (Canda, 1988). Still, a person in Stage-5 "remains divided" (Helminiak, p. 198). People in Stage-5 faith are living in an untransformed world while experiencing visions of transformation. In some few cases this division leads to radical actualization called Stage 6 faith.

Changes associated with psychological and cognitive development impel a person to focus on the inner or spiritual self (Mulqueen & Elias, 2000). Exceedingly rare, according to Fowler, Stage-6, Universalizing Faith, incarnates and actualizes the spirit of an inclusive and fulfilled human community, drawn to the familiarity of all people (Marra, 2000). This stage constructs an ultimate environment that includes and cherishes all beings (Fowler, 1981). For persons reaching this rare stage of faith development, Fowler suggests that they would be beyond mid-life. Erikson (1950) describes persons of old age as being in a crisis of Ego Integrity versus Despair. Persons in this stage, Stage-8, are looking back over their lives, reflecting, and taking stock of their decisions. For some persons this review leads to a sense of peace, but for others, to a sense of sadness and despair. As people are living longer, more persons are entering into the final stage of development posed by Joan Erikson (1997), Stage-9, and are finding that hope and trust are no longer the firm support they were found to be in previous stages, and that perhaps facing down despair with faith and appropriate humility is the wisest course. Joan Erikson suggests that 'transcendence' might be the "regaining of lost skills, including play, activity, joy, and song, and above all, a major leap above and beyond the fear of death" (p. 127). The components of relationship and unity might suggest some further parallels to Fowler's Stage-6 Faith described above.

In a study of women over the age of 80, Manning (2012) noted that this idea of acceptance or transcendence was an important part of the lived experience of spirituality for the women in her study. The women are "accepting of life circumstances, as well as who they are as women in old age. They are able to recognize the difference between regret and reflection and articulate that now, in this phase of their life, they are able to practice radical acceptance" (p. 104). This radical acceptance seems to be an illustration of Erikson's Stage-9, and Fowler's Stage-6 of spiritual development.

Therefore, traditional ways of considering spiritual development draw on the assumptions of general human development. According to stage-based theorists, this growth in authentic self-transcendence that results from the individual's taking responsibility for him or herself, "moves from infant, impulse-dominated self-centeredness to a conformist identity with one's social group and finally to post-conventional self-determination and integration of internal and external reality" (Helminiak, 1987, p. 77). Helminiak proposes Fowler's extensive work around stages of spiritual development as *the* stages of spiritual development, "at



least within middle-class American and equivalent cultures” (p. 84). “Movement through these stages reflects qualitative changes in one’s view of the world and in all relationships” (Carroll, 2001, p. 14). As has been demonstrated above, it can be useful to consider Fowler’s stages of faith in light of other types of development across the lifespan, in order to gain a greater understanding of the common crises, cognitive abilities, conceptual frameworks, and worldviews.

*Rabbi Terry Bookman: A Soul’s Journey – The Five Stages of Spiritual Growth*

Rabbi Bookman (2005) identified five stages, or vantage points, as a part of every soul’s journey. These resting spots which allow us the vantage point to “survey the landscape of our lives” (p. xiii) are Beginnings, Commitments, Intimacy, Wanderings and Acceptance. Unlike Fowler’s stages of spiritual development based on the possible age-ranges for a person’s development, Bookman does not link his descriptions to particular suggested age ranges. Instead, Bookman purports that though we have many beginnings in our lives, the ones which take hold and become the most meaningful and long-lasting, are typically those we have sought intentionally, or embraced with openness, often corresponding with young adulthood, or later.

Rabbi Bookman (2005), unlike Borysenko (1998), Canda (1988), Fox (1999) and others, unapologetically makes connections between spiritual growth and participation in formal religious traditions, teachings and disciplines. He recognizes that helping professionals will likely interact with numerous people who describe themselves as being ‘spiritual but not religious.’ Bookman notes that “what they usually mean is that they have an awareness, a consciousness of God in their lives and their world, but they find religion, with its rules, rituals, hierarchies, and repetition more an impediment than an enhancement” (p. 52). As a Jewish priest, his understanding of what the Torah directs, “is that spirituality devoid of religion – limits, discipline – ultimately leads to idolatry” (p. 52).

Similarly, “the Torah is equally harsh in its judgment on religion without spirituality calling it hypocrisy and emptiness” (p. 53). Though clients who describe themselves as ‘spiritual but not religious’ might link this greater awareness and consciousness to God, many others might use terms such as Other, the Greater Good, My Higher Power, and many others. Some clients might share Bookman’s conviction of this necessary connection between religion and spirituality, but many will not. Sensitivity to the potential separation of these understandings and practices in the lives of our clients is critical, as we actively assess over time the potential areas of strength, resiliency and possibility clients may find in this realm of his/her life.

Additionally, Bookman’s (2005) premise reminds us how critical it is as helping professionals, to listen to the stories of the client systems, to hear and actively use in our responses, the language they assign to the important experiences, revelations, assumptions, and transitions in their lives, and not impose our own language or meaning. For instance, if a helping professional were to take part in a Brief Initial Assessment (Hodge, 2004) beginning with a question such as “I was wondering if you happened to be interested in spirituality or religion?,”

in order to maximize the possible strength of this exchange, and build the trust within the helping relationship, the helping professional must listen carefully for terms utilized, experiences referred to, as well as those left out, pauses, or the change in the speed in which clients communicate their lived truth. If we follow this initial question with a 'standardized' second question which includes terminology or the name of a Higher Power or Godhead in language which does not "match" that of the client, we will likely find that the client is unable to access and share the kind of information, experiences, or wonderings we are intending to provoke. Depending on the response(s) of clients to initial spiritual assessment questions, further questions can be asked throughout the helping relationship which explore how clients' faith is impacting their experience of the presenting situation, as well as where they receive spiritual support. These discussions can reflect the strength of *community*, sense of hope and possibility which can be strong foundations for growth and transformation, as well as identify potential areas of negative assumptions related to clients' understanding of self and their place in the world which can be further addressed and worked through, leading to healing and wholeness.

During Bookman's (2005) Beginnings stage, people absorb all that they are learning with great enthusiasm and excitement. Commitment follows, as a stage when people realize that any time of spiritual growth necessitates a "temporary narrowing of our freedom followed by work and discipline" (p. xiii). The stage of Intimacy is reached as fleeting moments of connection are experienced, when people know with certainty that they are on the right path, almost as if "sky-writing" had declared it, and that all is well with their lives. A sense that everything that happens, does so with meaning and purpose, accompanies the days of persons in the Intimacy stage. As obstacles are confronted and people are challenged to give up, the stage of Wanderings occurs. Acceptance, the fifth stage, occurs as a person owns the past, lets it go, draws lessons from it, marvels at the sense his/her life makes, and reaches a state of inner peace.

One of the "criticisms leveled at general stage theories is that such theories are merely descriptions of how specific people change, and that such models are only valid for the one culture out of which they have emerged. The patterns are chiefly due to cultural factors, expectations, roles, and conditioning, or else economics, and do not reflect universal tendencies of human nature outside of the society portrayed" (Irwin, 2002, p. 30). Erikson himself conceded that what a man adds up to must develop in stages, but no stage explains the man (Coles, 1970). Other specific critiques of Kohlberg's and sometimes Erikson's work include potential cultural biases inherent in categorization, limitations imposed by children's developing vocabulary and expression of their ideas, the lack of clear-cut divisions between one category and another, and the idea that the stages must occur in an absolute order.

Dykstra (1981) questions the very foundation of Kohlberg's work. Though he finds Kohlberg to be quite clear about what he thinks morality is and what it takes to be a moral person, Dykstra questions the judgement-based or juridical ethics upon which this image of a moral person is derived. Dykstra contrasts

Kohlberg's form of ethics, which provides a clear guide for action through its rules and principles for decision making, with "visional ethics." Dykstra's visional ethics focuses on questioning what we see and what it is that enables human beings to see more realistically. For visional ethics, action follows vision, and vision depends upon character – "a person thinking, reasoning, believing, feeling, willing, and acting as a whole" (p. 59). Fowler (1986b) himself contends that the contributions of Kohlberg and others are useful only to a point when addressing conceptually the last relational step of faith. This is primarily because Kohlberg favors an objectifying, technical reasoning, which has no room for freedom, risk, passion, and subjectivity, all central in Fowler's final stage of faith development, or letting it go and finding inner peace, as described in Bookman's (2005) final stage, Acceptance.

### **Alternative Ways of Thinking about Spiritual Development**

As social workers, concerning ourselves with "what and how we actually live in this world" can lead to a variety of approaches for defining and understanding spiritual development within ourselves and for those with whom we work (Marra, 2000, p. 72). While recognizing the worth and unique contribution of the stage-based approaches, a number of researchers have proposed expanded or additional ways of considering spiritual development. Carol Gilligan, Joan Borysenko, Matthew Fox, Harry R. Moody and David Carroll and others have approached development from a largely feminist perspective and offer some additional useful ideas for thinking about spiritual development. Further, Wendy Haight incorporates some broader cultural implications for considering the importance of the role of spirituality within the lives of children and all individuals. And, finally, Craig Dykstra's unique process critique, which focuses on the practices and behaviors that he identifies as inherent in spiritual development, will be discussed.

As we begin to look at some alternative approaches to spiritual development, it might be helpful to also consider a broadened or alternative definition of spirituality. Senreich (2013) suggests that "spirituality refers to a human being's subjective relationship (cognitive, emotional, and intuitive) to *what is unknowable* about existence, and how a person integrates that relationship into a perspective about the universe, the world, others, self, moral values, and one's sense of meaning" (p. 553). This existence within the unknowable is considered within the following approaches to spiritual development particularly when experiencing radical acceptance (Manning, 2012).

*Gilligan, Moody & Carroll, Borysenko, & Fox: Feminist Approaches to Development*

An alternative way of thinking invites the participation of voices of those persons often unheard, including persons other than the young, white, heterosexual, Judeo-Christian, able-bodied, male, with sufficient resources and power (Schriver, 2004). Carol Gilligan and others (Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1985) have examined the research and findings of many traditional theorists, and concluded that generally the experiences of girls and women at best are treated

with curiosity, and a brief description inferring ‘otherness’ in comparison to the ‘norm,’ defined as or assumed to be boys and men. Gilligan proposes a look at girls as “‘different,’ mainly to hold it apart from its common mistranslation, ‘deficient’” (p. 2). She suggests that to listen to the voices of women is to learn a great deal about what is necessary for more completely understanding the meaning of individual development for both women and men (Gilligan, 1982). Additionally, persons in many minority groups hold a worldview emphasizing the inter-relatedness of the self or the individual with other systems in the person’s environment such as families, households, communities, and the ethnic group as a whole, often embracing ‘story’ as legend, myth and metaphor. “In addition to and in conjunction with the family, religious and spiritual institutions hold and pass along the philosophical standpoints or worldview of the people” (p. 355). Hutchison’s (2005) life course perspective honors this continuum of spiritual relevance for individuals, families, small groups, and even healing at the community level. Therefore, it is useful to review approaches that embrace a communal spiritual developmental process.

Moody and Carroll (1997) acknowledge the value of the life span transitions and passages identified in extensive psychological research by persons such as Erikson, Levinson, Sheehy, Freud, Spock and others. However, they also recognize that though the models posed by many of these researchers were persuasive, they were somehow incomplete, as cautioned earlier about stage-based theories. What Moody and Carroll, as well as Borysenko (1998) and others realized, is that an “element of the human condition that has always been at the heart and soul of every human culture from primordial time – *the spiritual element*” (p. 8) was omitted from those models. Spiritual as well as psychological and social passages are parallel and occur across a lifetime. The “structure of the great religions of the world – Christianity, Judaism, Taoism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism – are all likewise rooted in ideas of progressive developmental passages” (p. 9). Irwin (2002) noted that Kohlberg, Erikson and Jung each, in fact, do utilize language which correlates to spirituality. He observed that these components of morality from a non-dualistic perspective, concern for others rather than oneself, and a release of archetypal images from the collective unconscious, are incorporated in higher, more evolved stages of moral and psychosocial development. If we are to hold a holistic view of our clients at any stage of their development, we must include entry points to consider their spiritual passages, beliefs, connections, wonderings and potential in relation to the work we are engaged in together.

In her bio-psycho-*spiritual* model, Joan Borysenko (2004; 1998) expands the more traditionally accepted bio-psycho-social understanding of individual development. Borysenko’s work builds on the assumption that a person’s spiritual development is integrally connected to his/her cognitive, physical, and psychosocial learning and transformation. Utilizing the bio-psycho-spiritual feedback loop, she describes this spiral-formation of development through 12 seven-year cycles of renewal and metamorphosis, each one preparing for the next (See Table 2). There are three such cycles in each ‘quadrant.’ The four quadrants are broadly defined as childhood and adolescence, young adulthood, midlife,

and late adulthood. The thirteenth part of the life cycle, death, is perhaps the ultimate act of renewal and growth.

Borysenko explains the evolving capacities of each period, traces the waxing and waning of feminine consciousness, and assures women that midlife is a stage, not a crisis. Thomas (2001) cites similar findings, as she describes a “renewal of spirituality” for many women, as their lives changed the moment they gave birth (p. 93). Though Borysenko’s work is grouped within linear age-related stages, her approach is largely focused on the recurring themes of the inter-connectedness between people, nature, and things. A person living in such a way as to embrace the ideals set out by Borysenko would recognize that true intimacy based on respect and love is the measure of a life well lived. This often plays out in the choices made by a person related to work, leisure, living arrangements, and social commitments, as well as forming the underlying motivation for all relationships. As the person grows older, Borysenko (1998) suggests that “this innate female spirituality underlies an often unspoken commitment to protect our world from the ravages of greed and violence” (p. 3). This presentation gives a wonderful example of the spiral-model of spiritual development (see Table 2).

A spiritual metaphor for traditional and alternative paradigms may be found in the familiar themes of “Climbing Jacob’s Ladder” and “Dancing Sarah’s Circle.” Climbing Jacob’s Ladder, as defined by Fox, is a metaphor based on Jacob’s dream recorded in the twenty-eighth chapter of Genesis, interpreted through the lens of a Western-Christianity, male-dominated perspective (Fox, 1999). This Biblical text has been utilized to describe the faith journey as one symbolic of fleeing the earth in an upward climb to God. In this model or metaphor, Fox suggests that “we climb to God by contemplation and descend to neighbor by compassion. Thus compassion is descent; it is also an after-thought, a luxury that one can afford only after a very long lifetime of contemplative ascending” (p. 40). According to Fox, a spiritual developmental understanding based on this traditional, hierarchical, competitive, independent, and linear approach to growth will necessarily embrace distinct, clearly defined, and restrictive patterns. Openness to the visual and theoretical understanding of Dancing Sarah’s Circle allows for a wide variety of spiritual experiences, explanations, and attachments of meaning for persons on this journey.

Borysenko (2000) replaces the heroic model of step-by-step progress up Jacob’s Ladder with the image of women walking and Dancing Sarah’s Circle. She suggests that, like all women, the mother of Isaac came to know herself in the deep, intuitive way through the medium of her relationships rather than strictly in terms of a relationship with a transcendent God (2004). Dancing Sarah’s Circle is based on the biblical text found in Genesis 18-21, culminating in Sarah, at the age of ninety, giving birth to a surprise son she named Isaac, meaning “God has smiled, God has been kind” (Fox, 1999, p.44). Thus, a spirituality of Dancing Sarah’s Circle is one of wonder and joy. Sarah could be surprised, filled with unexpected wonder, and able to laugh. Sarah, then, is a symbol of laughter, creativity, and shalom.

A spiritual developmental understanding based on this alternative notion including a shared experience/ecstasy, interdependence, nurture, circle-like welcome of others, culminating in a love of neighbor that is love of God, will necessarily embrace a broader, fluid, circular, dynamic, shared pattern of spiritual growth. Jesus' supper times with his disciples can be seen as a Sarah's Circle kind of intimacy and his Last Supper experience rings especially true to this dynamic. The sacrament of washing the feet that meant so much to Jesus the night before he died is a patent example of a Sarah's Circle dynamic. Jesus both washed his disciples' feet *and* had his feet washed with ointment by a woman willing to dry them with her long hair. "All of Sarah's Circle dynamic is as much receiving as giving" (Fox, 1999, p. 56).

Within alternative approaches to understanding spirituality and spiritual development, certain concepts are central, such as mutuality, cooperation, harmony between persons, the earth, and God, and participating in significant life events. These are the main tenets of Sarah's Circle. One example of persons working together within this understanding of spirituality is a liberation group. Persons in these groups come together to share their pain of oppression and discrimination, thus building a bond and striving for mutual empowerment. Person's embracing the Sarah's Circle dynamic might take part in cooperatives such as food or clothing or housing, expanding the options, resources and flexibility of all involved. Living in harmony with the environment through interest in solar, wind and water energy systems is another example of people living Sarah's Circle within society. Finally, parents who insist on natural childbirth wherein their child will be welcomed eye to eye by a circle of fully conscious and celebrating, wonder-struck family, offer another way in which persons may choose to live out the tenets held within Sarah's Circle, in full participation of important life events.

Borysenko (1998) believes that "from a spiritual vantage point our major life task is much larger than making money, finding a mate, having a career, raising children, looking beautiful, achieving psychological health, or defying aging, illness, and death. It is a recognition of the sacred in daily life – a deep gratitude for the wonders of the world and the delicate web of inter-connectedness between people, nature and things" (p. 3). Her description of the spiritual realm of a person's life parallels nicely with Canda's (1988) emphasis on seeking a sense of meaning and purpose in life, and striving for mutually fulfilling relationships among individuals, society, and ultimate reality, focusing on the *relational* aspects of persons.

A significant difference between the growth of persons in Borysenko's understanding and Fowler's is that each previous type of interaction, personal experience, and belief process is cherished and viewed as critical, remaining a part of a person's whole, rather than an emphasis on leaving a particular stage behind for another, higher one. Bohannon (1992) comes to a similar conclusion. She states that women experience the sacred as immanent rather than as transcendent, living their lives in the awareness of the sacred around them, and practicing grace and love in the here and now. This rhythmic approach to the

understanding of a woman's body, mind, and spirit, is interdependent, creative, and dynamic (Borysenko, 2004). Dose (2007) observed a similar pattern in the lives of older adults in hospice care, noting that the meaning of the lived experience of spirituality at the end of life was *framed within the spirituality lived throughout one's life*, with the "major themes being connectedness, spiritual life moments, pick up the pieces and move on, and religion 'matters'" (p. 62).

"No spiritual journey is marked by a straight, unbroken line. Rather, like the path through a Zen garden; there are many twists and turns, even switchbacks, now progressing forward, now (seemingly) regressing" (Bookman, 2005, p. xiii). Bookman speaks of stages of development which are more like familiar places we revisit as we change, grow, and age. An image which represents this repetitive, active, and engaged process is found in the labyrinth, a metaphorical representation of the journey to our own center and back again out into the world, appearing as an oasis of possibility, pathways, and hope (Straughan, 2006). The labyrinth is an ancient symbol that relates to wholeness. It combines the imagery of the circle and the spiral into a meandering but purposeful path, similar to the spiritual pathways and growth experienced by many persons (Johnston, 2007).

The walking of the labyrinth involves intuition, creativity, and even imagery. With a labyrinth, there is only one choice to be made – to enter or not. The choice is whether or not to walk a spiritual path (Johnston, 2007). As people walk into the pathways of the labyrinth, they are encouraged to "let go" of the things that are weighing on our minds, and "strip" themselves of outward distractions, in order to be fully present with what they are feeling, knowing and experiencing. Then, when they reach the center, they are to be quiet (in spirit), calm, reflective, prayerful even - repeating silently or out loud, writings that are posted within that inner circle, or that come to mind. Then, once the people on this journey are ready, they are encouraged on their outward return to begin to prepare to "re-enter" the world, by calling to mind people and situations they were connected to, and being actively thoughtful about them (Straughan, 2006). The winding back and forth of the pathways of the labyrinth seem to parallel the images Borysenko (1998), Bookman (2005) and Fox (1999) suggest of the spiral or circular nature of the spiritual journey and growth.

#### *Wendy Haight: Cultural Implications for Spiritual Development*

Spiritual socialization can be central to children's healthy development. Haight (1998) found that for some African American children, this foundation is directly tied to resiliency. Despite profound, ongoing stressors, her research recognized significant strength within African American children, their families and communities, often tied to the role of the church in their lives, and of a generally shared spiritual connection. Neumark (1998) suggests that spiritual development cannot be taught or managed, but "children can be encouraged to develop spiritually through being given the opportunity to consider, reflect, dream, and challenge" (p. 22).

Ancestral worldviews are reflected throughout the social institutions responsible for imparting the beliefs and values of the group such as the family,

and religious and spiritual institutions. In addition to and in conjunction with the family, religious and spiritual institutions hold and pass along the philosophical standpoints or worldviews of the people (Schriver, 2004). The African-American community, like others, has rich traditions and history that uplift the hurt, comfort the struggling, and celebrate the soul (Hudley, Miller, & Haight, 2003). Church leaders rise to significance in the daily moral life of families and communities. "Individuals, families, and neighborhoods seek their counsel and support, guidance and inspiration. The church is also a fulcrum of much of the social life in the community and exists as a staging area for political and social activism" (Saleebey, 2001, p. 315).

A Rabbi working as a community organizer found that the lives of many low- to moderate-income people of color and working-class ethnic whites revolve around their religious and spiritual beliefs (ben Asher, 2001). As practitioners, we may find that ethnic and cultural diversity among clients is paralleled in spiritual and religious belief systems and practices. Many African Americans hold a worldview with roots in an African philosophical position that stresses collectivism rather than individualism. The worldviews of many Native Americans perceive all aspects of life as interrelated and of religious significance although there is no single dominant religion among the many Native American cultures. Asian/Pacific American families stress a belief system in which harmony is a core value. Latino religious beliefs reinforce a belief system in which the role of the family is a central tenet (Guadalupe, 2005; Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990). Such worldviews as these suggest much more in common with the core concerns of social work. The principles of social systems and ecological thinking found in these worldviews complement the growing emphasis on spirituality and religion within social work practice (Schriver, 2004).

The church often plays an important and supportive role for families of color. Church provides a sense of community and inter-relatedness for many individuals and families. Family and church are so intertwined for some African Americans, for example, that church members may refer to other members as their "church family." One's church family may provide such important supports as role models for young family members and assistance with child rearing (Hudley, Miller, & Haight, 2003). Even for African American families that do not belong to a formal church, spirituality may play a significant role. This spirituality is often a strength and a survival mechanism for African American families that can be tapped, particularly in times of death and dying, illness, loss, and bereavement (Boyd-Franklin, 1993; Hudley, Miller, & Haight, 2003). It is important to acknowledge the cultural implications of spiritual development, and the unique roles, meaning, and expectations found within each faith community.

### *Craig Dykstra: A Process Critique of Spiritual Development*

Craig Dykstra (1999) embraces a certain "strangeness," a "peculiarity" of Christian practice, as an asset, not a handicap. He accents the role of families, however defined, and youth, however attracted, in such settings which is a similar focus to Haight's findings related to some African American communities. This



openness to “strangeness” or other ways of thinking about and understanding certain life events, and ascribing meaning to them, fits well within an alternative approach to thinking about spiritual development. Dykstra’s approach leaves more room for less traditional ways of expressing one’s spiritual journey, which can include meditation, the acknowledgement of a particular geographic space which serves as a spiritual oasis, and the honoring of the God-given life and worth in all living beings.

Dykstra (1999) believes that the development of Christian nurture, rather than following formal “stages,” relates to themes integral to the Christian story itself, focusing on ways of being and thinking and doing. If one considers spiritual development as a spiral-shaped experience, drawing from the recurring realities of a circle, but honoring the assumed growth and movement that a ladder suggests, it is possible to begin to understand a more thematic approach to this process. Dykstra identifies hunger, life, practices, places, and signs as broad themes recurring in our lives, embracing the mystery or depth of Christian faith, and a variety of methods for practicing this faith.

William Hull (1991) describes Christian salvation as a dynamic process – we were saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved. This somewhat subtle shift from the ladder image to a re-visiting process in cyclical form is quite profound, as the spiral-formation of growth allows one to re-engage with themes throughout life. This approach mirrors our own yearly reliving of the significant events on the liturgical calendar including communion, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. The process of re-experiencing these pivotal celebrations allows us to find the extraordinary in the “ordinary.” As we continue to grow, change, understand ourselves, others, and God in different ways, our experiencing of these events is repetitive, yet new.

These alternative approaches to understanding spiritual development allow for the impact of greater societal, political, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, physical, and emotional factors throughout this life process. Helminiak (1996) argues that if the needs of organisms are not met, the higher levels of psyche and spirit are adversely affected. Inversely, a sick spirit impacts psyche and organism negatively. Young, Cashwell, and Shcherbakova (2000) conclude that spirituality seems to provide a buffer from stressful life events that are perceived as negative, further supporting the value of the spiral-formed developmental impact which sustains the connections to previous life experiences.

## **Conclusion**

The spiritual development approaches discussed in this chapter support the central tenet that “important religious beliefs, rituals, and social structures can play key roles as individuals and families move through the life cycle” (Hugen, 2001, p. 13). Some of the elements identified as significant dimensions of spiritual development are creativity, contemplation, wholeness, connectedness and quest or search for meaning (Guadalupe, 2005). In short, “spirituality is essential to human happiness and mental health” (Elkins, 1999, p. 44).

What occurs between the client and the social worker involves not only the traditional interventions, methods, and skills the social worker applies, but also a two-way exchange of ideas, feelings, beliefs, and values that may or may not be directly addressed or acknowledged. "Whether professionals are 'believers' in the spiritual dimension is important. 'Nonbelievers' may not be fully able to accept clients who consider spirituality and religion to be meaningful and useful within the context of their life experiences" (Sermabeikian, 1994, pp. 178-79). Social workers, therefore, should develop self-understanding regarding personal biases, their own experiences that lead to strong assumptions about others, existential issues and spiritual growth (Canda, 1988; Cascio, 1998; & Russel, 2006). "Self-inquiry must be a disciplined and consistent process of personal and professional growth. Social workers should examine their beliefs, motivations, values, and activities and consider the impact of these factors upon the client's spirituality" (Canda, p. 245).

A spiritual bias can be just as harmful as racism or sexism. When considering the issue of spirit, spiritual, and spirituality, a social worker must also consider his or her assumptions about the process of growth, deepening awareness, and the language and meanings attached to this spiritual development. Whether the philosophical tenets of Climbing Jacob's Ladder or those supporting Dancing Sarah's Circle are embraced, social workers must enter into an awareness of the sacred for themselves and for the persons with whom they work.

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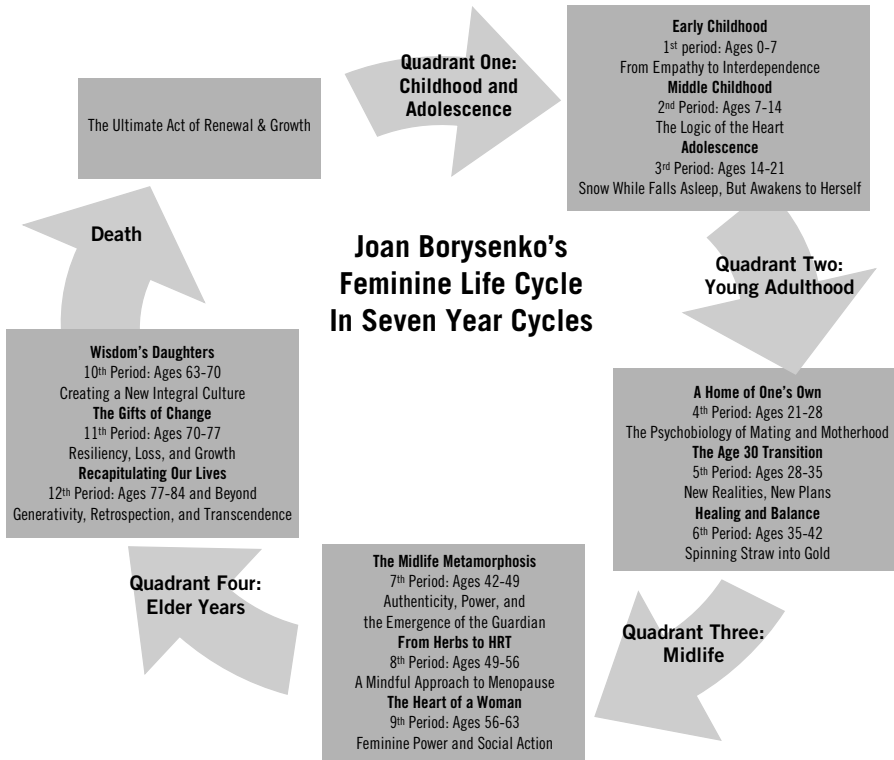
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**Table 1: Stages of Psychosocial, Moral, and Spiritual Development**  
**Erikson, Kohlberg, and Fowler**

Erik Erikson's Eight Stages of Man (Psychosocial Development) * Ninth Stage contributed by Joan Erikson		Lawrence Kohlberg's Six Stages of Moral Development		James Fowler's Six stages of Faith Development	
Stage/Age	Description	Stage/Age	Description	Stage/Age	Description
Stage 1: <b>Basic trust vs. basic mistrust</b> Birth-12/18 months	Infant develops trust, as he or she understands that some people or things can be depended on.			Pre-Stage: <b>Undifferentiated Faith</b> Birth-1 ½ years	Faith characterized by mutuality between infant and nurturers. First pre-images of God are formed prior to language & are feeling-oriented, not reason-oriented.
Stage 2: <b>Autonomy vs. Shame &amp; Doubt</b> 18 months – 3 yr.	Accomplishing various tasks/ activities provides children with feelings of self-worth and self-confidence.				
Stage 3: <b>Initiative vs. Guilt</b> 3-6 years	Preschoolers encouraged to take initiative to explore & learn are likely to feel confident in initiating relationships, & pursue career objectives later in life. Preschoolers consistently restricted or punished are more likely to experience emotional guilt, & most often follow the lead of others.	4-10 years Level 1-Preconventional	Stage 1: <b>Punishment &amp; Obedience Orientation</b> Controls are external. Behavior governed by receiving rewards/punishments. Decisions concerning what is good/bad are made in order to avoid receiving punishment. Stage 2: <b>Naïve Instrumental Hedonism</b> Rules are obeyed in order to receive rewards. Often favors are exchanged.	Stage 1: <b>Intuitive-Projective Faith</b> 3-7 years	Child constructs ever-shifting world of imitation, fantasy, & imagination. Child thinks only literally. Sees God as person yet realizes imagery falls short.
Stage 4: <b>Industry vs. Inferiority</b> 6-12 years	These children need to be productive & succeed in play and school activities.	10-13 years Level 2 – Conventional	Stage 3: <b>"Good Boy/Girl Morality"</b> Behavior governed by conforming to social expectations. Good behavior is considered to be what pleases others. Stage 4: <b>Authority-Maintaining Morality</b> Belief in law & order is strong. Behavior conforms to law & higher authority. Social order is important.	Stage 2: <b>Mythic-Literal Faith</b> 6-12 years	Emergence of concrete operational thinking precipitates the transition to this stage, as a child is able to see the world from more than 1 perspective. Child's world is simple, orderly, temporally linear, and dependable.

<p>Stage 5: Identity vs. Role Confusion</p> <p>Adolescence</p> <p>This transition period from childhood to adulthood is when a person examines the various roles they play, and integrate these roles into a perception of self, or identity.</p>	<p>Level 3 – Post Conventional (many persons never move to Level 3)</p> <p>Late adolescence</p> <p>Stage 5: Morality of Contract, of Individual Rights, and of Democratically Accepted Law</p> <p>Moral decisions internally controlled. Morality involves higher level principles beyond law and self-interest. Laws considered necessary, subject to rational thought and interpretation.</p>	<p>Stage 3: <b>Synthetic-Conventional Faith</b></p> <p>12-beyond</p>	<p>Emergence of formal operational thinking allows critical reflection on myths central to Stage 2. See God as personal &amp; relational, holding great value to religious symbols.</p>
<p>Stage 6: <b>Intimacy vs. Isolation</b></p> <p>Young adult</p> <p>Young adulthood is characterized by a quest of intimacy. Persons not attaining intimacy are likely to suffer isolation, and were likely to resolve some of the crises of earlier psychosocial development.</p>	<p>Adulthood</p>	<p>Stage 4: <b>Individual-Reflective Faith</b></p> <p>Young adulthood or beyond (many persons stay between Stage 3 &amp; 4)</p>	<p>Physical separation from home and encounter with new environment; authority moves from outside to inside person. Perception of God similar to Stage 3.</p>
<p>Stage 7: <b>Generativity vs. Stagnation</b></p> <p>Maturity</p> <p>People are concerned with helping, producing for, or guiding the following generation. People lacking generativity become self-absorbed and inward.</p>	<p>Adulthood</p> <p>Stage 6: <b>Morality of Individual Principles &amp; Conscience</b></p> <p>Behavior based on internal ethical principles. Decisions made according to what is right vs. what is written into law.</p>	<p>Stage 5: <b>Conjunctive Faith</b></p> <p>mid-life or beyond</p>	<p>Person must have known life experiences of grief/confusion; deepest truths are inconsistent; sweeter spirit than Stages 3 &amp; 4; lives with ambiguity; views faith from perspective of others; open to change.</p>
<p>Stage 8: <b>Ego Integrity vs. Despair</b></p> <p>Old Age</p> <p>People look back over life and reflect, taking stock in their decisions. For some this leads to a sense of peace (ego integrity) and for others to a sense of sadness and despair.</p>		<p>Stage 6: <b>Universalizing Faith</b></p> <p>Adulthood (exceptionally rare)</p>	<p>Characterized by brotherhood of all; focus on love, peace &amp; justice; religion is relational, not conceptual; a radical absorption with unity of all people.</p>
<p>* Stage 9: <b>Basic Mistrust vs. Trust: Hope</b> <b>Shame &amp; Doubt vs. Autonomy: Will</b> <b>Guilt vs. Initiative: Purpose</b> <b>Inferiority vs. Industry: Competence</b> <b>Identity Confusion vs. Identity: Fidelity</b> <b>Isolation vs. Intimacy: Love</b> <b>Stagnation vs. Generativity: Care</b> <b>Despair &amp; Disgust vs. Integrity: Wisdom</b></p> <p>Eighties and Nineties</p> <p>People enter their late 80's and 90's and experience new demands, reevaluations, and daily difficulties. Despair is a close companion due to intense multiples losses, failing physical and cognitive abilities, and lessening autonomy. Old age is a circumstance which places the dystonic elements in a more prominent position than in earlier stages, with syntonic qualities having less potency. The underlined characteristics are possible outcomes of a person in their 80's or 90's struggling with each paired element, which can lead to growth, strength and commitment.</p>			

**Table 2. Joan Borysenko's Feminine Life Cycle**





# Working with LGBT Clients: Promising Practices and Personal Challenges

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*Allison Tan and Michael S. Kelly*

My client is gay. I am a Christian social worker. Now what do I do? This is a scenario many Christians in social work practice will inevitably face at some point in their professional journey. To be sure, Christian social workers are themselves diverse in terms of their own sexual orientations and their beliefs about homosexuality. However, it is well-known that many Christian denominations have historically held a negative view of homosexuality, and this results in many Christian social workers struggling to reconcile their professional and spiritual lives.

If you have not yet encountered lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) clients in your practice, it is only a matter of time. Goldfried (2008) found that LGBT individuals and same-sex couples are actually more likely to seek mental health therapy or treatment than heterosexuals. This may be due to the stigma and discrimination they face (Harper and Schneider 2003; Meyer, 2003). While the literature base on culturally competent practice with the LGBT population has grown exponentially in the last decade, the questions about best practices for working with LGBT clients are far from settled. This chapter aims to ask questions and raise important issues to help you wrestle with the personal and professional challenges that come with providing quality, ethical care to LGBT clients.

Through a critical review of the literature and our personal and professional experiences as Christian social workers and researchers on LGBT issues, we utilize multiple case vignettes to represent the common themes and challenges associated with working with the LGBT population. The chapter begins with an investigation into the literature on promising practices (including a specific focus on “affirmative practice” and the skills of “critical consciousness” and “difficult dialogues”) for intervention with the LGBT population. It also addresses literature on the religious and spiritual lives of LGBT individuals. We conclude with a case vignette about a Christian practitioner in social work in order to guide discussion about how one social worker might apply her professional role, rooted in her Christian faith, to her work with the LGBT community.

Our overarching aim here will be to support Christians in social work who want to work competently with the LGBT population, based on a deep-seated

belief in the call of both our faith and our profession to provide quality services to all people in a rich, diverse world. Toward that end, it is important first and foremost to be clear about what this chapter is not. It is not an attempt to engage in a scriptural debate or argument around the issues of homosexuality; such a hermeneutical discussion is beyond our expertise and is also not necessarily integral to a discussion of social work's promising practices. This chapter very purposefully does not take sides in the current gay rights debates; the stance we take here is not either primarily a political or theological one. Instead, it takes an evidence-based stance – the recommendations and practice-related discussion herein are rooted in the literature and the NASW Code of Ethics. Finally, while we believe every student and practitioner should prepare to serve a diverse range of clients, we know that there are some practitioners who may try to avoid serving LGBT clients as a regular part of their social work practice. As we will discuss in more detail later, if there is any client population, LGBT or otherwise, that a social worker feels he or she cannot provide competent services to, it is better to ethically and professionally refer the client to someone better able to help, while simultaneously examining why they believe they are not competent to serve this population, perhaps with a supervisor or mentor.

### **Promising Practices with the LGBT Population**

As we encounter LGBT clients in our practice, many of us will be challenged by the question of how to best serve them. In line with our obligation as social workers to provide evidence-based interventions to our clients, Figure 1 outlines the critical review strategy we utilized to explore what is known about promising practices for working with LGBT individuals. “LGBT” was combined with four different sets of key phrases to arrive at a solid base upon which to review the literature. This process, while not definitive, does reflect what I was able to find from a transparent and clear search of the extant mental health literature at the time of writing (Spring of 2015). It may be of interest to acknowledge the exponential increase in available literature on these topics just in the last four years. Toward that end, Figure 1 also includes the results of the same search at the time of the first version of this chapter, written in 2011.

**Figure 1: Overview of Critical Review Strategy**

Database Searched: Academic Search Premier (ASP)

Keywords	Number of “Hits”	
	<b>2015</b>	<b>2011</b>
LGBT + ‘best practices’	36	7
LGBT + ‘evidence-based practice’	8	1
LGBT + ‘therapy’	<u>365</u>	<u>144</u>
Total number of unique hits:	314	117

The goal of this review was to understand which techniques, interventions, and theoretical orientations are commonly associated with culturally-competent work with this population. Students and practitioners reading this chapter are encouraged to do their own regular searches of the literature in these areas, as doing so is necessary to remain current on findings and improve their clinical skills with LGBT individuals. Much of the literature represented in Figure 1 is discussed in detail in the “Review of the Literature: Findings” section later in this chapter.

### *The Importance of Terminology*

It is essential to speak briefly to the term “LGBT population,” which is used throughout this chapter to describe lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. This term was specifically chosen because it was found to be the one most commonly used in both the popular and research literature, though it is a term that is still considered controversial. Some prominent researchers and practitioners within the field argue against this phraseology because it lumps all gay men, lesbian women, and bisexual men and women, along with transgender individuals, into one category (see Fassinger & Aresenau, 2008). Additionally, much of the research that claims to represent the LGBT population is actually heavily weighted with lesbian and gay individuals and weakly includes bisexual and transgender individuals, if at all (Fisher, Easterly & Lazear, 2008). Therefore, many researchers are in favor of a more narrow “LGB” term, because transgender individuals are quite different in terms of their needs and often highly underrepresented in the literature (Harper & Schneider, 2003; Israel, Gorcheva, Burnes & Walther, 2008; Smith, 2005). In truth, the acronym for this community varies greatly from one person to the next and sometimes grows to as lengthy a term as “LGBTTIQQ2SA” (Lamoureux & Joseph, 2014). One of the alternative terms to describe this population is “sexual minority clients” (Dworkin & Gutierrez, 1992), which also may be seen as controversial. However, the LGBT terminology was selected instead simply because of its prevalence in the literature. In working with clients, we would strongly encourage the social work practitioner to ask what terminology the client is most comfortable with and how the person wishes to be identified. Using the client’s desired language is a vital first step toward building competent social work practice.

### **Review of the Literature: Findings**

Figure 2 below gives an overview of ten of the key studies/publications on LGBT promising practices and summarizes their influence on this topic; many of their conclusions are referenced throughout the entirety of this chapter.

### *Key Themes*

Perhaps the most crucial theme in the LGBT literature is the consensus in support of the uniqueness of LGBT “best practices” because of the compounding factors the LGBT client faces; these factors can include stigma and lack

of familial support. This research suggests tailoring interventions to meet the unique barriers and needs associated with the LGBT population. While the presenting problem of an LGBT client may not appear significantly different than one of a heterosexual client (i.e. relationship problems and general feelings of depression), research indicates that these presenting problems are possibly more severe for LGBT clients because of unique factors including their experiences of prejudice, oppression, and homophobia in our society (Dworkin & Gutierrez, 1992; Meyer, 2003) as well as the possibility of having less social and familial support (Lam, Naar-King & Wright, 2007). In other words, the LGBT client's presenting problems might be similar, but they are confounded and compounded by "specific psychosocial stressors unique to this population" including victimization, harassment, fear of rejection, discrimination, past abuse, and isolation from family and friends (Berg, Mimiaga & Safren, 2008, 294). These unique barriers and the corresponding importance of tailored LGBT-specific interventions are referenced in the studies in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Key Studies/Contributions**

Source	Research Design/Methods	Major Contributions
Berg, Mimiaga & Safren, 2008	Qualitative/Quantitative study – based on a chart review of 92 gay men in mental health treatment	Demographics and history variables characterizing gay men who seek services; implications for interventions tailored to unique needs of population
Goodrich, Harper, Luke & Singh, 2013	Review of literature on best practices for working with LGBT youth in school settings	Offers valuable insight into strategies education, prevention, response, and advocacy for and with LGBT youth
Israel, Gorcheva, Burnes & Walther, 2008	Qualitative study based on 42 LGBT clients' experiences in counseling	Delineates 'helpful' and 'unhelpful' counseling experiences; includes discussion of variables at the levels of client, therapist, and intervention
Israel, Ketz, Detrie, Burke & Shulman, 2003	Qualitative study – based on feedback from LGBT experts, practitioners, and clients	Outlines specific competencies counseling professionals should exhibit in working with LGBT population
Lam & Joseph, 2014	Practice-based case study describing model of Transformative Practice with LGBT mental health clients	Adds richly to the discussion of what 'affirmative practice' needs to include

Lim, Brown & Sung Min, 2014	Review of literature on LGBT health disparities and best practices in LGBT health	Details unique health needs of various subgroups within LGBT community, offers resources for health professionals, and reviews policies
Omoto & Kurtzman, 2006	Review of several large quantitative and qualitative LGBT datasets	Overviews state of LGBT research, including limitations; establishes use of qualitative research as effective with hard-to-reach populations
Romeo, 2007	Qualitative dissertation	Proposes effective workshops for the training of practitioners to work competently with the LGBT population
Ross, Doctor, Dimito, Kuehl & Armstrong, 2007	Quantitative uncontrolled trial – based on 7 Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Groups	Suggests a model for intervention, which tailors CBT to meet the unique needs of the LGBT population
Smith, 2005	Quantitative dissertation	Creates and validates a scale (LGBT Hardiness Scale) for use in assessment of LGBT client needs

In one study, 86.4% of LGBT clients engaged in mental health treatment stated the importance of the intervention being LGBT-specific (Ross, Doctor, Dimito, Kuehl & Armstrong, 2007). One way to think about tailoring interventions to the specific needs of the LGBT population is to approach promising practices as an issue of cultural competence and diversity training. Logan & Barret (2005) outline a set of guidelines for working with the LGBT population as recommended by leaders of the Association for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues in Counseling. Some researchers encourage practitioners to view effective practice with the LGBT population as a cross-cultural competency issue (Amadio & Perez, 2008), while others note that a framework for planning interventions with ethnic minority LGBT clients called the Racial Ethnic and Sexual Orientation (RESIC) has been developed (Ohnishi, Ibrahim & Grzegorek, 2006). Considering the identification of promising practices for work with the LGBT population as one component of their overall cultural competence may persuade some Christian practitioners to view this work differently.

Describing effective practice with the LGBT population, Israel, Gorcheva, Burnes, and Walther (2008) polled a set of LGBT individuals currently engaged in mental health treatment regarding examples of 'helpful and unhelpful' counseling experiences. After reviewing their qualitative data, these researchers summarized the key findings in three categories of variables: client, therapist, and intervention. This suggests that promising practices with the LGBT population

require consideration of multiple components of efficacy. These three categories will be utilized in the pages that follow to structure the themes emerging not only from this key qualitative study, but also from the entirety of the literature on the subject, as a means to considering how best to serve LGBT clients like those in the vignettes provided.

#### *Client Variables and Characteristics*

*Eric is a 34-year old African American male with an MBA degree. He is attractive, charismatic, and well-spoken. After working for several years in advertising in downtown Chicago, he has recently changed careers in order to start a non-profit organization in his childhood neighborhood aimed at reaching young men with positive messages of healthy relationships and prevention of HIV and STDs. Eric grew up in a strong Christian family with a single mother and three young siblings. He had many relationships with girls and women throughout high school and college, and was even named Homecoming King. While he appeared to be the “all-American guy” during those years, he wrestled silently with two secrets he feared would destroy his family. First, he experienced several instances of sexual abuse at the hands of an alcoholic uncle. Second, he felt attracted to men.*

*The first of these secrets, the sexual abuse, he has never disclosed to his family. Only his current partner and his therapist and social worker are aware of this past. The perpetrator passed away decades ago and Eric feels he has “moved on” and that disclosing this history at this point would only hurt his mother. Last year, he finally disclosed the second of these secrets, his sexual orientation, to his family and friends. Generally, his family’s response has been supportive. His mother cried and still chooses not to share her son’s sexual orientation with most of her “church friends,” but she has remained loving and supportive toward Eric. His friends have had mixed reactions. Eric indicates that his “church friends” have slowly “fallen away,” and he spends most of his time now with non-churched people. Eric has also reported a very difficult time meeting other gay men in his community. His current partner, whom he has been living with for the past 14 months, is Caucasian, and they live in a predominantly Caucasian area. His partner, Frank, is HIV-positive. Eric and Frank are highly educated on HIV prevention strategies, engage in safe sex practices, and ensure Frank places high priority on his health. Eric is HIV-negative.*

*Eric sees an LCSW counselor twice a month to work on his ongoing issues associated with the “coming out process” and his personal challenges associated with finding reconciliation with his “church home” community, which holds a set of important relationships he still mourns the loss of. His counselor supports and challenges him with inspirational readings from the popular media and the academic literature on the coming out process. He enjoys these resources and finds value in discussing them with her during their sessions. It is as a result of his work with this counselor that he has chosen to leave his job and focus on empowering other African American youth growing up in communities like his.*

In the study by Israel and colleagues (2008), the researchers found that the strongest client-level variable associated with ‘helpful’ experiences in counseling was providing the client with the highest possible level of autonomy. Clients like

Eric are likely to feel empowered and valued when they are given independence and autonomy in the counseling session. Considering the challenges some Christian social workers might face in working with the LGBT population, this can become a challenge since giving the LGBT client independence and autonomy often means granting him or her the freedom to discuss all issues, even those that might make some Christian social workers uncomfortable.

Another major client-level theme in the literature is the concept of conflict in acculturation. Acculturation refers to the level of assimilation, connection, and sense of belonging or isolation individuals feel toward their cultural groups. It refers to how well Eric feels he fits in with the various cultural groups to which he belongs. The caution here for practitioners, then, is to understand the common conflicts LGBT clients may be facing in attempts to acculturate with the LGBT community as well as with their other (sometimes conflicting) cultures. ‘Dual acculturation’ is often used in the literature to describe the challenge of finding identity in belonging in one’s LGBT community and one’s ethnic culture of origin (Ohnishi, Ibrahim & Grzegorek, 2006). Acculturation may serve as a challenge even beyond sexual orientation and ethnicity when one seeks to identify with other groups, including family of origin and religious community (Bieschke, Perez & DeBord, 2007). In fact, the most recent literature on LGBT youth especially suggests that a significant segment of the LGBT community values their religious/spiritual beliefs and seeks to remain integrated with religious communities, churches, or spiritual groups (Johnston & Stewart, 2011). Harper and Schneider (2003) refer to this as ‘double, triple, and quadruple minority status.’

Lastly, it must be acknowledged that LGBT clients like Eric bring into the helping relationship a history of both trauma and resiliency. While it is never safe to assume that every LGBT person has a personal history of abuse, trauma, or targeted discrimination, we do know from literature and mainstream media that history of such trauma is common. That history calls for best practice interventions, which include acknowledgement of likely trauma and corresponding “trauma-informed treatment strategies” (Drabble & Eliason, 2012). At the same time, it is important also to acknowledge that, as is the case with many populations in society who have roots in oppression and discrimination, “the LGBTQ community has demonstrated significant strengths, resiliency, creativity and transformative potential” (Lamoureux & Joseph, 2014, 218). In terms of client-level characteristics, this spirit of resiliency is perhaps the greatest hope for meaningful social work intervention.

### *Therapist Variables and Characteristics*

*Rebecca is a seasoned mental health professional who has spent most of her career working with youth and families in the foster care system. Due to recent funding cuts in the DCF system and her desire for stability in her social work career, she opened a private practice two years ago in an area of the city which is predominantly Hispanic and low-income. She is Caucasian, but bi-lingual in Spanish. One of her first clients was a 24-year-old man named Jose. Jose initially came to Rebecca seek-*

ing counseling to address relationship issues and feelings of rejection from previous sexual partners as well as from his parents, who are still living in Mexico. He has regular sessions with Rebecca over the course of about six months. Then, he stopped returning phone calls from her and missed several appointments.

After about nine months, Rebecca was very surprised to hear what sounded like Jose's voice on her confidential message line, asking for an appointment. There was something different about his voice, but she knew it was him. She left him a message in response confirming an appointment later in the week.

At the time of Jose's scheduled appointment, Rebecca heard the outer door to her office lobby open and she walked out to greet him. She was taken aback to see Jose standing there in women's clothing and with clear differences in his appearance including enhanced cheek bones, breasts, and a more slender build. He reached out his hand to her and said, "Call me Josie." She welcomed Josie into her office. Josie immediately began sharing her story. She had begun the process of gender reassignment about 6 months previously, was on strong doses of female hormones, and was seeking Rebecca's counseling in order to meet the psychological requirements for evaluation needed to complete the process of gender reassignment surgery. After explaining the reason for her visit, Josie began to "test" Rebecca with a series of questions clearly aimed to assess her response to transgender issues. Josie wanted to know if she was the first transgendered client Rebecca had seen. Rebecca said yes. Josie wanted to know if Rebecca was okay discussing with her issues related to the differences in sexual activity as a male versus a female. Rebecca said yes. Josie asked Rebecca a series of "do you know about..." questions. Rebecca responded honestly that what she did not know she was certainly willing to find out.

At the end of the 50-minute session, Josie seemed satisfied enough with Rebecca's non-judgmental response to continue meeting with her over the course of the next several months. As Josie walked out of the office, Rebecca wondered whether she had responded "correctly" to what was certainly an unexpected turn of events in her day.

Israel and colleagues (2008) also identified a larger set of therapist-related variables associated with 'helpful' experiences in counseling, which includes a therapist who openly shares his or her perspective and opinion, provides positive and encouraging feedback, exhibits strong basic counseling skills, can develop a close and trusting therapeutic relationship, and has specific LGBT training and practice experience. The larger literature base echoes some of these themes and adds some additional therapist-level considerations.

In one qualitative study, Romeo (2007) addresses the need for practitioners to receive updated and on-going training regarding practice with this population by implementing a set of LGBT-focused training workshops for practitioners and seeking to measure behavior changes in the practitioners post-training. This study reported several significant behavior changes, including increased likelihood to seek out and read LGBT-related books, engaging more regularly in conversations with co-workers about LGBT issues, and changing language used in reference to and in practice with the LGBT population.

Another major area of research on therapist preparedness for work with LGBT clients is in the area of self-awareness and self-reflection (Butler, 2010).



Josie, and clients like him, might experience prejudice and discrimination from others on a daily basis; he should be able to expect a competent social work practitioner who will not perpetuate that prejudice in the counseling session. This is a highly important point for practitioners looking to improve competency with this population, as it emphasizes the detrimental effects that unrecognized bias, prejudice, and judgmental attitudes can have on the practice environment. Interestingly, while this is a theme common in the most current literature, it has been emphasized over the past several decades, with one researcher almost two decades ago stating the need for a “call for priority to be placed on counselor awareness” (Dworkin & Gutierrez, 1992).

Perhaps the most researched therapist-related factor influencing competent practice with the LGBT population has been the sexual orientation of the counselor. Some researchers emphasize the value of a therapist with the same sexual orientation as the client. One such study reported 95.5% of their respondents stated the importance of their mental health group therapy sessions being facilitated by a therapist who is of the same sexual orientation (Ross, Doctor, Dimito, Kuehl & Armstrong, 2007). Yet, several studies report otherwise; various samples of LGBT clients reported that the therapist/counselor’s sexual orientation is not as significant as his or her competence as a counselor (Bieschke, Paul & Blasko, 2007). Interestingly, that same study also found that LGBT clients have a preference for social workers and counselors over psychiatrists. From the questions Josie asked, it is clear the value she places on knowing her social worker is competent in the transgender experience she faces.

Another study by Israel and colleagues (2003) presents a specific set of competencies for counselors in working with LGBT clients. One of the strengths of this study is the involvement of LGBT clients who were polled along with expert practitioners. Clients and practitioners were asked about the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for competent practice with the LGBT population. In its entirety, the study rank orders 85 different categories of such competencies. According to those surveyed (and clearly echoed in the case of Josie), the top three characteristics of competent counselors working with LGBT clients are: 1) knowledge about discrimination, oppression, prejudice, homophobia, and heterosexism, 2) a non-homophobic attitude (i.e. not feeling one’s sexual orientation is evil and in need of changing), and 3) sensitivity to LGBT client’s issues, including ethics and confidentiality and a willingness to listen to all aspects of LGBT life.

### *Intervention Variables and Characteristics*

Clara is a 38-year-old Caucasian woman. She has an associate’s degree in health care services and works as a CNA in a nursing home. After her mother died last year, Clara’s coworkers noticed a significant change in her demeanor. She had become withdrawn, distant, and visibly depressed. Her supervisor suggested that she seek grief counseling through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) their health insurance provided. Clara was hesitant, but agreed to give it a try. Having never gone to counseling, she had no idea what to expect. The

counselor, Dan, was an African American man in his late 40s. He explained his counseling process to her in a way that was both straight-forward and compassionate at the same time. She felt comfortable with him; his office was calming, and his approach was open. During the first session, he asked her to just “share her story” with him. To her own surprise, she talked for the next 30 minutes almost completely uninterrupted. She shared with him that she had been very close to her mother, that she had early childhood memories of Sundays in church with her, and that she missed her very much. Then, she opened up even more and shared with him that she has been in a closeted lesbian relationship with her partner Sofia for the past seven years, and that one of her greatest regrets is now that she never shared her sexual orientation with her mother before she passed away. She kept this important relationship hidden from her mother because she had not been prepared to answer questions about sexual orientation and religion – a topic she was sure would have been her mother’s first concern. When Dan asked her more about this, Clara said she has not herself come to a really good conclusion on what her sexual orientation means for her personal faith in God, but that she is “working on it.”

Toward the end of the first session, Dan challenged Clara to write a letter to her mother. He wanted her to put into writing everything she wished she had had a chance to say. While this sounded initially like a strange activity to Clara, she agreed to do it and to bring a copy to their next session. As she left Dan’s office, she realized that just the act of “doing something” made her feel better.

The letter that resulted was nearly 10 pages in length. Dan asked Clara to read it out loud at the beginning of their second session. As she read, Dan was struck both by the simultaneous level of emotion and critical thinking Clara was able to articulate. More than that, he was impressed by the eloquence in which she wrote. As she finished reading, he remembered a poster he had seen hanging in the local coffeehouse he frequented on his way to work every day. Dan told Clara about an Open Mic Night/Spoken Word event at the coffeehouse later that week. He thought she might really enjoy participating and also might find it personally therapeutic to do so. To her own surprise, Clara agreed immediately, and after a few more sessions, she decided that was going to read some of her writing at the Open Mic event.

For the past 6 months, Clara has been performing at Open Mic events regularly. She writes pieces on grief and loss, pieces on the mother-daughter relationship, and pieces on sexual orientation and faith. She has become a crowd favorite at these events. She has also continued in counseling with Dan and has found him to be surprisingly non-judgmental toward her, open to dialogue about issues of faith (although he is not himself religious), and supportive in assisting her to connect with community resources to aid her in the coming out process. Clara’s supervisor and co-workers have observed marked improvements in her demeanor at work, and her partner has also noted improvements in their relationship.

Regarding variables and characteristics directly related to the actual intervention and counseling strategies utilized in ‘helpful’ experiences, Israel and colleagues (2008) reported LGBT individuals benefited most from counseling

conducted from specific approaches or theoretical bases. Those approaches most commonly identified were cognitive behavioral, dialectical behavior, imagery, and relaxation therapies. The study's participants also reported direction and structure to be most 'helpful', citing confrontation, goal setting, and homework as beneficial components of counseling.

Studies have attempted to demonstrate the effectiveness of specific therapeutic interventions with the LGBT population. Several such studies have begun to legitimize adaptations of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) for working with LGBT clients (Berg, Mimiaga & Safren, 2008; Ross, Doctor, Dimito, Kuehl & Armstrong, 2007). The latter study mentioned above (Ross et.al) describes a model of CBT adapted to the specific needs of LGBT group work; the model augments traditional CBT work with specific curriculum addressing anti-oppression, the coming out process, and experiences of homophobia. In their intervention trial, a 14-week group saw significant decreases in depression and increases in self-esteem. In the case scenario, the use of "homework" in counseling (common in Cognitive-behavior-oriented therapy) could certainly be helpful to Clara and her social worker.

Another set of researchers offered theoretical support for the incorporation of liberation psychology (defined as work that seeks to bridge the gap between personal mental health issues and societal oppression) in work with LGBT clients, citing the interwoven nature of personal and social change as uniquely applicable to the LGBT experience (Russell & Bohan, 2007). Other authors suggest the innovation of using art therapy with the LGBT population, based on research indicating the relationship between creative expression and healthy sexual identity development (Pelton-Sweet & Sherry, 2008). Clara found this therapeutic activity to be particularly valuable.

While each of the interventions mentioned above may very well result in some measure of effectiveness in practice with the LGBT population, the most dominant theme in all of the literature on the subject is the concept of 'affirmative' counseling (Amadio & Perez, 2008; Bieschke, Perez & DeBord, 2007; Croteau, Bieschke, Fassigner & Manning, 2008; Dworkin & Gutierrez, 1992; Logan & Barret, 2002; Whitman, Horn & Boyd, 2007). Defining affirmative practice is a bit challenging. Bieschke, Perez & DeBord (2007) say this about the definition of affirmative counseling: "Existing definitions tend to reflect more of an attitude than a set of behaviors or specific instructions" (p.7). One understanding of affirmative practice is to value homosexuality and heterosexuality equally (Dworkin & Gutierrez, 1992). Another way to consider affirmative practice is by asking the question, "How have you either created barriers or built bridges" for the LGBT community?" (Logan & Barret, 2002 42). In short, the rationale for an atmosphere of affirmation rests in a belief that clients like Clara deserve therapy free from the "the medicalizing of difference," the "pathologization of gender and sexual orientation," and "the reproduction of Othering through labeling and stigmatization" (Lamoureux & Joseph, 2014, 212). This discussion of affirmative practice is a major theme in the literature and one of the linchpins of promising practices for working with all LGBT clients like Eric,

Josie, and Clara. More discussion of affirmative practice, specifically related to instances of discordant social worker-client beliefs, is provided in a latter section of this chapter.

These techniques reflect a strong support for a model of narrative therapy, which has been presented by some in the social work and counseling fields as particularly applicable and empowering for work with the LGBT population (Walters, 2009). Clients like Clara might prefer to be given the opportunity to simply ‘talk’ and, in doing so, she is given a powerful opportunity to create her own story – to describe and define for herself the trajectory of her life and the ways in which her sexuality has impact on her mental health and well-being. The narrative therapy approach may be most applicable in instances where the client’s opinions and beliefs are discordant with the practitioner’s beliefs and values (which will be addressed further in a later section of this chapter).

### *Spiritual and/or Religious LGBT Clients*

Additionally, a narrative approach may be beneficial in giving clients like Eric and Clara a forum to share experiences and internal struggles in navigating through multiple cultures and social circles – especially the tensions of their own faith journeys, which have, at times, been very misunderstood and even dismissed by helping professionals. Especially for practitioners who hold conservative religious beliefs and values that define homosexuality as sinful, the fact that a gay or lesbian client may also be a committed religious or spiritual person may seem confusing. Yet, there are many (perhaps most) LGBT individuals like Eric and Clara who view themselves as members of both LGBT communities and religious (including Christian) or spiritual communities. Just as the research on LGBT issues in general has increased rapidly in recent years, the research specifically on LGBT individuals and spirituality is on the rise. In 2011, Academic Search Premier found 34 articles meeting the keywords ‘LGBT’ and ‘spirituality’; in 2015, that same search yields 92 results and growing. In one study of the newest generation of LGBT individuals, a large dataset of LGBTQ youth (n=6,872) showed that nearly 60% of respondents report strong religiosity/spirituality (Johnston & Stewart, 2011). Some work is certainly being done to better understand the challenges these LGBT men and women face, but promising practices for helping clients like Eric and Clara find meaning and acceptance are few. Clearly, bridges must continue to be built between religious communities and LGBT communities (Marin, 2009), as there are members of each group who genuinely seek to understand and engage with members of the other.

Having gleaned multiple important lessons from the literature to inform practice with LGBT clients, we now turn our attention to the second part of the chapter, which focuses on the personal challenges many Christian social workers may experience. At the conclusion of the chapter, we return briefly to the aforementioned literature and draw some overarching conclusions about the promising practices for working with the LGBT population.

## **History of Research and the LGBT Movement**

The current state of research on promising practices for working with the LGBT population is perhaps best understood by examining the history of LGBT research on this area of practice. Harper and Schneider (2003) summarized historical trends in four phases of study. (See Figure 3). Prior to 1973, homosexuality was generally understood as a mental illness and research focused on homosexuality as pathology. In 1973, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) removed homosexuality as a mental illness (Spitzer, 1981), resulting in a significant shift in research efforts. Once views of homosexuality shifted from pathological to a diversity issue, research (and social work practice) began to take a more open-minded and inquisitive stance. The second phase of research then focused on the experience of LGBT life and included broad approaches to understanding experiences of LGBT men and women. As HIV/AIDS emerged, research included HIV risk behaviors, which led to the third phase of research in a new millennium. At that time, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) committed large amounts of grant funding specifically for researching LGBT health issues. This third phase, while health-focused, remained inquisitive in nature; yet, driven by government funding and the medical community, each carrying its own set of values, agendas, and hypotheses. This medical and public health phase of research certainly brought important issues into the public arena, but also perpetuated a certain level of LGBT stigma.

The fourth and current phase of LGBT research is noted not for a change of topic studied, but rather a change in approach. This phase is characterized by a commitment to strengths-based research and to the resiliency of LGBT men and women. Croteau, Bieschke, Fassinger, and Manning (2008) summarized this historical overview by indicating that the pathology-focused research of the past (i.e. aimed at “curing” homosexuality and creating problem-focused interventions) has been replaced by current affirmative approaches to research, which see the problem as institutional and societal rather than individual. Also within this most recent phase of the LGBT movement, it is important to note the speed at which the Gay Rights Movement is advancing nationwide. Using just the issue of same-sex marriage as a litmus test of the changing atmosphere for gay rights, we have seen an influx of states passing laws in favor of gay marriage since the mid 2000’s; prior to the landmark Supreme Court decision in Summer 2015, 36 states and the District of Columbia had begun issuing marriage license to same-sex couples. Now with *Obergefell v. Hodges*, same-sex marriage has been legalized nationwide (Denniston, 2015). Regardless of a social worker’s personal values or beliefs on the subject, this evidence of the changing legal and social landscape of LGBT rights is striking, and has a range of important and lasting implications for social work practice.

**Figure 3: Overview of Historical Trends in LGBT Research**

<b>WHEN</b>	<b>FOCUS OF RESEARCH</b>	<b>TRANSITION</b>
Phase One: Prior to 1973	Homosexuality as pathology Homosexuality as mental illness	Removal from DSM
Phase Two: 1973-1990	The experience of LGBT life The coming-out process Relationship patterns and practices Effects of discrimination/violence	HIV epidemic
Phase Three: 1985-2000	LGBT health outcomes HIV risk behavior and reduction	Reduced HIV funding and Affirmative practice
Phase Four: 2000-present	Resiliency of LGBT people Strengths of LGBT community Institutional stigma Expansion of Gay Rights Movement	

The trends in social work practice with the LGBT population can be clearly seen in tandem with these trends in the LGBT research. Clients like Eric, Josie, and Clara have likely experienced the gamut of attitudes fueled by these trends in various interactions with people in the helping professions. They may remember a time when they were told their sexual orientation meant they were sick or needed to be ‘cured’; they may recall a time when a counselor asked pointed, albeit curious, questions about behaviors and experiences. Hopefully, they will also experience an affirmative social worker able to help them recognize their strengths and resilience as they face life’s struggles. The following section turns our attention toward how we, as Christian social workers, can strive toward culturally-competent practice with LGBT clients.

**Personal Challenges for Christian Social Workers**

*Christine is a social work practitioner who works at a faith-based mental health center. She has recently had a number of LGBT clients present in her office for counseling. Two of these recent clients were young gay men; one came seeking help with depression and the other has severe substance abuse issues. Another of her ongoing clients recently revealed her lesbian sexual orientation in a counseling session.*

*Christine generally avoids discussion of sexuality with these clients, especially with the gay men (with whom she is especially hesitant). However, because the clients know of Christine’s faith and the mission of the agency, several of them have begun to ask her direct questions about her ability to accept them and their sexual orientations. The clients have not expressed any desire to be referred to another counselor or agency. In fact, one of the gay men seems to be quite interested in the faith-based aspect of the health center. The lesbian client comes from a Christian family and has*

had a generally positive experience with her family's faith community. Yet, Christine admits to feeling uncomfortable addressing sexuality with these clients.

Challenged by how to integrate her own personal beliefs and Christian faith, as well as the faith-based mission of her agency, into the provision of competent care for these clients, Christine recently emailed me to ask for advice. Christine's email spoke of her desire to provide her clients with best practices tailored to their unique needs. She spoke openly about the complete lack of familiarity she and her agency have in working with the LGBT population, calling it "uncharted and daunting territory." Christine also expressed with honesty and humility her feelings of discomfort in talking with her clients about their sexuality. She and her co-workers have talked privately amongst themselves about these challenges and several of them have recognized in themselves an unfortunate tendency to judge the clients in "their sin."

What is Christine to do? Her particular Christian views are an undeniable part of who she is and what she brings into the helping relationship. She should, first and foremost, be commended for having the self-awareness and professional integrity that led her to ask for help in the first place. Certainly, her situation is not uncommon – in fact, some who are reading this chapter might be able to identify with Christine. So, to broaden the question – what is any social worker to do when working with clients whose beliefs or practices are discordant with our own?

### *Returning to the Literature*

In summarizing the current state of LGBT research, Bieschke, Perez & DeBord (2007) identify a 'hot topic': the harm of conversion therapy. Conversion therapy, also called reparative therapy, refers to counseling homosexual clients with the intended purpose of changing their orientation. Regarding conversion therapy, most in the field agree that there is no conclusive evidence that it is effective. In fact, most professional organizations in the helping professions have developed official position statements opposing the use of conversion therapy.

The National Association of Social Workers' position statement on conversion and reparative therapies states clearly the belief

...that such treatment potentially can lead to severe emotional damage. Specifically, transformational ministries are fueled by stigmatization of lesbians and gay men, which in turn produces the social climate that pressures some people to seek change in sexual orientation. No data demonstrate that reparative or conversion therapies are effective, and in fact they may be harmful (NASW, 2000).

Similarly, the American Psychological Association has concluded that insufficient evidence exists to support the idea that sexual orientation can be altered through therapeutic aims. Therefore, their formal resolution echoes the NASW:

The American Psychological Association encourages mental health professionals to avoid misrepresenting the efficacy of sexual orientation change efforts by promoting or promising change in sexual

orientation when providing assistance to individuals distressed by their own or others' sexual orientation (APA, 2009).

While the aforementioned resolutions cite the inconclusive nature of this literature on conversion therapy, some research does exist which presents compelling data suggesting potential harmfulness (e.g. Halderman, 1994; Shidlo & Schroeder, 2002) and a lack of evidence of any long-term 'success' in changing one's sexual orientation (Bieschke, Paul & Blasko, 2007; Butler, 2010; Shidlo & Schroeder, 2002; Blackwell, 2008). In just the past year, President Obama has called for an end to conversion therapy (*New York Times*, April 8, 2015) and the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMHSA) agency released a report collecting the most recent evidence, arguing for a prohibition of conversion therapy with LGBT youth (SAMHSA, 2015). In our case study, it is not clear whether the concept of conversion therapy is one that Christine and her faith-based agency endorse – the email did not indicate one way or the other. Evidence that conversion therapy can be harmful, coupled with the definitive stances against conversion therapy taken by the leading professional mental health organizations, is likely to discourage Christine and others like her from suggesting conversion as a therapeutic end.

In contrast to the controversy about conversion therapy, there is some initial literature encouraging social workers to embrace the challenge of reconciling conflicting religious and sexual identities. Rather than see religion as inherently a problem for working with LGBT clients, it should be understood that religious beliefs have the potential to be viewed and utilized as both positive or negative forces in social work practice for LGBT men and women (Greene, 2007). One particularly telling indication of the growing acceptance of and interest in developing rigorous research and publication of this connection between religion and sexual orientation is the recent efforts of CSWE Press to publish an edited textbook entitled *Conservative Christian Beliefs and Sexual Orientation in Social Work Practice* (Dessel & Bolen, 2014). This book includes a collection of 18 different chapters authored by a wide range of practitioners, academics, and researchers across both the religious and sexual orientation spectrums. The result is a book which has allowed for growing dialogue and resources available to social workers like Christine.

### *Culturally-Competent Practice within Discordant Belief Scenarios*

The first step for any practitioner seeking to ensure his or her competency in practice with diverse clients is to develop one's own self-awareness, and Christine's email requesting help is a very positive first step. The profession of social work demands that practitioners achieve a level of cultural competence (which includes instances of discordant religious and/or spiritual beliefs). The NASW Standards of Cultural Competence set two interrelated standards expressing these challenges (although the standards do not explicitly refer to spirituality and/or religion) (NASW, 2001). Standard One states: "Social workers shall function in accordance with the values, ethics, and standards of the profession, recognizing how personal and professional values may conflict with or accom-



modate the needs of diverse clients.” Standard Two focuses on the development of the social worker’s self-awareness: “Social workers shall seek to develop an understanding of their own personal, cultural values and beliefs as one way of appreciating the importance of multicultural identities in the lives of people.” For some Christian social workers like Christine these social work standards raise a crucial and controversial question: Can I maintain our Christian beliefs about sexual orientation and also serve LGBT clients with integrity and respect? The answer is yes, but not without intentional soul-searching and exceptionally strong self-awareness. In the aforementioned text from CSWE Press, one chapter articulated the challenge this way:

Although the profession would not encourage practitioners to treat such clients in an oppressive fashion, social workers are often called to suppress their personal beliefs when working with particular clients, and *it is possible* that those social workers who hold conservative beliefs about same-sex relationships may be able to hold these competing beliefs between the personal and the professional; however, awareness of personal values and how they may play out in practice is a critical first step (Chonody, Woodford, Smith & Silverschanz, 2014,57, *emphasis mine*).

Beyond the introspective work of self-awareness, Christian social workers must also seek out external opportunities to expand this area of their practice. Research done among Christian social work practitioners found that the single most significant predictor of increased level of comfort with and affirmative attitudes toward LGBT clients is exposure to LGBT individuals (Tan, 2014). In this study, those Christian social work practitioners who reported higher numbers of LGBT family members, friends, and/or clients also reported greater comfort and competence at achieving this delicate balance of personal and professional values. While this certainly suggests that the best way to grow in this area of practice is to seek out exposure to and interaction with the population, this may or may not be a natural first step. The next best option is to seek out training in best practices with the LGBT population. As one would with any diverse population, one must seek out continuing education to develop culturally competent practice with LGBT clients. Workshops, webinars, conferences, and podcasts are available nationwide on this topic. Local NASW chapters have been intentional about such topics. NACSW has included workshops on this subject at annual conventions. And both local and national LGBT-affiliated organizations have generated quite a bit of opportunity for CEUs on the topic. This type of professional exposure would do a world of good for Christian social work students and practitioners who want to learn more about working with LGBT clients.

What, then, does it look like for Christine to move toward ‘affirmative practice’? How can she be authentic to her own religious and spiritual beliefs and sort out how to help her LGBT clients?

### *Establishing an Affirmative Practice*

Perhaps the greatest pioneer in the quest to integrate the Christian faith with social work practice was Alan Keith-Lucas. In one of the most widely-read primers for Christian social work students, he articulates very clearly what he saw as the essence of social work practice for Christians:

As a Christian committed to the dissemination of what I believe to be the truth, our task as a social worker is not so much to convince others of this truth, as to provide them with the experience of being loved, forgiven and cared for so that the Good News I believe in may be a credible option for them (Keith-Lucas, 1985, 35).

This emphasis, not on conversion, but on creating an atmosphere where the client feels loved and cared for, can serve as a significant platform for meaningful social work practice in the face of discordant client/counselor beliefs.

This environment Keith-Lucas suggests also fits well with the literature on the value of affirmative practice with the LGBT population. The practitioner's personal religious and spiritual beliefs, if not handled well, could lead the practitioner to create barriers detrimental to the helping process. In this case study, it seems Christine has begun to recognize this danger in her own practice. Engaging in a time of self-reflection and the building of self-awareness can address and prevent these barriers. Guidelines for affirmative practice models can be an important foundation for the competent integration of spirituality into social work practice – especially with LGBT clients.

As described earlier in this chapter, affirmative practice is defined by the creation of a respectful space for dialogue in which the values and beliefs of the clinician do not cloud the progress and goals of the client. Affirmative practice can be done when “practitioners can be allies by addressing sexual history, being aware of gay-affirmative mental health services in their area, and advocating for services where none exist” (Lamoureux & Joseph, 2014, 218). What is presented in this chapter is intended to equip the social work practitioner with the knowledge and skills to make such a respectful dialogue possible. Yet, for some, these skills will not be enough. For those practitioners who remain challenged by or hesitant toward affirmative practice in this way, the following section discusses avenues for appropriate and ethical referral.

### *Is it Time to Refer?*

If Christine (or any other practitioner like her) is reading this chapter and thinking, “I’m not sure I can do this,” there are additional options she can consider that still allow her to be helpful to her LGBT client, though these options are full of ethical and possible legal challenges for the practitioner. For some Christian social work practitioners, the task of creating such an affirmative environment or LGBT clients may prove to be too difficult. Practitioners who, after a time of honest introspection and self-awareness searching, cannot reach a place of sincere affirmation should take appropriate next steps to ensure that their LGBT client gets the mental health support they need.

The challenge for these practitioners is that the fields of social work, counseling, and clinical psychology are far from settled on how best to make such a referral to another counselor. Additionally, considerable academic and legal debate still exists in the field about whether mental health professionals (social workers, counselors, and psychologists) should even feel empowered to make such a referral at all; a number of scholars and resources in the field argue that the most ethical response to LGBT clients is for all mental health professionals to provide competent counseling services to LGBT clients regardless of the practitioner's personal views on homosexuality (Hermann & Herlihy, 2006; Janson, 2002; Murphy, Rawlings, & Howe, 2003; Pearson, 2003; Reamer, 2014).

More specifically, much controversy exists with regard to the ethics of making such a referral and/or declining to work with specific clients due to one's own religious beliefs. Several legal cases involving counseling students and full-time employees who have refused to counsel LGBT clients based on the counselors' religious beliefs have resulted in different interpretations. One judgment upheld the termination of the counselor for not agreeing to counsel LGBT clients (*Bruff v. North Mississippi Health Services, Inc.*, 2001) while another recent court decision by the 6th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals (*Ward v. Polite et al.*, 2012) held that Eastern Michigan University was wrong to expel a counseling student for declaring her intention to refer LGBT clients to other competent professionals due to her religious convictions regarding homosexuality (Melloy, 2010; Bohon, 2012). Another legal challenge was made by a school counseling student at Augusta State University in Augusta, who claims she had her First Amendment rights violated by being required to change her views on counseling LGBT clients (Schmidt, 2010).

At the time we are writing this in 2016, we are not aware of any legal challenges about whether or not social work practitioners or students have an ethical obligation to counsel any and all LGBT clients they encounter in practice. There is, however, one high-profile case in which a social work program was sued and investigated for alleged intolerant practices toward Christian social work students who balked at supporting LGBT issues. The school (Missouri State University) settled a lawsuit brought by a Christian BSW student who said she was pressured to sign a letter for a class project advocating that the state legislature support adoption by gay couples. The university ordered an external review of the program and reviewers found:

There is an atmosphere where the [NASW] Code of Ethics is used in order to coerce students into certain belief systems regarding social work practice and the social work profession. This represents a distorted use of the Social Work Code of Ethics in that the Code of Ethics articulates that social workers should respect the values and beliefs of others (Sowers & Patchner, 2007).

Whether or not specific challenges to ethical practice with LGBT clients by Christian social workers have been mounted within the field of social work to date, we must acknowledge the controversy, as well as the likelihood, that

these tensions are going to persist in the field for the near future. More clarity from both the law and the mental health professions is needed in this area to guide professionals, regardless of their religious or spiritual beliefs, in how to navigate these difficult issues. The questions we would ask Christine are: “Where do you, as a practitioner, stand in your ability to help LGBT clients?” and “If you feel compelled to refer your LGBT clients to another social worker, does this reflect best practice on your part for this specific client and their specific needs, or is this evidence of your own discrimination against LGBT clients more broadly?”

These questions dealing with the social worker's ability and competence to serve a particular population apply to *every client/worker relationship*, not just those with LGBT clients. These challenges also apply to social work faculty themselves and their students in undergraduate and graduate-level contexts, as there is some evidence that the religious beliefs of faculty and students can create attitudes towards LGBT clients that are less accepting than attitudes towards heterosexual clients (Dessel, Woodford, & Gutierrez, 2012; Dessel, Westmoreland, & Gutierrez, In Press). The need for ongoing self-reflection and intergroup dialogue is needed for all social work students and faculty, to enhance our professional development and increase our capacity to ethically serve all client populations, particularly historically marginalized groups (Dessel et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2009; Morrow & Messinger, 2006; Nagda et al., 1999).

If Christine cannot genuinely ensure that her personal values and beliefs will not be imposed upon the LGBT client, it is, in our opinion, best for the client to be referred to another service provider who can provide competent and ethical service. We would strongly encourage all Christian practitioners to prepare for such possibilities by developing and maintaining a list of appropriate referral sources in the local area; purposefully seeking out networking opportunities to meet with and get to know practitioners in one's community with experience working with the LGBT population can also be helpful. Likewise, in order to effectively respond to clients like those described in this chapter, practitioners should also familiarize themselves with the various faith communities in the area, identifying particularly gay-affirming church congregations. Lastly, it is our firm belief that a social workers' persistent need to make referrals in instances like these should also suggest to Christian practitioners like Christine the importance of seeking out continuing education in the areas of culturally-competent practice with LGBT clients. Without this constant self-reflection, social workers like Christine can veer into an area where they are actively discriminating against their LGBT clients by refusing to provide them social work services. It is, and always will be, an obligation of our profession that we seek career-long learning and constant expansion of arenas of competent practice.

We recognize that this process of referral can be difficult, especially if the practitioner presently has a low comfort level engaging in conversation with LGBT clients. That said, the language used to communicate the reason for the referral to another service provider must be carefully chosen and articulately

spoken. If she reaches a point of referral, Christine should be sure to state the reason for referral clearly, directly, and non-judgmentally. She may wish to say something like, “I have been thinking about our progress thus far, and I feel that you might benefit from a counselor with more experience working with LGBT clients.” This statement puts the focus on providing the client with the best possible care, rather than on the counselor’s personal discomfort or beliefs. When the social worker is not prepared to create an affirming space for dialogue, choosing to refer a client with discordant beliefs and practices, while developing one’s own self-awareness around the issues, may be in the best interests of the client.

One final note: in the years between publication of the first version of this chapter in the 4<sup>th</sup> edition and this one, a number of productive connections have been forged between the authors, NACSW leadership, and members of the Caucus of LGBTQ Faculty and Doctoral Students in Social Work, under the auspices of CSWE’s Council on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Expression. As this book went to press, the Caucus was finalizing a document entitled “FAQs: The Intersection of LGBTQ Topics and Christianity in Social Work Education and Practice.” This FAQ document was created with input from the authors and NACSW, and we look forward to its future dissemination within social work.

### **In Summary**

For some who read this chapter, concluding at this point will be, perhaps, unsettling. This chapter does not conclude with a neatly wrapped package of evidence-based interventions, nor does it conclude with permission granted to Christian practitioners to ‘save’ their LGBT clients. Much gray area remains. Still, it is our hope that this chapter serves to stimulate further thinking and discussion among Christian social workers like Christine who are engaged in work with LGBT men and women, and to equip those practitioners with new literature to consider in the process.

Ultimately, Christian practitioners like Christine will best serve her LGBT clients by developing an ability to engage in genuine dialogue about the client’s history of oppression and the baggage that history may bring into the helping relationship. As such, the solutions to the LGBT client’s situation are rarely exclusively clinical in nature; there are social and spiritual ends that must also be addressed (as in the cases of Eric and Clara and their exclusion from the Church). Finally, should the practitioner feel unable to provide the type of affirmative practice suggested in this chapter, the best step might be to sensitively and positively refer the client elsewhere, while continuing to examine his or her ability to provide all clients “with the experience of being loved, forgiven and cared for” (Keith Lucas, 1985, 35).

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# Spiritual Assessment: A Review of Complementary Assessment Models

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*David R. Hodge and Crystal R. Holtrop*

Spiritual assessment is increasingly recognized as a fundamental dimension of service provision (Hodge, 2015). Despite this fact, most social workers appear to have received minimal training on the topic (Canda & Furman, 2010; Sheridan, 2009). The lack of attention devoted to spiritual assessment represents a significant oversight. To highlight the importance of spiritual assessment, we will briefly discuss four rationales related to ontology, ethics, strengths, and autonomy.

Spirituality is often central to clients' personal ontology. In other words, spirituality can be the essence of their personhood, the lens through which they view reality. Accordingly, spirituality may inform attitudes and practices in many areas, including child-rearing, communication styles, diet, marriage arrangements, medical care, military participation, recreation, schooling, and social interactions (Richards & Bergin, 2014; Van Hook, Hugen & Aguilar, 2001). For many individuals, religion is the most important facet of their lives (Newport, 2012). Further, for African Americans, Latinos, women, older adults, people who are poor, and many other populations of significance to social workers, spirituality is particularly salient (Newport, 2012). The provision of respectful services to these groups is often contingent upon practitioners' awareness of clients' spiritually-based beliefs and practices. In order to provide effective services, social workers must develop some understanding of clients' spiritual worldviews (Hodge & Bushfield, 2006).

A second rationale stems from the profession's ethical mandates. Spirituality is often expressed in distinct spiritual traditions or faith-based cultures (Richards & Bergin, 2014; Van Hook et al., 2001). The NASW Code of Ethics (2008) stipulates that social workers should demonstrate competence and sensitivity toward faith-based cultures (1.05b) and recognize the strengths that exist among such groups (1.05a). Similarly, the NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice (2001) recognize the importance of developing cultural competency in the area of spirituality and religion. In short, ethically sound practice entails obtaining the knowledge to exhibit spiritual sensitivity to clients.

Social workers are increasingly recognizing the importance of strengths (Saleebey, 2013). Reviews have consistently found a generally positive association between spirituality and a wide number of beneficial characteristics (Koenig, King & Carson, 2012; Koenig & Shohaib, 2014). For example, various measures

of spirituality and religion have been associated with higher levels of well-being, happiness and life satisfaction; hope and optimism, purpose and meaning in life, self-esteem, marital stability and satisfaction, social support, and faster recovery from depression. Unfortunately, these strengths often lie dormant. Spiritual assessment provides a vehicle to identify and tap clients' spiritual assets to help them in ameliorating their problems (Hodge, 2015).

Finally, there is the issue of client autonomy. Many clients desire to integrate their spiritual beliefs and values into the helping relationship (Rose, Westefeld & Ansley, 2008). According to Gallup data reported by Bart (1998), 66% of the general public would prefer to see a professional counselor with spiritual values and beliefs and 81% want to have their own values and beliefs integrated into the counseling process. Further, research suggests that spirituality tends to become more salient during difficult situations (Koenig, 2013; Pargament, 2007), when individuals may be more likely to encounter social workers.

In sum, spiritual assessment provides social workers with a means to understand clients' spiritual strengths, beliefs, and values—in short—their worldview. Not only is such knowledge often critical for culturally competent practice, in many instances it is an ethical imperative. Spiritual assessment provides a mechanism to identify clients' spiritual resources and honor their desire to integrate their beliefs and values into the clinical dialogue.

In light of the importance of spiritual assessment, this chapter reviews a number of assessment approaches and provides examples of how they may be applied in practice with Christian clients. Our intent is not to provide an exhaustive review of various assessment methods, but rather to review a specific family of assessment instruments. These four instruments were developed to complement one another in the hopes of providing social workers with a set of assessment tools for use in numerous settings with a variety of clients. Rather than being interchangeable, one approach may be ideal in one context while another tool may be better suited to address a different client-to-practitioner interface. Readers are encouraged to obtain the original articles in which the instruments first appeared, which have since been collated into book form with added content (Hodge, 2003; Hodge, 2015), and to become familiar with the strengths and limitations of each assessment instrument (Hodge & Limb, 2010b). The assessment tools may be used with clients from an array of different spiritual traditions. Recently, efforts have been made to validate each of the tools for use with Native American clients (Hodge & Limb, 2009; Hodge & Limb, 2009; Hodge & Limb, 2010c; Limb & Hodge, 2007; Limb & Hodge, 2011). In this chapter, however, we will be using Christian clients to illustrate the instruments.

After defining spiritual assessment, spirituality, and religion, four assessment instruments are reviewed—spiritual genograms (Hodge, 2001b), spiritual lifemaps (Hodge, 2005c), spiritual histories (Hodge, 2001a), and spiritual ecomaps (Hodge, 2000; Hodge & Williams, 2002). A brief overview of the assets and limitations of each method is provided and, for the three diagrammatic instruments, case examples are supplied to familiarize the reader with the instrument. A brief discussion on conducting an assessment concludes the chapter.

## **Definitions**

Spiritual assessment is defined as the process of gathering and organizing spiritually based information into a coherent format that provides the basis for interventions (Hodge, 2015). The subsequent interventions may or may not be spiritually based. As implied above, a spiritual assessment may be conducted for the purposes of using traditional secular interventions in a manner that is more congruent with clients' beliefs and values.

Spirituality is commonly defined as an individual's existential relationship with God (or perceived transcendence) (Hodge, 2015; Wuthnow, 2007). Religion flows from spirituality, expressing the spiritual relationship in particular beliefs, forms, and practices that have been developed in community with other individuals who typically share similar experiences of transcendent reality (Hodge, 2005b). Thus, in keeping with the understanding of many other social workers, spirituality and religion can be conceptualized as overlapping but distinct constructs (Canda & Furman, 2010; Hodge & McGrew, 2006).

## **Spiritual Genograms**

In a manner analogous to traditional genograms, spiritual genograms provide social workers with a tangible graphic representation of spirituality across at least three generations (Hodge, 2015). Through the use of what is essentially a modified family tree, they help both practitioners and clients understand the flow of historically rooted patterns through time. In short, spiritual genograms are a blueprint of complex intergenerational spiritual interactions.

In keeping with standard genogram conventions (McGoldrick, Gerson & Petry, 2008), the basic family structure is commonly delineated across at least three generations. Typically, squares represent males and circles denote females. In some cases, triangles or other geometric shapes can be used to designate individuals who have played major spiritual roles but are not members of the immediate biological family.

To indicate clients' spiritual tradition, colored drawing pencils can be used to shade in the circles and squares (Hodge, 2015). Color coding provides a graphic "color snapshot" of the overall spiritual composition of the family system. Various colors can be used to signify religious preference (Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, New Age, none, etc.), or more specifically, when the information is known, denomination (Assemblies of God, Brethren, Catholic, Southern Baptist, Presbyterian, etc.). For example, a circle representing a female Southern Baptist could be colored red, a member of the Assemblies of God might be colored orange, a Muslim might be colored brown, and an individual whose affiliation and beliefs are unknown could be left uncolored. A change in an adult's religious orientation can be signified by listing the date of the change beside a circle which is drawn outside the figure and filling in the space between the circle and the figure with the appropriate color, a procedure which indicates the stability or fluidity of the person's beliefs over time. Using

a similar approach, changes in orientation might also be noted by coloring the vertical segment connecting the child with the parents.

If needed, the color scheme can also be used to incorporate information on commitment (devout vs. nominal) and theology (conservative vs. liberal) (Hodge, 2015). For example, yellow might be used to signify a devout, conservative Methodist while gray could be used for a nominal Methodist. Alternatively, symbols, which are placed beside the appropriate circle or square, could be used to indicate the degree of commitment or theological orientation. An open set of scriptures, for instance, might be used to indicate a devout person. Social workers can explain the options to clients and allow them to select the colors and symbols that they perceive best express their worldview.

Spiritually meaningful events can also be incorporated, such as water and spirit baptisms, confirmations, church memberships, and bar mitzvahs (Hodge, 2001b). Symbols drawn from the client's spiritual journey can be used to signify these events. For instance, a cross might be used by a Christian to indicate reaching a point of conversion, a dove might be used by a Pentecostal to depict a deeper work of the Holy Spirit, or a sunbeam might be used by a New Age adherent to symbolize a time of profound spiritual enlightenment. In addition, short summary statements can be used to denote significant events or personal strengths.

In addition to depicting religious beliefs, it is also possible to include an affective component (Hodge, 2015). In other words, felt spiritual closeness between family members can be illustrated on spiritual genograms. Lines with double-headed arrows can be used to symbolize a relationship in which individuals experience a close reciprocal spiritual bond. The thickness of the line can indicate the intimacy or strength of the relationship. In situations where the relationship is more hierarchical and less reciprocal—as might occur with a grandparent mentoring a grandchild—a single arrowhead can be used to depict the flow of spiritual resources. Finally, spiritual conflict can be portrayed with a jagged line, similar to a lightning bolt, drawn between the two individuals.

### **Case Example**

Diagram 1 indicates what a relatively straightforward spiritual genogram might look like for a couple, Mark and Beth, who are experiencing marital problems. In place of the colors that would normally be used with a spiritual genogram, patterns (for example, dots, diagonals, waves) are employed to depict various denominations.

After three years of marriage, Mark, 26, and Beth, 23, requested counseling after the recent birth of their daughter, Megan. Her birth renewed their interest in church attendance as they both desired to have Megan baptized and raised with spiritual values. However, they disagreed on practically everything else—how to spend money, parent their daughter, where to go to church, and how to accomplish household tasks. Mark and Beth's inability to resolve conflict was due to a power struggle over whose family of origin's rules would prevail

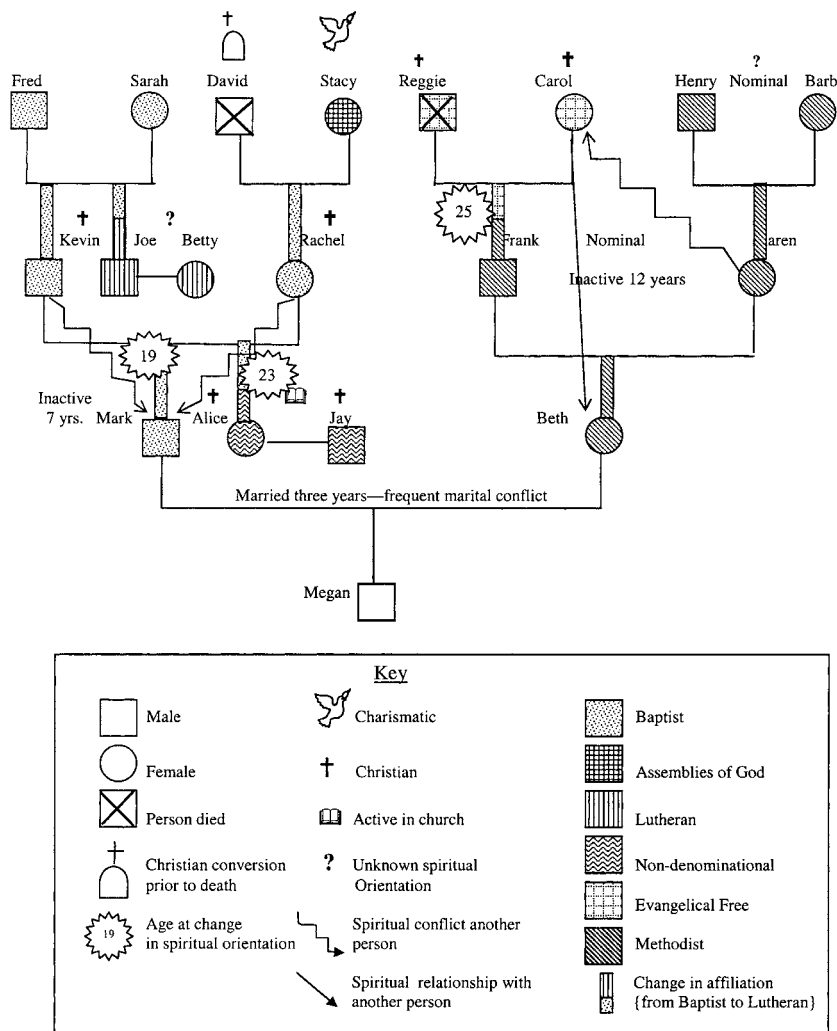


Diagram 1.

in their home. Due to their conflict over which church to attend, the therapist developed a spiritual genogram, as a supplement to their traditional genogram.

During Mark's childhood, his nuclear family and his paternal grandparents attended the Baptist church that was 3 blocks away from their house. His family shared a tradition of going to Mark's paternal grandparents' house every Sunday after church. Although Mark knew that Aunt Betty and Uncle Joe attended a Lutheran church regularly, he had never heard them talk openly about their faith at family gatherings and was unsure how important it was to them. His maternal grandmother attended an Assemblies of God church before she was

placed in the nursing home. He recalled his grandmother sharing a story about how she prayed for 30 years that her husband would become a Christian, and that her prayers were answered shortly before her husband died.

During his adolescence, Mark perceived his parents' rules as old-fashioned and rebelled against them. As soon as he left home, Mark stopped attending church, much to his parents' chagrin. His sister, Alice, left the Baptist church when she was 23 years old and started attending a non-denominational church where she met her husband, Jay. Alice and Jay are still actively involved in this church and frequently share information with Mark and Beth about family activities that are occurring there. As Mark shared this information, the therapist drew a cross by the names of his parents, paternal grandparents, maternal grandmother, sister, and brother-in-law to indicate that they were Christians. She put a question mark next to his aunt and uncle due to Mark's lack of clarity about their level of commitment to their faith. In order to signify Alice and Jay's devout faith and active participation in their church, the therapist drew an open Bible near their names. She colored their circles and squares different colors to indicate the various denominations represented in Mark's family. Uncle Joe's and Alice's rectangles that attach them to their respective parents have two colors, indicating that they switched from attending the Baptist church to a different denomination.

Beth's family attended a Methodist church when she was young. However, their attendance dwindled to Easter and Christmas as Beth became active in school activities. She knew that her parents both believed in God, but did not see this belief influencing their lives. However, Beth had fond memories of sitting on her paternal grandmother's lap as she listened to her grandmother, Carol, read Bible stories to her. She also recalled attending Vacation Bible School which was sponsored by the Evangelical Free church her grandmother attended. She assumed that "Grandma Carol" was a committed Christian because she overheard her mother complain about "how religious Grandma Carol was" and observed her mother rebuff Grandma Carol whenever she offered to pray for the family. To signify Beth's mother's underlying conflict towards Grandma Carol over spiritual matters, the therapist drew a jagged arrow between their circles. Although her paternal grandfather died before Beth was born, she recalled her Grandma Carol fondly referring to her husband as "a fine man who loved people and the Lord."

Although Beth stated she believes in God, she acknowledged that she presently refers to God primarily when she is swearing angrily at Mark. However, as the conflict between Beth and Mark continued to escalate, she started contemplating "giving God a try." She was open to attending a church as long as it was not Mark's parents' church. She thought his mother already interfered with their marriage far too much. The therapist colored Beth's maternal grandparents' and parents' circles and squares red to represent the Methodist denomination. Due to their nominal interest in spiritual matters, Beth and Mark agreed that the therapist should not draw a cross by their names. She did draw a cross by Grandma Carol's name and by her paternal grandfather's name, and also drew an arrow from her Grandmother Carol to Beth, indicating the spiritual influence she had on Beth.



With the multi-colored spiritual genogram directly in front of them, Mark and Beth were struck by the diversity of denominations represented in their extended families. This new perspective helped them see beyond their original, narrowly defined choices of Baptist vs. Methodist that Mark and Beth clung to out of loyalty to their families of origin. The therapist encouraged the couple to interview members of their extended family, asking questions concerning their faith, their religious practices, and the strengths and limitations of their church and denomination. Beth and Mark discovered that the new perspectives gained from the interviews helped them be more evaluative in their decision-making process and moved them beyond their stalemate.

### **Assets and Limitations**

Although spiritual genograms can be effective assessment instruments in a number of situations, they may be particularly useful when the family system plays an important role in the client's life or when the client presents with problems involving family members or family of origin issues (Hodge & Limb, 2010b). For example, spiritual genograms might be used with interfaith couples experiencing spiritually based barriers to intimacy to expose areas of difference and potential conflict as well to highlight the respective spiritual strengths each person brings to the relationship. Similarly, spiritual genograms could also be used with couples from similar backgrounds to increase their level of intimacy.

Conversely, spiritual genograms may be an inappropriate assessment instrument in situations where historical influences are of minor importance (Hodge, 2015). Further, even in situations where generational influences are pertinent, many clients do not connect past events with current difficulties. Accordingly, clients may view genogram construction and between-session tasks as an ineffective use of time. Proceeding with such interventions before clients appreciate their usefulness can reduce treatment adherence and jeopardize outcomes. Consequently, in some contexts it may be best to use assessment approaches that do not focus on the generational aspects of spirituality, such as spiritual lifemaps.

### **Spiritual Lifemaps**

While spiritual genograms chart the flow of spirituality across at least three generations, spiritual lifemaps depict clients' personal spiritual life-story (Hodge, 2015). More specifically, spiritual lifemaps are a pictorial delineation of a client's spiritual journey. In a manner analogous to renowned African writer Augustine's (354-430/1991) *Confessions*, spiritual lifemaps are an illustrated account of clients' relationship with God over time—a map of their spiritual life.

At its most basic level, a drawing pencil is used to sketch various spiritually significant life events on paper (Hodge, 2005c). The method is similar to various approaches drawn from art and family therapy in which a client's history is depicted on a "lifeline" (Tracz & Gehart-Brooks, 1999). Much like road

maps, spiritual lifemaps tell us where we have come from, where we are now, and where we are going.

To assist clients in the creative expression of their spiritual journeys, it is usually best to use a large sheet of paper (e.g., 24" x 36") on which to sketch the map (Hodge, 2015). Providing drawing instruments of different sizes and colors are also helpful as is offering a selection of popular periodicals and various types and colors of construction paper. Providing these items, in conjunction with scissors, glue sticks, and rulers, allows clients to clip and paste items onto the lifemap.

Spiritually significant events are depicted on a path, a roadway, or a single line that represents clients' spiritual sojourn (Hodge, 2005c). Typically, the path proceeds chronologically, from birth through to the present. Frequently the path continues on to death and the client's transition to the afterlife. Hand drawn symbols, cut out pictures, and other representations are used to mark key events along the journey. In keeping with many spiritual traditions, which conceive material existence to be an extension of the sacred reality, it is common to depict important lifestage events on the lifemap (for example, marriage, birth of a child, death of a close friend or relative, or loss of a job). While it is often necessary to provide clients with general guidelines, client creativity and self-expression should typically be encouraged.

To fully operationalize the potential of the instrument, it is important to ask clients to incorporate the various crises they have faced into their lifemaps along with the spiritual resources they used to overcome those trials (Hodge, 2015). Symbols such as hills, bumps, potholes, rain, clouds, and lightning can be used to portray difficult life situations. Delineating successful strategies that clients have used in the past frequently suggests options for overcoming present struggles.

### **Case Example**

Diagram 2 provides an example of what a spiritual lifemap might look like on a smaller scale. Tyrone, a 42 year-old black male, was recently diagnosed with terminal cancer. The doctor confirmed his worst fears that the cancer was inoperable, and predicted that Tyrone had approximately 6 months to live. A medical social worker on the oncology ward met with Tyrone to help him process the shock of his prognosis and prepare for what appeared to be a premature death. Shortly into their conversation, the social worker discovered that Tyrone was actively involved in the Third Missionary Baptist Church. Tyrone's eyes lit up as he shared that he began playing guitar in the church's music ministry 10 years ago, a couple of years after he became a Christian. It soon became clear to the social worker that Tyrone's faith was a significant strength and could help him cope with his present crisis. In order to help Tyrone identify effective coping strategies, the social worker encouraged Tyrone to develop a spiritual lifemap. Tyrone's creativity and musical interests seemed to indicate that this assignment would be a good fit for his personality.

Tyrone's parents divorced when he was 9 years old. He and his 2 older sisters lived with his mother and periodically visited his father. His mother was actively

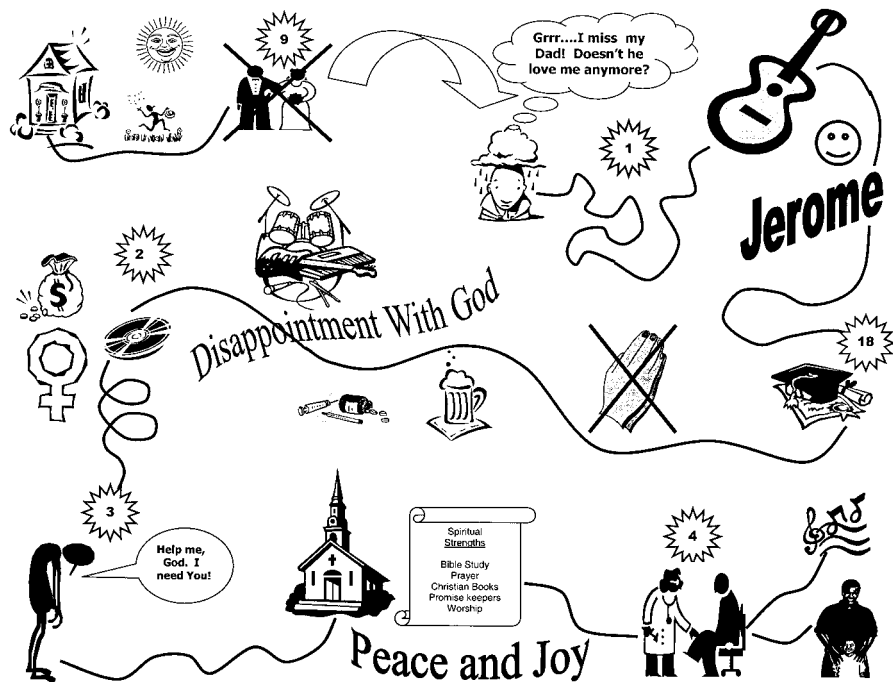


Diagram 2.

involved in a Pentecostal church and sang in the church choir. When Tyrone reached adolescence, his anger toward his absent father began to mount and was acted out in rebellion toward his mother. Out of desperation, his mother arranged guitar lessons for Tyrone to creatively redirect his anger and build his self-esteem. Tyrone established a lifelong mentoring relationship with his guitar teacher, Jerome, who consistently believed in him and spawned a passion for a variety of musical styles including blues, jazz, gospel, rock and hip-hop. When he graduated from high school, he joined a band and played in clubs for the next 9 years. Disillusioned with God for not answering his childhood prayers concerning his father, Tyrone started experimenting with drugs and alcohol to numb his emptiness.

By age 27, Tyrone had successfully recorded a CD with his band and was gaining local notoriety. Life was good. He was doing well financially and he enjoyed dating several different women. However, this season was short-lived. By age 30, he was significantly in debt and was emotionally broken. After 3 years of dating, Tyrone's girlfriend, Janet, concluded that Tyrone was more committed to his band than to her. Consequently, she broke up with him. He coped by increasing his alcohol consumption, which hurt his performance and created conflict with his band members. After a particularly heated argument, Tyrone sought solace from Jerome, his former guitar teacher. Through this renewed

friendship, Tyrone began examining his life, his priorities, and the source of his emptiness and bitterness. He forgave God for what he perceived to be abandonment (a replication of his father's abandonment) and he experienced a profound sense of God's love and acceptance. Tyrone soon realized that it was he, not God, who had abandoned divine and human love out of bitterness and despair.

Tyrone started attending the Third Missionary Baptist Church. Upon Jerome's advice, Tyrone took a break from playing guitar and immersed himself in Bible study, prayer, and Christian books to help him sort out his unresolved hurts, develop effective anger management skills, and evaluate his life goals. He also developed significant relationships with other men in a Promise Keepers group. He watched several men in the group weather severe trials by clinging to God's promises and by receiving love and support from their friends. He gradually learned that no matter what happens in life, God is good, faithful, and in control. After a 2-year hiatus, Tyrone began playing guitar in church. Using his talents to worship God gave him a sense of meaning and joy that was deeper than any he had experienced before.

Completing the spiritual lifemap helped Tyrone reflect on his life, his pit and peak experiences, the lessons he had learned, and the people who had blessed him. Most importantly, he identified key people that would support him through his present illness and pray for God to heal him. While discussing the lifemap with his social worker, Tyrone began to clarify the goals he still wanted to accomplish, like mentoring some young boys in church who were growing up in single parent homes. Through this reflective assignment, he also made the decision to write some songs as a creative way to express his pain, cry out to God, and receive strength and comfort.

### **Assets and Limitations**

Of the assessment methods reviewed in this chapter, spiritual lifemaps are perhaps the most client-directed. Consequently, there are a number of unique advantages associated with the use of this diagrammatic model (Hodge, 2015). By placing a client-constructed media at the center of assessment, the message is implicitly communicated that the client is a competent, pro-active, self-directed, fully engaged participant in the therapeutic process. Additionally, individuals who are not verbally oriented may find pictorial expression more conducive to their personal communication styles.

The relatively secondary role that social workers play during assessment also offers important advantages (Hodge & Limb, 2010b). For many clients, spirituality is a highly personal, sensitive area. Most social workers have had limited training about various spiritual worldviews, in spite of the central role spirituality plays in human behavior (Canda & Furman, 2010; Sheridan, 2009). Consequently, there is the distinct risk that social workers may offend clients and jeopardize the therapeutic relationship through comments that are inadvertently offensive, especially with the use of more practitioner-centered, verbally-based assessment approaches. The pictorial lifemap affords practitio-

ners the opportunity to learn more about the client's worldview while focusing on building therapeutic rapport by providing an atmosphere that is accepting, nonjudgmental, and supportive during assessment.

In terms of limitations, some social workers may feel so removed from the process that this assessment approach makes poor use of therapeutic time (Hodge, 2015). Indeed, in the time-constrained, managed care world in which many practitioners work, in some cases it may be advisable to use the lifemap as a homework assignment. Another significant limitation is that many clients, such as those who are more verbal, those that are uncomfortable with drawing, or those who prefer more direct practitioner and client involvement, may find the use of a largely non-verbal, pictorial instrument to be a poor fit. The following approach to assessment may represent an ideal fit for such clients.

### **Spiritual Histories**

A spiritual history represents a narrative alternative to a spiritual lifemap (Hodge, 2015). Instead of relating the client's spiritual sojourn in a diagrammatic format, the client's spiritual story is related verbally. In a process that is analogous to conducting a family history, the client is provided an interactive forum to share his or her spiritual life story.

To guide the conversation, a two-part framework is used (Hodge, 2001a). As can be seen in Table 1, the first part consists of an initial narrative framework. The purpose of these questions is to provide practitioners with some tools for structuring the assessment. The aim is to help clients tell their stories, typically moving from childhood to the present.

It should also be noted that the questions delineated in Table 1 are offered as suggestions. Social workers should not view them as a fixed template that must be applied in every situation, but rather as a fluid framework that should be tailored to the needs of each individual client. In other words, the questions provide a number of possible options that can be used to facilitate the movement of the client's narrative and to elicit clinically important information.

The second part of Table 1 consists of an interpretive framework (Hodge, 2015) based on the anthropological understandings of Chinese spirituality writer Watchman Nee (1968). In addition to physical body, Nee envisions a soul, comprised of affect, will, and cognition, and a spirit, comprised of communion, conscience, and intuition. Although human beings are an integrated unity and, consequently, the six dimensions interact with and influence one another, it is possible to distinguish each dimension. As is the case with other human dimensions, such as affect, behavior, and cognition, the dimensions of the spirit also can be discussed individually.

Communion refers to a spiritually based relationship (Nee, 1968). More specifically, it denotes the ability to bond with and relate to God. Conscience relates to one's ability to sense right and wrong. Beyond a person's cognitively held values, conscience conveys moral knowledge about the appropriateness of a given set of choices. Intuition refers to the ability to know—to come up

**Table 1**  
**Framework for Conducting a Spiritual History**

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**Initial Narrative Framework**

1. Describe the religious/spiritual tradition in which you grew up. How did your family express its spiritual beliefs? How important was spirituality/religion to your family? Extended family?
2. What sort of personal experiences (practices) stand out to you during your years at home? What made these experiences noteworthy? How have they informed your later life?
3. How have you changed or matured from those experiences? How would you describe your current spiritual or religious orientation? Is spirituality or religion currently a strength? If so, how?

**Interpretive Anthropological Framework**

1. *Affect*: What aspects of your spiritual life give you pleasure? What role does your spirituality/religion play in handling life's sorrows? Enhancing life's joys? Coping with life's pain? How does your faith give you hope for the future? What do you wish to accomplish in the future?
2. *Behavior*: Are there particular spiritual/religious rituals or practices that help you deal with life's obstacles? What is your level of involvement in church, small groups, etc.? How are they supportive? Are there spiritually encouraging individuals that you maintain contact with?
3. *Cognition*: What are your current religious/spiritual beliefs? What are they based upon? What beliefs do you find particularly meaningful? What does your faith say about personal trials? How does this belief help you overcome obstacles? How do your beliefs affect your health practices?
4. *Communion*: Describe your relationship with God (or the sacred). What has been your experience of God? How does God communicate with you? How have these experiences encouraged you? Have there been times of deep spiritual intimacy? How does your relationship help you face life challenges? How would God describe you?
5. *Conscience*: How do you determine right and wrong? What are your key values? How does your spirituality/religion help you deal with guilt (sin)? What role does forgiveness play in your life?
6. *Intuition*: To what extent do you experience intuitive hunches (flashes of creative insight, premonitions, spiritual insights)? Have these insights been a strength in your life? If so, how?

with insights that by-pass cognitively based, information-processing channels.

As is apparent in Table 1, the questions in the interpretive anthropological framework are designed to elicit information about each of the six dimensions. The questions are not meant to be asked in any specific order. Rather, they are provided to help social workers draw out the richness of clients' spiritual stories. As clients relate their spiritual stories, they tend to touch upon some of the dimensions listed in the interpretive anthropological framework. Social workers can pose questions drawn from the framework to more fully explore clients' spiritual reality in the natural flow of the therapeutic dialogue.

### **Assets and Limitations**

There is some evidence that information is stored and organized narratively in the mind (Hodge, 2015). Accordingly, assessment methods that are congruent with this reality work with, rather than against, clients' mental thought processes. Indeed, for verbally oriented persons, spiritual histories may provide the best assessment method. The non-structured format allows clients to relate their stories in a direct, unfiltered manner. For example, whereas genograms require clients to circumscribe their spiritual reality upon a generational chart, assessment with spiritual histories allows clients to choose the relevant material to be shared (Hodge, 2005a).

However, not all clients are verbally oriented and some may find that a narrative assessment places too much attention on them in light of the sensitive, personal nature of spirituality (Hodge, 2015). Some clients find it helpful to have a specific framework. Given the amorphous, subjective nature of spirituality, physical depiction may help concretize the client's strengths. In other words, the process of conceptualizing and depicting one's spiritual journey may help to focus and objectify spiritual assets, which can then be discussed and marshaled to address problems. Still another limitation is the time spent exploring portions of the client's spiritual history that may have limited utility in terms of addressing the present problem with which the client is wrestling. The next approach circumvents these limitations.

### **Spiritual Eco-maps**

In contrast to the above assessment tools, spiritual eco-maps focus on clients' current spiritual relationships (Hodge, 2015). The assessment instruments previously are united in the sense that they all are designed to tap some portion of clients' spiritual story as it exists through time. Spiritual genograms, lifemaps and histories typically cover one to three generations of a client's spiritual narrative. Spiritual eco-maps, on the other hand, focus on that portion of clients' spiritual story that exists in space. In other words, this assessment approach highlights clients' present relationships to various spiritual assets.

In keeping with traditional eco-gram construction (Hartman, 1995) the immediate family system is typically portrayed as a circle in the center of a piece of

paper. Household family members can be sketched inside the circle, with squares depicting males and circles representing females (Hodge, 2000). Alternatively, separate eco-maps can be drawn for each individual (Hodge & Williams, 2002).

Significant spiritual systems or domains are depicted as circles on the outskirts of the paper, with the names of the respective systems written inside the circles. The circles are placed in a radius around the family circle, which may consist of a single figure representing the client. While clients should be encouraged to depict the domains that are most relevant to their spiritual worldviews, there are a number of spiritual systems that are strengths across many spiritual traditions.

More specifically, social workers should generally seek to explore clients' relationships with God, rituals, faith communities and encounters with angels, demons, and other spiritual phenomena (Hodge, 2015). One's relationship with God is widely regarded as a key strength, as are rituals, or codified spiritual practices such as devotional reading, meditation, prayer, scripture study, singing hymns, worship, "practicing the presence" of God by focusing on God's presence and active involvement in daily affairs. Faith communities refer to various church and para-church communities that individuals may associate with on a regular basis, such as church services, fellowship groups, mid-week Bible studies, youth groups, and singles associations.

As suggested above, social workers should also seek to incorporate into the eco-map any spiritual system that has meaning to the client. For example, one may wish to explore clients' relationship to their parents' spiritual traditions or their relationship to individuals who hold a position of significant spiritual leadership in their lives, such as a pastor, spiritual mentor, or elder. The goal should be to delineate on the eco-map all the spiritual systems that are relevant to the client's present spirituality.

The heart of the spiritual eco-map is the depiction of relationships between the family system and the spiritual systems, which are represented by various types of sketched lines (Hodge, 2015). Thicker lines represent stronger or more powerful relationships. A dashed line represents the most tenuous relationship, while a jagged line denotes a conflicted one. An arrow is drawn on the line to indicate the flow of energy, resources, or interest. As is the case with the other diagrammatic instruments profiled above, short, descriptive encapsulations, significant dates, or other creative depictions, can also be incorporated onto the map to provide more information about relational dynamics.

When using eco-maps with individuals, the appropriate type of line is drawn in between the family system (the figure representing the client) and the spiritual systems. When working with families, lines are drawn to the family system as a unit when the family shares a particular relationship in common, or more frequently, connections are drawn to individual family members depicting the various unique relationships between each family member and various spiritual systems.



## **A Case Example**

In an abbreviated manner, Diagram 3 depicts how a spiritual eco-map might be used with the Martinez family, consisting of Miguel and Maria, and their two children, Angie, 16, and Tony, 10. The Martinez family sought counseling as part of a relapse prevention plan for Angie who had recently been released from an in-patient alcohol treatment program. The goal of counseling was to reduce the conflict and distrust that existed between Angie and her parents. Angie thought her parents were too strict, and her parents felt betrayed by Angie's chronic lying. In addition, Miguel and Maria removed Angie from public school and enrolled her in a Christian school in an attempt to prevent her from associating with her peer group that frequently abused alcohol.

Angie and her parents were embroiled in a heated conflict as Angie complained that the Alcoholic's Anonymous (AA) groups that her parents insisted she attend were "stupid and a waste of time." Due to Angie's prior deceitfulness and poor decision-making, her parents did not trust Angie's assessment of the AA groups and were adamant that she needed to continue attending two groups per week to help her maintain her sobriety. In order to address this dilemma, the therapist developed a spiritual eco-map with the family to explore the family's spiritual worldview and resources and identify spiritually based alternatives to AA attendance. The family was receptive to this because AA had substantiated the benefits of spirituality in treating alcoholism.

The Martinez family was currently attending St. Vincent's parish. Maria had grown up in this parish and knew many of the parishioners. She and Miguel had attended Cursillo, a weekend retreat that guided participants as they explored a deeper relationship with God, and they continued to participate in Cursillo's on-going groups. Maria, in particular, stated that she had received a great deal of support and prayer from this group when she and Miguel discovered Angie's struggle with alcoholism. Tony had been an altar boy for a couple years and looked forward to seeing his friends at his Christian education class. In the past, Angie had viewed attending mass with disdain and thought that her peers at their parish were "stale." However, after attending in-patient treatment and switching to the Christian school, Angie slowly began to develop an interest in spirituality. Upon invitation from her new friends at school, Angie attended several local youth groups. Specifically, she enjoyed the "cool music" at Solid Rock Gospel Church, and liked the youth pastor, Dan, and his wife, Karen, at Victory Faith Temple. The therapist asked Miguel and Maria if they would be comfortable replacing the AA groups with the youth groups. Although they both wished Angie would attend the Catholic youth group at their parish, they agreed to give it a try and the family contracted to evaluate the youth groups' effectiveness in two months.

The therapist asked the Martinez family if they practiced any family rituals at home. Maria stated that she and Miguel each individually spent some time reading scripture and praying. Angie surprised her parents by stating that, after a conversation with Karen, she had recently started reading a devotional book



Diagram 3.

when she felt upset and praying when she felt tempted to drink. Miguel shared that they discontinued their attempt at family devotions a year ago after a major fight arose between himself and Angie. The therapist asked if they would be interested in initiating family devotions again. However, in order to break the conflictual pattern of the parents lecturing and Angie bristling at their rules, the therapist encouraged structuring the family devotional time as an open forum in which all family members would be free to share their perspectives and struggles. Miguel and Maria might share how their faith guides their decision-making and

helps them deal with life's pain and hardships. Angie and Tony might share what they were learning in youth group, school, and Christian education class. This weekly ritual could potentially reassure Miguel and Maria that Angie was learning productive coping skills, build trust between family members, and help them forgive past grievances.

In congruence with the AA model, the therapist asked Angie if she could identify anyone on the spiritual eco-map that she respected and would like to be her sponsor who would provide support, guidance, and accountability for her. Angie stated that Karen had shared her life story in youth group, and was sure that Karen would be understanding, nonjudgmental, and helpful to her.

By developing the spiritual eco-map, the therapist was able to use the Martinez family's current spiritual resources to help them identify new solutions to their problems. Before this counseling session, Miguel and Maria had briefly heard Angie mention Karen's name, but their distrust and concern that the youth groups were not Catholic had prevented them from hearing the positive influence Karen and the groups were having in Angie's life. The process of developing the spiritual eco-map allowed Angie to openly share for the first time that her new-found faith was helping her stay sober and that the youth groups were helping her grow spiritually. As a result, the family moved past their stalemate, broke down barriers to communication, and began establishing trust.

### **Assets and Limitations**

The main asset of spiritual eco-maps is that they focus upon clients' current spiritual strengths (Hodge, 2015). For social workers seeking to operationalize clients' spiritual assets to help clients solve their problems, this assessment approach may be ideal. The time spent in assessment is focused upon tapping into present spiritual resources.

In some cases, clients may find it less threatening to have a concrete object that functions as the focus of subsequent conversation. As is the case with all diagrammatic instruments, spiritual eco-maps provide an object that can serve as the focal point of discussion. The design of eco-maps, however, with their focus on environmental systems rather than, for example, clients' life stories, helps remove the emphasis from the client as an individual. In short, while other approaches may implicitly emphasize clients, devoid of their contexts, spiritual eco-maps explicitly stress the spiritual systems in clients' environments (Hodge, 2005a).

Spiritual eco-maps suffer from the same limitations as other diagrammatic instruments relative to verbally based spiritual histories. In addition, in at least some situations, the focus on current spiritual assets may result in a limited assessment that overlooks salient historical factors. In some contexts, social workers may wish to explore historical resources by using, for example, a spiritual genogram.

## **Conducting an Assessment**

Knowledge of how to conduct an assessment is also important (Hodge & Limb, 2010a). Developing familiarity with various assessment tools is only part of the assessment process. Practitioners must also know how to use these tools in an appropriate, spiritually sensitive manner. Although a detailed discussion of the mechanics of conducting a spiritual assessment is beyond the scope of this chapter, a few important points will be highlighted.

Social workers should be aware that many clients may be hesitant to trust practitioners. Some clients may be concerned that practitioners will not treat with honor that which is held to be sacred (Richards & Bergin, 2014). Consequently, due to the highly personal nature of spirituality, it is appropriate to procure clients' consent before engaging in a spiritual assessment. Additionally, social workers should explain a particular assessment instrument to ensure that the client is comfortable with the particular approach before engaging in an assessment.

To a great extent, clients' apprehension can be alleviated by expressing genuine support. Adopting an attitude of interest and curiosity toward the client's belief system is an appropriate therapeutic stance.

Social workers can also demonstrate spiritual sensitivity by obtaining knowledge of common spiritual traditions from various available sources (Pargament, 2013; Richards & Bergin, 2014; Van Hook et al., 2001). For example, if one works in an area where Latter Day Saints (LDS) and Pentecostals are prominent spiritual traditions, then seeking out information on LDS and Pentecostal traditions can assist social workers in exhibiting spiritual sensitivity with these populations. Ideally, in the process of attempting to understand clients' spiritual worldviews, social workers should seek to envision life through the particular worldview of the client.

In their attempts to understand the worldviews of clients, social workers should develop their understanding of the oppression people of faith often experience in the larger secular culture (Smith, 2003). It is important for social workers to recognize that the dominant secular culture often marginalizes or otherwise de-legitimizes devout faith in many influential settings. Included among these are colleges and universities (Smith, 2014; Yancey, 2011), network news (Kerr, 2003), fictional television (Clarke, 2005), and other cultural shaping "knowledge sector" forums (Hunter, 1991). In other words, people who are secular experience a certain privilege that is foreign to people of faith (Hodge, 2009). Social workers should reflect on how living in a culture that often ignores, devalues, and even ridicules believers' most cherished beliefs and values affects the psychology of people of faith (Yancey, 2014).

Developing their understanding of clients' worldviews can assist social workers in respecting clients' spiritual autonomy. The focus of practice should not be on determining whether clients' spiritual beliefs are right or wrong, but rather on how their values animate their lives and assist them in coping with difficulties. The social worker's job is not to accept or reject clients' spiritual

values but to understand them and help them use their beliefs and practices to assist clients in overcoming their stated problems (Hodge, 2015).

In some cases, however, social workers may believe that clients' spiritual beliefs are problematic. In such situations, social workers should not attempt to change clients' values in an area that lies outside the realm of their professional competence. Rather, practitioners should collaborate with, or refer such clients to, clergy. Given that this is clergy's area of professional competency, pastors, priests, and other spiritual specialists are better equipped to ascertain the appropriateness of a given set of beliefs and practices (Hodge, Bonifas & Chou, 2010). It is critical, however, that practitioners respect clients' spiritual autonomy by forming collaborative relationships with clergy that share the same denominational and theological orientation as the client. It would be unethical to covertly attempt to subvert clients' values by, for example, referring a client who holds traditional beliefs to a liberal pastor.

In keeping with their roles as social workers, practitioners should remain focused on empowering clients to address their problems. During the assessment process, social workers might keep two questions in mind. First, during past difficulties, how have clients culled various resources from their spiritual frameworks to address previous problems? Second, what types of resources have not been accessed, but are available in their frameworks and can be marshaled to address current problems? Social workers can attempt to link clients with untapped resources to help them solve their problems. Practitioners might, for example, suggest particular interventions either drawn from, or consistent with, clients' spiritual worldviews.

More specifically, social workers might employ a modified form of cognitive therapy in which unhealthy beliefs are identified and replaced with positive beliefs drawn from the individual's spiritual belief system (Tan, 2013). Similarly, practitioners may explore the possibility of reframing current problems as opportunities for spiritual growth (Pargament, 2007). In attempting to foster the adoption of more productive patterns of behaviors, spiritual rituals may be employed as "exceptions" to unproductive behavioral patterns. Decision-based forgiveness interventions may be useful in some contexts while existential, brevity of life interventions may be appropriate in other situations. Some evidence also suggests that intercessory prayer may assist clients in the recovery process (Hodge, 2007). In each individual setting, the unique spiritual beliefs of the client and the theoretical orientation of the social worker will indicate which interventions are selected. In any setting, however, the goal should be to help clients use their spiritual strengths to address their issues and concerns.

## **Conclusion**

In order to provide services that are sensitive to clients' spiritual worldviews, social workers must conduct spiritual assessments to have some awareness of clients' spiritual realities. Similarly, to help clients tap into their spiritual strengths to address the problems they wrestle with, it is necessary to undertake an assess-

ment of clients' strengths. A single assessment approach, however, is unlikely to be ideal in all situations; diverse needs call for a variety of approaches. If the profession of social work is to take seriously its mandate to provide culturally sensitive services that build upon clients' unique strengths, then in many cases performing a spiritual assessment is an imperative.

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# Family Circles: Assessing Family and Spiritual Connections with Military Clients

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Dexter R. Freeman

## Introduction

What might compel a man or woman to leave the home, environment, and way of life that he or she knows to join a culture and defend a cause that he or she may not fully understand? Some suggest it may be financial stability, educational opportunities, the need to get away from a difficult home situation, or maybe the need to decide what one wants to do with their life (Hall, 2011a; Woodruff, Kelty, & Segal, 2006). Research shows that men and women enlist in the military due to economic factors, a desire to serve their country, an opportunity to travel and see new places, the ability to partake of educational benefits, a desire to learn new job skills, and a need to escape a litany of social problems (Eighmey, 2006). While these reasons indicate why a person might pursue the military, it doesn't explain why they choose to stay. The literature on career military involvement (Eighmey, 2006; Mariscal, 2007; Woodruff, Kelty, & Segal, 2006) suggests that it is the achievement of a sense of purpose, a connection with others who understand their unique perspectives, existential experiences, and the ability to fulfill one's responsibility to serve self and others that convinces service members to stay beyond their initial enlistment.

Sergeant Ryan Kranc is a good example of the transformation that occurs in the lives of service members. He was deployed in northwestern Iraq, and was considering leaving the military when he had an epiphany that in many ways was a spiritual experience. Shortly after hearing that one of his comrades had been killed following an attack by insurgents, he said that there is no way he would leave the military now. He said, "We serve for those who are willing to lay down their lives for those fundamental and inalienable rights that distinguish our country from all others (*Who influenced you to stay in the Army*, September, 2011, p.82)." Christina Grof (1993) put it this way: "Many of us yearn for something that we may not be able to name. Yet we believe that it will help us feel all right, at home, and as though we belong. We believe that if we could find it, we would no longer be lonely. We would know what it is like to be loved and accepted, and we would be able to love in return (p.4)." Sergeant Kranc appears

to have experienced a spiritual connectedness that exceeds human reasoning. Grof (1993) refers to this state of connectedness as spiritual wholeness or completeness, recognized as a state of being in which one experiences a sense of oneness with all things to include a divine source of meaning (Jung, 1933).

A premise of this chapter is that humanity is divinely created to connect and that this spiritual compulsion to connection often takes place within the military. For the purposes of this book, we will suggest through a case vignette how this spiritual impulse can be expressed through a Christian lens, though the spiritual yearning Grof and Jung describe can apply to other religious traditions as well as those who don't profess any specific religious beliefs. It is the quest for wholeness that compels many to join the military, as well as make it a career. This chapter will discuss the components of spiritual wholeness so that the reader may better understand this powerful, but numinous force that many Christians rely upon to reconcile the challenges of serving in the military. Finally, the family circle instrument will be introduced as a means by which military social workers can help military service members and their families identify the resources they rely upon to provide a sense of completeness or spiritual wholeness. A case vignette will be used to describe key characteristics of the military culture as well as demonstrate how the family circle instrument can be used to identify and articulate the components of spiritual wholeness that exists within the military culture.

### **Social Work in the Military: Conserving the Fighting Force**

Social workers have been serving the military community since World War I, when Red Cross workers provided counseling and case management-related service to military service members in military hospitals (Garber, 1992; Harris, 1999). Social workers were effective in helping service members cope with the horrific images and consequences of war, as well as providing transition and reintegration assistance to those who were deemed unsuitable for the military.

Social workers became commissioned officers in 1943 and over the years have assumed a plethora of duties and responsibilities in an effort to promote growth and healing with the military community (Harris, 1999). For instance, uniformed social workers now assume a primary role in conserving the fighting force through providing community-based support services to promote family stabilization; providing marriage and family counseling in outpatient counseling clinics; as well as providing supervision and direct mental health clinical services to active duty service members in behavioral health clinics (Brand & Weiss, 2015). Social workers also assist service members and families who may have developed substance dependency and abuse problems as a means to cope with the stress and trauma related to the military lifestyle and mission (Blaisure, Saathoff-Wells, Pereira, Wadsworth & Dombro, 2012). Furthermore, they serve in community hospitals and teaching medical centers as psychiatric and medical social workers, provide individual, group, and organizational counseling support services in theaters of operations as brigade behavioral health officers,

and fulfill a litany of administrative, educational, and policy oriented duties (Rubin & Barnes, 2013).

Even though the military may be experiencing a reduction of forces across the various services, the need for social workers and behavioral health providers is even more essential than ever (Brand & Weiss, 2015). Advances in military medicine and changes in the modern battlefield mean that service members who deploy are more likely to survive traumatic incidents such as suicide bombers, improvised explosive devices (IED), serious physical injuries, traumatic brain injuries, and are more likely to witness the deaths of comrades and civilian casualties of war than in past wars (Melcer, Walker, Galarneau, Belnap, & Konoske, 2010). As a result, a record number of service members are directly affected by the atrocities of war and their families are carrying secondary wounds as a result of living with a family member who has made major sacrifices for his or her country and the mission. The wounds of war [many of which are invisible] often cause an absence of wholeness and service members and their families often question the sacrifices they made. Chronic feelings of isolation, emptiness, and detachment are too much for many service members to bear. Post deployment studies with service members have shown that they experience increases in alcohol use and abuse, the misuse of pain medication, and suicide attempts and completions (Larson, Wooten, Adams, & Merrick, 2012).

### **Spiritual Wholeness**

It is obvious that the force [spiritual wholeness] that compelled many service members to join the military is still out of reach for many who have been affected by the wounds of war, and military social workers are being called upon to assist service members and their families with finding this divine source of completeness. To understand the nature of wholeness, one must acknowledge that it is a dynamic and transcendent process that is ongoing and never totally complete.

Edwards, Pang, Shiu, and Chan (2010) defined spirituality as a dynamic process recognized as a personal search for meaning and purpose in life. Burkhardt (1998) described spirituality as the core of all that we are and all that we do. Vaughan (1991) said that spirituality is the origin of compassion, thankfulness, and faith in a divine and higher dimension of existence. It is the genesis of the desire to pursue one's true meaning and purpose in life. In summary, spirituality represents the universal dimension that encourages humans to explore their true purpose and meaning through connecting individuals with entities and forces within, around, and beyond them. Jung (1933) referred to this state of connectivity as individuation or wholeness.

Jung (1933) said the quest for spiritual wholeness is a continuous process that involves "tearing oneself loose from an all-embracing, pristine unconsciousness that claims the bulk of mankind almost entirely (197)." Moreover, spiritual wholeness is best defined as a dynamic state of being that is recognized by a connection with a conglomeration of masculine and feminine energies, strengths and weaknesses, and internal and external forces that serve a divine purpose to

help individuals to live the lives they were created to experience (Freeman, 2001). Jung (1959/1990) called dynamic forces that promote wholeness archetypal energies, and they evolve from the collective unconscious of humanity. Research by the author (Freeman, 2007 & 2015) has shown that there is a statistically significant relationship between identification with archetypal energies and the experience of spiritual well-being.

### **From Civilian to Service Member: Embracing the Warrior Culture**

Oftentimes recruits raise their right hand and agree to protect and defend America's freedom for practical rather than patriotic reasons. Mariscal (2007) and Blaisure et al. (2012) assert that young people enter the military for a variety of pragmatic reasons (money towards college, economic or vocational self-improvement), family expectations, and reasons rooted in deeper meaning (freedom, connection with others, and a desire to be part of something bigger than themselves as well as to serve their country). Even though practical reasons (financial, education, and healthcare benefits) may have consciously compelled recruits to join the military; a deeper level of commitment is required to transform a civilian recruit into a marine, soldier, airman, or sailor who is willing to embrace a warrior or military culture and die for a cause that he or she may not understand.

Hall (2011b) described the military community as having a zero-tolerance for personal or social defects. Military personnel and their families live in a psychological fortress that projects self-reliance and a mentality that prevents others from seeing their weaknesses (Hall, 2011a). This psychological fortress allows service members and families to maintain a warrior society that emphasizes three traits: secrecy, stoicism, and the denial of feelings or fears. Thus, to project the warrior ethos, service members quickly learn the importance of maintaining secrecy (keeping unit issues and concerns private from those outside the unit), never showing their fears or concerns to others, and they seek to maintain a controlled and stoic demeanor at all times (Hall, 2011a; Hall, 2011b). It is important that behavioral health providers who serve military service members recognize these values and understand how these values might hinder a sailor or soldier, an airman or marine from pursuing or benefiting from mental health services.

Behavioral health providers also need to understand that military families are affected by the same values that uphold a warrior society. Military families that adapt to the military culture uphold these values so that they might survive and thrive within a military community. For instance, a civilian spouse who is a victim of domestic violence may be conditioned to maintain secrecy about what goes on within their home so that she does not adversely affect her spouse's military career. Therefore, anyone who serves military families must acknowledge the significant role that warrior societal values play in the day-to-day lives of military service members and their families.

The previously mentioned description of values that exists within the military culture is not to suggest that all service members are the same. For instance, the

means by which a soldier from a combat arms unit (infantry, armor, field artillery, aviation, or special forces) displays these values may be significantly different from soldiers working as quartermaster (supply) specialists, medical technicians, dental technicians, and other combat support arms fields (Devries, Hughes, Watson, & Moore, 2012). Soldiers in combat arms units have a unique lexicon and set of acronyms. These units also typically maintain a high level of preparedness, are male-dominated, and also tend to have a higher level of cohesion between the members (Rosen et al., 1996; Rosen, Knudson, & Fancher, 2003). However, soldiers working in combat support areas may not always adhere to certain organizational boundaries due to the technical nature of the unit's mission. Therefore, a counselor who provides mental health support to a service member must also take into consideration the type of job a service member has when it comes to understanding the military culture that may influence a service member's worldview.

The case vignette below reflects many of the typical dynamics of military families. This case will highlight some of the motivations for military service as well as demonstrate how social workers can use the family circle instrument to identify spiritual and religious resources available to promote wholeness.

### **The Case of Specialist Amy Stevens**

*Specialist (SPC) Amy Stevens grew up in a modest mid-western town, the youngest of three siblings. Amy joined the Army when her husband was no longer physically or emotionally able to financially support her and their two children. He had sustained a severe physical injury that left his body permanently disfigured, and his mind hampered with guilt, anger, shame, difficulties sleeping, and other symptoms indicative of posttraumatic stress. One of John's greatest adjustments since being discharged from the military has been trying to accept his role as a military family member, and supporting his wife, Amy, as the primary provider for the family. John and Amy admit that this change in the family constellation has negatively affected their marital relationship; however, they are trying to slowly rebuild their relationship.*

*Amy sought counseling from a social worker at the Department of Behavioral Health to help her cope with family related problems she and John had been experiencing, and to seek guidance about how to handle their three-year-old daughter, who was having temper tantrums in daycare and problems sleeping alone at night over the past couple of years. Amy thought that her daughter was having problems adjusting to being in daycare because she was accustomed to being at home with her for the first year of her life. However, she and John became concerned when this behavior continued beyond the first six months in daycare.*

*Amy's nuclear family consists of her husband John, six-year-old daughter Lori, and three-year-old daughter, Lisa Ann. Amy describes Lori as a six-year-old who appears to be far too mature for her age at times. She never demonstrated any acts of rebellion and is one of the most agreeable children Amy has ever met. She helped Amy around the house when John was deployed and frequently tells Lisa Ann to "stop being such a baby." Amy admits feeling guilty at times because she thinks she puts too much responsibility on Lori to be a good girl and most of her attention*

now goes toward Lisa Ann and John. Amy said that Lori reminds her of her oldest sibling, Sally, who has always been a quiet person that never seems to have any conflicts with others. The middle child in Amy's family of origin is her brother, Jake. He is like Amy's father: quiet, mechanically skillful, but hated school so he couldn't wait to begin working with their father after he graduated from high school. Amy's parents, Jake, Sally, and their families all attend the same Baptist church and they all are committed to the faith. Jake and Sally are actively involved in various ministries at the church. Amy, however, admitted that she frequently questioned some of the religious beliefs of the Baptist faith and she always viewed herself as somewhat rebellious when it came to accepting the family's religious beliefs. She infrequently attended church after she and John got married, and she had not seriously prayed to God until she saw John laid up in a hospital bed fighting for his life. She stated that she was confused and angry that God would allow this to happen to John; especially after they had tried to do the right thing by getting married and choosing to take care of their children.

Amy married her husband John at the age of 17 for two reasons. First, she was pregnant and her family was a conservative Baptist family who did not consider abortion as an option. Likewise, Amy and John believed that the only option they had was to get married. John was a star on the football team and he grew up in a hardworking Christian family that encouraged John to take care of his responsibilities in a way that would be pleasing to God. John had hopes of playing football in college, but after he discovered that Amy was pregnant, it was an easy decision for him--college was no longer an option because he now had a family.

The entire church was shocked to learn that Amy was pregnant, and Amy's entire family was extremely upset and ashamed about this situation. Amy's mother was especially upset because she, too, became pregnant before she and Amy's father got married. She had plans of finishing high school and possibly going to college. However, she gave up her college dream to marry Amy's father and raise their children in a Christian home. She wanted Amy to go to college and hopefully become a physician someday. Amy also had dreams of studying medicine and becoming a pediatrician, but those dreams would have to wait because she was pregnant.

The second reason Amy married John was that in addition to loving John; she saw her parents as controlling, rigid, overly religious, and smothering. She saw the military and her marriage as the perfect opportunity to get out of what she called "a stifling hick town."

After four years of marriage, things were progressing well; John was enjoying his military job as a cavalry scout at Fort Smith, Texas, and Amy had just given birth to their second child. She was satisfied with where things were in their family relationship. John was on his second deployment and, as one could expect, Amy was very anxious about him being away. She had learned from the first deployment to do what she could to try to stay busy, and avoid watching too much news.

Amy always felt close to her maternal grandmother, and during John's first deployment she moved back home for a couple of months to be near her. Amy was feeling very lonely and under a great deal of pressure during John's first deployment. She and John often argued about the sense of abandonment that Amy was feeling.

John suggested that Amy go home and spend some time with her family while he was deployed. After a month of going to the same places and answering the same questions about what it was like being a military wife and mother, she became frustrated with the attitudes and comments she was hearing from members of her family and others in the community. She often found herself defending the military against some of the “simple-minded” comments made by her extended family. Amy recognized during John’s first deployment that she left home as a kid, but now she was a grown woman and a proud military family member. Therefore, she opted to stay in the Fort Smith community during John’s second deployment.

About a month prior to John’s projected return from his second deployment, Amy received the news that John was seriously injured and was being medically evacuated to a military medical center near Houston, Texas. He had been badly burned and his right leg amputated below the knee as a result of an IED bombing. Amy was devastated to receive the news about John’s injuries. She recalled praying to God, asking that He heal John so he could continue to do the military job he loved. She had always been taught that God hears the prayers of his children. Therefore, Amy was committed to do all she could try to nurse John back to health; hoping that God would help John and keep their family structure intact. John, however, appeared to be in shock and was reluctant to ask questions, but Amy not only asked the providers questions, she frequently researched the information they were given and kept a journal of all her communications with the providers. Amy’s maternal grandmother and her mother frequently traded off watching the children while Amy stayed at hospital with John. Amy and John received countless cards, gifts, and visits from members of John’s unit and the Baptist church in their home town while he was in the hospital. Amy was overwhelmed with the level of support she was receiving from the other military family members in John’s unit. She was particularly surprised about by the outpouring of love she received from other Christians in the church back home as well as the local church. The support she received was influential in convincing her to begin attending the local Baptist church after she and John realized that he would never be able to return to the military.

Although it was taxing for Amy to take care of John, it was also stimulating because for the first time, since her high school years, she had the opportunity to revisit her love for medical science. She had a sense of fulfillment and medical curiosity that she had not experienced in many years. John’s physical recovery took over a year and he was still struggling with emotional scars from the war when Amy sought counseling from social work. During the first year of rehabilitation, Amy and John talked about the various options available for their family. Even though John was medically retired and considered 100% disabled by the Veterans Administration, neither he nor Amy considered moving back to their home town.

Amy, with John’s support, decided to enlist in the Army to ensure the family’s stability. She also saw this as an opportunity to follow her dream of getting into the medical field. She met with an Army health care recruiter and enlisted as a health care specialist. In the civilian sector, a health care specialist could be an emergency medical technician, a licensed vocational nurse, or an operating room technician.

## **The Family Circle: Theory and Background**

How does one describe or depict the family structure, connections, boundaries, and spiritual forces that might exist within, around, and outside an individual or family? How can you help a client identify changes to a family's dynamics after the birth of child? When a parent or child is deployed by the military? When there is marital conflict, or when a couple divorces? Even the most astute social worker may need to meet with a client several sessions before gaining this type of insight. This is where the family circle instrument demonstrates its strength.

The family circle interview is a quick and easy graphic method of gathering, assessing, and working with family dynamics and structure based upon the perceptions of the family members (Asen, Tomson, Young, & Tomson, 2004). Although the family circle instrument is easy to execute, it yields a wealth of information about intra-familial and extra-familial connections. The circle that one produces is influenced by the current perceptions of the drawer.

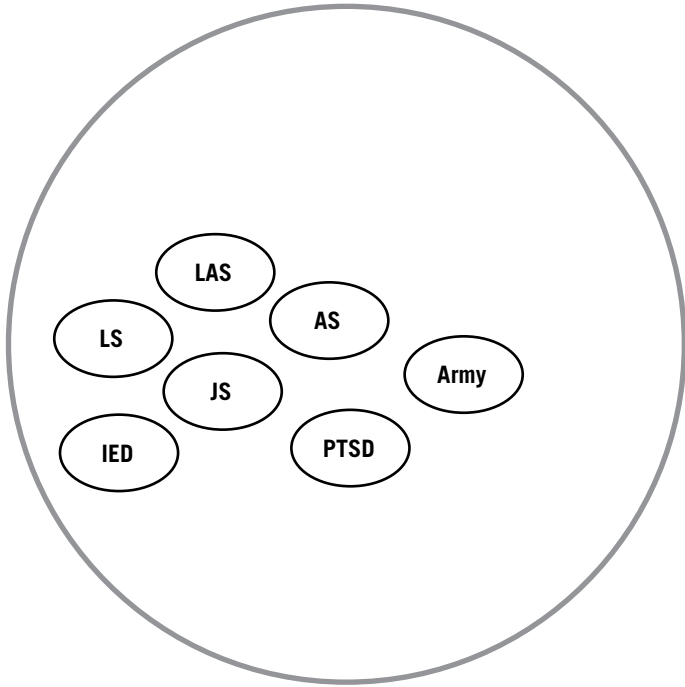
Family circles are not projective tests to be interpreted by the social worker in an effort to uncover deep-seated thoughts and emotions of the drawer (Asen et al., 2004). These drawings are designed to be a non-threatening means for individuals and families to express and discuss family dynamics in a controlled environment. Thus, the process will often by-pass many of the defenses and discomforts that military families experience when it comes to discussing family issues that typically remain secret.

The family circle instrument is based upon family systems theory and enables clients and social workers to view family structure, boundaries, and subsystems from the client's perspective. According to family systems theory, every family has boundaries or invisible borders that moderate the flow energy (connection) between the members within the family, the family as a whole, and with systems outside the family (Coleman, Collins, & Collins, 2005; Walsh, 2008). The family circle is an assessment method that social workers can use to allow clients to describe and discuss how their family appeared in the past, present, and how the client would desire their family to look in the future (Thrower et al., 1982).

### **Conducting a Family Circle Interview**

The family circle session includes a facilitator (social worker), client drawer, and other family members who may also draw their family circles. The first step in conducting the family circle interview is for the social worker to describe what a family circle is and explain the purpose of the interview. The facilitator explains to the client that a family circle is a schematic diagram that enables an individual to depict their connections with other individuals, friends, animals, organizations, beliefs, events, or passions. As a result, these entities may be perceived as part of their family. For example, in the case of Amy, the emotional and physical trauma that John experienced during his second deployment has become a major part of their family over the past couple of years. Therefore, she might include posttraumatic stress or his physical injury in her family circle. See Figure 1 for an example of what Amy's beginning family circle could look like.





**Figure 1. SPC Stevens' Beginning Family Circle** This is the beginning of Amy Stevens' (AS) family circle. The significant objects that she connects with as part of her family circle at this phase of the family circle interview include her husband, John (JS), daughter Lori (LS), daughter Lisa Ann (LA), the Army, I.E.D, and PTSD.

The second step of the family circle interview is to describe the process and rules for completing family circle drawings (described in greater detail below). The final step of the family circle interview is to have each drawer describe the components or objects they connect to as part of their family. Figure 2 shows Amy's family circle after receiving the following instructions:

### **Describing the Process**

At this stage of the process the facilitator explains the purpose of the family circle. Thrower et al. (1982) and Asen et al. (2004) provide examples of verbiage that facilitators might use to describe the purpose and procedure for completing a family circle. After the facilitator is certain that the drawer(s) understand the procedure and purpose, each drawer begins constructing their family circle by drawing a large circle on a blank sheet of paper. Next, the facilitator asks each individual to draw smaller circles that represents them and other family members. Thrower et al. (1982) and Asen et al. (2004) provide a thorough description of verbiage that facilitators could use to instruct drawers in constructing their family circle.

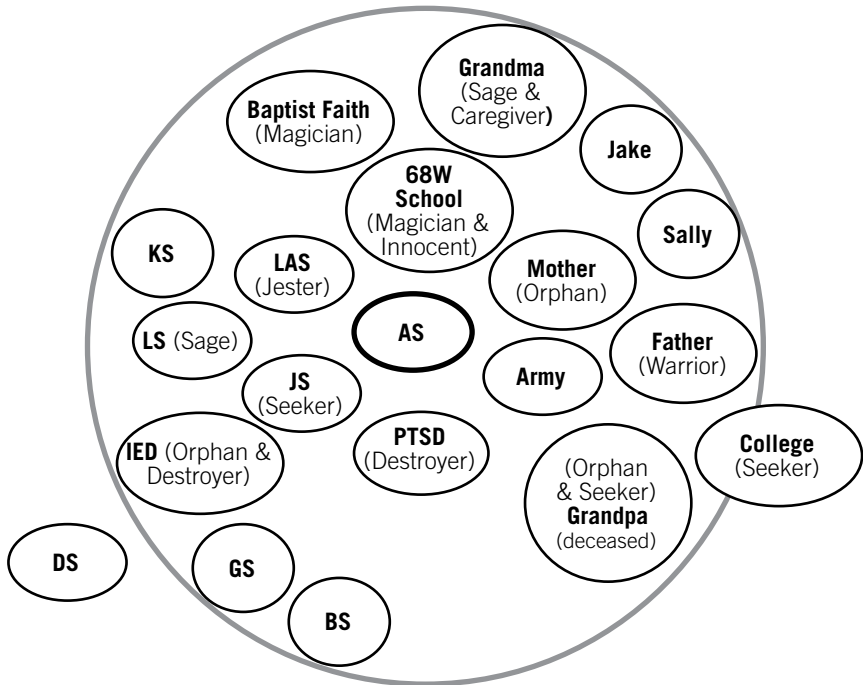
Each drawer should have 5 to 8 minutes to complete their family circle drawing. Once client drawers have completed their family circles, the facilitator asks each drawer to add circles to represent those individuals, activities, beliefs, or organization that meet the following criteria: What or who reminds you of your vulnerabilities or weaknesses (orphan energy)? What or who gives you hope and confidence to trust in others and never give up (innocent energy)? What or who helps you feel nurtured and cared for (caregiver energy)? What or who helps you make sense of pain, sorrow, and difficulties (magician energy)? What or who causes you to question your path and direction in life (seeker energy)? What or who has enabled you to recognize it is time for you to change and let go of things you used to see as important (destroyer energy)? These questions are based upon Pearson and Marr's (2003) indicators of dynamic (archetypal) energies, which they theorize as being available to everyone to promote spiritual wholeness. Pearson and Marr (2003) identified twelve archetypal motifs that combine to create wholeness: innocent, orphan, warrior, caregiver, lover, seeker, destroyer, creator, ruler, magician, sage, and jester energy. Studies (Freeman, 2007 & 2015) have shown that Pearson and Marr's dynamic energies are significantly correlated with spiritual well-being.

### **Rules for Drawing and Discussing Family Circles**

Once all drawers have completed their family circles, each member is invited to describe their circle to the others. Following each drawer's circle presentation, the facilitator and other family members are encouraged to ask clarifying questions to give the drawer an opportunity to expound upon and clarify anything in the drawing. The facilitator's questions should encourage the drawer to consider the effects of time and specific phenomena on their family circle. Asen et al. (2004) and Thrower et al. (1982) provide examples of these types of questions.

### **Amy Steven's Family Circle: An Example**

The case vignette of SPC Amy Stevens will help readers understand the utility of the family circle instrument and interview in helping clients recognize their connections with dynamic energy. Figure 2 depicts what Amy's family circle drawing may look like if she had the opportunity to complete it in accordance with the previously stated instructions. Amy's family circle would include key members of her nuclear and extended family. She would also include key figures that represent spiritual and religious sources in her life (see Figure 2). Amy's extended family includes her grandmother, who continues to promote caregiver and sage energy by reminding Amy to unconditionally care for others and do those things that are wise and appropriate. She also received unconditional nurturance from members of John's military unit and her home Baptist church. This energy proved to be significant in her decision to begin worshipping at the local Baptist church. Her maternal grandfather, although deceased, had encouraged her to go to college to be productive. She described him as a man of deep faith that believed if a person trusted in the Lord there is no problem



**Figure 2. SPC Amy Stevens' Family Circle** This family circle was drawn by SPC Amy Stevens (AS) after she enlisted in the Army. The significant objects that she connects with as part of her family circle are her Health Care Specialist training school, her desire and fear of attending college, her Baptist faith, her mother and father, her grandmother, her deceased grandfather, her youngest daughter (LAS), her first born child (LS), her husband (JS), her mother-in-law (KS), her estranged father-in-law (DS), her brothers-in-law (GS) and (BS), the IED incident, and the Army.

that God won't help a person to overcome. Amy admits that she reflects back on messages from her grandfather more now that she is expected to do more to take care of her family. The spiritual energy that emits from Amy's maternal grandfather's image is comparable to Pearson and Marr's (2003) description of innocent and magician energy that encourage people to be trusting and have faith in divine goodness, power, and purpose. Magician energy enables one to use their pain and challenges as an opportunity for growth (Pearson, 1991). Amy definitely relied upon this dynamic energy when she enlisted in the Army. Amy would also include some family members who are connected in significant ways to John, even though she does not know them well. For example, she would include John's mother, Karen; his estranged father, Doug, who walked out on the family when John was in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade; his older brother Gene; and his younger brother Bobby.

Amy's family circle also includes her mother and her father. For many years Amy had conflicts with her mother because she thought her mother wanted to hold her back. Now she realizes that her mother gave up her desire to become a teacher because she chose to stay home and take care of Amy and her siblings.

Her mother was afraid of Amy's rebellious attitude during her adolescent years and worried Amy would make some of the same mistakes she made. Amy now realizes that her mother is a very intelligent person; she did not pursue education because she thought Amy's father would not be able to handle an educated wife. The dynamic energy that Amy's mother reflects is indicative of Pearson and Marr's (2003) orphan energy, which enables people to experience the reality of pain and disappointment. Amy's father was not educated (he received his high school equivalency certificate at age 18), but was well respected in the community. He is a vehicle mechanic who runs a successful business and provides financial support to his family. Amy's father reminds her of the importance of confronting challenges and adversity head-on. Pearson and Marr (2003) referred to the dynamic energy that is represented by her father as warrior energy. Other members of Amy's family of origin in her family circle include her big brother Jake and her sister, Sally. She is not as close to either of them as she used to be, and she wishes they were closer.

Amy's nuclear family consists of her husband John, older daughter Lori, and her younger daughter Lisa Ann. Although Lisa Ann is only 3 years old, she already displays a true free-spirit who gets all she can out of every moment. Whereas, Lori is the typical big sister who seems to display wisdom and responsibility much greater than her 6 years of life should allow. These children appear to project Pearson and Marr's (2003) jester and sage dynamic energy, respectively. Lori Ann enables Amy to appreciate the importance of living life in the moment and Lisa encourages Amy to carefully evaluate opportunities for growth prior to pursuing them. Both of these dynamic forces are essential to experiencing wholeness. The dynamic energy that John represents in Amy's family circle has changed since their relationship began. Originally, John was Amy's passionate protector who helped her feel safe and protected, while living life to its fullest at the moment. This dynamic energy is indicative of Pearson and Marr's (2003) warrior and lover energy that helps people fulfill their sense of responsibility through aggressively confronting challenges (warrior) and identifying what is most important by wholeheartedly committing to it and following that commitment (lover). Today Amy looks at John as someone who is full of questions (What should I do with my life? Why did this happen to me? What does it mean to be the head of my family?). All of these questions reflect the presence seeker energy. Pearson and Marr (2003) state that seeker energy is activated when people experience dissatisfaction and a sense of emptiness.

Amy added the IED incident to her family circle when she was asked to add what or who has caused her to question the path or direction of her life (destroyer energy). She added posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) when she was asked to consider adding what or who has enabled her to recognize that it is time to let go of things she used to see as important (destroyer energy). She included her Baptist faith and Health Care Specialist (68W) School and training when asked to include what or who has helped her use and/or make sense of the pain, sorrow, and difficulties she has experienced (ruler and magician energy). Amy frequently thinks about going to college and pursuing her degree in medicine (seeker energy); especially now that she has made it through her Health Care Specialist (68W)

training. Therefore, her 68W training is not only a source of transformation; it is also a source of hope and faith that she can accomplish her goals in life (innocent energy). She expressed that her confidence in her ability grew as her supervisors and teachers during her 68W training demonstrated trust and faith in her ability to handle greater levels of responsibility. Organizations that are motivated by innocent energy tend to thrive on simplicity, predictability, trusting its workers to do the right thing, and it clearly explains to workers what they should emphasize for the organization to be successful (Mark & Pearson, 2001). Amy stated that her 68W training made it easy to be a successful Health Care Specialist. They taught her exactly what she needed to be a good Health Care Specialist; she did it and the organization appreciated her even more for her ability to follow orders.

Now that Amy and the social worker have examined some of the key connections and spiritual forces in her life using the family circle; Amy needs an opportunity to reflect upon what this experience has meant to her. It is important that the social worker remind Amy that the energy she identified in her family circle is a part of her as well as the people, events, or organizations she has identified.

## **Conclusion**

Pearson (1991) theorized that in order for an individual to experience spiritual wholeness, that individual must embrace dynamic energy that will enable her or him to experience a greater sense of completeness. This chapter described how the family circle instrument and interview can help military service members understand the transformative role that spiritual resources assume in their life as they seek to experience wholeness. In the case of Amy Stevens, the IED incident served as a spiritual force that opened her life up to embracing change and questioning the direction of her life when she was a military wife relying upon her husband to serve as a protector. When she and her husband began seeing the emotional scars of the IED incident, Amy accepted how vulnerable and helpless she is (orphan) and realized that she can't rely on others to always be there to care for her. Posttraumatic stress, which followed the IED incident, helped her see that she would have to let go of old perceptions about how her life was supposed to be (destroyer energy). The dynamic energy that PTSD and the IED represented ultimately led to Amy recreating a new life for herself and her family.

This chapter has demonstrated how the family circle diagram can be used effectively to identify the various spiritual connections that military service members form, and how these connections contribute to an individual's sense of spiritual wholeness. Ostensibly, people enter the military to fulfill social, educational, financial, and emotional needs; however, at the core of these motives is the quest for wholeness.

The family circle instrument and spiritual assessment process that was presented in this chapter acknowledges the spiritual origins of humanity. It also clearly puts into practice and enables social workers who use this instrument and process to help clients get back in touch with the spirit of God that exists within and around them.

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## SECTION 4

# Christian Social Workers and Practice Issues

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# Evidence-Based Practice: Towards a Christian Perspective

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*James C. Raines*

There are a number of different ways to critically examine evidence-based practice (EBP). This chapter will explore the ethical foundations, philosophical assumptions, and clinical concerns about using EBP in social work practice for Christians. There is already some evidence that EBP has found its way into clinical pastoral practice (Franklin & Fong, 2011; O'Connor & Meakes, 1998) and religious agencies (Halterman, Rodin, & Walters, 2011; Patrick, Rhoades, Small, & Coatsworth, 2008). For the purpose of this chapter, the definition of evidence-based practice is “the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decision about the care of individual [clients]” (Sackett, Rosenberg, Gray, Haynes & Richardson, 1996, p. 71). Implemented correctly, practitioners use their clinical expertise to integrate client circumstances, client value preferences, and research evidence into sound treatment strategies (Haynes, Devereaux, & Guyatt, 2002).

Social workers may ask, “How can EBP be practiced in the multitude of Christian social work contexts we see around the world?” This question, however, may display a bias about religion and science. Barbour (1997) posited four possible relationships between science and religion. First, they may conflict and hope to prove the other wrong about an issue (e.g., creationism vs. evolution). Second, they may be separate and address different spheres of expertise (e.g., religion tells us who created humans and science tells us how). Third, they may share common interests (e.g., both are concerned about human suffering and healing). Fourth, they may be integrated (e.g., both can be useful in helping people solve their problems). This author shares the implied perspective of the guest editors, but thinks it is always best to make the implicit explicit – faith and science can be combined to help our clients.

## **Ethical Foundations**

There are four ethical reasons for evidence-based practice. First, it helps us reach our goal of providing the best possible service to our clients (Franklin, 2001). Theologically, we must give our best to others because God has already given His best for us (II Cor. 5:21). Christ, in the parable of the prodigal son, uses the metaphor of the Father giving his wayward child “his *best robe*” (Luke 15:22). Accordingly, Christ tells his disciples, “As I have loved you, so you must

love one another” (John 13:34). Christians are called to serve others as they would their Lord (Matthew 25:40, 45). Paul’s opening prayer for the Philippians hopes that they “may be able to discern what is *best*” (Phil. 1:10). Likewise, Timothy is charged to “Do your *best* to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed” (II Tim. 2:15). If God’s best is good enough for us, then mediocre service to others should be an oxymoron.

Second, as Raines (2004) has pointed out, using evidence-based practice is increasingly a government mandate. The No Child Left Behind Act (2001), for example, mentions that school-based services should “scientifically-based” more than one hundred times. Theologically, we are expected to obey legitimate laws because God is the ultimate authority and all human authorities are accountable to God (Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; I Pet. 2:13). Unless a human law clearly contravenes divine law, then Christians should be obedient (Mott, 1982; Schaeffer, 1981; Yoder, 1964).

Third, in an era of fiscal austerity, we must use those interventions that are both effective and efficient. Theologically, all of us are simply stewards of resources that belong to God (Psalm 24:1; Lev. 25:23; Job 41:11) and therefore we must use those resources responsibly (Matt. 25:14-30). Biblical exemplars include Eliezer (Gen. 15:2-3) and Joseph (Gen. 41). We are to use our time, talents, and treasures carefully, knowing that they are only ours to use temporarily.

Finally, in a litigious society, we must know and uphold a standard of care. Theologically, this standard of care is the Golden Rule: “Do to others as you would have them do unto you” (Matt. 7:12). Hans Küng (1976) explains this as follows:

God can be rightly understood only as the Father who makes no distinction between friend and foe, who lets the sun shine and the rain fall on good and bad, who bestows his love even on the unworthy (and who is not unworthy?). Through love human beings are to prove themselves sons and daughters of this Father and become brothers and sisters after being enemies. God’s love for all men is for me then the reason for loving the person whom he sends to me, for loving just this neighbor. (p. 220)

Gibbs and Gambrill (1996) contrast the treatment criteria preferences that professionals have from a doctor with the criteria typically offered to clients. They point out that social workers “may think more carefully in situations in which the potential consequences of their choice matter more to them personally” (p. 31). While most of us would refuse to see a doctor who simply treated every patient with the same medicine, studies have shown that many social workers are content to prescribe generic “weekly counseling” regardless of the client’s problem (Kelly & Stone, 2009).

### **Philosophical Assumptions**

There has been a great deal of misunderstanding about the philosophical assumptions in evidence-based practice. It is important to differentiate between

ontology and epistemology. *Ontology* is the branch of philosophy that studies the nature of reality. Philosophical *realism* is the belief that reality exists independently of our perception, conceptual schemas, and language. Reality may be addressed with respect to other minds, the past, the future, universals, math, moral principles, the material world, and even social events, but our words are always metaphors or metonyms of reality. For example, God the Father is but one metaphor to describe a relationship that can also be maternal (Matt. 23:37; Young, 2007). People who believe in realism state that “truth” consists in the mind’s approximation to reality (Blackburn, 2005). Philosophical *subjectivism* is the theory that reality is whatever we perceive to be real, and that there is no underlying reality that exists independently of our perception (Richardson & Bowden, 1983). Ethical subjectivism, for example, is a form of moral relativism in which the truth of moral claims is relative to the attitudes of individuals or cultural beliefs (Boss, 2008).

*Epistemology* is the branch of philosophy that studies the nature and limits of knowledge, especially the methods by which knowledge can be acquired. *Empiricism* is a theory of knowledge emphasizing the role of experience based on observations by the senses. Central to empiricism is the belief that sensory data is epistemologically privileged. Positivism is a form of empiricism that asserts that all knowledge can be positively determined through scientific inquiry and everything is measurable (Bullock & Trombley, 1999). *Constructivism* is a theory that posits all “knowledge is a compilation of human-made constructions” (Raskin, 2002, p. 4), “not the neutral discovery of an objective truth” (Castelló & Botella, 2006, p. 263). *Fallibilism* is form of postpositivism that suggests that absolute certainty about knowledge is impossible. Similar to constructivism, fallibilism entails the epistemic humility (Rom. 12:3) that all of our knowledge is bound by time and culture (Kompridis, 2006).

Theologically, when ontology is applied to the Christian faith, the realist claims that (1) God exists independently of our awareness of him while, epistemically, the fallibilist states that (2) we can only approximately know God and that (3) human language can neither accurately nor adequately speak about God (Moore, 2003; Wright, 2012). This realist ontology accords with Christian faith. God’s unconditional reality is asserted in no uncertain terms, “God said to Moses, ‘I am who I am.’ This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you.’” (Ex. 3:14) and “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty” (Rev. 1:8). Fallibilistic epistemology is also affirmed – our ability to know God is imperfect, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). Again, the Bible states, “Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens above—what can you do? They are deeper than the depths below—what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea (Job 11:7-9). Yet, as Christians we can hope for more, “For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known (I Cor. 13:12).

As Christians, there are lingering concerns about the extent to which evidence-based practice reflects positivism. Positivism has been criticized on theological grounds for its insistence that empirical or sensory knowledge is superior to other types. Christians certainly understand the temptation to reduce knowledge to what we can see or touch (e.g., doubting Thomas in John 20:24-29). Christ even acknowledged the role that the senses play in faith (Matt. 13:16), but he praised those who did not rely on them, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have *not* seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). Paul provides this paradox, “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (II Cor. 4:18). Likewise, the author of Hebrews states that “faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do *not* see” (Heb. 11:1). It is important, therefore, to recognize and respect different forms of “evidence” in evidence-based practice. Sometimes, for example, our qualitative evidence comes in the form of countertransference, emotional responses to clients that cannot be empirically known, but provide potentially useful as information about the therapeutic relationship (Raines, 2003). While EBP does use a hierarchy of evidence to categorize the research, the hierarchy only applies to rigor and rigor is only one component of good clinical research (Goldenberg, 2009). *Rigor* refers to the degree to which the research studies control for internal threats to validity; randomized controlled trials and quasi-experimental designs do the best job. Equally valid concerns are *relevance* (the study’s similarity to our own practice situations) and *sensitivity* to client values (the respect for diverse moral principles). The “current best evidence” used in the original definition then becomes evidence that is rigorous, clinically relevant, and sensitive to client value preferences. A practice example may help.

Larry was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). His social worker triangulated the results from the Conners Rating Scales-Revised (Conners, 1997) for teachers, parents, and self-report. Upon analysis, Larry scored the highest the clinician had ever seen for ADHD. Referring to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry’s (AACAP) clinical practice parameters (AACAP, 2007) and paying special attention to the minimal standards, the social worker recommended that the parents see a child psychiatrist to talk about starting Larry on a trial of a psychopharmacological treatment such as Ritalin. The parents, however, adamantly refused. His mother was a Jehovah’s Witness who believed that prayer and discipline could heal her son and his father was a recovering alcoholic who didn’t believe in putting kids on “psycho-drugs” to solve their problems. The social worker did not try to change their value preferences, but worked within them. Accordingly, he asked if the parents would be willing to participate in a school-based program (Cunning-

ham, Bremmer, & Secord, 1997) to develop some behavioral management techniques so that everyone could collaborate to help their son. While treatment was less than optimal, Larry did manage to successfully complete high school with both teachers and parents reinforcing the same behavioral expectations and communicating weekly.

### **Clinical Process Concerns**

Evidence-based practice is a five-step process that includes the following elements: Asking answerable questions; Investigating the evidence; Appraising the evidence; Adapting and applying the evidence; and Evaluating the results (Gibbs, 2003). Each step presents a number of potential problems and concerns from Christian practitioners.

#### **Asking Answerable Questions**

Asking answerable questions refers to asking a question that can be informed by the research literature. Obviously, not all clinical conundrums can be answered by science. If a 16-year-old girl comes in to talk about getting an abortion, then the research literature is not going to be of much help. The primary clinical concern is an ethical-moral issue, not a scientific one (Raines, 2004). If a client asks if her 18-year-old brother who just committed suicide is going to hell (as her parish priest told her), then research will not alleviate her concerns. Clinical social workers frequently deal with ethical and existential issues where EBP does *not* apply and a different clinical process is needed (Raines & Dibble, 2011). As O'Connor and Meakes (1998) described, "Evidence-based... care does not replace intuition or the wisdom of clinical experience or compassion. Rather, compassion, intuition, and clinical wisdom ought to be used in conjunction with the evidence from research findings" (p. 360).

Gibbs (2003) mentions five kinds of appropriate research questions. An example of interest to Christian social workers will follow each one. *Assessment* questions ask about reliable and valid ways to assess problems or strengths (e.g., what is an accurate measure of spiritual development?). For Christian examples, see Ellison, 1983 or Thayer, 2004. *Description* questions address the characteristics of a clinical concern (e.g., what are the characteristics of adolescent victims of clergy sexual abuse?). For an example of male victims, see Ponton and Goldstein, 2004. *Risk* questions inquire about potential dangers facing certain clients (e.g., which homosexual youth from religious families are most vulnerable to suicide?). For a lesbian example, see Mathy and Schillace, 2003. *Prevention* questions focus on how to avoid potential problems (e.g., how to avoid occupational burnout among clergy?). For examples, see Doolittle, 2010 or Chandler, 2009. *Effectiveness* questions address the best interventions used to resolve a problem (e.g., how to intervene when someone loses their faith). For an example, see Harvey, 2011.

### **Investigating the Evidence**

Investigating the evidence refers to exploring the research literature in an effective yet efficient manner. Franklin and Kelly (2009) describe how they triangulated their search by using five online databases, three related textbooks, and proprietary databases (e.g., PsycINFO or Social Work Abstracts). Social workers searching for Christian terms in secular databases will want to allow the database (e.g., EBSCO or OVID) to “map term to subject heading” to understand how it categorizes or associates certain search terms.

For Christian and religious research, the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) religion database is also useful. It is the “premier index to [nearly two million] journal articles, book reviews, and collections of essays in all fields of religion, with coverage from 1949 and retrospective indexing for some journal issues as far back as the nineteenth century” (ATLA, 2012). The much smaller, but free, Research in Ministry (RIM) database ([http://rim.atla.com/star/rimonline\\_login.htm](http://rim.atla.com/star/rimonline_login.htm)) has about 11,000 records of projects and theses from more than one hundred Doctor of Ministry (DMin), Doctor of Missiology (DMiss), and Doctor of Educational Ministry (DEdMin) programs. The ATLA database is available only to institutions with an associated theological library (e.g., seminaries), but alumni (e.g., clergy) can sometimes obtain access from their alma maters. Given the time constraints of most practitioners, they will probably want to partner with a clinical researcher who has both access to and expertise in using research databases.

### **Appraising the Evidence**

Appraising the evidence means not only examining the degree of rigor, but also its relevance and sensitivity to client values. While there are some excellent online appraisal tools (e.g., [www.consort-statement.org](http://www.consort-statement.org)) for examining rigor, the questions about relevance and sensitivity are dependent upon the clinical expertise of the practitioner (Haynes, Devereaux, & Guyatt, 2002). For many novice social workers, it is tempting to browse a research article and focus on whether or not the intervention worked. More experienced scientist-practitioners, however, will focus on the methods section to determine first if the population and sample have any similarity to their current clients. If the research has only been conducted with white, middle-class suburbanites and you're working with Hispanic migrant farm workers, then it's not a good fit no matter how rigorously the research was conducted. Likewise, if the intervention is one that you know your clients would find objectionable (see the case of Larry above), then it doesn't matter how effective it is.

As Christians, we must be wise about the assumptions of secular science when it approaches spiritual interventions. Lawrence (2002) points out four flaws about spirituality research. First, some research comes dangerously close to testing God. An example would studies about the effectiveness of prayer (e.g., Dossey, 1993). Does prayer only “work” when God says yes? Second, much of the spirituality research assumes that all spirituality is the same and it is always good. Kershaw (2000) reminds us that when Hitler heard about the death of



Roosevelt, he assumed God was on the Nazi's side. Clearly, despite the claims of new age proponents (Wilber, 2006), some spiritual beliefs are not benign. Third, much of the spirituality research seems misdirected. Again, the prayer studies have focused solely on supplication to the exclusion of other types of prayer, such as adoration, confession, or thanksgiving (Price, 1974). An interesting hypothesis might be that those who give thanks for both the good and the bad that happens to them have better mental health than those who give thanks for only the good. Finally, much of the spirituality research displays theological naiveté. Koenig (1999), for example, dismisses the age-old problem of theodicy by stating that God simply never causes illness, God only heals! Thus, one of the dangers inherent in EBP for Christians is that it can be overly reductionist when it comes to complex theological issues.

### **Adapting & Applying the Evidence**

Applying and adapting the evidence means modifying the intervention to make it useful for your client's circumstances. This doesn't mean that "anything goes," but it does mean that one should not use a treatment manual robotically (Stewart, Chambless, Baron, 2012). The best treatment is no substitute for poor clinical skills. Kendall and colleagues (1998) have this to say about their own treatment manual for anxiety disorders:

The rampant misunderstanding of treatment manuals, along with the overzealous assumptions about the potency of manuals, combined to reaffirm the need to explicitly state that a manual operationalizes the treatment but practitioners must be able to breathe life into a manual. (p. 197).

How might we adapt evidence-based interventions for religious clients? Let's consider two different paradigms for understanding Christian spirituality. First, Thomas (2000) proposes nine "sacred pathways" to God: naturalists, sensates, traditionalists, ascetics, activists, caregivers, enthusiasts, contemplatives, and intellectuals. Thomas suggests that Christians with different journeys have different spiritual needs. Respectively, some Christians need the grandeur of nature, some need sensual stimulation, others a liturgy, many need simplicity, some need social action, others to serve, many need celebration, some need personal devotions, and others theological profundity. Understanding clients' different spiritual paths may help Christian social workers adapt therapeutic interventions to meet their both their psychosocial and spiritual needs. Second, Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) have proposed six different dichotomies that define Christian churches. These include priestly (worship-centered) vs. prophetic (action-focused); other worldly (eternal life) vs. this-worldly (abundant life); universal (diversity welcomed) vs. particular (in-group advocacy); communal (public-minded) vs. privatistic (congregation-focused); charismatic (spirit-led) vs. bureaucratic (well-managed); accommodating (adjusting to cultural norms) vs. resistant (standing against cultural dilution). Since American Christians typically "church shop" until they find a spiritual home (Mouw, 2008), a church's

stance on these six dichotomies often reflect members' mindsets as well. Understanding the reasons behind clients' different church affiliations may help Christian practitioners adjust their interventions accordingly.

### **Evaluating the Results**

Evaluating the results is important for two reasons. First, the only fact that empirically-supported treatments can tell us is what works for most people. There are two corollaries to this truth: (a) even the best empirically-supported intervention will not work for some clients and (b) the best empirically-supported treatments will make a few clients worse! If we don't routinely evaluate our work, then we will not know if we are helping our clients or not. Second, if we have adapted the intervention prior to application as suggested above, then we have changed the treatment (Raines, 2008). Hopefully, we did not change the core components, but we did alter the original intervention. Once we have modified a treatment and applied it to new people, it is no longer the empirically-supported intervention we found during our investigation of the evidence. We must now evaluate the results to be sure there is still evidence to support its continued use.

Christian social workers may rightly wonder whether spiritual improvement can be reduced to a measurement instrument. For example, evangelical Christians tend to reach the maximum score on Ellison's (1983) Spiritual Wellbeing Scale (Bufford, Paloutzian & Ellison, 1991). Sometimes a qualitative evaluation can be just as helpful. Consider the following case:

Ricardo came to counseling with his family after being released from prison for sexually abusing his own daughter. He claimed to have had a religious conversion while incarcerated. His social worker, having recently read Leavy's (1988) insightful book, asked him about his concept of God. Ricardo explained that he simply thought of God as a gardener who helped people and things grow. There was no more detail that he could provide. Two years later, after being helped to address his own childhood sexual abuse and working hard to make amends to his family, he was asked if his concept of God had changed over the course of treatment (even though it had not been a topic of conversation). Ricardo said that he now viewed God as the CEO of an airline and added that God had placed him in the cockpit of his family plane where his wife was his co-pilot. Their passengers were their children and their mission was to deliver them safely to their destination (adulthood). Clearly, Ricardo had grown spiritually during his treatment even though it was never a focus of his therapy.

Ultimately, concerned and careful tracking of client progress leads to practice-based evidence (PBE). Good social work practice is not linear, it is iterative. PBE comes full-circle to help formulate the next set of answerable questions.

## **Putting it in Perspective**

First and foremost, EBP is just one component of good practice. There are at least five other essential components (Duncan, Miller, Wampold, & Hubble, 2010). First, we should take a strengths perspective (Phil. 4:8) and inquire about clients' functional abilities, resources, skills, talents, and informal support systems (e.g., church participation). This is not easy in EBP since the vast majority of clinical scales use a deficit approach (Raines, 2008). Second, we should work on building a trusting relationship with clients (I Tim. 5:1) through active listening, empathic responding, reaching for feedback, goal consensus, collaboration, and genuine positive regard (Norcross & Wampold, 2011). Third, we should provide positive expectations about the possibilities for change (I Peter 3:15). The instillation of hope begins when practitioners convey an attitude of partnership and possibility for the future (Joyce, MacNair-Semands, Tasca & Ogrodniczuk, 2011). It never minimizes the pain or the problems the client is experiencing nor does it offer the false assurance of guaranteed results (Douthat, 2012). Fourth, we need to acknowledge the limits of our own clinical expertise (Prov. 19:20). We may have learned that eye movement desensitization and retraining (EMDR) works well for clients with post-traumatic stress disorders, but we have no business using EMDR unless we have been carefully supervised and trained. Finally, we must never use a treatment that violates our ethical standards (II Cor. 1:12). Schwartz and Begley (2002) criticize the behavioral therapy known as exposure and response prevention for people who suffer with obsessive-compulsive disorder. The technique involves having clients rank their most feared contaminants. Starting from the least objectionable (e.g., holding a doorknob) to the most (e.g., holding feces), the therapist gradually exposes the client to the dreaded object and then prevents them from washing until their emotional distress subsides. Despite reported success rates of up to 70%, Schwartz and Begley contend that the intervention fails ethically to respect others has having inherent human dignity and worth (Gen. 1:27).

## **Conclusion**

EBP is an essential part of fulfilling our ethical obligations to clients. It enables Christian social workers to provide our best possible service, meet our legal mandates, be good stewards of our resources, and to treat our clients as we would have others treat us. Although the origins of EBP are rooted in positivism, current versions of EBP are more cautious about the limitations of human knowledge. This enables Christian social workers to believe in an objective reality while admitting to epistemic fallibilism. The clinical process of EBP allows us to differentiate between questions answerable by science and those which must be decided on moral-ethical grounds. It recognizes that there are many different search tools and many different sources of knowledge. Christian social workers need to appraise the results of their search with care – not blindly following the criterion of rigor alone, but balancing this with equally important considerations

such as clinical relevance and client values. EBP is not meant to lead to wooden inflexibility, but allows practitioners to adapt interventions to fit the psychosocial and spiritual needs of clients. Finally, evaluating the results allows Christian social workers to take both a quantitative and qualitative approach to monitoring the progress of our work. Whether we use one of the scales mentioned above or use a more narrative approach will depend on the clients we help.

Finally, we recognize that EBP is but one ingredient in a healthy and holistic approach to Christian social work practice. Other essential components include using a strengths perspective, building strong relationships, instilling hope, improving our clinical expertise, and maintaining high ethical standards. If we can do all of these, then we can present ourselves as approved and unashamed social workers (II Tim. 2:15). Hopefully, this brief introduction will inspire others to think deeply and dialogue about the integration of EBP in Christian social work practice.

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# International Social Work: A Faith-Based, Anti-Oppressive Approach

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*Elizabeth Patterson Roe*

With increased global awareness and interdependency, there is great opportunity for social workers to combine their Christian callings and social work skills through international social work efforts at home and abroad. Social work practice, biblical principles and theories of Christian missions offer parallel principles that can shape international social work practice. However, throughout history we have seen the reality of shamefully oppressive international social welfare practices in the name of Christian faith. As we combine Christian faith and social work values in this era of globalization, anti-oppressive practice can inform our approach in order to develop cultural humility and combat unintentionally oppressive practice. My involvement in the process of the development of a faith-based NGO in Romania will provide a case study to challenge Christian social workers toward anti-oppressive practices. Readers will be challenged to be critically reflexive as they engage in international practice whether at home or abroad.

## **Defining International social Work**

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) defines international social work by stating:

The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work (IFSW, n.d.).

The goal of IFSW is to provide a general definition of social work that transcends individual cultures and nations in order to be relevant in international contexts. More specifically to international practice, Healy's (2008) definition of international social work embraces globalization in both local and global contexts, stating that international social work is:

...international professional action and the capacity for international action by the social work profession and its members.

International action has four dimensions: internationally related domestic practice and advocacy, professional exchange, international practice, and international policy development and advocacy” (Healy, 2008, p. 10).

Healy further defined this work as “...international professional action by the social work profession that promotes human rights and social justice within the values and ethics of the profession and Christian faith principles” and noted dimensions are a good starting point, but I believe a Christian faith-based consideration of international social work should include aspects of human rights and social justice principles and the influence of faith on the Christian social worker’s practice. Therefore, I suggest my own definition of international social work for Christians:

...international professional action by the social work profession that promotes human rights and social justice within the values and ethics of the profession and Christian faith principles.

### **Justification for Faith Based International Social Work**

Section 6.01 of the NASW Code of Ethics states:

Social workers should promote the general welfare of society, from local to global levels, and the development of people, their communities, and their environments. Social workers should advocate for living conditions conducive to the fulfillment of basic human needs and should promote social, economic, political, and cultural values and institutions that are compatible with the realization of social justice (NASW, 2008).

This statement reminds us of our ethical obligation as social workers towards not only local, but also global society. This statement, when combined with foundational principles of social work practice of the dignity and worth of the person, service, cultural competence and self-determination, emphasizes the importance of social work practice in global contexts that exhibits sustainable, culturally relevant, and culturally empowering practices.

Biblical foundations and theory of Christian missions combine Christian principles with social work values. Both the Old and New Testament biblical narratives reveal the importance of caring for those in need, including foreigners. Numerous scriptures in the Old Testament call for justice for the poor and oppressed and call for fair treatment of foreigners (including Exodus 23:5, Leviticus 23:22, Isaiah 1:17, Leviticus 25:35, Psalm 82:3, Proverbs 14:31). Jesus bridges the gap between the Old and New Covenants by declaring Isaiah 61 in Luke 4: 18-19, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor (NIV).” Jesus preached and lived a lifestyle of a kingdom of



God that was available for all people and defied cultural norms. He reached out to marginalized cultures and people that Jews typically did not engage. He then commanded his disciples to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15, NIV).” This gospel, or good news, brings both salvation of a kingdom to come and justice for the poor and oppressed in the current realm. Joining together this Great Commission commandment with our social work values encourages Christian involvement in faith-based international social work.

Principles of missions that have developed out of these biblical mandates also inform a Christian perspective on international social work practice. International Christian missions usually involves entering a culture different from one's own, following the incarnational model that Jesus lived during his life on earth (Lingenfelter & Mayer, 2003). Theories of missions emphasize the importance of understanding the culture one is entering for effective relationship building and not automatically identifying dominant cultural values as Christian values (Smith, 1998). Practice of missions also emphasizes the indigenization and contextualization of the church, which strives to mirror social work principles of culturally sensitive self-determination and empowerment. Ideally, this model of missions should indicate that both social work and Christian missions focus on working with and training local cultures to do sustainable work in their own cultural context (Eitel, 1998; Tennent, 2010). International social workers and Christian missionaries both should have the goal of “working themselves out of a job” through a process of empowerment towards developing local leadership to sustain culturally relevant work (Gray, 2006; Tennent, 2010). As we move towards a model of international social work practice that is ethical and faith-based, it is important to first examine the history of international social welfare so we can learn from our past as we develop new international social work paradigms.

### **History of International Social Welfare and the Christian Church**

Ancient cultures were largely homogenous. When in need, people took care of their own family and community groups (Queen, 1922), but when foreigners crossed into new lands, kindness to strangers was considered a virtue in many early cultures and religions, including Hebrew Law (Harnack & Hermann, 1907; Trattner, 1994). Old Testament documents record religious mandates to look after the widow, orphan and foreigner. Social policies existed to meet the needs of the poor, such as the harvest principle of gleaning and the year of the Sabbath and Jubilee that redistributed wealth (Exodus 22-23, Leviticus 25).

Although there were ancient traditions and policies that encouraged just treatment of outsider groups, dominant cultural groups still conquered territories to acquire more land, often oppressing inhabitants and even enslaving those they conquered. Slavery continued to be acceptable practice in the days of the early Christian Church. However, the early church was open to all social classes, including slaves, and encouraged mutual aid, sharing of resources, visiting of prisoners, and the entertainment of strangers while also emphasizing the importance providing for one's own needs (Hnik, 1938; Queen, 1922).

More formal systems of charity developed with the breakdown of relationships within communities and increased migration. As Christianity spread and became more influential under Constantine, charitable practices developed. Xenodochia were established as relief institutions aiding groups needing care, such as the aging, sick, orphans, widows and those in poverty. During this time the power of the bishops in Rome increased. Mackenzie (2010) suggests that the Catholic Church serves as an example of an early international charitable organization with centralized power in Rome joining the church throughout the Western World. Although much Christian charity was done in the name of religion, there has also been much oppression in the name of major world religions, including Christianity (Krehbiel, 1937). Under religious auspices, the Crusades created a Holy War for Christian dominance of the Holy Land, killing tens of thousands along the way (Parry, 1965). As the world expanded through further exploration, international oppression in the name of religion, wealth and power continued. By the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, Western European countries were colonizing lands they had discovered, including what we now call North America, often in the name of Christian faith and missionary zeal (Parry, 1965; Wallace, 1930).

In the 1500's, the Protestant Reformation took place, also impacting systems of charity in countries where Protestant ideas spread internationally. As Protestantism grew, monasteries diminished. The Protestant church revolted against the corruption within the system of papal indulgences and did not offer an alternative method of charity, emphasizing grace and hard work rather than the giving of alms and good works (Harnack & Hermann, 1907; Hnik, 1938; Queen, 1922). These philosophical attitudes that influenced religious charity, along with societal changes that created more poverty led to the development of public relief systems, starting in France, Germany, and Switzerland, then moving to England and eventually the U.S. (Queen, 1922).

As industrialization took place and North America was colonized, those who captured and oppressed slaves justified their actions as a means of personal and economic development (Leiby, 1978). Settlers sought new land at the expense of indigenous people, justifying the oppression as a colonization effort to convert the "savages" to Christianity and modify their culture, while providing new wealth for both themselves and their colonizers (Osterhammel, 1997). Eitel (1998) suggests that "biblically inspired adventurism coincided with secular trends... Economic and political interests stimulated Western powers to engage in imperialistic expansionism (p. 306)." As industrialized countries advanced their own wealth, there became a greater gap between rich and poor nations (Magdoff, 1978).

With both land and industrial expansion of the Americas, massive immigration during the Industrial Revolution brought more European immigrants to North America. A greater diversity of cultures came to North America and new culture groups worked together for the first time (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011; Leiby, 1978). Conditions in cities worsened as populations grew. Recent immigrants often suffered the most as they adjusted to the new land while being displaced from their own cultures and families (Queen, 1922).

## **International Influence on the Development of Social Work**

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries private charities, many religious in nature, were developing in Great Britain to provide direct services for those in need (Friedlander, 1975; Healy, 2008; Queen, 1922). Some of these charities spread across borders internationally and have continued their international influence to this day. These charities include City Missions, Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and the Salvation Army. Many of these organizations developed systems for providing services to the poor that were precursors to later professional social work methods. During the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, religious motivations often shaped social welfare ideologies and work among private charities in Western Europe and North America (Hnik, 1938; Young & Ashton, 1956). The Social Gospel movement emphasized the importance of meeting social needs as an important part of carrying out the Gospel of Jesus Christ, both in domestic and international work (Harnack & Hermann, 1907; Rauschenbusch, 1922). While this movement was being formed, it influenced religious charities and their work, including the work of City Missions in urban slums. City Missions contributed to the development of social services by providing more than immediate relief; they created restaurants, lodging houses, sewing workrooms and nurseries (Leiby, 1978; Valverde, 2008).

Meanwhile, the rising middle and upper class bourgeoisie developed non-sectarian charities without formal religious ties (Valverde, 2008; Queen, 1922). Although these agencies were mostly secular in nature, their leaders often had religious motivations and international involvement (Beauman, 1996; Holden, 1922; Richmond, 1930). Starting in Europe and then moving to North America, both the charity organization societies and settlement house movements worked with immigrants to the U.S. while also spreading their influence internationally during the early development of social work. Jane Addams, who showed deep concern for culturally sensitive practice, also collaborated with early social justice pioneers from other countries visiting Hull House. She also traveled to Europe and Russia and was involved in the international peace movement, leading to her Nobel Peace Prize in 1931 (Addams, 1920, Addams, 1922; Addams, 1910; Bruno, 1957; Jennissen & Lundy, 2011).

As this brief historical analysis indicates, throughout the last two millennia there have been oppressive practices coexisting alongside genuine charitable works within international relations. However, as social welfare services developed in the past two centuries, they have often included service to immigrant populations in the U.S. as well as international populations abroad. The profession of social work also developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century through international learning and mutual exchange of information between nations. Once professional social work took root, the U.S. and Western Europe became dominant forces in the development of social work practice internationally as social work theories and models spread to developing nations (Healy, 2008). In recent years globalization has resulted in new opportunities for international social work.

## International Social Work Today

### *Globalization*

Although international interdependency has been a part of society for centuries, since the 1990's globalization has increased at an exponential rate (Ife, 2000). Modern day globalization encompasses a greater breakthrough in information, technology, and cultural domains (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2015; Mizrahi & Davis, 2008), creating the notion of an increasingly smaller world. Social problems such as human trafficking, global health epidemics, and poverty are no longer contained within national borders or even global regions. This makes global issues local and local issues global. Social workers now confront international problems more directly than in times past, whether working with refugees in the U.S. or through involvement in travel opportunities to use their social work skills to assist in aid and development efforts (Dominelli, 2004; Ife, 2000; Marsiglia & Kulis, 2015; Payne & Askeland, 2008).

One example of globalization's impact on social work practice is the fall of communism that took place in the 1990's in the former Soviet Union and other parts of Eastern Europe. The rest of the world became aware of the social problems that arose during the communist era (Healy, 2008; Perry, Berg, & Krukones, 2011). Social work educators and professionals were called upon to help develop the social welfare system and social work educational systems (Bridges, 2004; Horwath & Shardlow, 2004; Walsch, Griffiths, McGolgan, & Ross, 2005). Christian missions and churches flooded these areas to spread the gospel through evangelism and assistance with physical needs.

These and other opportunities to develop social work in other parts of the world have provided chances to share the gospel, meet human needs in tangible ways, and to share social work resources and knowledge. However, there are real concerns that these new opportunities might result in social workers repeating imperialistic, colonialist practices of times past in a culturally incompetent way (Kendall, 1995). As the U.S. becomes a dominant force in both professional social work and in missions internationally, we must ask ourselves: are we repeating culturally imperialistic models of practice or exhibiting empowering social justice principles?

### *Repeating Colonialist Practices?*

There is much literature that encourages social workers to engage in international social work practice during this era of globalization. However, at the same time, there is much literature cautioning against the oppressive practices that may exist within international social work practice today (Fox, 2010; Gray, 2005; Midgley, 1997; Jonsson, 2010; Payne & Askeland, 2008). In fact, some believe that globalization has brought about more opportunities for international social work, but has benefited the rich nations much more than poor nations. Perhaps it has further perpetuated the risk of colonialistic practices in international social work (Fox, 2010; Jonsson, 2010; Midgley, 1997; Morely, 2004). Colonialist practices take place when Western models are offered to developing nations without being adapted in a culturally relevant manner.

The Western world, with a longer history of social work education and social programs, may have resources to aid less developed regions of the world, yet the history of colonization and cultural imperialism needs to be recognized if these efforts are to empower rather than oppress (Cox & Pawar, 2006). Sadly, colonialist tendencies can even permeate the social work profession as well as Christian international work and missions, despite the values and ethics of social work that would go against this notion of power and dominance (Midgley, 2007). This is particularly true in international social work, when people from Western nations interact with those from less developed communities. Post-communist countries of Eastern Europe provide a great example of this danger of cultural imperialism. When the fall of communism opened up avenues for teaching social work, it was often assumed that experts from the West had the knowledge to bring social work expertise to these nations (Horwath, J. & Shardlow, 2004; Cox & Pawar, 2006).

I believe that both social work values and missions theory embrace cultural empowerment. However, I am aware that both international social work and missions endeavors have often exhibited oppressive practice approaches. I recently conducted research on the impact of international practicums on the participants. These participants worked in both faith-based and secular international practice settings. The majority of participants in the study expressed concern that oppressive tendencies continue to take place in international social work and development settings, both faith-based and secular alike. Some decided they did not want to be involved in international work due to this.

Should these oppressive tendencies stop us from international practice? Definitely not. Both biblical mandates and the values and ethics of social work call us towards international service. Although some in the above-mentioned study were turned off from international involvement due to seeing oppressive practices, others decided to become involved to make a difference. The majority of participants developed cultural humility and anti-oppressive practice perspectives due to their desires to see indigenous leadership empowered through international relationships.

If we desire to fulfill our ethical obligation to the broader society and Christ's calling to live out the gospel, we must work towards empowering models of practice that truly exhibit biblical, missions and social work principles that promote dignity and worth of the individual, self-determination, and culturally relevant practice. Anti-oppressive practice is a model that I believe Christian social workers can apply.

## **Anti-Oppressive Practice**

### *Power and oppression*

Anti-oppressive practice (AOP) is a common method in English-speaking countries that recognize oppression, including Canada, Great Britain and Australia. However, anti-oppressive practice has not been as common among social workers from the United States (VanWormer, 2004). Anti-oppressive social work

is based on critical theory. Critical theory acknowledges oppression throughout history and shows a concern for oppressive structures that exist today, and the need for change that reduces oppression and leads towards empowerment (Creswell, 2007; Fook, 2002). AOP acknowledges the power differentials that pervade society and the oppressive structures that exist at various levels of society, further marginalizing people outside dominant cultures (Darlymple & Burke, 2006; Dominelli, 2002; Mullaly, 2002). Mullaly (2002) takes a critical approach to anti-oppressive practice, putting emphasis on the structural inequalities that exploit and oppress the less dominant groups, stating that:

...both the structural forces and human agency are integral in developing an understanding of oppression and anti-oppressive practices. Both structures and individuals are able to exercise power. However it is patently obvious that a social institution will be able to exercise more power than an individual, and that an individual from the dominant group will, for the most part, be able to exercise more political, social, and economic power than members of a subordinate group (p. 20).

Anti-oppressive practice also recognizes that these acts of oppression do exist at personal, cultural and societal levels (Mullaly, 2002). Oppression is described at the personal level as “thoughts, attitudes and behaviors that predict negative prejudgments of subordinate groups (p. 52).” This oppression is usually based on stereotypes and often happens at a subconscious level. When traveling internationally, westerners often assume a stereotypical viewpoint of those from the culture, whether positive or negative, and often need to set aside these viewpoints to learn and understand the reality and deeper meaning of their actions. This requires taking on the role of being a learner and our client as the expert on their cultural context (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2015).

Anti-oppressive practice theory also acknowledges the power differential between the social worker and the client system and the potential for the social worker to be unintentionally oppressive (Clifford & Burke, 2009; Mullaly, 2002; Dominelli 2002). When social workers and students from developed countries host people from other countries in mutual exchange or travel to other countries to practice or educate, they normally go with the best intentions, hoping to make at least a short term difference and perhaps a lasting change. By bringing Western ideologies and interventions to international social work education, practice, and policy, social workers must be careful not to oppress when intending to empower.

Anti-oppressive practice also brings awareness to privilege as a factor in oppression. Those involved in international practice must be aware of the power differentials that exist between dominant nations and developing nations at the personal, cultural and societal levels and the potential oppression felt by those from nations with less power and privilege (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2015). Healy (2008) notes the criticisms of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) codes

of ethics. Some would argue that there is a “Western bias” to these codes in that they leave out the values of less individualistic, community oriented societies.

### *Cultural Humility*

To recognize privilege, unfair power differentials, and the importance of taking on the role of the learner requires social workers to develop cultural humility. In social work we often discuss cultural competency as a model for cross-cultural practice; more recent literature has critiqued cultural competency models as causing further oppression due to the lack of recognition of the uniqueness of the individual, the heterogeneity of culture and the client as the expert on their own lives. An alternative to cultural competency is cultural humility (Este, 2007; Hook, Owen & Utsey, 2013). Cultural humility includes being focused on the parts of the cultural identity that are most important to the client and approaching the relationship with a lack of superiority on the part of the helper. It does not assume competence based in prior experience with the culture, but with an openness that is respectful and work that is collaborative in nature (Hook et al., 2013).

### *Anti-Oppressive Connections to Christian Faith: Freedom for the Oppressed*

So how does anti-oppressive, culturally humble practice fit within the context of Christian faith? There are numerous scriptures throughout the Bible that speak against oppression and towards social justice and care for the marginalized. Proverbs 14:31 expresses, “whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for His maker (NIV), revealing the importance of recognizing ways that we are unintentionally oppressive. Isaiah 1:17 tells us to “Seek justice. Defend the oppressed (NIV).”

As we seek to work against oppressive tendencies, we must come into the culture with an attitude of learning and listening. In taking Jesus as a model for incarnational living, Lingenfelter and Mayers (2003) state:

It is noteworthy that God did not come as a fully developed adult, he did not come as an expert, he did not come as a ruler, or even as part of a ruling family or a dominant culture. He was an infant, born into a humble family in a conquered and subjugated land.... Jesus was a learner. He was not born with a knowledge of language or culture. In this respect, he was an ordinary child... In Luke 2:45, we read that Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the temple, listening to the teachers of the law and asking them questions. This is a profound statement: The Son of God was sitting in the temple, listening and questioning (p.16).

In this process, Jesus did not lose his identity as God, but also took on the identity of a Jewish man. This incarnational model can challenge us to realize we can gain through identifying with another culture, while still recognizing the value of our own cultural identity.

As Christian social workers, we are challenged to take on our biblical mandate to share the gospel internationally through the use of our social work

knowledge and skills. Anti-oppressive practice methods can give us a model to bring “freedom for the oppressed” at the personal, cultural and structural levels of society. My experiences with this process taking place in Romania will provide a case example.

### **The Case Example of Romania**

#### *Romania: A culture between identities*

The history of Romanians is a permanent search for identity, a permanent attempt to define itself. It is a silent drama, which each succeeding generation has lived anew. The country of Romania does not belong either to Central Europe, or the Balkans, or Western Europe, or the vast Slavic body of the East. It lies at their crossroads. Its history is itself a history of borders; on the outskirts of the Romanian Empire or the Byzantine Empire, as well as the outer limits of the Ottoman, Russian, or later on, Western expansion (Bulei, 2005, p. 5).

Like much of Eastern Europe, Romania has experienced many border changes and struggles for identity. Anti-oppressive social work practice acknowledges the importance of identity and the fact that struggle with identity can act as a source of oppression. Dominelli (2002) discusses how anti-oppressive practice is “integrally involved in the process of contested identities” (p. 39). One’s personal sense of identity and how others perceive them can impact the ability to form non-oppressive relationships. The communist era continued to act as a source of oppression for Romania and its people.

Romania is beautiful nation, rich in natural resources and diverse ethnic groups. Unfortunately, much of this wealth was destroyed after World War II during the communist period lasting until 1989 (Bachman, 1991; Bulei, 2005). The final ten years of communism brought the worst of the deprivation under the rule of the final dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu. In 1989, Ceausescu reported that over the previous ten years he had paid off the national debt by exporting Romania’s natural resources. During this time period there were few resources left for the survival of the people. Basic commodities were rationed, leaving people in long lines without the bread they hoped for at the other end. Resources of electricity, heat and gas were also limited. While this was happening, in order to increase the labor force, abortion and birth control were considered illegal and families were given incentives to have more children (Bachman, 1991). This gave rise to increased numbers of children abandoned to the care of the government institutions, similar to the rest of Eastern Europe. The government claimed it could better care for children in institutions, rather than distribute resources to families. (Zamfir, 1997). Individuals, groups, and social classes who did not remain loyal to communist ideals were oppressed, with their employment removed or, in many cases, put in prison. (Zamfir & Ionescu, 1994).



From 1959 to 1990 there were no schools of social work, as the communist government did not recognize the need for solutions to social problems but believed these problems would resolve themselves (Zamfir and Ionescu, 1994). Like in the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries, the fall of dictators in the late 1980s brought hope. However, there remained an awareness of the devastating effects that communism had on the country and its people. After the people's revolution in December of 1989, Romania's social problems were revealed to the rest of the world, bringing foreign aid and development efforts into Romania. This included government aid from North America and Europe, grassroots efforts, churches, and secular and faith-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It was during this time that the seeds of Veritas took root.

### *The development of Veritas, a Faith-Based NGO in Romania*

Anti-oppressive practice methods that take a critical approach to policy and practice are very relevant for societies in transition, such as Eastern European nations. As work is done at the structural level, anti-oppressive practice methods can help the voice of the powerless to gain power at the societal level. Alternative service organizations with "bottom up" development efforts are often key in anti-oppressive practice at this level. Veritas is a prime example of a grassroots NGO developed to meet community needs. It became the most active NGO with the widest variety of services within its community.

In the early 1990s American students at Eastern Nazarene College in Quincy, Massachusetts, who heard about the devastating effects of communism in Romania went there to serve. Their work led Eastern Nazarene College to develop the Romanian Studies Program so that students (including me) could spend semesters in Romania studying and serving the needs of the community. While taking on active roles as learners, students and American volunteers were able to develop programs with the aid of Romanian translators, particularly with abandoned and at-risk children. The director of the Romanian Studies Program, Dorothy Tarrant, believed in the community and knew that a legitimate NGO would need to be created for sustainable development and indigenous leadership. Once Veritas was developed as an NGO, Romanian staff could be hired legally to sustain the work.

Independent Romanian leadership did not develop immediately. The history of oppressive structures influenced the local people and a very deliberate anti-oppressive process of empowerment needed to take place; "a process through which oppressed people reduce their alienation and sense of powerlessness and gain greater control over all aspects of their lives and social environment (Fook, p. 179)." As part of this process, I went back to Romania after receiving my MSW degree to coordinate the social services, which had expanded to include children, families, older adults, and people with disabilities. Educational and community development programs were evolving to serve the local community, including small business development and later a program to address domestic violence. Romanian staff were leading these programs, but still hesitant to take on further leadership.

Throughout my time in Romania, I witnessed many other NGO's and Christian ministries developing. I saw both oppressive and anti-oppressive practices within these NGOs, and even within Veritas at times. While many people came with the best intentions, I observed some Westerners putting stipulations on how aid was given, making Romanians more dependent on them. Others were encouraging Romanians to utilize the aid towards sustainability. At the policy level, new social welfare policies were developed after Western models, restricting and sometimes eliminating services that were effectively meeting needs.

These stipulations were not empowering Romanians, but further controlling them. We realized that if Veritas truly believed in the social work and Christian missions values of self-determination, empowerment and indigenization, we must be aware of the unintentional oppression that can take place and deliberately work against this process. As Mullaly (2002) suggests, the first step in this process was acknowledging the power that we had as Western social workers and missionaries by the very nature of our cultural history and identity as well as the economic, social and educational opportunities we had experienced. We needed to utilize these opportunities to deliberately empower, rather than unintentionally oppress.

Romanians learned how to be social service workers and leaders through first working alongside American students and volunteers. One method of empowerment throughout history has been education and certainly, that was the case with Veritas employees. Romanian staff developed social work skills that allowed them to take on more and more leadership and become directors of their own programs. Veritas helped them receive formal training by supporting Romanians to get degrees in social work and related fields. Social work was a new profession in Romania and many of our staff did not have university degrees. As Romanians took over as leaders, roles shifted and American students and volunteers began to work alongside Romanians to learn from them.

Many Romanians were satisfied to let foreigners lead them, which I believe was largely due to the cycle of oppression and mistrust they experienced under communism, struggles with their own professional identities, and lack of trust in themselves and their own people. Therefore, in this process it was important that we developed trusting relationships with local Romanians who could freely voice their opinions and see we valued them. These and other small steps showed Romanians we valued their expertise and trusted their leadership. Our confidence in them helped them to trust themselves as leaders and to take on higher levels of leadership.

As this process of trust is developed and the international social worker has the opportunity to utilize skills and theoretical bases of social work, the client systems must be agents of their own change, at the personal, cultural and societal levels. The international social worker can help facilitate this change, but practice must be "critically reflexive," allowing the client system to be in control so the pattern of oppression is stopped (Fook, 2002; Mullaly, 2002). During the development of Veritas, a German social worker, Bianca Duemling (2003), came to serve with Veritas as part of her graduate work. She surveyed

the Romanian staff to see how they perceived the relationships within a foreign developed NGO and to discover if there were oppressive relations. This was an uncomfortable process at first, but a valuable anti-oppressive practice method.

Results of her study indicated Romanian's appreciation and desire for Western involvement during this time of transition, due to the benefits of training and education, mutual exchange of ideas, and the modeling principles of equality and human rights principles for all members of society. Yet Romanian staff expressed concerns over their dependence on Western funds and the imposition of Western values at times. Interviewees also mentioned the dilemma of Westerners taking away local responsibility, and imposing their own Western values and stereotypes in an oppressive manner. Many, but not all, of their examples related to short-term involvement of Westerners, but their opinions needed to be taken seriously by long-term Western leadership if we were to act in an anti-oppressive manner. In order to maximize the positive relationships and minimize oppressive tendencies, Romanians suggested that long-term commitment, better communication, and cultural sensitivity were all necessary. The importance of Westerners acting as mentors and allowing Romanians to take over leadership was also mentioned as an important part of the development of Veritas. Duemling's research helped the staff voice some concerns and allowed us to make changes, including a more informative orientation for newcomers and adapting the work schedule to be more culturally sensitive to Romanians' expectations. This research and the resulting practice approaches enabled the staff to see that their opinions were valued and respected as part of the process of the development of Veritas.

The opinions of Veritas staff confirm what we know about anti-oppressive practice methods applied to international social work practice. The social worker must not come into the relationship with preconceived ideas of how to help but, in mutual learning, recognize the client system as the expert of its own situation (Mullaly, 2002; Dominelli, 2002). Some degree of withdrawal from the dominant group does need to take place, allowing the client system to know you are available when consultation is needed. As the Romanian leadership was put in place, we foreign leaders took on a behind-the-scenes-role, but made ourselves available as needed. Veritas hired a Romanian director of social services, Petronia Popa, in 2006, who took over completely when the founder of Veritas retired in 2010.

As Mullaly (2002) warns, this process should not be romanticized; it was not simple. Mistakes were made along the way and deliberate steps towards anti-oppressive practice were needed. Although Romanian leadership has taken over at the organizational level, anti-oppressive practice methods must still be applied since much of the funding still comes from outside of Romania. There is an American advisory board that supports this funding and we must still be careful to use deliberate anti-oppressive methods in continuing to support Veritas in its important work.

As Veritas works towards sustainability, it continues to struggle for recognition by local and county governments and often feels oppressed and marginalized

in this process. Progress has been made over the last few years though, as Veritas staff work towards accessing more local funding. Veritas employees and clients are also being empowered as local leaders to speak for change at the societal level.

Coalition building is also a valuable aspect of anti-oppressive practice. As this has happened between Veritas and other NGO's in Romania, Veritas staff became involved in national coalitions on issues related to child advocacy and were part of creating policies that addressed child welfare and domestic violence at the national level.

Romania became a member of the European Union in 2007. This Europeanization brings new social problems and new struggles for identity. Prices have risen in Romania with little salary increases for the average Romanian. Many Romanians have migrated to other European countries to find work, dividing families and sometimes leaving children in the care of grandparents or neighbors, causing a new kind of abandonment (Personal Communication,

D. Tarrant, May 2013). European Union grants have offered funding for projects that promote Europeanization and democracy building (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). Healy (2008) suggests that this funding to promote Europeanization is a positive opportunity for professional exchange between the former Eastern bloc and Western Europe, yet admits there are criticisms of this funding as "Eurocentric." This brings about a new challenge for Romania today in its struggle between national identity and Europeanization of its culture (Dragoman, 2007). This presents the question: is Europeanization oppressive to Romania's development as a democracy and to its continual struggle for identity as a marginalized outgroup on the edge of Europe?

### **Self-Reflection**

Self-reflection is an important tool to use when practicing in international settings, whether while working with international groups domestically or with clients in an international setting. Critical perspectives on multiculturalism hold the view "that self-reflection promotes change of perspective" (Sinseros, p, 5, 2008). If we desire to develop empowering international partnerships we must start as a learner. Our perspectives will change, enabling us to be more effective practitioners. Through this we can gain the trust of our international partners and mutual exchange can lead to empowering international social work and development efforts. The following questions can help you to critical self-reflect on your international social work efforts.

- How am I learning? What am I learning (language, customs and culture, history of oppression and empowerment)?
- Have I gained the community's trust? Are they honest with me? Do they ask for my help?
- How am I losing some of my own culture and gaining some of the culture? How am I expressing cultural humility?
- How am I facilitating the development of local leadership?

- How am I incorporating what I have learned to create empowering partnerships?
- Are local people involved in ultimately making decisions and developing of culturally relevant models of practice?
- What am I doing to intentionally hand over any leadership roles I have to a local person or people?
- What am I doing to seek honest feedback from local indigenous people to see if anti-oppressive practice is taking place?
- How am I assisting others international workers (short and long term) to be anti-oppressive in their relationships and practice?
- What mistakes have I/we made? What can we learn from these mistakes?

## **Conclusion**

Gray's (2005) words summarize the value of international social work within the paradigm of anti-oppressive practice:

International social work is not just about the spread of professional social work across the globe, it is also about the development of practices that are relevant in local contexts. As such, different forms of social work emerge and take hold, molded and shaped by the social, political, economic circumstances, the history and culture of particular contexts, as well as prevailing social work knowledge and values... There is much of value in Western thinking about social work, but this must not stifle the wisdom and experience of local cultures ... International social work, in being responsive to diverse contexts and sensitive to local cultures, must, of necessity, be a flexible entity, open to new forms of social work evolving as it responds to local problems and needs in culturally appropriate and sensitive ways.... (p. 236).

As Christian social workers it is important that we not ignore the need and opportunity for international social work practice both in international contexts and with international populations in the U.S.; however, we must take into consideration both Christian faith and social work values that work against oppression and towards culturally empowering partnerships. This often requires cultural humility on the part of the dominant culture in order to develop trusting, empowering relationships that are anti-oppressive at the individual, cultural and societal levels. Without this paradigm of practice, international social workers run the risk of further oppression of people, cultures and societies that have the potential to offer much to the globalized world of social work practice. As international social workers commit themselves to developing the relationships that can allow anti-oppressive methods of practice to develop, not only will the country or culture of focus benefit, but the social work profession as a whole will benefit from this mutual exchange and from newly developed indigenous, culturally relevant practice methods.

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# Preaching and the Trauma of HIV and AIDS: A Social Work Perspective<sup>1</sup>

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*Frederick J. Streets*

Parish ministers, particularly those who serve in troubled, neglected inner-city neighborhoods, experience extreme stress dealing with the overwhelming number and types of crises, violence, abuse, and disruption that confront their congregants and communities. As the leader of the church and often the only “glue” holding a community together, they take on multiple leadership roles for which they have not been prepared and which are not recognized by their denominations. They are religious leaders and personal counselors, urban planners and educators, community leaders and political negotiators working on behalf of their community, and corporate leaders interacting with church boards and officers. Delivering sermons weekly and sometimes several in one day is one of the most important tasks these pastors engage. The act of preaching is a vital part of many Christian worship traditions. Listening to sermons is, for many Christian worshipers, a significant means of their receiving guidance for how they live and cope with challenges. Those who preach imply or explicitly share their understanding of what the Christian faith has to offer those who suffer physically and emotionally. This form of pastoral care provided by preaching is not to be minimized in the life of those who listen to sermons.

Rob (name changed to maintain anonymity), a single African American man in his early 30s, sat in the pew during morning worship at his local church. His Pastor shared with the congregation that the sermon he was going to preach that morning would be one of several over a period of time addressing the issue of HIV and AIDS. Rob and his family had been active members of this church for several years and this was the first time he heard his minister mention HIV and AIDS. His announcement surprised and frightened Rob. He was worried about what the minister would say about HIV and AIDS. Rob knew at the time (the early 1980s) that most people who were aware of HIV and AIDS associated it

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<sup>1</sup> Portions of this revised essay were initially presented in *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 29(3), 2008, a journal of the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa where the author served as a Fulbright Senior Scholar.

with gay men and that many people judge the sexual actions of gay people as promiscuous and immoral at the very least.

Rob decided after hearing his Pastor's sermons about AIDS to make an appointment to see him. He disclosed when he met with him that he was infected with HIV. Rob's family knew of his conditions and was very supportive of him. The Pastor asked him why he had not shared this with him sooner. Rob replied that it was not until he heard the sermons about AIDS that he thought it would be "safe" for him to reveal his status to his Pastor.

People infected and affected by HIV and AIDS who hear sermons being preached often experience a range of emotions from safety to punishment and everything in between. Many people living with HIV and AIDS and those who care for and about them also carry the weight of this disease and they come to worship and sit in the pews and listen to sermons. There are also those infected and affected by HIV and AIDS who avoid attending church services and hearing sermons because they fear those with a HIV or AIDS status will be condemned through the sermons.

The advances in medical interventions and the use of antiretroviral drugs since the early 1980s enable people with HIV to live longer and healthier lives. These interventions that would have made Rob's living with HIV possible and less painful had not been developed in the 1980s during his ordeal. ARV medication taken by many people today who are living with HIV enables them to appear as though they are not carrying the virus. They however, do have to cope with living with HIV. This presents them with significant emotional and spiritual challenges. They often face these obstacles alone because they are afraid of what people—including those in the church—would think of them if they knew they were HIV positive.

### **The Clergy and HIV and AIDS**

Rob asked his Pastor while he was visiting him in the hospital "do you love me?" His minister said, "Yes, as a brother in Christ." Rob died a few days later. A new pastoral relationship between them had emerged over time that ended with Rob's death. His Pastor learned from Rob how the physical, emotional and spiritual suffering of those infected with HIV/AIDS is compounded by the stigma many people assigned to those living with HIV/AIDS which make them feel like modern day lepers. Through his disclosure that he had AIDS, Rob's congregation came to better understand the impact HIV/AIDS has on those living with the disease, their family, and the congregation. They initiated an AIDS outreach ministry in his honor and memory.

In 2010-2011, I informally interviewed 20 African American Pastors in my local community. They, like most clergy, see themselves as agents of healing spiritual and emotional wounds of their parishioners and as advancing social and economic justice for the wider community. However, some members of African American churches and the community at large perceive many Black Pastors and their congregations as uninviting and unwelcoming of those who

suffer from the stigma of HIV and AIDS. Members of the clergy also have fears about HIV/AIDS. One Pastor told me (Interview #3, Streets, 2008) that “HIV/AIDS is a taboo! I think if I open the debate I will be fired.” Ministerial colleagues used to tell me that they would stand out in the hall of the room in the hospital when they went to visit a parishioner who had AIDS because they were afraid they would catch the disease if they touched or were in close proximity to the congregant they were calling upon.

Perceptions like this can hinder churches from using the extensive social networks of their congregations as a vital social capital resource to promote awareness and understanding of HIV and AIDS among members of their congregations and the community. Here are a few impressions from those interviews. The names of the Pastors have been changed to assure their confidentiality.

Reverend Paul established and became the Senior Pastor of his Christian church almost thirty years ago. The active membership of about 100 people is predominantly African American and the church is located in an urban area. During our interview, he said something that surprised me: he has never during his ministry brought up nor has anyone come to him with questions or concerns about HIV or AIDS. However, a member of his staff told me prior to the interview that the pastor has unknowingly been assisting a friend who is ill with AIDS.

Pastor Grace has been the Pastor of her small congregation for almost ten years. She has never addressed the topic of HIV or AIDS directly in a sermon because she was concerned about how members of her congregation would react. She wondered if they would think that she or someone else in the congregation must have the virus or disease if she raised the topic in such a public way. She collaborated with a local HIV and AIDS educational advocacy group to hold a workshop at her church about HIV and AIDS. A person in her congregation confided in her that he was HIV-positive but unwilling to tell his partner. Both are members of this same congregation.

Reverend Activist, during a recent annual observance of AIDS Day, focused on the HIV and AIDS crisis with a special musical program hosted by his church. Free HIV and AIDS screening was offered in the church basement to anyone wishing to be tested during the program. Minister Activist took the test and announced his healthy result to the congregation as a way of emphasizing by example the importance of knowing your HIV status.

These anecdotes reflect the range of reactions among African American clergy to the presence of HIV and AIDS in their community. Three preliminary findings about HIV and AIDS strongly emerged from my initial interview of twenty Pastors in an urban community:

1. Some Pastors have provided pastoral care to individuals living with HIV or AIDS, but this activity was not known by their congregation at large.
2. Some Pastors have basic information about HIV and AIDS. Each of the pastors interviewed wanted to enhance their existing or develop a formal HIV and AIDS ministry.

3. Many of the congregations have what they describe as “wellness” ministries that are aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles and could incorporate an HIV and AIDS awareness component.

Ministers can use their church networks to create healing environments by providing information about preventing the spread of HIV and AIDS, challenging the stigma associated with having the virus or disease, and supporting those infected with HIV or AIDS in seeking appropriate medical information and treatment. Pastors can use their status as leaders and the social capital of their congregations to establish or enhance their churches' HIV and AIDS ministry programs. They can explore ways of linking their congregations with other faith-based and public HIV and AIDS health resources in their community. A city-wide or community HIV and AIDS faith-based advisory council could offer the opportunity for those involved with HIV and AIDS outreach ministries to mutually support one another in this work and advocate for the resources and policies needed to enhance the quality of life of those with HIV or AIDS. Framing the discussion with the clergy about HIV and AIDS within a larger context of health and disparities in health care treatment or access to health services can help them to be more open to considering how to promote HIV and AIDS awareness among their parishioners.

### **Preaching as Pastoral Care and Persons Living with HIV and AIDS**

There is a long and rich history of the power of Christian prophetic preaching about social justice and reform. The preaching of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, motivated people to challenge racism and end legal segregation in America. Archbishop Desmond Tutu in South Africa, through his preaching, helped to rally the people there to end apartheid and established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that has become an international model for peace making among former enemies. The sermons people hear at their weekly worship services and during revival gatherings can play a significant role in helping people living with HIV and AIDS to cope with this reality. Many people around the world infected and affected by HIV and AIDS experience the trauma of having this disease.

Everyone who delivers a sermon has to be mindful of the context in which the sermon is given. The culture, language, gender, age, and history of the people to whom one preaches are for them the filters through which they interpret the meaning of what they hear in a sermon. I have reflected elsewhere upon some of the ideas about trauma and preaching shared here (Streets 2005). The focus of this article is upon some of the important *general* things for those who preach about HIV and AIDS to consider about trauma and the traumatic affect of living with HIV and AIDS when preaching specifically about AIDS. These considerations will help the pastoral care dimension of preaching to emerge in a sermon in the speaker's effort to help those with HIV and AIDS to live with hope. It is important for us to remember that people living with HIV and AIDS

and those who support them have much to teach us about resilience, human dignity, and our need to care for one another. Addressing the issue of HIV and AIDS is also a way of emphasizing the social justice and transformation themes found within the Christian preaching tradition.

### **HIV, AIDS, and Trauma**

Those who become infected with HIV are confronted with the task faced by anyone who experiences a traumatic event in their life. “Narrating one’s life is about finding structure, coherence, and meaning in life. Trauma, in contrast, is about the shattering of life’s narrative structure, about a loss of meaning—the traumatized person has ‘lost the plot’” (van der Merwe & Gobodo-Madikizela, 2008, p. 6). The authors van der Merwe and Gobodo-Madikizela (2008) also suggest that trauma can be historical, meaning a “single huge disaster, which can be personal (for instance, a rape) or communal (like a flood); or structural trauma, which refers to a pattern of continual and continuing traumas” (p. 11).

The word trauma is taken from the Greek *tramatos*, meaning an injury from an external source. McGee (2005, p. xii) reminds us that

trauma is the physical, spiritual, and emotional wound caused by circumstances that are, in some way, a threat to life... Trauma changes our assumptions of identity, safety, and relationship with the world. Healing from trauma requires consciously knowing, as part of our life and self-concept, the unspeakable, the terrifying, and the incomprehensible realities of what people do to each other. Spirituality and trauma are both defining elements of our humanity. The response to traumatic circumstances is life preserving. It reflects the tenacity of human spirit and its powerful desire to survive in spite of threat and injury.

Echoing a perspective on the meaning of trauma similar to McGee’s, van der Merwe and Gobodo-Madikizela (2008, p. 39) write: “The essence of psychological trauma is loss: loss of language, meaning, order, and sense of continuity. Trauma is a shattering of the basic organizing principles necessary to construct meaningful narratives about ourselves, others and our environment.” Many people living with HIV and AIDS are traumatized by having the disease and depending upon the extent of their own psychological state, family and community and medical sources of support they may experience on-going trauma by being rejected by others and feeling helpless and hopeless due to their status in the community as a person who has HIV or AIDS.

Discriminating against those living with HIV and AIDS, stigmatizing them—making them into “objects” rather than seeing them as people with a virus or disease is a form of violence that further traumatizes them. Jones (2009, p. 155) reminds us: “If imagination is the place where grace meets sin...then how do we come to grips with the fact that a mind disordered and diseased by violence might

well be one in which the very ‘imagining’ mechanism necessary for redemption has been broken...beyond repair.” People living with HIV and AIDS who listen to sermons are listening for a restorative grace.

### **Know Thyself**

It is important that members of the clergy who preach and/or provide pastoral counseling to others concerned about HIV and AIDS be as informed as possible about the nature, causes, and means for preventing contracting or spreading the virus. It is also essential that the clergy examine their own attitudes, values, and behaviors regarding their views about sex and sexuality, what it means to be a man, women, or male or female or child. The preacher may encounter a variety of perspectives others have about sex that are unfamiliar to them and which may make them feel uncomfortable. The views of those to whom they preach or provide counseling may be different from their own understanding of sexual behavior and HIV and AIDS.

### **The Meanings We Give to HIV and AIDS**

HIV and AIDS means so many different things to people whether or not they are infected with the virus or see themselves as affected in some way by it. HIV and AIDS are for some people synonymous with death. It is a disease that carries very complicated social implications and has multiple factors and layers of meanings that are shaped by the context in which people live. We have an essential understanding of how the virus is contracted and spread from one human being to another. We know basically how the HIV virus works in the human body once it is contracted and the medical interventions needed to control the virus so that a person with HIV is protected from moving into having AIDS. The meaning we give to HIV and AIDS or having the virus or AIDS itself is far more challenging to discern and respond to than is our scientific knowledge about the disease. A sermon about HIV and AIDS has to address both our scientific understanding of and the meaning we give to HIV and AIDS. People living with HIV and AIDS give their own interpretation of what it means to them to have the HIV virus or AIDS disease.

### **HIV, AIDS, Identity, and Variation of Experience**

People with HIV or AIDS react differently to the trauma of having HIV or AIDS. They do not all have the same needs in their effort to cope with what has happened to them. Their response to being diagnosed with HIV depends upon their gender, personality, support of family and friends they receive and the socio-economic condition under which they live. Some will exhibit signs of depression or other emotional reactions such as anger, denial, and despair as the reality of having HIV settles in. Women of childbearing age who have HIV or AIDS, for example, have much to consider when deciding whether or

not to have children. This struggle goes to the heart of what some of these women may consider as the core of their identity—to be a mother. What it means to be a woman, a mother, and how to prevent mother to child transmission of HIV are questions faced by many women living with HIV and AIDS. Women have to answer questions like these and negotiate for themselves the complex cultural context which shapes these issues and their responses to HIV and AIDS and their relationship with men, their families, communities and others. All persons with HIV need medical attention and counseling as they adjust to living with HIV.

Those who preach about HIV and AIDS need to be sensitive to the fact that some people with HIV contracted the virus through being raped or physically or sexually abused or tortured. In some situations they also witnessed loved ones and friends undergo similar experiences and they have seen some of them die as a result. The emotional struggles they have interact with the conditions under which they contracted HIV. The circumstances under which they contracted HIV may have great salience for how they feel about themselves, life, and God, adding to their burden of living with the disease. A person, for example, who contracted the HIV virus as a result of being promiscuous and not practicing safe sex may feel more damage to the ego than a faithful wife who is infected with the HIV virus by a husband she did not realize was being unfaithful to her by having unprotected sex with someone else.

The Pastor, through preaching about HIV and AIDS touches the memory someone with HIV or AIDS has of the context in which they became infected with HIV. It has been my experience that whenever I have preached on issues that emotionally resonate with people, the number of people requesting a pastoral meeting always increased during the week after I have preached the sermon. As preachers, we must be prepared for this possibility. The following suggestions are offered for your consideration when planning to preach about HIV and AIDS and reaching out to those in the congregation who are infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.

### **Some Considerations for Preaching**

Pastors and those who preach will need to consider broadening their understanding of their role by learning some of the basic psychosocial methods of assessing someone's emotional and spiritual well-being and its relationship to the way a person's culture influences their self-understanding, ethnicity, gender role, sexual orientation, theology, and worship, and how their faith helps them to live a meaningful life. Sharing one's feelings and experiences with a member of the clergy and understanding that there may be a link between thinking, emotions, and physical wellbeing are new perspectives, concepts and values for many people, including the clergy. Collaborating and learning from pastoral counselors and other mental health professionals in our community is a good way for Pastors and preachers to increase their knowledge and pastoral counseling skills. It is also an opportunity for counselors to learn from the clergy more

about pastoral care and the important role that religion and spirituality plays in helping people to cope (Bilich, Bonfiglio, & Carlson, 2000).

Persons who wish to tell their HIV or AIDS story are not necessarily further traumatized by doing so; this can be for them an act of self-empowerment. The HIV and AIDS story of some people is not their life's story—there is more to who they are than the HIV they carry. They are not without strengths and capacities for living. By allowing enough time to listen to those who come to them seeking pastoral advice or help, clergy can discover some of these strengths. It takes courage for people to come to a social worker or minister and share their pain. It is therefore important that they feel welcomed and safe. Learning to listen well to those who come to a counselor underscores how much they can teach the social worker or minister about their pain and possible ways of successfully dealing with it. How people interpret an event and the meaning they give to it is crucial in understanding how they are dealing with that experience. Pastors can also be helpful by being a bridge for those in need to additional sources of social and psychological care available in their community. Knowing when and how to refer someone for additional support is an important part of pastoral care stewardship.

It is important to note that there are people from all walks of life and sexual orientations represented among those living with HIV. HIV and AIDS is a disease of intimacy. The transmission of the disease by one person who has the virus to another occurs when they engage in unsafe sex practices or other activity, such as the sharing of intravenous needles, in which the blood, semen or other bodily fluids of the infected person enters into the blood stream of the other. One cannot talk about HIV and AIDS without causing people to consider their attitudes, beliefs, and sexual practices. In many societies and cultures it is taboo to publicly deal with sex and sexuality. These matters are thought by many people to be personal and only discussed in private.

### **Empowerment through Biblical Associations**

Some people who suffer from HIV or AIDS associate themselves with the experiences of some of those found in the Bible such as Job, Jacob and Esau, Joseph, Judas, Peter, Ruth, Mary and Martha, Christian martyrs, and the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Having HIV or AIDS affects their identity, their views and beliefs about God, and ideas of fairness and justice (example: the story of Job), family betrayal like in the stories of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 27 and 28 and Joseph in Genesis 37, devotion in the story of Ruth, the betrayal and denial of Judas Iscariot and Peter found in the Gospels, grief and hope as in the loss of Lazarus and Mary and Martha's response to his death, and mercy and humiliation like Christ experienced while being judged and convicted and then executed to death on a cross. I have often heard Christians, Jews and Muslims alike say that "God does not put anymore (on them) than (they) can bear." These are some of the thoughts and images some people have in mind when they reflect upon their suffering and also while listening to sermons. It



would be important for the social worker to explore their clients' associations with these images.

### **Who Am I Now with HIV and AIDS?**

People who have undergone substantial damage to their psyche and soul may answer a question or share a reflection by indicating what they would have said before the event and contrast it with how they see things now after contracting HIV and AIDS. (One of the exceptions to this is, of course, children born with HIV. They are born with the disease and grow into the knowledge of what HIV and AIDS means and why they need certain medications to remain well.) The trauma of becoming infected with HIV can divide a person's sense of self and of time and history. Wholeness for many of them is not about uniting these two halves but discerning how to live with their sense of self and memories of how life was for them before contracting HIV and then after becoming infected with HIV. They now have to make sense of their new understanding of the world and themselves as a person living with HIV or AIDS. Understanding and acknowledging in a sermon the resilient capacity of people and providing suggestions on how they might find strength for their journey is a wonderful gift to those listening to the sermon who are infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.

Those living with HIV and AIDS experience a new understanding of normalcy; they have to reconsider the values by which to live and make choices, and they struggle to redefine for themselves a sense of self agency or personal power. In some societies the number of persons living with HIV and AIDS is so huge that the majority of people living in those environments are all enduring the same basic struggle to survive in response to HIV and AIDS. Living with HIV and AIDS, watching people suffer and die from the disease is for them a normal way of life.

Imagine what it is like to have a virus around which you have to organize your life to get proper medical treatment, subscribe to a daily diet and medication regiment, learn to monitor how well you are feeling and functioning, and negotiate with your partner what it means for the two of you to be intimate and to always practice safe sex measures. This would be difficult for many people to do living under the best of circumstances. Those living with HIV and in dire poverty and with little or no access to proper health care have these burdens to bear in addition to their illness. Women and women with children who live in male dominated cultures through out the world often have little or no control over dictating the terms of their sexual relationship with men. This inequity increases their chances of being sexually abused by men and contracting HIV.

### **Altruism, Work, and Spirituality: Surviving War, Violence, and Trauma**

The importance of altruism, work, and spirituality (Mollica, 2006) has been confirmed for me in my pastoral work with those traumatized by war and other forms of violence as a member of the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma.

They are applicable to people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS. Altruism, work, and spirituality are at the heart of people coping with the trauma of being diagnosed with HIV. Altruism is the type of therapeutic behavior that occurs when people help others, even when they have experienced some kind of devastation themselves. As human beings, we have an enormous capacity to reach out toward one another. In many places around the world, people with HIV and AIDS help one another to the extent possible, even if it means sharing with one another their meager resources and limited strength.

People surviving with HIV or AIDS have a story of regret or shame about their physical condition. They may feel that they did not do enough for someone else in their same circumstance who suffered or died. These feelings of regret and shame most likely arise because altruistic behavior is a key mechanism for people traumatized by having HIV or AIDS to re-establish links between themselves, their shattered worldviews and other human beings.

Work is not just a function of being employed, producing a commodity, or providing a service in exchange for money or another good or service. In some communities unemployment is extremely high. Work or other socially productive activities such as performing chores, housework, making things with our hands, and caring for children are other behaviors that contribute to people living with HIV and AIDS ability to cope with this reality. A complaint shared by all of the members of a HIV and AIDS weekly support group with whom I met recently was their lack of having a job. While having and remaining active on a job is critical to resisting the emotional distress of living with HIV or AIDS, participating in the daily activities of life is also therapeutic. No activity is too small or too insignificant. While it has been discovered that, for traumatized people, work of various forms is the world's most important anti-depressant, it is an under-appreciated, under-utilized therapeutic activity for people living with HIV and AIDS.

Spirituality is also an aspect of being human that cannot be reduced to its parts. Every person is worthy of respect and deserves to receive care, regardless of those things about them that we find objectionable. A person's sense of altruism, capacity to work, and being a creation of God whom God loves are important ideas for a sermon dealing with people living with HIV and AIDS to emphasize. Churches are ideal places that can enable people living with HIV and AIDS to engage in altruism, work as volunteers, and increase their sense of spirituality. HIV and AIDS challenge our fundamental beliefs and values about ourselves, life itself, and our understanding of other people. It shakes or destroys the confidence those living with HIV or AIDS have in their values and beliefs to provide them with meaning for living. Religion and spirituality have been positive forces in the lives of many of those who are surviving with the trauma of being infected or affected by HIV and AIDS. They derive meaning for living from their sense of spirituality in addition to altruism and work.

Research (Dalmida, Holstad, Diloris, & Laderman, 2009) has shown that depression varies among those living with HIV/AIDS who are actively engaged in spiritual practices. Prayer, meditation, traditional healing, and other spiritual rituals and practices are widely prevalent in the homes and communities of many

living with HIV/AIDS. A sermon can lift up the many ways that altruism, work, and religious practices were encouraged by Jesus in some of the parables and stories about people who were marginalized due to their mental or health state. His encounter with people, particularly women, affirmed and helped them to reflect upon how they chose to live and what the sources were that sustained and gave them hope and meaning for living. In the sermon the preacher can ask listeners, directly or indirectly, what sustains and gives them hope.

There are risks involved in putting into words the trauma of living with HIV and AIDS and we take risks when we maintain silence about the emotional and physical pains caused by having HIV or AIDS. Preaching about this topic means that the preacher is able through the sermon to guide those listening along their journey toward spiritual and emotional well-being.

## **Challenges for Pastors and Social Workers**

### **The Pastor's Challenge and Response**

Pastor Able was aware of the perspectives people had about HIV and AIDS as he struggled for several weeks with how to present to his congregation through his sermons the issue of HIV/AIDS. He decided that the aim of his sermon would be to inform people about HIV/AIDS and motivate them to have a compassionate response to those living with and affected by the disease. He approached HIV/AIDS in the sermon first by sharing the basic facts about the disease—how prevalent it was in his community, how it is transmitted, and the precautions one needed to take to decrease the chances of contracting the virus. He then spoke about the impact of the disease on the persons who have it and how that affects her family and friends. He gave attention to the stigmatization endured by people with HIV/AIDS. The focus of his sermon was also upon offering some suggestions about the attitudes and values he felt they should have as Christians about HIV/AIDS. He used these principles as a guide to outlining an outreach ministry of the church to people living with and infected by HIV/AIDS. His theological basis for his presentation was the admonishment of Jesus to love and care for those who are sick and most vulnerable found in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25.

To his surprise and delight, the sermon was well received by the congregation. It opened up a conversation among the members and leaders of the church about HIV/AIDS. This challenged the silence and denial that often surrounds the disease. Pastor Able learned from members of his congregation that they, too, were living with the reality of HIV/AIDS in their family and work place as they carried the burden, often in silence and alone, of a loved one or colleague who was suffering from the disease. They, too, were looking for ways to strengthen their spirits and exercise their faith in response to HIV and AIDS. These conversations with members of his church led the congregation to providing updated information about the causes and prevention of HIV/AIDS to its members, linking with other congregations and organizations that provided

HIV/AIDS resources, and establishing a ministry of helping those living with HIV/AIDS to receive the support and medical attention they needed to better cope with the disease and its impact upon them.

I think it is more important for a sermon to emphasize compassion than judgment toward those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. Not everyone who is infected with HIV became so because of engaging in risky sexual behavior. We did not know in the early days of the disease as much as we do now about how the virus was transmitted, nor were there measures available to test blood for the presence of the virus. This resulted in some people contracting HIV/AIDS through blood transfusions. There are many other reasons and ways people unknowingly become infected with the virus in spite of HIV/AIDS awareness education and prevention programs. Some people who are informed about the disease may still make choices that lead to their becoming infected. Regardless of how and why a person becomes infected with the HIV virus, they are not to be further victimized by being blamed for their condition. Helping them to live responsibly with the virus is more important than reminding them of their liability for having contracted the disease.

The pastoral care tasks commonly referred to are healing, guiding, sustaining and reconciling, and liberating or empowering people. These are best nourished in others as they listen to a sermon given by a preacher who conveys to them through his or her sermon an attitude of welcome and hospitality. This is what Jesus did as he preached and taught the meaning of God's love to those who were sick or marginalized by their ethnicity (the Samaritan) or gender (woman at the well). These values parallel those of social work: service, challenging social injustice, respecting the inherent dignity and worth of persons, the importance of human relationships, integrity and competence.

### **The Social Worker's Challenge and Social Work Values**

The principles in professional social work not to discriminate against those who seek social work services and the right of the client to determine for him or herself a course of actions are at the core of social work values. The social worker is ethically obligated when his or her personal or professional values conflicts with those of the profession to acknowledge this difference and not to allow it to interfere with his or her ability to provide the appropriate social work service within the ethical guidelines and constraints that guide the provision of social work services. Social workers use their awareness of self, their professional values orientations, and personal convictions to guide them in delivering a social work service. Cornett (1998) reminds us:

One of the most helpful things that therapy can do with regard to spirituality is not to change the client's view but to amplify it or bring it to sharper focus so that the client may scrutinize it more carefully and decide whether it truly fits the individual circumstance of life and current self-understanding (p. 38).

This is a helpful approach when assisting someone living with HIV and AIDS who also is religious and/or listens to and values sermons. The social worker who cannot adopt Cornett's exploratory and value neutral approach to counseling others due to their own convictions or religious beliefs and values is obligated to find respectful alternatives, perhaps referring the client to someone else. To establish the kind of connection and relationship with our clients that will facilitate Cornett's goal of therapy suggests that the social worker adopt a posture of truly letting the client be his or her teacher about what it means for them to be religious or spiritual and living with HIV or ADS. The client "as a teacher" is an invaluable role for them to assume in the social worker/client relationship. It enhances the social worker's ability to connect with and understand clients, their needs, and the religious resources that they rely upon. The client as a teacher represents a shift in the traditional understanding of the helper/client relationship.

Understanding the meaning of our relationships is to social work practice what "location" is to the value of real estate. Who we are is composed of our perspectives regarding our gender, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, where we have been physically located in the world and where we are now, our family relationships, friendships, concept of God and sense of the wider world. Each of these dimensions of our identity is constantly interacting and influencing the others. Contracting HIV filters our understanding of each of these components of our identity. It is therefore important for the social worker to get a sense of how a client values each of these aspects of him or herself. People who listen to sermons, whether in person, on television, or the internet, do so as whole persons and what they hear and believe as a result of what they listen to can impact all of the ways by which they relate to self, others, the world, and God.

### **Summary**

People with HIV /AIDS are engaged in a process made extremely difficult by their having the disease—recreating an image of themselves and redefining their meaning of wholeness. Preachers who are empathetic to their plight can use this feeling to enter into ways of thinking that will enable them to unlock through preaching the loving and healing power of the Christian message for those who are suffering with HIV/AIDS. People living with HIV/AIDS need new images of themselves that the disease would otherwise destroy, violating their earlier understanding of themselves, reality, and truth (McGee, 2005). This means being able to reference their lives by the vitality it is given by the medications for HIV even though having the disease may at times cause them distress (McGee, 2005).

Like pastoral counseling according to Dittes (1999) (I have substituted the word "preaching" where Dittes uses the word "counseling"), pastoral preaching about HIV/AIDS:

cannot change the facts of poverty or other injustice, abuse, oppression, alcoholism, psychosis, cancer, atheism or depression.

But [pastoral preaching] is profoundly committed and effective in energizing people to address such facts, changing what they can and coping creatively as they must...Pastoral [preaching] aspires to enable people to take their place as responsible citizens of God's world, as agents of God's redemptive hope for that world... To reclaim commitment and clarity, to beget faith, hope, and love, to find life affirmed—this is the conversion of soul that sometimes happens [when people hear pastoral preaching] (p. 161).

And, I would add, this is also what can happen when people experience the best of what social work offers to people in distress.

## Conclusion

There are multiple factors that contribute to the global spread of HIV/AIDS. Ignorance about or denial that the disease impacts our life in some situations and the addition of abject poverty or the lack of medical resources in others, along with how people who are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS are stigmatized, each have to be a part of the preacher's attention when he or she gives sermons on HIV/AIDS. In some ways these dimension are easier to address in sermons on HIV/AIDS than the more vexing matter of (a) understanding how and what motivates people to change their behavior that reduces their risk of contracting or spreading HIV/AIDS, and (b) dealing with having their suffering from the disease compounded by their feeling marginalized and discriminated against because of the HIV or AIDS health status. Human behavioral change reflects a matrix of what constitutes our values, norms, customs, and our ethical and moral compass (Nicolson 2008). These are shaped by our identity, social, political, ethnic, gender, economic, cultural histories, and moments in time.

Some people deny the reality and impact of HIV/AIDS. A discussion of some of the many social, cultural, political, economic and individual reasons why some people deny that HIV/AIDS exist or is a global health problem is beyond the scope of this paper. Yet, it is safe to say that Pastors and the church in general are among those in denial. I have observed that some people minimize the consequences of being infected or affected by HIV/AIDS as a means of warding off despair. This nuance function of denial enables them to face what they are willing to see as the reality of HIV/AIDS in their life. A fundamental aim of preaching with people in the audience or congregation concerned for whatever reasons about HIV/AIDS is to alleviate their sense of misery and wretchedness—to confront their sense of despair.

All behavior is a form of communication that attempts to speak of those things that gives us meaning and purpose as well as about those matters that haunt and horrify us. Religious beliefs and spiritual practices are some of the ways many people try to make sense and speak of their experiences and work at reconciliation—coming into a sense of peace with themselves and who or what they perceive as their enemy. We do all of this in an effort to further write

the narrative of our life. This task is even more imperative after we have been wounded by the trauma of contracting HIV/AIDS. The experience of a woman member of the clergy I interviewed in South Africa (Streets, Interview #4, 2008) is not unusual for many clergy. She said:

With my dealings with HIV and AIDS in South Africa, I have been introduced to a world I knew existed, but didn't really understand. I feel now that this should be the number one priority for the churches in South Africa, as enormous ethical issues underlies this epidemic and the spread thereof...in the African churches the issue of HIV is mostly condemned...I do feel that there is more work to be done and various aspects of human suffering brought on by this disease that need the attention of the ministry...It's a circular motion: if the churches can get more involved in the care of the patients, education will follow and as such also the re-institution of moral values regarding sex and the abuse of women (or the disregard)...AIDS have brought to our attention the extreme level of poverty and crime which are directly spreading the disease and which is infiltrating our country and people's lives.

All who preach and listen to sermons know something about suffering, sin and evil. Ministers in communities ravaged by HIV/AIDS can identify with this quote from my clergy colleague. We come out of a broken world or situation to hear (and deliver) sermons. The word "trauma" implies injury or wound. There are endless ways we can hurt other people, but pain is not all there is about the world and our living in it. We have, since the beginning of humankind, found ways to overcome despair and our feeling humiliated and to cope with and heal our wounds and flourish. Preaching and hearing sermons are two of the ways we have endured life changes and hardships.

There are a number of variables that help to shape the perspectives of a preacher's sermon. His or her critical explanation or interpretation of the text is based upon the preacher's understanding of the historical and cultural context in which the scriptures was written. The preacher must be aware of what the faith tradition he or she represents has taught as the meaning of the text. The preacher must express as well as possible to the congregation in the sermon where and why he or she agrees and differs with that viewpoint. The preacher conveys through the sermon his or her understanding of how the meaning of a text applies to the lived experience of the listener. These considerations of the preacher when preparing and delivering a sermon mean that preaching is always subjective and contextual. In the act of preaching the speaker attempts to help people gain insight about themselves or a life situation in light of the beliefs and teachings of the church and to engage the listeners in a reflective process of discerning what it means for them to live faithfully and meaningfully as they deal with the vicissitudes of life. This is always a goal of preaching whether or not the objective of the sermon is to primarily inform, instruct, inspire, or to motivate those who hear the sermon to become a certain kind of person or act in particular ways.

The preached word, from a Christian perspective, is like a mustard seed. It can be planted in those who hear it and become for them fruits of strength for living with HIV/AIDS and recovering from having been harmed by the stigma of having the virus. The nature of this seed is its healing agency, and it has a chance to become for someone who has been injured a source healing. Pastors and preachers may not have the power to heal. They do have an invitation embedded in their calling from God to plant a seed of hope through their preaching of the Good News. This nurturing of hope is what Rob and others like him—men, women, children and families around the world infected and affected by HIV/AIDS—look to receive from hearing sermons and the healing ministries of churches.

Most religious traditions promote the physical, mental, and spiritual health of people. They also advocate that we seek justice, show mercy and walk humbly before God and that we have an ethical and moral calling to heal the sick, feed the hungry, visit those in prison, and show compassion, especially to children. Here are three principles that can guide church leaders regarding HIV and AIDS:

1. Church leaders should encourage an understanding that those infected and affected by HIV and AIDS are not being punished by God. We need to remind our congregations and each other that we remain children of God and brothers and sisters to one another regardless of the status of our health or abilities.
2. It is helpful and important for people of faith to remember that their care of and for children and families who are infected and affected by HIV and AIDS are acts of transforming them from seeing themselves as defiled to people living with a sense of hope, dignity and pride God wishes for us all.
3. It is important not to deny the global pandemic that is HIV and AIDS. The suffering of those who are infected and affected by this disease is compounded by their being stigmatized as modern-day lepers. The fact is that we are all affected by HIV and AIDS. We learned from another culture on the other side of the globe about what must be urgently attended to locally and in our own country. In many places around the world those who are poor and women and children are most vulnerable to contracting HIV. This is also true for those living in poverty, minorities and for women and children in the United States. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC.gov) in 2009 there were more than one million people living with HIV in the U.S. African Americans were 14% of the population but were 44% of new HIV infected diagnosed cases in 2009. It is the leading cause of death among Black men between the ages of 35-44.

HIV and AIDS is one of the most complex diseases we face today. It affects every aspect of human life and relationships. Our response to it – from the pulpit and in the helping relationship—is a measure of our humanity and will influence the overall quality of life of everyone on the planet.



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# Lessons Learned: Conducting Culturally Competent Research and Providing Interventions with Black Churches

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Throughout its existence, the black church has been a consistent provider of emotional, religious, spiritual and social support for people of African descent. Although the Black Church has a history of providing information, intervention, and advocacy, particularly for those within the African American community (Adksion-Bradley et al. 2005; Lincoln & Mamiya, 2001; Martin & Martin, 2002; Neighbors, Musick, & Williams, 1998; Taylor, Ellison, Chatters, Levin, & Lincoln, 2000; Thomas, Quinn, Billingsley, & Caldwell, 1994), there seems to be scant information on the Black Church within the social work body of literature. Furthermore, there is a dearth of empirical and conceptual literature related to conducting research in the Black Church. If present, the research could provide insight into how to include and practice social work within African American communities and African American communities of faith in a culturally competent manner.

This conceptual article provides guidance for those seeking to conduct culturally competent research in Black Churches. The content shared in this article is based on the authors' collective 15 years of experience conducting research and trainings in Black Churches on interpersonal violence, women's empowerment, effective practices surrounding gentrification, use of narratives, and the impact of HIV/AIDS-related knowledge on risk-taking behaviors. This conceptual article discusses cultural competence in social work, the history of research in Black Churches, challenges that we have experienced while conducting research in Black churches, and the lessons learned regarding how to conduct effective culturally competent research in the Black Church. We believe that this information will promote efforts to conduct culturally competent research with Black congregations and subsequently lead to providing effective interventions and social reforms that positively impact diverse populations.

## **Cultural Competence**

Cultural competence is a contemporary concept that has been supported by various professions for a number of years. Within social work, professional helpers have been challenged by national social work organizations to understand, practice, and research from a perspective that demonstrates an appropriate level of cultural competence with diverse populations and institutions. According to the National Association of Social Workers, cultural competence requires learning new behaviors and techniques that respect, affirm, and value the “dignity and worth of diverse individuals, groups, families, and communities while protecting and preserving the dignity of each” (National Association of Social Workers, 2001, p. 11). The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2011) adds that cultural competence includes promoting “social workers’ knowledge, values, and skills for the ethical and effective practice that takes into account the diverse expressions of religion and spirituality among clients and their communities” (<http://www.cswe.org/CentersInitiatives/CurriculumResources/50777.aspx>). Even smaller national and international social work organizations recognize the importance of cultural competence among social workers. While the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) has published a statement on cultural competence (NABSW, 2013), the North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW) has recently published an article in its peer-reviewed journal that supports the importance of culturally competent social workers (Brade Stennis, et. al, 2015). The ultimate goal of this inter-organizational support for cultural competence is to mandate that social workers operate in a manner that shows interest, respect for and sensitivity regarding the unique attributes that exist within every group.

While there is a thrust in the social work profession towards understanding, practicing, and researching in a culturally competent manner (NASW 2001; CSWE, 2011; NABSW, 2013), the literature which connects cultural competence, social work practice, research and the Black Church is sparse. Although there is no guarantee that the provision of such literature or research would ensure heightened cultural competence as it relates to the Black Church, this lack of connection in the literature is staggering, particularly since the Black Church is one of the oldest and most stable institutions in Black communities. Furthermore, the dearth of literature that connects these topics is astonishing since the Black Church has been and continues to provide the foundation for many, and provides one context for understanding, practicing with and researching African American people and African American communities.

## **The Black Church**

The strengths and contributions of the Black Church and Black Church leaders have been noted in seminal works by W. E. B. DuBois (1903), Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph Nicholson (1969), E. Franklin Frazier (1963) and Nannie Helen Burroughs (1950), as well as in publications by more contemporary

scholars including C. Eric Lincoln & Lawrence Mamiya (1990), Andrew Billingsley (1999), Albert Raboteau (2001), Carla Brailey (2007), Cheryl Sanders (1996), and Cheryl Gilkes (2001). These scholars note that the Black Church has historically served as a repository of wealth for its congregants, community and the global society (DuBois, 1903; Frazier, 1963; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). With its roots reaching back beyond the middle passage, the Black Church has been the refuge for many who have faced emotional, economic, social, civic, psychological, physical, and spiritual oppression (Martin & Martin, 2002; Schiele, 2000). While financial resources have not always been plentiful and the Black Church has often been forced to “make bricks without straw,” when coupled with human resources the Black Church has accomplished much. It has produced institutions that have spawned reformation and social movements, begun social services initiatives, educated members of the community and provided a safe haven from external forces (Frazier & Lincoln, 1974; Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990; Taylor, Thornton & Chatters, 1987).

The legacy, strength, resolve, and resilience of the Black Church as a social institution that facilitates change on micro, mezzo, and macro system levels continues today, particularly on behalf of those who are oppressed and suffer (Billingsley, 1999; Brailey, 2007). As a microcosm of the larger Black community, Black Church members have significant strength and resilience despite facing some of the same challenges that exist in the global society: intimate partner violence (Brade & Bent-Goodley, 2009), racism (Barber, 2011), HIV/AIDS (Khosravani, M, Poudeh, R., Parks-Yancy, R., 2008; Perkins, 2006, elder care (Caldwell, Chatters, Billingsley, & Taylor, 1995), addiction and substance abuse (Stahler, Kirby, & Kerwin, 2007), prison and prison re-entry (Goode, Lewis, & Trulear, 2011), at-risk-youth (Cook, 2000), health disparities (Isaac, Rowland, & Blackwell, 2007) and mental health (Molock, S., Barksdale, C. Marlin, S., Puri, R., Cammack, N., Spann, M., 2007). While committed to its international legacy of service, leadership, advocacy, and community uplift, the institution of the Black Church and its congregants face similar issues as other historic institutions, including but not limited to, relevance (Gilkes, 1998), gentrification (Sanders and Brade Stennis, 2014), economic hardship (Day, 2012; Pattillo, 2013), and political mobilization (Brown & Brown, 2003; Calhoun-Brown, 1996), putting the sustentation of the church at risk.

## **The Black Church and Research**

Because of the importance of spirituality and the role that the Black Church has played in the lives of many African Americans, some researchers, including the authors, have recognized that the Black Church is perhaps the best place to capture the perspectives and experiences of African Americans. The Black Church has served as the context for numerous research initiatives aimed at helping to contextualize and operationalize phenomena in the African American community. The willingness of African American churchgoers to provide data surrounding issues that impact African Americans and African American

communities has been noted in numerous research studies. Within the last ten years, Black Church leaders and congregants have participated in research that considered domestic violence (Brade & Bent-Goodley, 2009), HIV/AIDS (Perkins, 2006), community empowerment (Barnes, 2010), healthy eating and physical activity (Kegler, Escoffery, Alcantara, Hinman, Addison & Glanz, 2010), suicidology (Molock, Barksdale, Matlin, Puri, Cammack & Spann, 2007), and a vast array of other social factors that impact well-being.

While research conducted in the Black community and Black Church has provided a level of insight into systems, institutions/organizations, groups, families, and individuals (Frazier, 1963; Gilkes, 1980; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990), there remain a number of challenges associated with conducting research within this sub-culture. One challenge includes the member's sense of being misunderstood by persons who are not members of the group and who perceive the Black community and Black Church as a monolithic group rather than as a multifarious group with distinctions and diversity (McAddo, 2006). A second challenge in conducting research in Black communities and Black churches is distrust that members of the community may have of the researcher and the research process as a result of unethical studies like the well-known Tuskegee Experiment (Fremuth, et al., 2001).

These factors and others make it critically important to engage in culturally competent research practices and methodologies that are sensitive to factors including cultural history, spiritual beliefs, religious practices, and overt and covert innuendos associated with this population. Furthermore, it is important to continue engaging in research on the Black Church that utilizes specific culturally considerate techniques that minimize distrust and provide a sense of empowerment and contribution for participants as well as the researcher. Unfortunately, while there is a need to continue to engage the Black Church in research studies, and while it is especially important to use sensitive research techniques, there is a dearth of literature that provides guidance regarding how to conduct culturally competent research that engages the Black Church and influences practice.

This conceptual article will seek to fill the gap regarding cultural competence and research in Black Churches. The purpose of the article is to promote the proliferation of culturally competent research in the Black Church by providing an overview of our individual research projects, sharing some of the barriers and challenges associated with our collective research, presenting some recommendations surrounding effective research practices with Black Churches, and making implications for researchers. We will present reflections from our collective 15 years of experience conducting research in Black Churches on a number of issues, including interpersonal violence, HIV/AIDS knowledge, effective practices surrounding gentrification, and use of narratives and women's empowerment. We believe this information will not only promote efforts to conduct culturally competent research in Black congregations, but also subsequently provide effective interventions for working with this unique population.

## **Summary of Research Projects**

In order to provide a context for our observations and recommendations for conducting culturally competent research in Black Churches, the information that follows will give an overview of the studies from which the recommendations surfaced. Over the past 15 years, each of us has served as the primary investigator or co-investigator on projects that considered issues in African American communities. Because we recognized the strengths, history, and diversity within the Black Church, the research intentionally engaged members of Black Churches that were based in the southeastern and east coast regions of the United States. In each of the research projects, established guidelines were followed and written approval to conduct the research was granted by the university, church leadership and the participants. Collectively, there were over 335 participants in all of the studies that took place from 1998-2013, and an additional 200 that participated in subsequent trainings during that period of time.

Our earliest projects with Black Churches sought to explore Black Church leaders' understanding and experiences related to domestic violence. Influenced by two grants funded by the Department of Health and Human Services and the National Institutes of Health, this work led to the development of and training using the S.T.A.R.T. © model for culturally sensitive domestic violence education, prevention and intervention (Brade Stennis, et. al., 2015), and helped us understand the perceptions and experiences of African American clergy surrounding domestic violence (Brade, 2009). We learned that a considerable number of African American clergy have encountered incidents of intimate partner violence as victims or perpetrators, as well as in their roles as clergy and/or family member. In addition, we understood that members of this sub-culture believed that (1) domestic violence is difficult to conceptualize, (2) gender impacts perceptions about domestic violence and gender roles, (3) theological paradoxes are numerous related to domestic violence, and (4) additional culturally sensitive interventions and training models are needed. As a result of this work, numerous culturally sensitive domestic violence trainings have subsequently taken place within and with members of Black Churches.

One member of our writing team conducted a study that considered the impact of HIV/AIDS knowledge on risk-taking behaviors for African American women (Perkins, 2006). With the support of the executive director of a local agency as well as the pastor of the mega Black Church from which the participants were recruited, the women completed an informed consent form and were given a survey instrument to ascertain the participants' knowledge about HIV/AIDS. Contrary to the hypothesis, findings showed that HIV positive women and negative women were equally knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS and that HIV/AIDS knowledge had no direct impact on risk-taking behaviors for this sub-culture.

Finally, one member of our team conducted research that considered the impact of population shifts and gentrification on Black Churches (Sanders & Brade Stennis, 2014). Members from seven Black Churches located in one east coast, metropolitan city participated in the study via individual interviews and

focus groups. Findings suggest that Black Churches are facing considerable challenges regarding economic viability, transportation, historical preservation, effective outreach, parking, and declining membership that are perceived to be related to population shifts and gentrification. Nonetheless, Black Churches continue to demonstrate an amazing amount of faith, resilience, and commitment to survive and thrive. The development of a culturally diverse Advisory Board was established to consider theological and practical approaches to address this concern from a culturally aware paradigm.

Although proud of our individual and collective work which was intended to advance research on matters that impact the Black Church and the larger Black community, each of us had our own takeaway about conducting research involving this sub-culture within Black society. A collective retrospective look at the conglomerate research process revealed that there were lessons learned about conducting research and trainings that involved the Black Church. While the lessons may be applicable to other groups or may be insightful for conducting research within the context of other cultures, these lessons surfaced in the form of challenges and barriers that informed our recommendations for conducting culturally competent research with Black Churches.

### **Challenges and Barriers**

Over the course of 15 years of collecting data within the Black Church and with Black Church members, we have experienced a number of challenges and barriers. These challenges and barriers that impacted the research process are communication, cultural insensitivity, theology and branding, gender, position of the pastor, and logistics.

#### **Communication**

Among the first barriers were those related to communicating with Black Church leaders to receive research-related consent and guidance. Due to the pastors' busy schedules, researchers often found it difficult to locate them to schedule research-related meetings. Additionally, many of the Black Churches in the studies were small and had limited staff, so in some cases there were numerous un-returned phone calls or low to no response to mass-mailed invitations.

This communication challenge tended to impact the time-line for several of the research projects. Research start dates and completion dates were compromised. We should have taken into consideration that some of the Black clergy were dual-vocational and had limited time for matters that may not have been on their list of immediate priorities, such as our research agendas. Additionally, we should have considered the time that was required for face-to-face communication with the clergy versus relying on feedback from mass mailing. Being aware of the value of oral communication and personal relationship building with people of African descent, we should have committed more time in the research



time-line for engagement through direct communication. Communication was much more effective when personal visits and follow-up phone calls were made, despite the fact that it compromised the research timeline.

### **Cultural Insensitivity**

A second category of challenge involved cultural insensitivity, mainly by us, the researchers. Despite our identification with the participants either as people of faith or as people sharing the same racial and/or ethnic background, there still tended to be challenges associated with culture.

For example, because of our positive perspective regarding research and positive relationship with the churches, we may not have fully appreciated the distrust for and apprehension about research that is deeply embedded in the experience of people of faith and people of color who were invited to participate. Because of this insensitivity, we did not always take the appropriate time to cultivate the research environment and build a level of trust, which was necessary to facilitate a more fluid data collection process.

Other culturally insensitive actions that impacted research success included not fully recognizing the strength of the respected elder who formally and/or informally validates the research, not fully embracing the power of the oral tradition that is used to share stories and increase participation, not contextualizing the research in nomenclature that recognizes the connection between faith and daily life, and not utilizing or creating shared experiences as a platform to gather data (i.e. community celebratory gatherings, after-church meals, pre-existing group meetings, etc.). Because of these culturally insensitive positions, the amount of time needed to build trust and gather data was significantly extended. They may have also impacted the number of people who felt comfortable participating in specific studies.

### **Theology and Branding**

We also noticed a challenge associated with theology and image. Cognizant of their congregants' apprehensions about research and aware of the impact of perception on church operations, some pastors were hesitant to host a setting that allowed data to be collected on topics that were still taboo in the Black Church. While the clergy may have been aware that cases of people with HIV/AIDS and people living in domestic violence situations existed in their congregations, they feared that hosting a research team that studied these and other issues might cause some to question the church's theological position on issues like homosexuality, gender-based roles, and the meaning of family. Protective of the church's brand, in some cases, the pastor or the administrative board of the church did not want the church to be associated with certain topics or theological questions that could damage its public and internal image. Although committed to discussing and capturing data on these sensitive issues, we, especially those in Southern states, found this to be a significant barrier to receiving consent,

validation from the designated leader, and high levels of participation from congregants. A number of recommendations in the following segment evolved from this particular challenge.

### **Gender and Position of Pastor**

Another barrier was one associated with gender. Because gender, race, and ethnicity are among the most prominent considerations when discussing culture and cultural competence, it was interesting that gender surfaced as a point of relevance in our research. Some of us perceived that the gender of the pastor impacted the research agenda. Most of the pastors in the referenced studies were African American men who were viewed as being a part of “the ole-boy network”. Consequently, they may not have been aware of or as invested in the research topics that may have been perceived as women’s issues including intimate partner violence and the impact of HIV/AIDS knowledge on Black women’s risk-taking behavior. Despite the fact that most of today’s Black congregations are predominantly comprised of women, that many functions of the church are conducted by women who serve in various supportive roles, and that many women within their congregations are impacted by the issues that were being researched, male pastors still seemed to somewhat disconnected from the research. However, male clergy were more easily accessible and participatory in the research regarding population shifts and gentrification. Conversely, fewer female clergy seemed to be as strongly connected to and participatory in research related to gentrification and population shifts, but were more engaged in research involving HIV/AIDS and domestic violence.

We recognize that this disparity in interest may not be solely based on the gender of the pastor. It may also be attributed to other factors, including the pastor’s personal experience levels with research topics, the pastor’s preferred approach when addressing issues (i.e. micro, mezzo or macro approach), the pastor’s perspective regarding addressing the most immediate concerns of the church which may or may not include specific issues, or the pastor’s assessment of how the research aligned with his/her vision for the church. While these factors may have influenced aspects of the research, we found it interesting that the gender of the pastor aligned with his/her direct involvement and support of specific research topics. Furthermore, we believed that this gender factor should be noted as a challenge that was experienced when conducting Black Church research, and that culturally competent research related strategies could consider ethnic culture as well as the gender cultures.

### **Logistics**

Perhaps not isolated to challenges associated with conducting research within Black Churches alone, our experience showed that the implementation of the research relied more heavily on informal networks and traditions versus formal policies, protocol, and administrative organization like scheduling spaces,

confirming times, and providing incentives. There were times when policies and protocol required one set of decisions to be made while personal relationships and oral communications recommended a different set of decisions. This conflict between policy and procedures versus personal network and traditions led to logistical challenges including the recruitment of participants, reservation of meeting spaces, scheduling of events, and even the types of incentives that would be provided. In smaller, less frequented churches, these logistical issues were more easily addressed, but in larger churches that had a full complement of scheduled activities, these logistical issues were more pronounced and took more time to solidify. For example, although announcements placed in the bulletin by the church's administrative assistant provided one set of gathering instructions that were consistent with pre-approved protocol, messages disseminated from the pastor may have conveyed different instructions. All of these logistical challenges potentially impacted the implementation of research project with this already apprehensive cultural group. Such challenges speak to the need to consider formal policies in addition to cultural norms.

Collectively, these challenges presented barriers that impacted a number of participants in the studies, time-line of the studies, participation in study-related training, and ultimately the degree of information that is transmitted into the atmosphere which would positively impact the Black Church and communities of color.

## **Recommendations**

In an effort to encourage others to conduct culturally competent research on and with the Black Church, we have developed the following recommendations that evolved from the previously mentioned challenges and barriers. These recommendations consider the historical account and experience of the Black Church and respond to the challenges that have been presented. While the recommendations evolved from our experiences with Black Churches, they may also be applicable when seeking to conduct culturally competent research with other populations.

### **Demonstrate Sincerity**

Because of the history of cruelty and oppression that many members of Black Churches have experienced as a result of their faith and/or ethnic identity, there is a heightened need for researchers to have and demonstrate a serious level of sincere interest in the community. The research must be conducted not merely for the purpose of gathering data and highlighting perceived inadequacies of the population. Rather, it should be gathered by and with people who have a genuine interest in the well-being of the Black Church and its members. The researcher must have a clear understanding of how the group's history may make the members hesitant to be "test subjects," the researcher must recognize how historical and contemporary practices regarding race and faith have led to the

church's perceived necessity of self-protection, and the researcher must convey a sense of shared investment and mutual interest in the promulgation of the Black Church and its agenda to continue a legacy of service.

This sincerity and sensitivity can be demonstrated in a number of ways. Being introspective about one's level of personal interest and investment in the population is the initial step that a researcher using the Black Church as the context for research should do. Secondly, the researchers should adequately study the history of the church and make note of specific items including its mission, previous experience with research, strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth.

Once a church or churches have been selected for the study and after church leadership has formally agreed to participate, a researcher should publically address the church if given the opportunity by the leadership. The public statement should laud the positive contributions that the Black Church and that specific church have made, acknowledge the challenges that they have faced, and present some ways that collaboration on the proposed research could address some of the challenges and benefit the church, the community, and the profession. This statement may help the congregation feel that the research is purposeful and can advance the church's mission.

One final way to demonstrate sincere interest in the church is to be visible at "non-research" times and to send acknowledgement of appreciation after the research has been conducted. Acknowledgement of appreciation can be expressed in a thank you note, small gift for individual participants, or a gift for the church. These acts can validate the researcher's level of sincere interest in the well-being of the participating church.

## **Build Relationships**

Engagement is the first step in developing any effective personal or working relationships. It is especially important when conducting research in the Black Church that is relational in nature, especially if the researcher has no affiliation with the congregation. Many people who attend various Black Churches attend for the spiritual nourishment and for the personal interactions with others. A researcher must recognize this factor and build relationships accordingly.

The first steps should entail recognizing the formal and informal leaders of the institution. While the pastor may be the formal leader of the church and the ideal person to engage in discussions regarding research, his or her personal, spiritual, or administrative agenda may not allow opportunity for additional responsibilities and discussions. Furthermore, he or she may have a formal structure in place that assigns certain responsibilities to other leaders, committees, and members of the church. The researcher should make a concerted effort to know the pastor's agenda, positions on certain theological, applied, and gender-based topics, and the power structure of the church prior to following the designated protocol for engaging the proper person in a discussion about the proposed research. While much of this information may be apparent on the church's website and printed material, other information may be gathered by visiting the church, listening to

some of the pastor's previous sermons, speaking informally with members and studying the theology and structure of the church's denomination.

The researcher should also be aware that there are a number of informal leaders at the church who have a level of access to leadership and the power of influence in the church. These informal leaders sway perceptions and activities in the church and can be an asset or hindrance to any proposed research project. The researcher should be aware of who these persons of influence are and their experience and perspectives on theological and applied topics as well. Developing a sincere relationship with the church's administrative staff and long-standing members may prove to be critical in obtaining this information. Such persons can be the researcher's ally, help him or her move beyond the formal gatekeeping system, and influence the pastor and other congregants to support the proposed research, even when it may not be a priority for the pastor. Along with following the outlined system to engage the pastor in a research-related discussion, the researcher should also follow the informal system and engage the informal leaders in a discussion about the proposed research. This dual approach may strengthen the possibility that the proposed research, steeped in a sincere interest for the well-being of the church, may rise to a high level of importance and involvement from the church.

### **Connect Historical Context and Culturally Appropriate Nomenclature**

While alluded to earlier, it is absolutely necessary for the researcher to understand the impact of unethical research on people of color and faith. This history with unethical research is embedded in the experiential framework of many African Americans and, consequently, many African Americans feel an obligation to protect the race from future obstructive and destructive people, including researchers. This sense of self-protection may also be true for clergy who feel wedded to certain theological positions and gender-based church norms to maintain a patriarchal structure.

The researcher must be aware of the challenges associated with the self-protective nature of historically oppressed and wounded people, and confront it by including language that is sensitive to the experiences and beliefs of those members of the Black Church who may potentially participate in the study. The language used should be simple and direct. It should demonstrate knowledge and interest in the community, an awareness of unethical research previously conducted, and an appreciation for current beliefs. Researchers should use language that is generally accepted within the cultural group and is considered acceptable to use by people who are not members of the cultural group. For example, if conducting research in Black Christian churches, it may be important to demonstrate and interject spiritual and religious concepts found in the biblical scriptures, gospel music, and testimonies. The use of this language that is generally understood within Black Churches, including words like pastor versus priest, demonstrates an awareness of and appreciation for the Black Church culture and may ease the discomfort of many regarding research in Black communities.

### **Build upon Pre-Existing Cultural Practices**

In addition to including culturally sensitive and appropriate language that demonstrates an awareness of the culture, we suggest that it is also prudent to build upon pre-existing norms within the Black Church culture. As with any culture, there are customs and norms that have existed and are evolving. These cultural practices provide points of connection for members of the cultural community and give the research greater opportunity to gather data. Some of the norms in the Black Church include embracing the oral tradition through testimony, preaching, informal conversations, and music; reflecting upon experiences through collective learning (i.e. Bible study and church school) and over group meals (i.e., dinner after church); celebrating leadership and groups on special designated days and through financial gifts; and advocating for the marginalized and oppressed through community service projects and volunteer efforts.

In preparing to conduct a study, we recommend that the researchers recognize the dynamic cultural practices within each faith tradition and each individual Black Church, and use them in formulating a methodological approach. Building upon pre-existing practices may allow the researcher to eliminate some logistical concerns by using normal gatherings as times and spaces for data collection. In addition, building upon pre-existing cultural practices will not only demonstrate a respect for the cultural norms, it may also provide an opportunity to gain a culturally-sensitive perspective by recognizing and even participating in the norms which may subsequently frame how the data is analyzed and presented to the larger community of scholars.

In several of our research projects, we scheduled focus groups immediately after or during post-worship church meals. In other cases, data was collected in association with designated days like Women's Day and Bible Study days. Structuring our methodology around noted pre-existing practices allowed us to gain a different perspective of the church, participate in the norms, and ensured that more people participated in the research.

### **Be Cognizant of Time**

It is said that "patience is a virtue." This adage is especially true when conducting culturally sensitive research in the Black Church. The process may seem to move much more slowly than anticipated due to several factors, including limited staff to return calls and respond to letters, the pastor's agenda which may not fit with that of the researcher, the formal and informal processes which may contradict one another, the importance of relationship building with formal and informal leaders, the level of comfort and interest of the participants regarding research subject which impacts data collection, and the tendency for programs to begin after the designated start period, which may require a change in scheduled presentations to a different day and/or time. All of these factors will substantially impact the researcher's timeline, necessitating that the researcher practice patience and prudence when planning research.

We recommend that any researcher who is interested in studying the Black Church develop a time frame that includes a degree of flexibility. In the methodological development, consider including more than the anticipated time for cultivating relationships, experiencing the culture, and explaining the details of the study. Also, researchers are encouraged to use their time wisely. Understand that the proposed research project is generally not critical to the mission of the church; therefore, a researcher should use any time that is permitted to make concise presentations which includes allowing time to read and complete necessary forms. Being concise should be the researcher's position unless additional time is granted by the leadership to expand on the details of the study. This awareness of time, merged with a persistent nature that is necessary for any researcher to advance a research agenda, will prove beneficial to the researcher and will yield a higher level of comfort for the participants and a greater response rate for the researcher.

### **Implications for Social Workers**

There are a number of implications for social work practice, policy, research, and education that result from this reflection on research within Black Churches. In regard to social work practice, there remains a clear need for effective culturally competent, evidence-based practice with communities of faith such as the Black Church. This practice should evolve from research that is collected in a methodologically sound and culturally sensitive manner. For example, the research with African American clergy and the development of the S.T.A.R.T. Model © that evolved from work with the DHSS and NIH grants has been implemented in practice by domestic violence educators. The model focused on being culturally sensitive, and has been implemented in a manner that positively impacts clients and those who are seeking further domestic violence education. Perhaps this process is one to be modeled by others conducting research and practicing in the Black Church.

This article also has implications for policy and social work education. It is imperative for social workers to recognize and teach that data gathered in a culturally competent manner has the potential to provide even more detailed and accurate information which can then be used to guide policy development. Additionally, this information would allow policy makers to more adequately support the allocation of funds designated to address specific issues and impact certain practices related to intervention and prevention. For example, if information from the culturally-sensitive research conducted with Black Churches on gentrification was forwarded to policy makers, perhaps the perspectives of Black Church congregants regarding their church's communities could impact the development of culturally sensitive policies that shift the trajectory of urban communities. With this consideration, it is imperative that social work educators focus on the loop that connects culturally competent research with social work policy and practice.

Finally, consistent with the need for continued emphasis on cultural competence by national organizations, the organizations may want to consider finding a way to

measure levels of cultural competence by those within its organization, particularly for those responsible for transferring information regarding cultural competence to others. We recognize that this consideration may be difficult to implement; however, we also believe that this is an important consideration if we are honestly committed to practicing and promulgating the concepts of cultural competence and its link to evidence-based practice, particularly in specific communities like the Black Church.

## Conclusion

While the Black Church is not monolithic, there are some similarities we have noted that surfaced in our individual research projects conducted over the past 15 years. In order to increase the possibility that effective and culturally sensitive practices may be implemented in the Black Church and in communities of color where many Black Churches exist, it is imperative that data from this population are gathered in a manner that demonstrates awareness and sensitivity to cultural dynamics. It is our hope that the challenges, barriers, and recommendations presented will further promote culturally competent research that focuses on the Black Church and social work.

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# Social Justice and Spiritual Healing: Using Micro and Macro Social Work Practice to Reduce Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

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Children are not expendable. They are God's choicest vessels, his greatest treasures, and ours as well (Gomes, 1993). Minors who are trafficked for the purposes of commercial sex are currently the largest known population of trafficking victims within the United States (U.S. Department of State, 2010). Obtaining estimates of the number of trafficked youth is difficult because of the nature of trafficking and the difficulty of measuring hidden populations. Ohio, for example, estimates that more than 3,000 of its youth are at risk for sex trafficking and of those, 1,078 are trafficked yearly (Williamson, Karandikar-Chheda, Barrows, Smouse, Kelly, Swartz, et al., 2010). Because of the repeated appearance of victims from the area in national prostitution stings, Toledo, Ohio, has been identified as one of the national hubs for the recruitment of youth into the sex trade.<sup>1</sup>

## **Sex Trafficking of Minors**

Findings from a 2007-2008 study on child victims from Toledo, Ohio, reveal they have been bought, sold, battered, and abused while involved in sex trafficking. The average age of recruitment of victims from Toledo is between 14-15 years old. Victims have been sexually exploited in houses set up for prostitution, motels, conventions, and truck stops, among other venues. Toledo victims have been transported and prostituted in smaller cities such as Lima, Ohio, and Harrisburg, PA, as well as in larger cities such as Detroit, Atlanta, and Chicago. Rescued children from Toledo demonstrate high levels of stress and trauma associated with their trafficking experience, lack stable housing and healthy

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<sup>1</sup> Under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, anyone under the age of 18 that is involved in the commercial sex trade is a victim of human trafficking. Anyone over the age of 18 who is involved in the commercial sex trade is a victim if their involvement was because of force, fraud, or coercion.

support systems, and exhibit low levels of problem-solving and emotion-focused forms of coping to deal with their experiences (Williamson, 2008). Of the 14 trafficked children identified by the juvenile court and interviewed during the 2007-2008 research year, all reported knowing other trafficked children from our community, many of them not identified by authorities (Williamson, 2008).

For many childhood victims of trafficking, life remains difficult long after their victimization ends. Indeed, subsequent research on 1000 women offenders in Toledo, Ohio, revealed that 77% of those that reported being involved as victims of the child sex trade, without intervention, graduated into adult prostitution (Ventura, Williamson, Cox, DuPuy, Lambert, Benjamin, Laux, Nathan, & Bryant, 2007). In-depth interviews with 53 prostituted women from Toledo tell the story of what frequently happens to sexually trafficked children who do not receive appropriate intervention. By adulthood, most of these women had been or were currently involved in chronic substance abuse (97%), exhibited poor mental health with a common diagnosis of major depression and/or post traumatic stress disorder (52%), engaged in high risk behavior including placing themselves at risk for HIV (41%), and were often victims of sex buyer-related violence (82%). Many of these women faced deteriorating physical health and were homeless (Williamson, 2005).

Despite evidence of continued or reoccurring trauma, some caused initially by earlier child sex trafficking victimization, none of these women can be legally defined as trafficking victims because they are now adults and not involved in prostitution through means of “force,” “fraud,” or “coercion.”<sup>2</sup> They were instead being prostituted by drugs, poverty, and the outcomes of earlier trauma, elements not currently recognized by the U.S. as extensions of child sex trafficking.

As advocates and spiritual leaders, we must identify the extension of victimization and the continued trauma that affects the lives of women involved in prostitution. Very often, these are the children in our community that we missed.

Although understanding both the childhood and adulthood experiences of victims is critical to developing the empathy that leads to action, comprehensive and targeted services to meet the needs of victims should not stop there. Understanding the *social system* of domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) and all of the players involved is essential to developing responses that effectively address sex trafficking. Just as the manner in which one understands the problem shapes the response, the level of response determines the effectiveness achieved.

Trafficking of youth into the sex trade often involves a network of behind the scenes, complicit players—legitimate businesses or those in authority willing to look the other way, vulnerable youth, and sex buyers willing to purchase youth.<sup>3</sup> It is a business. The business involves supply (i.e. victims), demand

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2 See Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, which requires the existence of force, fraud, or coercion in claims of sex trafficking of adults.

3 See Williamson & Prior (2009). Domestic minor sex trafficking: A network of underground players in the Midwest. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma*.

(i.e. sex buyers), and distribution or distributors (i.e. sex traffickers). In order to respond successfully to child sex trafficking, one must attend to each in a strategic manner using criminal justice, social services, and health care systems.

### **Faith-based Social Workers: Significant Contributors to Anti-Trafficking Efforts**

Toledo, Ohio, has been heavily involved in addressing human trafficking, with particular attention to child sex trafficking. This has been a collective effort throughout the community, calling on professionals and community members from all areas. Although rarely acknowledged publicly, social workers of faith have led the charge to address this effort in the community. Their actions grow out of a social work commitment to advocate for social justice reflective of the spirit of Christianity and the practice of spirituality.

For many social workers of faith, organizing and advocating against social injustice is nothing new. Social change and social justice advocacy have long been elements of both social work practice and organized religion, including the support of such historic causes such as civil rights, welfare rights, the labor movement, and various peace movements (Faver, 2004; Lee, 2004; Overlid, 2008; Lee & Barrett, 2007). Social work practice has its roots in social justice and social activism with the goals of confronting and eliminating racism, sexism and other “isms.” Following the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (2008), social workers engage in anti-oppressive practice, which often involves fighting for the redistribution of wealth, fair representation and opportunity within business, religious organizations, political arenas, access to quality education, and fair treatment in the criminal justice system. To accomplish these goals social workers may be engaged in micro work that involves practice at smaller levels such as with individuals, families, and small groups. They may also be engaged in macro work, in which clients are not individuals or families, but are instead larger entities such as organizations and communities. However, in recent years the separation between micro and macro is lessening with the idea that most social issues are best addressed with a blending of micro and macro practice that considers both the individual and structural factors (Austin, Coombs & Barr, 2005).

Social work in the area of social justice is indeed reflective of the spirit of Christianity itself. Spirituality can provide the structure or foundation to turn inner reflection into outward social action (Prior & Quinn, 2010). Social justice has been supported by organized religion. At their 34<sup>th</sup> General Congregation in 1995, the Catholic Church declared a social justice agenda as a moral imperative. Liberation theology (Gutierrez, 1973) also argues the natural link between religion and social action as a necessary outcome of faith (Singletary, 2005, p. 58). From this perspective, spiritual people are naturally and ethically committed to involvement in transformative social action. In the Christian tradition, these values are based directly on the model of Jesus himself, who stood with and advocated for those who were devalued, exploited, and oppressed (Preston, 1988).

For helping professionals, social justice advocacy is a form of practicing spirituality. The fulfillment of one's spiritual life must include engagement with others in the remaking of the world, healing, and creating supportive structures and institutions (Powell, 2005, p. 73). The compassion inherent in spirituality drives one's "commitment to challenge social and political issues in society, such as inequality and injustice" (Overlid, 2008, p. 254). Efforts addressing trafficking and other forms of abuse and exploitation of young females reflect these universal spiritual values of love and compassion (Kapur, 1995).

We see social responsibility and commitment to social justice as central elements of spirituality. Social responsibility and social justice are often reflected in social ministry. Social ministry is social justice in action.

There are many definitions of social ministry. A common perspective in the U.S. is to view social ministry as the domain of organized religion, carried out through the church and by its congregation. Those in our community who wanted to respond to the child sex trade encompassed individuals who were Buddhist and Christian, as well as those who were spiritual, non-church attending members, and those who were Catholic Nuns. Therefore, we consider social ministry in a broader context, as a collaborative effort of all spiritual persons who desired to influence society or improve quality of life beyond organized religion and church membership.

### **Humble Beginnings**

Leading the development of anti-trafficking social ministry in Toledo were Dr. Celia Williamson and Mary Schmidbauer. Both had experience working in North Toledo's low-income, high-crime area. Dr. Williamson, recognizing the problem of prostitution in 1993, founded the Second Chance program to work with victims of the sex trade. Schmidbauer, an active community organizer, worked to empower low-income families to fight against drugs, crime, and a poor educational system. Over the years, the Second Chance program, dependent on small grants, struggled to provide street outreach and weekly support groups. Second Chance's founder approached the community organizer to take over the program in 2004, and under her leadership the program began to thrive. The founder was then free to write grants for the program, secure university interns, and, most importantly, conduct research on the topic. These efforts secured the necessary political influence to facilitate a prostitution roundtable and later a human trafficking coalition.

In 2005, despite limited support from the community, Second Chance began working with youth. Under the relatively new federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act, and with the support of local research findings, Second Chance worked to convince funders that child sex trafficking was real. Local program providers were educated and encouraged to refer victims for services. Once the program staff began to identify and refer victims, the two social workers, along with many other professionals, students, and volunteers, were able to engage in effective and targeted work. Below we present the process and results of our

efforts with and on behalf of child sex trafficking victims. While the outcomes presented below appear in a succinct manner, and are packaged in a framework as if each piece flowed in a linear fashion, in reality the process was often scattered and scrambled. Building programmatic and community capacity depended on our ability to access political leadership and for those in power to listen and follow through. Coalition members and volunteers relied on the freedom, faith, and boldness of many of those involved to do everything in their power to move the issue forward.<sup>4</sup>

### **Effective Response to Sex Trafficking of Minors: Four Levels of Social Ministry**

To effectively address child sex trafficking in our community, our goal was to engage in social ministry using micro through macro practice. Unruh and Sider (2005) define four social ministry types as 1) relief services, 2) personal development, 3) community development, and 4) systemic change. For social workers, the first two categories of relief services and personal development are interpersonally based, and relate to micro social work practice. The last two responses involving community development and systemic change are more macro in scope and involve transformative social change efforts.

Once we became aware of the scope of the problem, we began addressing domestic minor sex trafficking, not in a slow and casual manner, but with the calculated salience needed to move forward as expeditiously as possible. It seemed like a daunting task, but our team of social workers knew we had an opportunity to be successful if (1) we did not accept this problem as permanent, (2) we found strength through prayer, self confidence, and the ability to speak to power, and (3) if we removed the personal characteristics that inhibited us such as shyness, low self esteem, and the feeling of powerlessness. We began our movement at first with voices shaking and knees rattling, but in reminding ourselves of the shattered lives of the youth we interviewed and worked with, our voices became stronger and more confident. We knew the God of Justice would open doors for the oppressed, all the way to the top (Job 36:6; Psalm 89:14).

We reached across political and religious lines to form a multi-disciplined anti-trafficking Coalition to respond to child sex trafficking. We accepted the skills and talents that each individual brought to the table and turned no one away who wanted to help. We used the collective knowledge we had to reach various audiences, form unusual alliances, and work with some who we may personally disagree with, but with whom we could find common ground<sup>5</sup>.

Because of our nonjudgmental acceptance of those on our Coalition and

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4 See Promising Practices and Lessons Learned Report. Available upon request from Dr. Celia Williamson at [celia.williamson@utoledo.edu](mailto:celia.williamson@utoledo.edu).

5 Our coalition included Catholic nuns, trafficking survivors, prostituting women, and law enforcement officials, along with various social service agency representatives, who did not always agree with each other. In addition we worked with both Democratic and Republican politicians.

our hard work, we now stand as a collaborative force to be reckoned with. By standing collectively, we are currently a strong, formidable opponent for anyone who wants to deny the rights and protection of children in our community. As a result, we have achieved many successes, including securing an FBI task force, developing programming and locating funding for our Safe House for youth, the passage of anti-trafficking legislation at the state level, and engaging in community wide prevention efforts. These responses did not come easily and required that we remove barriers, which often meant consistently moving within and across political, religious, and professional boundaries to form effective alliances.

Below we present the model that best reflects our efforts and displays the importance of each component of our work. Each component is contingent upon the other and interdependent. It is important to note that because our response to child sex trafficking was shaped by those at the table of our Coalition, our successes are the product of those experts, their visions, and their ability to accomplish tasks and achieve goals.

### **Relief Services**

According to Unruh and Sider (2005), relief services are those that involve the supply of basic necessities such as food, clothing or housing. These services to victims are critical and represent a basic level of compassion for those that have been traumatized and victimized through human trafficking. Toledo Area Ministries (TAM) is the largest and oldest ecumenical ministry in Northwest Ohio and links over 125 member congregations and non-profit organizations. TAM's mission is to engage church leadership, congregations, community organizations and people of good will in meeting human need, creating community and working for justice. As a socially conscious and social justice-focused organization, TAM currently houses the Second Chance program. Today, a dedicated group of case managers (composed of degreed professionals and survivors) oversee the daily operations of Second Chance and form the core of the organization. Referrals for services come from law enforcement, judges, social workers, probation officers, and self-referral. As a result, Second Chance works with an average of 60 adult women and 15 youth per year, providing or linking victims with basic needs. Relief services and resources have largely consisted of street outreach, crisis intervention, an emergency health care fund for indigent women and youth, and the operation of two safe houses (previously used as local convents), one for adult women and one for youth. Funding for these programs comes from local contracts with child protective services and juvenile court, along with federal grants.

Survivors of sex trafficking and prostitution have made invaluable contributions to Second Chance. Those staff involved in relief efforts at Second Chance as survivors are as valuable as those who come with college degrees and those employed with college degrees are as valuable as survivors. Each has a respected skill set. While licensed social workers are trained to engage in targeted assessments, navigate social systems to benefit victims, and advocate in courts and with child protective services, we have found that they may not be



the best choice as “first responders” after referral. In contrast, while survivors are experts in facilitating support groups, conducting outreach, and building relationships, we recognize and value the need for trained social workers who can identify symptoms of mental illness, provide referrals, and create linkages to vital services.

Members of Stop Trafficking of Persons (STOP!), an education and advocacy coalition of religious Sisters from various communities, also contribute significantly to Second Chance’s relief services by providing basic needs as well as spiritual support to victims. The women of STOP! were instrumental in creating the Emergency Health Care Fund to provide health services such as medication to victims without insurance. They also donate to other areas of relief services such as emergency housing. In addition, certain Sisters can be called upon at a moment’s notice to lend overnight support to a victim in the safe house, as they recognize the importance of just being there for someone.

### **Personal Development**

Personal development is defined as helping victims develop tools to improve their physical, emotional, intellectual, relational, and spiritual self (Unruh & Sider, 2005). Personal development is closely linked with the provision of relief services, as victims of trafficking cannot effectively work toward personal development until their basic needs have been met (Maslow, 1970). Personal development involves receiving individualized services based on goals and needs, provided through highly skilled, compassionate, empathetic providers who can offer comprehensive, intensive, and flexible services throughout the healing process.

To this end, Second Chance provides weekly psychosocial groups to help victims, who are known as “members,” address psychological and social issues that enable their transition from victim to survivor. Psychosocial groups use specialized group syllabi and provide intensive and structured support to address specific trauma related to mental and emotional issues. Trained social workers and social work interns facilitate these groups. Women in these groups learn skills to maintain their sobriety and healthy living to assist them in goals such as reunification with their children. In addition, weekly support group sessions for members provide peer-led healing opportunities. Group content varies but always addresses an aspect of recovery and personal growth. Peer-led groups are less formal and allow the women a chance to grow through providing support to others. This group is an important part of the transition from survivor to thriver. As the women grow through their interactions with those who are where they once were, they can give other women hope as they say, “I was there once but I am here now.”

Additional personalized treatment is provided through one-on-one case management. Case management involves advocacy, referrals, obtaining of resources and day-to-day support to victims. Case managers first engage in assessments with members that help to identify needs, goals, and barriers. This may include helping members to find housing (or a suitable foster home

in the case of a youth who cannot return home), substance abuse treatment, counseling or mental health treatment, job training and education, obtaining a qualified attorney, attending court with members, advocating with child protective services on behalf of members, securing health care benefits and/or access to health care, and more. In sum, case managers work to remove barriers to independence and wellbeing. Over time, they empower survivors to address their own needs and make progress toward individualized goals, with the end goal of self-sufficiency in mind.

Recognizing the need for a more structured spiritual component, Second Chance created a partnership with a group of Sisters from different communities who are members of Sisters Empowered Reclaiming Our Voice (SERV). These Sisters, who were victims of sexual abuse, became active in the Second Chance program by initially providing spiritual support in the form of informal Coffee House Evenings. Later SERV connected with a Sister who had previously facilitated spirituality groups at Second Chance and formed S.H.E.—Spirituality for Healing and Empowerment— an organization they hope will enable them to continue to meet the spiritual needs of the women in a variety of ways.

S.H.E. programs are facilitated by highly skilled Sisters who have developed a spiritually based, gender-sensitive curriculum that addresses issues of abuse, empathy, whether or not to choose forgiveness, and empowerment, among others. An example of the spiritually based, gender sensitive component of the program is described in the traditionally manifested male image of God. According to the S.H.E. coordinator, the masculine image of God may have negative associations tied to abuse. This may result in the trafficking victim's objection to the traditional image of God as a male or to the use of the term God, which carries with it the connotation of a male personification of an ultimate power. Victims of sexual abuse may also distrust God or conceptualize God as harshly judgmental (Pritt, 1998). For other clients, feminine images of a God may also cause negative memories, because often a mother or another woman was involved in their commercial sexual exploitation. Therefore, the group strives to develop non-gender specific images for God and allow the women to address the higher power in the way that makes them most comfortable. This is also accomplished for the women through focusing on their own feelings and how these feelings speak to them of a higher power.

S.H.E. facilitators also make a special point to discuss the difference and connection between spirituality and religion. Many women who are survivors may reject religion outright, and therefore reject spirituality in the process. While some conceptualize religion and spirituality as synonymous, many see them as overlapping and complementary, but discrete from one another. For those who see the concepts as discrete, religion might be seen as a method of organizing for the purpose of pursuing spirituality, while spirituality is often seen as a unique, individual experience that has more to do with an inner state of being than an overt set of behavioral practices (Prior & Quinn, 2010). Quoting from Rachel Naomi Remen (1999), the Sisters' analogy is to talk about religion as one bridge to spirituality, and sometimes individuals get stuck on the bridge.

Day and overnight retreats are also part of the Sisters' spiritual programming with Second Chance. Themed retreats such as those focused on self-care may include self-hand massage stations, relaxing music, and self-meditation exercises. Overnight retreats facilitate deeper levels of connection between group members and explore their relationship to spirituality. Discussions during overnight retreats provide an outlet to incorporate each person's unique spiritual side into their recovery. Second Chance staff members also occasionally receive spiritual care from S.H.E. facilitators through relaxed day retreats where they can nourish their minds, bodies, and spirits.

The methods used are based on the bio-psycho-social-spiritual approach to human functioning. Working to help each survivor integrate or develop connections between the various aspects of the self into an integrated whole can be an important part of a member's recovery. Using this approach the women develop tools that provide them comfort or shelter from life stressors. The exercises are relevant to their lives outside of the programming and have lasting salience.

The success of the overall Second Chance program is based on its ability to provide flexible, intensive, and comprehensive services that place importance on physical, emotional, and spiritual healing. This does not necessarily happen during a traditional eight-hour workday. The added component of S.H.E. enhances the spiritual element in programming by providing spirituality in a holistic manner that includes the nurturing of relationships through companioning, non-judgmental listening, and acceptance. It requires time and patience.

As part of their emotional and spiritual healing, trafficking victims also have the option of pursuing justice for their victimization. Social workers and the local Violent Crimes Against Children Task Force, also known as the FBI Innocence Lost Task Force<sup>6</sup>, aid in the investigation of traffickers, the people and businesses that support trafficking, and sex buyers. Since 2006 the task force has identified more than 80 youth and works closely with Second Chance for victim services. In March 2010, Second Chance received the FBI Director's Community Leadership Award for their collaboration with the FBI to provide excellent services to victims that pursued federal prosecution.

Despite the achievements of this direct service program, direct service alone is not enough to effectively address human trafficking. A community-wide united front is necessary to respond to the networks and business of human trafficking. Macro-focused community organizing efforts are essential to addressing social justice and creating lasting social change for the benefit of and the prevention of future trafficking.

## **Community Development**

Community development moves beyond what a direct services agency like Second Chance can provide, to educate, organize, and develop the community outside its doors. Community development, in short, is defined as improving

6 There are 38 Innocence Lost Task Forces in the U.S. These task forces focus solely on domestic child sex trafficking. <http://www2.fbi.gov/innolost/innolost.htm>.

local communities. More specifically, community development empowers individuals and groups with a common agenda by enabling them to affect needed change in their own communities (Rubin & Rubin, 2007). In 2009, the social workers initially involved in launching anti-trafficking efforts in Toledo formed the Lucas County Human Trafficking Coalition. The Lucas County Human Trafficking Coalition meets monthly and its membership is comprised of social service and health care agencies, law enforcement, faith-based organizations, and interested community members. The mission of the Coalition is to unite the community to respond to human trafficking through increased awareness for educators, health care providers, social service providers, law enforcement, and the general community while developing collaborative protocols and procedures to respond to victims, target demand, and prevent future victimization and exploitation. Based on a series of discussions, Coalition members formed committees they believed would best meet the community's needs for effective human trafficking responses. Identified committees are presented below along with a sample of their achievements.

Following the formation of the Coalition, the Prevention and Education Committee began conducting presentations in the community. Our increased presence in the community led to more interest in the issue and assisted us in recruiting additional members to the Coalition. During the first two years, the Coalition educated more than 1200 professionals and paraprofessionals. A public service announcement was created to reach the general community, and airtime was donated for it to appear on the local cable channels. The public service announcement, called "Not On My Watch," combined local and state governmental officials, heads of community agencies and general community members to give the message to those who would purchase youth that trafficking would not happen "on their watch." They further asked youth and members of the community to call the trafficking hotline.<sup>7</sup>

The Education and Prevention Committee now regularly provides human trafficking education through the use of our locally written and produced prevention video, "Losing Maria," geared toward junior high- and high school-aged youth. Sisters from various communities throughout Ohio and surrounding states funded the video in its entirety. The committee also regularly uses a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Human Trafficking 101" to educate parents and professionals. A speaker's bureau was formed to cover the demand for presentations. The speaker's bureau is composed of volunteers from the community and University of Toledo.

The Marketing and Communications committee conducts larger scale awareness efforts, including the development and distribution of brochures, maintenance of web-based materials and social networking, and awareness raising community events.

The Procedures and Protocols committee is working to implement standard protocols within the community to guide agencies when they encounter victims.

7 See YouTube Video of "Not On My Watch" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4QZDlfb90uI>.

These standards, which apply to any social service, health care, or criminal justice setting, involve employing skilled responses from the moment of victim identification to providing comprehensive services leading toward recovery<sup>8</sup>. The local Health Department is one of the leading agencies on this committee and was the first to adopt agency specific procedures to guide protocols for victims. Other agencies have adopted this form for their use and it has been introduced at state level trainings.<sup>9</sup>

The Demand group focuses on the sex purchasers. While the FBI Task Force had already developed a response for those who attempt to purchase sex from youth, there was little accountability for those who attempted to purchase adult women who were involved in prostitution but not being trafficked. As a result, the Demand Committee implemented a “John School” to increase accountability and reduce overall demand for sexual services in the local area. Longer-term goals for the committee include plans to engage junior high and high school-aged boys in adopting positive definitions of manhood while rejecting the devaluation of women and girls.

Lastly, there are also two “working groups,” with one focused on domestic trafficking and one forming to address international trafficking. These committees, called working groups because they do not formally meet like other committees, are nonetheless in frequent contact with one another. The groups consist of Immigration Customs Enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Juvenile Court, Child Protection, and Second Chance. The purpose of these groups is to discuss and coordinate victim needs and services. Due to the sensitive nature of case information, they are not open to other members of the Coalition. Although the Coalition has mobilized a community to respond, this is not enough to achieve lasting social change. While an educated community motivated to respond to victims can open doors to recovery for victims and accountability for sex buyers and traffickers, there is a need for systemic change to ensure that successes achieved can be sustained. This systemic change is occurring on both the local and state level as advocates work together to promote the best result for responding to human trafficking.

## **Systemic Change**

As their final form of social ministry Unruh and Sider (2005) define systemic change as creating just political, economic, environmental or cultural systems. While this form of social ministry is the most desirable for long-term change, it can be the most difficult to achieve because it requires that systems operate differently to meet the desired need. It has been the Coalition’s goal to address

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8 Work in progress. The committee trained United Way operators to identify human trafficking calls and to record and report information to the coalition chairs. In turn, any calls to the National Hotline in Washington DC will have a follow-up call to the local 2-1-1 system.

9 Macro level protocols – health department – micro level protocols – Michelle Hannan <http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/TraffickingVictimServices>.

systemic change by sponsoring state legislation that would create a felony for human trafficking in Ohio, by establishing local protocols that addressed how systems would respond differently to victims, and by developing best practices for work with victims.

On the state level, the two social workers mentioned above who began this work in Toledo are members of the Ohio Trafficking in Persons Study Commission facilitated by the Ohio Attorney General. This Commission was broken into various subcommittees to explore trafficking in Ohio and answer key questions. Each subcommittee released a report that contributed to the knowledge base and led to improved responses. The first report from the Research and Analysis Subcommittee (chaired by the Second Chance founder) estimated the prevalence of trafficking in Ohio. Findings from this report were used to bolster support for S.B. 235 that would make human trafficking a felony in Ohio.

Prior to the report there was much opposition to the bill, but with these findings the bill sponsor, Senator Teresa Fedor, was able to secure co-sponsor support from 26 of her colleagues. The Legislative Subcommittee released its report shortly after, and recommended that the State adopt human trafficking legislation and provided support for the legal language. This was an important step in the battle for a stand-alone law, as Ohio was one of less than 10 states without such a law. Resistance to the law persisted despite the Attorney General reports and increased attention to the issue. However, after much persistence from State Senator Teresa Fedor, the bill passed and was signed into law in December 2010.

In the future, we anticipate passing Safe Harbor legislation that would protect child sex trafficking victims from arrest while providing needed services. We also look forward to strengthening our state child protection mandates to ensure that victims receive the needed protective services to enable them to be restored. These, among others, are the necessary legislative pieces needed to provide the best services and legal protections for our youth.

Locally, the Coalition is addressing the need for agencies to adopt procedures and protocols to respond to victims. In April 2011, the Coalition hosted a workshop on trafficking with more than 100 key community representatives. Attendees were provided resources to implement for increasing victim identification within their agencies. The tools included a victim identification protocol successfully implemented by the local health department and information on trafficking warning signs. We also asked attendees to sign up for a workshop to be held at their agency or for technical assistance to build human trafficking protocols within their agencies. The goal was to provide agencies suggested protocols to model their systems after, thus increasing their capacity to provide or accept referrals for relief and personal development services. These protocols are also being implemented in other areas of the state, so the effect of the local efforts is becoming wide reaching.

One of the biggest strides in changing local systems occurred during a multi-disciplinary meeting that involved the local Children Protective Services (CPS) Office. CPS is one of the key agencies that may interact with domestic minor

victims of sex trafficking. During discussions, the Coalition reviewed practices that the CPS office should adopt to improve responses to domestic minor sex trafficking victims. The CPS staff reviewed and adopted the suggestions as permitted by their agency policy. Some of these changes included a supervisor, intake staff and case workers trained and specifically assigned to trafficking cases, the utilization of therapeutic foster placements, and the training of CPS operators to identify possible human trafficking reports and refer information to trained case workers.

By using community development approaches, the Coalition has been able to achieve systemic change, helping the community come closer to treating victims justly. Without such efforts to unite the community, current changes would not be happening on the local or state level. We remain optimistic that we will sustain these changes while endeavoring to create additional needed changes to appropriately address human trafficking.

## **Conclusion**

The Toledo area has achieved success in addressing the needs of human trafficking victims because of initiatives to implement change in all four areas of social ministry, by staying true to our spiritual roots, and because we walked by faith, not by sight. In fact, all areas of social ministry may be seen as interdependent on one another and critical in efforts to achieve social justice for trafficking victims. In the hierarchy of need, one cannot obtain personal development without meeting basic human needs through relief programming. Yet, providing relief and enabling personal development is only a part of the solution. The barriers, gaps, misunderstandings, ineffective policies or lack of policies, and lack of communication between systems that enabled the problem to continue must be continually addressed if victims are to become survivors and if traffickers and sex buyers are to be appropriately factored into the response equation.

Today, others in the Coalition are at the forefront of many of the community's most challenging goals involving the child sex trade. The newer advocates, in collaboration with the Sisters, are injecting new energy and paving new and necessary roads to end child sex trafficking. We feel confident that with this added energy and vision we will continue to make a difference.

We further believe that moving individuals from victims to survivors is not enough. We pray that we will be able to help survivors become thrivers, meaning we will work toward having mechanisms in place for our survivors to thrive emotionally, economically, and spiritually. In our continued work toward moving our community to be accountable and responsive to human trafficking, we ask that the readers of this piece pray for continued strength and grace for the workers involved in this effort. By ensuring a future for our children, all of our children, through God's grace, we ensure a future for ourselves.

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# SECTION 8

## Descision Cases

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# DECISION CASE 1

## No Room at the Inn<sup>1</sup>

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*Judi Ravenhorst Meerman and Rachel Venema*

It was 3:00 pm on Monday, October 27, 2014, when Program Coordinator Kate Matthews heard a knock on the church door. Alone in the building, Kate was in the midst of preparing agendas for upcoming meetings that week, and was hoping to get them out by 4:00 pm. She wondered who would be at the door without a scheduled meeting. When she opened the door, Kate saw a disheveled and distraught older woman leaning against her walker and recognized her as someone who often hung out in the Granger neighborhood.

“I just, I just can’t be outside in this weather, I can’t,” the woman pleaded. “I have nowhere to stay and my cell phone is out of minutes.”

Although heavily involved with community organizing and systems-level work around homelessness, Kate did not have experience working directly with individuals in need. In fact, this was the first time in five years that a homeless person showed up on the church steps with no place to stay. Kate invited the woman into the church and started to unravel her situation. Following the protocol Kate had discussed with other service providers at countless meetings, Kate made a series of phone calls to arrange emergency shelter. But after two hours, a usually resourceful and confident Kate felt anxious, angry, disappointed, and completely confused about what to do next. It was past 5:00 pm and none of the shelters in Rochester, New York had room for Martha. *Have I done enough?* Kate asked herself. *Do I just turn her away at this point? Or, as a Christian, should I invite her home with me? I can’t just leave this woman on the street with nowhere to stay and no way to communicate.*

### **Rochester, New York**

Rochester, New York was located in Monroe County, south of Lake Ontario. According to the U. S. Census, Rochester had a population of 210,565, making it the state’s third most populous city after New York City and Buffalo. The surrounding Western New York region had a population of more than 1 million.

1 Development of this decision case was supported in part by the North American Association of Christians in Social Work. It was prepared solely to provide material for class discussion and not to suggest either effective or ineffective handling of the situation depicted. While based on field research regarding an actual situation, names and certain facts may have been disguised to protect confidentiality. The authors wish to thank the anonymous case reporter for cooperation in making this account available for the benefit of social work students and instructors.

Near downtown Rochester, the Granger neighborhood was populated primarily by low-income families and homeless individuals. Since the influx of mental health patients deinstitutionalized when many of the asylums in New York City were closed in the 1920s, numerous social service agencies and organizations were established to provide assistance with daily need including food pantries, health clinics and warming and cooling stations. The older non-profit agencies included St. Ann's Kitchen, Gathering Ministries, Pete Hopkins Mission, and Lighthouse Mission.

In the 1980s, additional service providers joined the work in the Granger neighborhood. Resting Place, one of the new non-profit housing agencies, purchased and renovated old buildings in downtown Rochester for use in subsidized housing. Gathering Ministries was another founded to serve the needs of the homeless and otherwise marginalized persons by assisting with daily needs such as hot showers, haircuts, bus money, housing and job assistance, and other presenting issues. Gathering was a place for people to make friends, find support, and be part of a community. Gathering also operated Doorstep Women's Center (DWC), a safe haven during the overnight hours for adult women in crisis. In addition to overnight emergency housing, DWC staff set goals to explore options for securing permanent sustainable housing. DWC aimed to reflect Christ's love in a welcoming environment where women were encouraged to make positive lifestyle changes. In addition to these agencies, churches, food pantries, coffee shops, health clinics, and businesses also provided services to meet the needs of individuals in the Granger neighborhood.

### **Bethlehem Methodist Church**

One of the most active churches in the Granger neighborhood, Bethlehem Methodist Church, identified itself as a downtown church "centered on God's grace and focused on worship, music and social justice with a goal of growing together in faith and action." In 1976, Bethlehem established the Granger Neighborhood Collaboration Project (GNCP) as a voice for the people in the community and to provide advocacy services. A program within Bethlehem, GNCP sought to facilitate increased collaboration between ministries, agencies, neighbors, governmental agencies and others with a stake in the Granger neighborhood. GNCP aimed to "increase collaboration in the Granger neighborhood in order to maximize resources, minimize service duplication and help neighbors to move from dependency on charity to independence and productivity to whatever extent that is possible for each individual." But GNCP did not work independently as a social service organization; rather, it focused on bringing people together to best determine how they could accomplish these goals. Financial support included grants from the Rochester Community Foundation, the Patterson Foundation, the Amos Fund, and individual and congregational gifts.

## **Kate Matthews, Program Coordinator of Granger Neighborhood Collaboration Project**

Kate Matthews was a newly graduated MSW from New York University. As part of her MSW education, Kate had completed her field practicum at GNCP under the supervision of its only employee, Director Jay Samuelson. Director Samuelson was so impressed with the skills that Kate offered, he created a position titled Program Coordinator and hired her after graduation. Kate's position description stated that the "GNCP Program Coordinator focuses on day-to-day operations and community outreach." Daily tasks involved meeting with key stakeholder groups within the Granger neighborhood to maintain relationships and keep lines of communication open so as to continue the work of social justice. Area agencies identified Network Managers who worked with Kate to understand and navigate their complex relationships to recognize and help members capitalize on opportunities, clarify member interests, identify conflicts, facilitate communication, maximize available resources, mediate differences, and influence the networks capacity to fulfill its purpose. The Program Coordinator position was not intended to provide direct service to individuals in need but to improve collaboration between area service providers and help them better serve those in need.

### **A Cold October Day**

On a cold Monday, October 27, Kate was busy preparing for upcoming meetings when she heard a knock on the church door. There was one especially important meeting on Tuesday with members of the City Council, in which they would be discussing new development and gentrification in the Granger neighborhood. Kate needed to send out communication for that meeting by the end of the workday. She wondered who would be at the door without scheduling a meeting. When she opened the door, Kate saw a disheveled and distraught older woman leaning against her walker and recognized her as someone who had been in and out of emergency housing in the neighborhood. The older woman immediately stammered,

"I just, I just can't be outside in this weather, I can't," she pleaded. "I have nowhere to stay and my cell phone is out of minutes."

"Well, come in," Kate invited. "My name is Kate, come in for a bit. What is your name?"

"My name is Martha," the woman responded.

Because Martha used a walker, Kate and Martha slowly made their way up the stairs to Kate's office. *Why did she come here?* Kate wondered as they walked. *We aren't a shelter. But she's clearly in need and I suppose I know a few people to call.* As much as Kate wanted to help, she was confused about why Martha came to the church and conscious that she was slightly annoyed and impatient with this unexpected visitor. *We don't provide housing and I'm not a caseworker.*

"What brought you to Bethlehem today?" Kate asked, after Martha was seated in her office.

"I was evicted in August," Martha began. "I was in the hospital. They made me go to the hospital for my leg. And when I left the hospital, I couldn't get in my apartment. I had been evicted!"

"Have you been in the hospital for three months?" Kate asked.

"I got diabetes," Martha explained. "I lost feeling in my foot and they told me I might lose it. But then they saved it and gave me this walker."

"Where have you been staying?" Kate probed.

"I don't have a place to stay," Martha said.

"Well, where did you stay last night?" Kate asked. "Can you stay there again?"

"What? I'm on the street!" Martha responded. "Where else do you think I've been staying? Why else would I be here?" Martha went on to describe her nights on the street since discharge. "It was warm so I would just be out at night. I could be okay if I stayed warm." Martha told her story, speaking rapidly.

*She sounds anxious, Kate thought. She's clearly in crisis.*

But as Martha continued, Kate started to grow nervous. *She's talking so fast. What else is going on with her? Why is she so amped up?* Kate began to wonder if it was safe for her and Martha to be alone in the church building together. But Kate tried to stay calm and let Martha finish.

Kate knew she needed to reach out to other providers, and felt confident in her networking skills to find shelter for Martha. *I'm glad I know some people, Kate thought, I'm going to make a couple of calls. This shouldn't be too difficult.* So Kate called and left a message at the community Housing Resource Program (HRP) to get the ball rolling. Shortly, the person from HRP called back with clear instructions to send Martha to Peter Hopkins.

"Don't worry," Kate assured Martha, "there will be room at Peter Hopkins!"

"I already went there," Martha responded, her voice rising. "They turned me away. They already turned me away. I knew it. I knew it. There's nowhere to stay." *Peter Hopkins always has room, I'm sure they will let her in- or with the weather cold are they full* Kate thought.

So Kate quickly called the next logical agency, Doorstep Women's Center. Ruth White answered the phone. Kate explained the situation, and Ruth looked up Martha's name in their computer system.

"Umm, Martha can't stay here," Ruth responded matter-of-factly. "She caused a disturbance the last time she was here and we had to ask her to leave. She refused to receive further mental evaluation."

"Just because that happened once," Kate pressed, "you won't let her stay in your shelter?"

"We want to make sure that it's safe for all the other women," Ruth explained, sounding a bit defensive. "For example, we once had a woman who was staying here with severe delusions. She was asking staff for a knife because there was a hobbit that was living next to her. She didn't have any mental health case management or medication that she was taking for mental health issues. And so for the safety of the other women she wasn't allowed back into the shelter until she had some type of mental evaluation."



“I just can’t. I just can’t be outside,” Martha pleaded while Kate was speaking with Ruth, “I just can’t. They turned me away, too.”

As Martha interrupted, Kate strained to hear what Ruth was saying. “We offered to refer her to area mental health agencies, but she refused. If they refuse, there’s not really much more we can do except not allow them to stay here.”

*They can’t provide housing just because someone refuses mental health services? Kate felt her frustration rising. Shouldn’t there be a place where people can go, even if they’re having a mental health crisis? How does Ruth sleep at night, knowing Martha has nowhere to go? Isn’t she a Christian?*

“But what about today?” Kate replied. “She might be willing to get an evaluation. She needs a place to stay tonight. Like, right now. She’s sitting here at Bethlehem Church and Peter Hopkins is full.”

“I’m sorry,” Ruth insisted, “but our policy is that she needs to have an evaluation first before she can stay here, and she needs to go to Rochester Community Mental Health for the evaluation. She can do that tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow?” Kate exclaimed! “She needs a place to stay tonight. It’s supposed to get below freezing tonight.”

“I’m sorry. We can’t take her at Doorstep. I pray that everything works out.” With that, Ruth ended the call.

Kate glanced at Martha, who was mumbling to herself, and rocking back and forth in the chair. Kate didn’t know what to say. *I didn’t know this would be so hard.*

As she sat across the table from Martha, Kate continued to reflect on Doorstep’s policy. *Shelters are in a really tough spot. So if you have somebody struggling with whatever it is—mental health issues, anger, they’re on tons of medications—shelters really aren’t prepared to work with that. At Doorstep, they’ve got forty women to look after and if one is aggressive, it’s not a safe place for the other thirty-nine. For the sake of the thirty-nine who have already been traumatized, the one can’t stay.* Kate had to admit the shelter policy made sense, but that didn’t help her find a place for Martha to sleep tonight. *She still needs a place to sleep. How could Ruth just say ‘no’? Didn’t she have a responsibility to follow-up?*

Then Kate reflected on her own position. *Have I done my best? she wondered. Should I tell Martha, ‘I’m sorry, but there’s nothing else I can do?’ Am I just like Ruth? What was that—‘I pray it works out.’? Is that what I should do? Just pray about it? Send Martha away and pray that she finds a safe place for the evening, while I go home to my family?*

As Martha waited, it was already past 5:00 pm, and Kate had made no progress. Kate didn’t know how to read what was going on with Martha. At times, Martha seemed content just to sit there quietly. But the next moment, she appeared agitated, mumbling more quickly.

Suddenly, a light bulb went off in Kate’s head. Kate remembered that area agencies had been using the Virtual Case Manager (VCM), a shared case management database. Each agency set its own privacy levels and decided what information they would share. The information in VCM focused on shelter, food,

and transportation. When Kate accessed the VCM, she could see that Martha had been kicked out of the Doorstep and that she had lost her house. But she couldn't see any information on psychotropic or other medications.

After Kate collected this information in VCM, she moved to another housing resource in Rochester, the United Way 211, a hotline where area experts provide information and referrals for food, housing, employment, childcare, transportation, health services, senior services, and more. *Maybe 211 will know of other resources that HRP doesn't*, Kate thought.

Elizabeth Porter answered the 211 call. After hearing the need, she suggested, "Yes, contact Doorstep. They will be able to help."

Wow. *What a system*, Kate thought. "I've already done that," Kate responded, trying to maintain her composure. "They won't take her."

"I'm sorry," Elizabeth said, "with the cold weather, I'm not sure what else is available. We've had so many calls today, I don't know where else to put people." With that, Elizabeth hung up the phone, leaving Kate more discouraged.

As she pondered, Kate grew increasingly frustrated, with both the situation and herself. Those emails she needed to get out by the end of the day had not been sent. They didn't even seem that important at this point. But she was making no progress with Martha either. And honestly, it was an hour past the time she normally went home. Kate was exhausted. She also felt really angry. *What if I were in Martha's shoes? she wondered. She's advocating for a place to stay . . . advocating to me. She's working as hard as she can. Why aren't agencies doing the same thing? Why am I not doing the same thing?* Kate felt really frustrated with the area shelters and found herself understanding what Granger neighborhood people say about social service agencies. This situation was not as easy as she thought it should be. This was not the system they had so carefully designed in meetings. Things were not working.

Meanwhile, Martha continued mumbling to herself.

*Martha's freaking out*, Kate thought. *She's got a walker. She's diabetic. She needs to eat. I'm freaking out. Should I invite her to my home? Who else could I call? Who's responsible? Am I responsible?* And Kate wondered, *What about all of the other people in Martha's situation who don't have a place to stay? Does the system really not work?*

*Have I done enough?* Kate asked herself. *Do I just turn her away at this point? Or, as a Christian, should I invite her home with me? I can't just leave this woman on the street with nowhere to stay and no way to communicate.*

# DECISION CASE 2

## The Best Interests of the Child?<sup>1</sup>

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*Joseph Kuilema*

In August 2013, new social worker Laura Jensen moved from just outside of Chicago, Illinois to San Fernando, Honduras to work at the St. Paul Bilingual School. One week after arriving, Laura met 12-year-old Gabriela Sandoval and, a short time later, began formally mentoring her. Gabriela and her siblings were sponsored by a small NGO to attend St. Paul.

One afternoon in March, 2014, Laura noticed square bruises on Gabriela's forearms.

"What happened to you?" Laura asked, "How did you get those marks on your arms?"

Gabriela said nothing, then she burst into tears.

Laura put her hand on Gabriela's shoulder and tried to make eye contact, but Gabriela looked away. They sat together in silence.

"It was a belt," Gabriela said finally. "She hit me with a belt."

"Who did?" Laura asked gently.

"My mom."

### **Honduras**

In 2013, Honduras was a country of approximately 8.5 million people. One of Spain's former colonies in Central America, it was overwhelmingly Catholic (97%), and quite young, with more than 55% of the population under the age of 24 (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013). It was the second poorest nation in the region, but also had extremely high levels of income inequality. Economically, it was still recovering from Hurricane Mitch, which devastated the nation in 1998 (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013).

More recently, Honduras had earned the dubious distinction of having the highest murder rate in the world, largely a result of America's appetite for illegal drugs (Bumpus, Meyers, & Sanchez, 2014). The drugs were manufactured in South America and routed through Honduras on their way to the United States.

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The violence surrounding narco-trafficking had fueled an increase in emigration northwards, especially among the youth, and efforts to stem the violence had been hampered by widespread corruption (Bumpus et al., 2014). In 2013, Transparency International (2013) ranked Honduras 140th out of 177 nations for corruption.

### **A school in San Fernando**

San Fernando, a small town of about 10,000, was several hours from the two epicenters of the drug-fueled violence, the major cities of San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, the capital. San Fernando was a small town of narrow cobblestone streets. Nestled at the base of a large mountain, San Fernando's rich colonial history, waterfalls, and nearby cloud forest drew some adventurous tourists, but it remained firmly off the beaten path.

At the time, San Fernando had two bilingual schools, St. Paul, which catered to students from Honduras' middle and upper class, and La Escuela Agua Viva (i.e., The School of Living Water), another bilingual school with a scholarship program which made it more accessible for lower-income Hondurans. St. Paul was founded by a Honduran doctor in 2002 as a way to give back to her community. In the 2013-2014 school year, it enrolled about 400 students in preschool to eleventh grade, the final year of high school in Honduras. The school was structured around bilingual education with a focus on citizenship and Protestant Christian ideas about vocation. It was located in a mostly middle class neighborhood, and had a number of international staff, all of them North Americans and most from the United States.

### **Gabriela Sandoval and the Sandoval Foundation**

In 2011, two of St. Paul's American teachers, Stephanie De Luca and Brittany James, met a girl, Gabriela Sandoval, who lived near St. Paul. Stephanie and Brittany had wanted to live intentionally in their community, and to get to know the people who lived around them. Many of the families in the mostly middle-class community had children who attended St. Paul, but one family stood out. Gabriela's family was one of the poorest in the neighborhood. They survived on about \$5 a day. Gabriela had three younger siblings who, along with their mother and father, lived in a tiny home on a vacant lot someone allowed the family to squat on. The house had a dirt floor, rough wood walls, and a tin roof. Gabriela's father, Carlos, sold hot dogs on the street to support the family. Gabriela's mother, Rocio, occasionally sold pupusas. Like Stephanie and Brittany, the Sandoval family was religious, Protestant, and attended church. Stephanie and Brittany were particularly drawn to Gabriela. She had a big personality. She was tall for her age, loved wearing dresses, and described herself as "guapa" (i.e., beautiful). Like Stephanie, she loved animals, particularly horses.

Gabriela's family was far too poor for her to attend St. Paul, and even struggled to pay for the uniforms and supplies required for the local public school.

Education in Honduras was only compulsory through elementary school (i.e., sixth grade), and Gabriela's parents were clear that she would not be headed to high school. This broke Stephanie and Brittany's hearts. They wanted this beautiful, intelligent young lady to be able to further her education. As Christians, they wanted to help, to show God's love in practical ways. So Stephanie approached the family and asked, "What if I send her to my school?" Carlos and Rocio were thrilled at the opportunity to send their daughter to a school they could not otherwise afford.

Stephanie and Brittany started the Sandoval Foundation as a 501(c)3 non-profit in the United States, and raised funds from their family and friends back in Alabama to pay the tuition for Gabriela. In the fall of 2012 they enrolled Gabriela at the school. Later that semester, they paid for her younger sister and brother to join her. The Sandoval children were the only children at St. Paul on scholarships, and the only recipients of the Sandoval Foundation. When Laura Jensen met her in 2013, Gabriela was 12 years old, and heading into the seventh grade at St. Paul.

### **Laura Jensen**

Laura Jensen had first fallen in love with Honduras in the fall of 2011, during her junior year at a Christian liberal arts school. She had participated in a semester program there focused on justice and development. The program fit in well with her social work major, as well as her minors in journalism and global development. In 2013, during the spring semester of her senior year, she completed her field placement in Kenya working with HIV/AIDS patients, and she was excited to pursue further international opportunities after graduation.

Laura graduated with her BSW in May of 2013. She was interested in practicing social work internationally, and began to search for jobs on idealist.org, a website with job postings from international NGOs that sought to "connect idealists with opportunities for action." It was there that she found a posting for a position at St. Paul in San Fernando to start a school counseling program. It seemed perfect to her. Laura had been backpacking in the mountains around San Fernando during her semester abroad, and felt excited to return to the area.

Laura was especially attracted to the job at St. Paul because it was a native Honduran organization, as opposed to an organization started by someone from the U.S. This made it different from many of the organizations she had interacted with during her first time in Honduras. While in Kenya, she had come to appreciate working with and for Kenyans, and seeing unique roles for both expats and local workers. It would also give her an opportunity to use her Spanish. She interviewed over the phone for the job while in Kenya, and got it.

### **Laura and Gabriela**

By the time Laura got to St. Paul in August of 2013, the person who had interviewed her for the job had returned to the United States. The new supervisor

for foreign staff was in her second year at the school, and two years older than Laura. Laura lived with her and two other teachers in the Koinonia House, a brightly colored home rented by the school. It was very nice by Honduran standards, comparable to the homes of many of the school's more affluent students who lived in the surrounding neighborhood. There were bars on the windows for security, and it (usually) had running water and electricity.

Laura came expecting to set up the school counseling program, but found the situation on the ground considerably more complicated and chaotic. Within one week of arrival she found herself leading a workshop, on leadership, with the entire school staff of about 40. The next week she had to give a speech in front of all the students' parents, several hundred people, in Spanish. Also that week, Laura was asked by Stacey Kim, a teacher at St. Paul and also the in-country director of The Sandoval Foundation, if she wanted to be a mentor for one of the students. Stacey had taken over operations on the ground in Honduras after Brittany and Stephanie had returned to the United States. To Laura, mentoring seemed like a great way to dive a little deeper. She would be interacting with lots of kids, but was excited by the possibility to get to know one well. Gabriela was given a list of staff willing to be mentors and she chose Laura.

Beginning that August, Laura met with Gabriela twice a week for about two hours, usually after school. They met at the Koinonia House, at Gabriela's house, or somewhere in the community. Laura appreciated being able to walk around San Fernando with Gabriela as her guide, seeing the city from her perspective. They did a lot of homework. Gabriela had come from the Honduran public schools, and spoke limited English. The year before, she had been through a 6-month language immersion program at St. Paul, but her language skills still lagged behind her peers. As a seventh grader, while she took some classes like Religion and Philosophy in Spanish, she was expected to take many of her core classes—Math, Science, Social Studies, and English—in English.

Laura enjoyed her time with Gabriela, but as the semester progressed she became increasingly concerned about the girl's situation. Seemingly, everyone knew that Gabriela and her siblings were receiving full scholarships to St. Paul, the only students sponsored to attend. Gabriela's home on the vacant lot had no plumbing. There was no place indoors to toilet, shower or bathe. Consequently, Gabriela and her siblings often smelled badly. To make matters worse, the house sat on the road to St. Paul. Every day, many kids went past her house.

Shortly after Laura began tutoring Gabriela, her father moved to a town about 40 miles away. Laura asked Gabriela what had happened and Gabriela said, "He thinks he can make more money there I guess." The family saw him only once or twice a month. As the fall progressed, it became clear that Gabriela did not fit in well at St. Paul. "I can't make any friends," she told Laura, "the other girls, they think they are better than me." Gabriela struggled with her English language proficiency, but also with the difference in her family's background. While all students wore the same uniforms, Gabriela's family could not afford the accessories that the other girls took so much pride in. A fellow staff person told Laura that Gabriela had stolen a hair clip from another girl.

### **“I am too good for you”**

In January 2014, Brittany came to Honduras to visit. Brittany or Stephanie took turns visiting once every six months or so. As Brittany was preparing to return to the United States, she gave Gabriela a silver ring. “This ring was given to me by my grandmother, I want you to have it,” she told Gabriela. Gabriela was extremely proud of the ring, which she showed to Laura, telling her what Brittany had said. She wore it almost every day.

A few weeks later, Gabriela showed up to a tutoring session looking flustered and told Laura she had lost the ring.

“I’m so sorry, do you have any idea when you last had it?” Laura asked her.

“No, I had it yesterday and now it’s gone,” she replied. “I know exactly where I put it, it just isn’t there anymore.”

“Are you sure?” Laura asked.

Then, a few days later, Gabriela found her ring again.

“Where was it?” Laura asked.

“I found it tucked away inside a sock,” Gabriela replied.

“What was it doing inside a sock?” Laura had asked.

“Well I didn’t put it there,” Gabriela replied angrily, “I think my mom was hiding it from me, she’s jealous. She’s stealing my things just because she doesn’t have anything nice of her own.”

One afternoon, in March, Laura met Gabriela for their usual tutoring session. Laura could sense that something was wrong. She had known Gabriela for almost eight months, and she thought they had developed a pretty good rapport. While she had always known Gabriela to be “somewhat moody,” she sensed her “shutting down.” Laura noticed square bruises on Gabriela’s forearms, and was immediately suspicious. *It looks like she was trying to shield her face*, Laura said to herself. *I was afraid something like this would happen.*

“Gabriela, what happened to you?” Laura asked softly, “How did you get these marks on your arms?”

Gabriela avoided eye contact. She turned and looked towards the ground. Then, she burst into tears. Laura put her hand on Gabriela’s arm and tried to make eye contact, but Gabriela looked away.

“You can tell me what happened,” Laura said again.

“It was a belt,” Gabriela said finally. “She hit me with a belt.”

“Who did?” Laura asked gently.

“My mom.”

“What happened? Can you tell me?”

“We were fighting and I told her I was tired of her stealing my stuff and being all jealous of me, and she started yelling at me and being like, ‘You think you’re too smart for me now? You think you’re too good for me because you go to a fancy school?’”

Laura knew that Gabriela and her mother had gotten into similar arguments before. Gabriela was now in seventh grade and Rocio, her mother, had a third grade education. This had been a source of tension on more than one occasion.

“And then she hit you?” Laura asked.

“No . . . not then, she was yelling like that and then I said, ‘I *am* too smart for you, I *am* too good for you . . .’ That’s when she took off her belt and started hitting me. She said I should be grateful it was just her belt, she said my grandmother used to chase her with an axe.”

“I’m so sorry,” Laura said. She didn’t know what else to say. They sat together in silence. Gabriela was still crying, but not as hard.

“It’s okay,” Gabriela replied, “It’s not as bad as when my father used to hit me with the electrical cord. I know I shouldn’t have said that to her, but I honestly feel that way sometimes.”

“Can I pray for you?” Laura said. Gabriela nodded. Laura took Gabriela’s hands and bowed her head. “God, I don’t know quite what to say right now, but I pray that you protect Gabriela, I pray that she can feel your love, all the time, even when it feels like nobody else loves her. I pray that you surround her, that she knows she is not alone. I pray that you would give her strength, and wisdom. God give me wisdom too. Help me to be there for Gabriela however I can. God be with us. Amen.”

Laura hugged Gabriela, and sat with her in silence.

“Violence is easy,” Gabriela said, switching from Spanish to English, “but change is hard.”

Laura knew that there was not a lot that the Honduran system, already notoriously corrupt, could offer Gabriela. Laura knew of no equivalent to Child Protective Services, no family preservation agencies, no foster care system. Earlier in the year she had spoken with an administrator at St. Paul to try to understand the systems in place and the proper procedures if a student disclosed abuse. She was told that, “Unless the abuse is seen in a public place by a police officer, there’s nothing that can be done.”

Later, Laura spoke with Stacey Kim. She told her everything, concluding with, “This is verbatim what I just listened to.” Stacey was surprised and upset by the events.

“Maybe we should meet with the parents,” Stacey said, “and see if we can work with them.” After a brief pause, she added, “We need to talk with Stephanie and Brittany. Let’s schedule a call.”

## **A confrontation**

Laura scheduled a Skype call with Stephanie and Brittany for later that week. Sitting in front of her laptop, she told them what had happened. “It’s getting really bad between Gabriela and Rocio since Carlos moved out of town. I feel like Rocio’s mental health is getting worse, and she’s taking it out on Gabriela, and Gabriela isn’t necessarily making the situation any better either. I think it’s been really hard on Gabriela to make the transition to this new school, learning English, being around all these kids from wealthier families, and, I mean, this is middle school, so it’s already crazy.”

“I think we both kind of knew that there was some abuse in the home,”



Stephanie replied, “but we never had any evidence of it.”

“You knew this was happening?”

“Well I don’t know if we knew, exactly,” Brittany chimed in. “I mean, I guess we could sense that things between Gabriela and Rocio weren’t always the greatest.”

“Yeah,” Stephanie said, “I think it’s been hard since Carlos started working out of town more . . .”

“Well I feel like we have to do something,” Laura interrupted.

“Oh, definitely,” Brittany replied. “It’s just hard because we’re not there right now.”

“I’ll be visiting again in a couple of months,” Stephanie said, “so I can certainly have a conversation with Rocio then.”

“But what about now?” Laura asked.

“Let’s see what we can do to maybe lower Rocio’s stress levels?” Brittany said. “We could have the kids change into their school uniforms at St. Paul instead of at home . . .”

“Can you and Stacey sit down with her and just try to check in?” Stephanie added.

*You’re missing the point*, Laura thought to herself. “I really think that some of the gifts and attention that Gabriela gets from you guys is creating some of this tension,” she said.

“Well,” Brittany replied, “we can certainly try to be more conscious about gifts, and, I don’t know, balance our time better.”

Stephanie and Brittany continued to talk about what they might be able to do to help lower Rocio’s stress levels, which Laura felt was missing the larger picture. *Rocio isn’t the problem here*, she wanted to say, *you are. You created this situation. Are you trying to replace this girl’s parents?*

“What are we trying to do for Gabriela?” she asked.

“We just want to love on the Sandoval kids,” Stephanie said, “have them be contributing members to society. Help them figure out how to live out their vocation.”

“It’s not about straight As,” Brittany added, “it’s about building people of good character.”

“I know,” Laura said, “but I just wonder whether all of this attention isn’t contributing to this situation. Gabriela is being abused.”

“Well we can’t abandon the Sandovals,” Stephanie said, “We’re going to have to figure out how to work through this. Let’s start with you and Stacey meeting with Rocio and Gabriela. We can go from there.”

“I’ve got to get going,” Brittany said, “but let’s talk again after you meet with her, and just keep us in the loop.”

“Definitely keep us in the loop,” Stephanie said. “We’ll be praying for you.”

The Skype call ended. Laura felt overwhelmed. She was still trying to develop her counseling program. In many ways she was still just trying to adjust to living in another country. She didn’t know what she’d say to Rocio and Gabriela.

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# DECISION CASE 3

## Client or Congregant?<sup>1</sup>

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*Carla MacDonald*

On a beautiful Sunday in June 2014 Caylan Bruns looked forward to worship at her beloved church, the South Metro Community Church located in greater Minneapolis. It had been her church home for two years. She found spiritual renewal each Sunday, following stressful weeks as a social worker in the field of domestic violence at the Family Justice Center.

Caylan had already entered the church and was preparing to find a place to sit when she saw her, client Samantha DeLucia. *What's she doing here?* Caylan wondered, startled. *She hasn't shown up for appointments in several weeks! What am I going to say to her if she sees me?*

### **Minneapolis and The Family Justice Center**

The Family Justice Center was located in the heart of Minneapolis, part of a metropolitan area with 3.8 million people. Caylan loved Minneapolis because so many neighborhoods were diverse. Members of minority groups could be found almost everywhere in the city. Loring Park was a diverse community with immigrant and refugee residents. The community experienced a fair share of violence that negatively impacted its residents. It also had a relatively high unemployment rate, poor schools, and was medically underserved.

The Family Justice Center was founded in 1967 as a way to address many of the community needs. Its broad mission was to empower individuals and families in Loring Park and surrounding neighborhoods. The Center offered early childhood education, youth services, adult education and employment, and general health and human services.

The Center also served approximately 120 survivors of domestic violence per year through case management and clinical services. Five staff members worked in the domestic violence program. Two staff members were licensed social workers—Caylan Bruns and Amy Womack—and the remaining three were

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1 Development of this decision case was supported in part by the North American Association of Christians in Social Work. It was prepared solely to provide material for class discussion and not to suggest either effective or ineffective handling of the situation depicted. While based on field research regarding an actual situation, names and certain facts may have been disguised to protect confidentiality. The authors wish to thank the anonymous case reporter for cooperation in making this account available for the benefit of social work students and instructors.

trained bilingual translators who served as court advocates and educators on the law. The two social workers provided psychoeducation groups for survivors who were just entering the program as well as support groups for survivors. They each also provided counseling and case management services to 35-40 clients.

### **Social Worker, Caylan Bruns**

Caylan Bruns was a native of Minneapolis. In 2003 she received her BSW from a small Christian liberal arts college. After graduating, she worked as an AmeriCorps worker at The Family Justice Center. Her primary clients were adults who wanted to work on their English. She served as an English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor. Following a year of service she returned to graduate school for her MSW. Subsequently, she returned to The Family Justice Center as a Domestic Violence Counselor and Advocate. In this role she received additional training in domestic violence and also earned a certificate in HIV/AIDS education.

Co-workers and colleagues often referred to Caylan as “cheerful Caylan” because she was so often smiling. She was outgoing and easily engaged clients. She typically had a cup of coffee in her hand, regardless of the time of day and was an avid runner.

Caylan lived in Burnsville, a suburb on the south side of Minneapolis that offered a diverse community with easy access to her job downtown at the Center. Partly to avoid dual relationships with clients, Caylan chose to attend the South Metro Community Church also in Burnsville. Due to the typical hour drive from Burnsville to downtown Minneapolis, she felt confident that she wouldn't run into clients from The Family Justice Center.

### **South Metro Community Church**

The South Metro Community Church congregation was housed in a former retail space. The church held two services on Sundays with an average of 30-40 people in each service. The two Sunday worship services were similar in format and simply were small in attendance because of the size of the worship space.

As a social worker, Caylan was attracted to the church because it was well known for serving a diverse membership. There were Republicans and Democrats, seekers and skeptics. The church was also racially diverse- 50% Caucasian, 25% African American, and 25% Native American. Most attendees were in their 20s and 30s although there were some elderly members as well.

The church strongly promoted an inclusive environment for anyone who wanted a place at the table, regardless of where they were in their spiritual journeys. They had a particular focus on welcoming individuals who identified as LGBTQ. Because of the church's aim to reach diverse people, it prioritized participating in community events as a means of outreach to the local community.

**February 4, 2014**

Caylan rushed past the packed waiting room and headed straight to her office. Due to the intense cold and wintery mix of sleet and snow, Caylan had worn a heavy coat and insulated boots. She promptly removed her coat and switched to more comfortable shoes before reviewing the intake forms for her first client.

Her name was Samantha DeLucia. Ms. DeLucia had moved to Minneapolis from Milwaukee in an attempt to get away from her abuser, the father of her two young children, five-year-old Joey and three-year-old Kelly. Upon arrival in the area they moved in with a family friend. The forms also indicated desired services of employment, housing, childcare, transportation assistance, and a cell phone.

Caylan returned to the waiting room visually noting the only female with two small children as described in the intake forms. Caylan approaching her hesitantly, "Ms. DeLucia?"

The woman looked up and nodded.

Caylan shared, "Hello, my name is Caylan Bruns. I am an intake worker here at The Family Justice Center."

Caylan invited Samantha and the two children to her office. None of the private offices at the Center were very large, but Caylan had tried to make her office inviting with a few plants and wall hangings. On this particularly cold day, the freezing sleet outside left a cloudy haze over her outdoor window, blocking the limited daylight. Caylan invited Samantha and her children to sit down.

"I heard that Verizon offers free cell phones with 3,000 minutes for victims of domestic violence," Samantha stated. "Since I'm a victim, can I get one of those phones? Can I get one right away . . . like today?"

Given the harsh coldness of the wintery months, along with the possibility that this woman was running from an abuser who could appear at any time, Caylan realized the immediate need appeared even more intense.

"Yes, I'll connect you with my colleague who handles that service before you leave today." Caylan responded.

She immediately noticed a sense of relief on Samantha's face.

Caylan looked over at the children. Thin with pale white skin, they were dressed in clean clothes and each had blond wispy hair. They were working intently with coloring books and crayons that Samantha had given them when the meeting started. Caylan knew that children who had witnessed domestic violence were prone to suffer symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, such as bed-wetting, nightmares, and were at a great risk of having allergies and asthma. Caylan made a deliberate decision to not explore those symptoms today until she got to know Samantha better.

"Can you share a bit more about what's brought you here today?" Caylan began.

Samantha shifted awkwardly in her chair and avoided Caylan's gaze.

Caylan had hoped to hear more about the husband and the father of these three vulnerable people sitting in her office.

"These details are just too hard for me to talk about. Do we have to discuss this right now?" Samantha asked.

“No, we can talk through this another time.” Caylan replied.

Caylan continued, “On your intake forms you also noted you’d like services in the areas of employment, housing, child care, and transportation assistance.”

“Yes, I need to find a place of my own because I can’t stay with my friend too much longer.” Samantha replied.

“Okay,” Caylan responded. “We offer an eight-week training program for survivors of abuse along with case management services. The focus will be on your legal rights in regards to your abuser, a safety plan for you and your children, and a focus upon your desire for employment, housing and childcare. We can also access some resources for you to assist with your transportation needs. How does that sound to you?” Caylan asked.

Samantha gave a gentle nod of her head.

“Okay, let’s just make sure that you have a safety plan started, Samantha,” Caylan began. It’s important that you have phone numbers readily available in the event you need help or another place to go. Such numbers include the police, hotlines, friends and the local shelter.”

Again, Samantha nodded agreement. And then, to Caylan’s surprise, Samantha pulled out a folded up piece of paper she had in the back pocket of her blue jeans. Because it was discolored and creased, it appeared that Samantha had been carrying this piece of paper for quite a while.

“The only number I don’t have from the ones you listed is one for a local shelter,” Samantha responded.

“Let’s find one,” Caylan replied. She pulled out her resource directory and found the number of a shelter close to the family residence where Samantha and her children were staying. Caylan read the number aloud and Samantha added it to her list.

“Samantha,” Caylan asked, “do your children know how to dial 911?”

“My children have had to call 911 on numerous occasions.” Tears welled up in Samantha’s eyes. “So, yes, they know how to make a call,” and then hesitantly she asked, “Can we stop for today? I’m exhausted and my kids have colored about every page in their coloring books.”

“Yes, Samantha, we can finish for today. Here’s my business card with your next appointment date on the back,” Caylan said as she handed the card to Samantha. “Let’s plan to complete your application for Medicaid and Food Stamps at the next visit.”

Samantha nodded her head.

“I’ll take you to my colleague who handles the Verizon Hopeline program and she will get you set up with a phone.” Caylan stated.

As they walked together, Caylan thought, *Next time I’ll focus on the Food Stamp program and Medicaid documents. I’ll have her sign up using our agency address to assure that she can obtain mail without interruption in the event she needs to make a move.* Caylan knew that having clients use the agency address for receiving email had a double benefit as it ensured that clients continued to come to the address in regular intervals to pick up mail. She sensed that Samantha was in a vulnerable place and wanted to support her at this time.

## The Following Week

Samantha returned to the Center the following week to apply for Medicaid and Food Stamps. Joey and Kelly were not with her. She opened the meeting by stating, “My abuser is the father of my children. I am concerned with how I can keep him away from Joey and Kelly. I didn’t bring them today, they stayed home with my friend. I was concerned with how much we may talk about their father today and I have tried to protect them from hearing about the abuse.”

Caylan said. “Is it okay for me to ask some specific questions?”

Samantha nodded.

“When did he become abusive?” Caylan asked.

“From the start,” Samantha replied. “Why I stayed, I’ll never know, but when the abuse started to shift towards my children that is when I knew we had to leave.”

“So, let’s go back to the safety plan we began working on last week, Samantha. Do you feel okay working on that some more?” Caylan asked.

Samantha continued to look down at her folded hands in her lap but gently nodded ‘yes.’

“Okay, let’s discuss how to get out of your home safely in the event your husband finds where you and the children are residing. Tell me how you would get out of your home if you had to,” Caylan asked.

Samantha told Caylan the layout of the home where she was residing, indicating that the front door would be the easiest if she were in her bedroom. Once Samantha had described the layout, Caylan led her to identify a primary route for escaping and a secondary one. She suggested that Samantha and her children practice ways to get out.

Samantha replied, “We will practice and next time I see you I’ll tell you how it went.” Caylan noted a sense of hope in Samantha’s voice.

“Sounds good, Samantha. Okay, now let’s address the applications for Medicaid and Food Stamps.” Caylan pulled out several folders from her desk.

“Can I just take the forms with me and complete them at home?” asked Samantha. “I really need to go. I’ll bring them back with me next week.”

Caylan indicated this was fine and scheduled their next weekly meeting.

## Mid-Late March

Over the period of the next three weeks Caylan and Samantha only met once due to her children being sick.

At their next meeting Samantha arrived alone but late, apologetically stating, “Public transportation was running behind because of the recent snow storm. So sorry I’m late.”

“We will have enough time,” Caylan assured her. “Last time we met we talked through your safety plan and how you and your children would escape the home where you are staying should you be in immediate danger. Did you have an opportunity to practice this together?”

Samantha responded with frustration, “Do we have to spend much more time on this safety plan? I worked with CPS in Wisconsin and they already helped me develop a safety plan.”

Caylan was a bit taken back by Samantha’s question and frustrated response. She remembered that Samantha shared the abuse had also been targeted toward her kids but wasn’t specifically aware of CPS involvement in Samantha’s case. “Can you give me details of what your plan included while you were living in Wisconsin?”

No sooner was her question raised, Samantha shut down and shared no further information.

*Is she hesitant to share the details because she has an open case in Wisconsin?*

“Samantha, safety plans typically involve children residing where they can be checked upon. If visitations are allowed with the domestic violence abuser, they are followed in the safety plan. Does this apply to your safety plan?” Caylan asked.

*Did your safety plan have restrictions against leaving the state?,* Caylan wondered, while awaiting Samantha’s response, *Maybe that’s why you’re withholding information.* Caylan wanted to explore these questions but hesitated because of Samantha’s apparent reticence.

“I need to go now,” Samantha broke the brief silence. “I have another appointment I need to get to.”

“Okay, but did you want to talk through your Medicaid and Food Stamp applications?” Caylan asked.

Samantha pulled the forms out of her purse. They were wrinkled but thoroughly completed.

“Thank you, Samantha,” Caylan replied. “I’ll send these in right away.”

Despite the abrupt ending to the appointment, Caylan and Samantha did schedule an appointment for the following week.

## **April**

It had been two weeks since Caylan had seen Samantha because she cancelled another weekly appointment when Kelly was sick. As Caylan prepared herself for seeing Samantha, she specifically wanted to focus on relationship building. She feared that Samantha was drifting away and she wanted to devote her attention to building trust.

Caylan was relieved when Samantha began their appointment by bringing up the CPS services she received in Wisconsin.

“Last time you asked me about the CPS services I received in Wisconsin,” Samantha stated to open the appointment. “I think I’m able to discuss it more today.”

“Yes, Samantha, I would like to hear more about that,” Caylan responded. “In order for me to fully support you and understand where you’ve been, whatever you share with me about your services in Wisconsin will help.”

Samantha nodded. “Do you think I’ll get into trouble with CPS because I moved out of state?”



“I don’t know the answer to this question without further information,” Caylan responded.

Samantha shifted in her seat.

Caylan asked, “What’s the name of your CPS worker in Wisconsin? If I have the name of the CPS worker we can proceed with having you sign a mutual consent form so I can gain information on your case and thus answer the questions you raised earlier.”

But as she looked up, Caylan noticed Samantha’s expression. She did not look willing to share information. Caylan thought, *I simply want a worker’s name so I can facilitate the transfer of her case to Minnesota...*

“I know that I need to open up to you and share more about my life in Wisconsin,” Samantha acknowledged, “but I’m just not ready. Can we cover this at our next meeting?”

“Yes, Samantha,” Caylan paused, “we can wait until you’re ready to share more. What else can we cover in today’s appointment?”

“Hey, I’d better go,” Samantha suddenly appeared disengaged, “I’m supposed to take care of my friend’s daughter when she gets home from school today.”

Whether that was a valid reason to end the brief appointment, Caylan didn’t know. But she also knew there was no use trying to prolong the appointment if Samantha was done.

“Let’s schedule you to come back next week.” Caylan replied.

After the hasty appointment with Samantha, Caylan found herself again in deep thought about the case and questioning, *Was her case in Wisconsin separate from the domestic violence incidents or was it connected?*

## **Late April**

Although it was two weeks later when Samantha returned for another appointment, she exuded excitement that Caylan had not observed before.

“I just picked up my mail and received notification that I’ll get Food Stamps and I also got my Medicaid card,” she announced. “I’ve moved though so I’ll need to report my new address.”

“You can continue to use the agency address if you want. Just in case you move again.” Caylan replied. “However, it will be good for us to have your current address in your file. What is the address of the place where you now live?” Caylan asked.

No sooner was the question raised when Samantha shut down. She had picked up some brochures in the lobby and appeared intent on reading them.

Caylan asked again, “So what’s your new address?”

Samantha looked up and gave a quick response, “I’m still in the same apartment complex but the number has changed. I’m now in apartment 4A23.” She returned to her reading.

Caylan attempted to discuss Samantha’s legal rights in regards to her estranged husband. These attempts, however, were in vain and Samantha again ended the appointment abruptly.

Caylan looked forward to their next appointment two weeks later but again Samantha did not show for her appointment. Over the course of the next three weeks, Caylan left weekly messages for Samantha but did not hear back.

## **May/June**

It had been over a month since Caylan had seen or heard from Samantha. On a warm but rainy spring day, Samantha appeared in the office without an appointment. Caylan was with another client so Amy met with her and assisted her in reviewing some options for summer programs for Joey and Kelly.

Caylan had hoped that she would get to meet with Samantha but by the time she finished with her scheduled client, Samantha had left. Amy noted in the file that Samantha reported that she felt safer. She also reported that she now had a boyfriend and was staying with him and his family.

Caylan tried to reach Samantha by phone several times the following week. Her calls and messages, however, went unanswered. She wondered if Samantha's case should be closed. New clients were waiting to be seen and no-show appointments kept new clients from receiving needed services.

## **Sunday, June 29**

Caylan had entered the church and was preparing to find a place to sit when she saw Samantha. *What's she doing here?* Caylan wondered, startled. *She hasn't shown up for appointments in several weeks! What am I going to say to her if she sees me?*

Samantha and her kids were welcomed by the usher and led toward the front of the small sanctuary. *She's a client! I can't go to the same church as my client!* Caylan felt flustered. *What about boundaries that we talked so much about in graduate school? What about dual relationships?* When Samantha took a seat near the front of the sanctuary, Caylan decided to sit in the back. Not sure how to respond if they came face-to-face, Caylan decided to leave early.

After the service Caylan met up with her friends from church at a local restaurant for brunch.

"Did you see the new lady with the two adorable children?" one asked.

*Normally, I would be excited to see my friends reaching out to a visitor at our church, but this feels different,* Caylan thought.

As they ate together Caylan's friends relayed a few stories Samantha had shared with them as they greeted her after church. This was not uncommon for them as they all shared in the same excitement when a visitor attended their church, especially one with children.

But the stories did not match what Samantha had told Caylan.

In order to protect Samantha's confidentiality, Caylan pretended that she didn't know her. But the church was such a small place. What if Samantha said hello to Caylan and Caylan's boyfriend, who typically attended church with her, and he questioned how she knew Samantha? She and Adam, whom she

had been seeing for over a year, held no secrets from each other but now what would she do. *What would I say? How would I explain how I knew Samantha while protecting her confidentiality?*

Caylan felt so much confusion as she pondered additional questions. *How do we interact with clients that I go to church with and yet protect their confidentiality? How can I be true to these two roles of social worker and church member and not have one negatively affect the other? Can I have any type of relationship with Samantha at church?*

Caylan decided to leave church early to avoid the issues. *I love this church and don't want to leave, she thought, but I also would not want to discourage Samantha from attending. This church could provide a great source of support to Samantha and her children.*

## **Sunday, July 6**

The following Sunday, Caylan was making coffee and setting up supplies for the second service when she spotted Samantha enter the church. Caylan was fairly confident that Samantha didn't see her but Caylan grew more disturbed. Samantha had an adult male with her.

Following the service, Caylan once again met up with her friends for brunch and they shared more information about the children. They now referred to her as Samantha DeLucia and mentioned the children's names, Joey and Kelly. She had obviously freely given out her full name as well as the children's. Caylan wondered, *Did she also reveal information about the guy who was with her?* Her friends' comments interrupted her thoughts.

"Did you notice that the new lady had her husband with her this time?" a friend asked.

"He must be the father of her children," another explained. "She called him 'Dad,' when talking to her children."

*Oh no!* Caylan thought. *I assumed that was her boyfriend! Who is this guy? Has she reunited with the children's father, her abuser, and thus put herself and the children in harm's way again?* But Caylan's mind quickly moved to another scenario, *Perhaps this is the boyfriend she's living with and she simply introduced him as their father to avoid questions.* Either way, Caylan felt conflicted. *If he's the husband, she's reunited with her abuser. If this is her new boyfriend, is she safe or involved with another potentially abusive person?*

On her way home from church that day, Caylan wondered how to respond. *I'm a volunteer at church, what if she becomes a volunteer at church as well? Our paths will certainly cross. I'm not the type of person who hovers over my clients, but what is my role as her social worker? Could I interfere with her growth and role in the church? What do I say when my friends make comments about the 'new lady with the really adorable kids'? We don't often have new people, especially with kids, so it will be impossible to avoid her. What should I do?*



# About the Editors

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**T. Laine Scales** is Professor of Higher Education and Associate Dean of Graduate Studies at Baylor University. She served 15 years as a social work faculty member in three universities before joining the Baylor School of Education in 2008. She has published over 40 articles and chapters in the areas of teaching in social work, faith and social work practice, rural social work, and higher education. Her 9 books (some are co-authored or co-edited) include *Human Behavior and the Social Environment: A Topical Approach to Development* (Forthcoming, Lyceum), *Rural Social Work: Building and Sustaining Community Capacity* (Wiley, 2014), and *Social Environments & Human Behavior: Contexts for Practice with Groups, Organizations, Communities, & Social Movements*, (Cengage, 2012). She is former associate editor of *The Journal of Family & Community Ministries* and *Social Work and Christianity*.

**Michael S. Kelly** is Associate Professor at the Loyola University Chicago School of Social Work. He has written over 50 articles, book chapters, & books on school social work, evidence-based practice, and the intersection of Christianity and social work practice. His most recent book was *School Social Work: Research, Practice, and Policy* (8<sup>th</sup> Ed.), published by Lyceum Press. He has served as a Guest Lecturer and consultant to social workers in Canada, Chile, Japan, Rhode Island, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. He was a section editor for *The Journal of Family and Community Ministries* and now serves as Associate Editor of *Social Work and Christianity*.

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**Terry A. Wolfer** earned a BA in sociology from Concordia University (Nebraska), an MSW from The Ohio State University, and a PhD from the University of Chicago. He is Professor and PhD Program Coordinator at the University of South Carolina College of Social Work. He has authored or edited six collections of decision cases published by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), Thomson Brooks/Cole, Columbia University Press, and NACSW. Dr. Wolfer leads faculty workshops on case method teaching and case writing. For his work on case method, he received the Distinguished Recent Contribution to Social Work Education Award by CSWE. His research and publications have focused on social work education, volunteerism, congregational social work, and integration of faith and practice. Dr. Wolfer has served on the Board of NACSW and on the editorial board of *Social Work & Christianity*.

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**Rick Chamiec-Case** earned a BA in Philosophy from Wheaton College, a MAR in Religion from Yale Divinity School, a MSW from the School of Social Work at the University of Connecticut, and a PhD in Social Work from Fordham University. He has been the Executive Director of the North American Association of Christians in Social Work since 1997, and an adjunct professor of social work at Nyack College in New York City since 2008. He worked for a number of years as Senior Vice President at ARI of Connecticut, whose mission it is to provide homes and jobs for people with disabilities.. Dr. Chamiec-Case has written and presented at conferences on various topics addressing the ethical integration of faith and social work practice, and has research and scholarship interests in the areas of spirituality in the workplace and faith-based social services. He has been the managing editor of *Social Work and Christianity* since 1997.

**Helen Fischle** received a BSW from Oakwood University, Huntsville, Alabama and a MSW from the University of Alabama Tuscaloosa. She is currently the Dean for Student Success at Oakwood University with an academic appointment to the School of Education and Social Sciences' Social Work Department. Mrs. Fischle has worked in the area of children and families, domestic violence education/ prevention and field education. She has conducted numerous faith based presentations in the US and the UK on domestic violence prevention and developing healthy relationships.

**Dexter Freeman** earned a BS in social welfare from Austin Peay State University, a MSW from the School of Social Work at the University of Georgia, and a doctorate of social work from The Catholic University of America's National Catholic School of Social Service. Prior to beginning his career as an academic, he served in the United States Army as a social work officer. As a military social

worker, Dexter held a number of clinical, administrative, and academic positions. These positions included serving as the behavioral science director of training in the Fort Belvoir Family Practice Residency, Director of the Department of Social Work at Fort Stewart, Georgia, Director of the Army Family Advocacy Training Program at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and Director of the Department of Social Work at Fort Hood, Texas. He joined the faculty at Texas State University as an assistant professor after retiring from the Army. He later became the Director of the Army-Fayetteville State University MSW Program at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. He currently is a clinical associate professor at Fayetteville State University and the Assistant Director of the Army-Fayetteville State University MSW Program. Dexter has written a number of book chapters and articles on spirituality in social work practice, social work education, and healthcare ethics. His research interests are spirituality in practice, social work ethics, educational transformation, and professional gatekeeping.

**Diana R. Garland** received her BA, MSSW, and PhD degrees from the University of Louisville. She was Professor of Social Work and inaugural Dean of the Diana R. Garland School of Social Work, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, where she served on the faculty from 1997 until her death in 2015. She previously served as Dean of the Carver School of Church Social Work at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kentucky. She was author, co-author, or editor of 21 books including *Inside Out Families*; *Living the Faith, Together* and *Flawed Families of the Bible: How God Works through Imperfect Relationships*. Her book *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide* (InterVarsity Press) won the 2000 Book of the Year Award of the Academy of Parish Clergy at Princeton Seminary. During her lifetime, she published more than 100 professional articles and book chapters and received more than \$7 million in research and program grants from organizations such as Lilly Endowment, Inc, Pew Charitable Trusts, Inc., the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Henry Luce Foundation, and the Ford Foundation. Diana R. Garland died September 21, 2015 following a courageous battle with pancreatic cancer.

**Helen Wilson Harris** earned a BA from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Belton, Texas, MSW from Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, Texas and Ed.D. from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. Presently she is an Assistant Professor at the Diana R. Garland School of Social Work at Baylor University where she teaches across curriculum. Previously Helen served as Director of Graduate Field Education and Director of Field Education for ten years. Prior to coming to Baylor, Helen was the founding director of the first hospice in central Texas and served for eight years as foster care and independent living director at The South Texas Children's Home. Helen's research and practice interests are the cognitive impact of loss and grief, grief theory applied, physical and mental health, end of life care, and faith-based child care and adoptions. She has written in the area of spiritual formation, grief and bereavement and educational administration.



**David R. Hodge** received his PhD from the Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis. Currently, he is professor and chair of the PhD program in the School of Social Work at Arizona State University. He also holds non-resident appointments at the University of Pennsylvania, Baylor, and Duke University and is a fellow in the Society for Social Work and Research. Dr. Hodge is an internationally recognized scholar on the topic of spirituality, religion, and culture. His scholarship has appeared in over 100 scholarly articles in addition to numerous encyclopedia entries, book chapters, conference presentations, and popular media. His latest book is titled *Spiritual assessment in social work and mental health practice* (Columbia University Press, 2015).

**Crystal R. Holtrop** earned her BSW from Dordt College and her MSW from the University of Iowa. She has 14 years of experience as a Clinical Supervisor and Marriage and Family Therapist at Catholic Charities. A former clinical member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy, she has conducted in-service trainings, facilitated workshops, and participated in the redesign of a two-county social service delivery system. Currently, she is enjoying working in the same school as her two children, Rachel and Esther.

**Beryl Hugen** received a BA from Calvin College, a MSW from Western Michigan University, and a PhD from the University of Kansas. He is Professor (emeritus) of Social Work at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He has served as a board member and publications editor for the North American Association of Christians in Social Work. He has published papers on mental health, the integration of Christian faith and social work practice, and social work history. He is co-editor of *Spirituality within Religious Traditions in Social Work Practice* (Brooks Cole, 2001) and editor of *Christianity and Social Work: Readings on the Integration of Christian Faith and Social Work Practice*, 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Editions, (NACSW, 1998, 2002, 2008). In retirement he has been involved in international social work consultation and program evaluation in Russia, Liberia, and New Zealand.

**Joseph Kuilema** earned a BSW from Calvin College and a MSW from the University of Michigan. He is currently ABD at the Michigan State University School of Social Work. His dissertation is focused on understanding motivations for international collaborations in social work education. He is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and Social Work at Calvin College, where he has taught since 2008. His research and teaching interests include global social work, community development, anti-racism, and the integration of faith and social work. He has published articles on the First International Conference of Social Work in 1928, the role of faith as a virtue in social work practice, and social work advocacy.

**Mary Lawinger** earned her BA from Marquette University and is currently enrolled in the MSW program at Loyola University-Chicago. She has spent much of her undergraduate and graduate career serving persons in jail and prison systems

in the midwest and hopes to continue to incorporate her faith and spiritual life into her future social work career. Mary recently got married and is enjoying being a newlywed with her husband in downtown Chicago.

**Carla J. MacDonald** is the Program and Field Education Director for the BSW program at Huntington University (IN). She is also Associate Professor of Social Work. She received her BSW degree from Manchester University (IN) and her MSW from Indiana University- Indianapolis. She also holds a MBA from the University of St. Francis (IN). From 1976 to 2005 she worked at Pathfinder Services, overseeing adult and children's services to individuals with disabilities as well as those facing barriers to employment, independent living and socialization within their communities. She was the founding director of Kids Kampus, an early childhood education center where the focus was on the integration of typical children and children with developmental delays in order to foster a focus upon *children first*. She also served as an outpatient therapist for the Bowen Mental Health Center working primarily with children in the foster care system. In 2012 she received her Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership from Indiana Wesleyan University.. She was recently recognized with the Vanderspool Volunteer Award presented annual to a United Way supporter.

**Tasha Perdue** received her Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice with Honors from Bowling Green State University and her MSW from the University of Michigan. After obtaining her MSW she was active in community organizing, policy advocacy and research on human trafficking in Ohio for five years. While in Ohio she was chair of the Lucas County Human Trafficking Coalition, served on the Ohio Attorney General Trafficking in Persons Study Commission, collaborated with local, state and federal legislators for human trafficking related legislation, and also served as a regional epidemiologist for the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. She is currently pursuing her PhD in Social Work at the University of Southern California while obtaining a Public Policy Certificate from the Price School of Public Policy.

**Dr. Emory L. Perkins**, LCSW, LMFT, CCDVC, ACSW, attended Paine College in Augusta, GA, where he received his BS degree in Sociology in 1983. Dr. Perkins earned the Master of Social Work degree from Howard University in 1986 and the Doctor of Social Work degree in January 2006 from Howard University. Dr. Perkins has worked in human services-related fields for two decades, both as a direct service practitioner and as an administrator. Dr. Perkins joined Bowie State University's social work faculty in Maryland in 2009 as an Assistant Professor and began teaching as an adjunct faculty member in 2008. Dr. Perkins is also an international author. Dr. Perkins has been granted IRB approval on multiple research projects at Bowie State University: HIV/AIDS Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviors among Students at Bowie State University; 2012; The Attitudes and Experiences of BSU students Surrounding Intimate Partner Violence; Fall 2013). Additionally, Dr. Perkins has spoken at many local and national conferences. Dr.

Perkins' goal and mission in life are focused on giving back and empowering the African-American community, namely African-American men and boys, to build creative and productive lives amidst interminable challenges. His research interest is African-American women and HIV/AIDS.

**Mary Anne Poe** earned a BA from Vanderbilt University, a MDiv from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and a MSSW from the University of Louisville. Presently she is Professor of Social Work, BSW Director, and Director of the Center for Just and Caring Communities at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee where she has taught since 1996.. She served previously as a congregational social worker in churches in Minnesota and Kentucky. Her research and practice interests are how to engage congregations in effective and culturally sensitive ministry in the community, social and economic justice, and relationships among faith-based organizations, congregations, and other social service providers. She has published case studies and the *Instructors Resources for Christianity and Social Work 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*.

**Michael Prior**, Ph.D., is Associate Professor and MSW Director at the University of Toledo. He earned a B.A. in Political Science from Eastern Michigan University and Master's and Ph.D. in Social Work from the University of Texas at Arlington. Dr. Prior has over sixteen years of direct practice and administrative experience in the mental health field. His main area of practice has been with adolescents and families, especially those with chemical dependency issues. His areas of study and personal interest center on spirituality, treatment of the effects of child abuse, and fighting racial inequality.

**Julia Pryce** earned at BA in Psychology from Kenyon College, an MSW from the School of Social Work at the University of Michigan, and a PhD in Social Work from the University of Chicago. She is committed to integrating her values of faith and justice into her teaching, and in addition to her work as a social work educator, Dr. Pryce has served as the Associate Director of the Faculty Center for Ignatian Pedagogy at Loyola University Chicago for the past three years. Her research areas span two content foci, including the use of positive youth development (including mentoring) among system-involved youth (domestically and internationally), and social work education, particularly as it relates to incorporating social justice into social work pedagogy. Dr. Pryce's work has been funded by the Department of Health & Human Services and the Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention.

**Kathy Goodridge Purnell** earned a BS in Social Work from Oakwood University, a MSW from Alabama A & M University, Huntsville, Alabama, and a PhD in Social Work from Capella University. She is an Associate Professor at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga. She has also served as the Director of Field Education & Instructor in the undergraduate BSW program at UTC. Her research interests include cultural competence exploration and development,

with a particular focus on Social Work professionals and educators, and culturally sensitive research methods and applications with diverse populations. She also has an interest in exploring the personal narratives of diverse professionals to assist in developing cultural awareness and competence among students, professionals, and Social Work Educators. She has co authored several articles and presented at national conferences on the stated topics. Her research also includes the impact of faith and resilience among Caribbean professionals.

**James C. Raines** earned his B.A. and MA in Christian Education from Wheaton College (IL), a M.Div. from Fuller Theological Seminary (CA), a MSSW from Columbia University in New York City, and his Ph.D. in Social Work from Loyola University of Chicago. He has been an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church of the USA since 1981. He is currently professor and department chair of Health, Human Services, & Public Policy at California State University Monterey Bay. He has authored three books published by Oxford University Press on evidence-based practice, school social work, and ethical decision-making. He has served as President of the Illinois Association of School Social Workers, the Midwest School Social Work Council, and is President-Elect of the School Social Work Association of America.

**Elizabeth Patterson Roe** received her BA in social work from Mount Vernon Nazarene College and her MSW from Roberts Wesleyan College, and PhD from Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada. Presently, she is associate professor at Malone University in Canton, Ohio. Her dissertation focused on the impact that international practicums have had on participants' social work practice. Her current research and practice areas include anti-oppressive practice as it relates to international practicums and study abroad, international social work, and international and domestic community development. Previously, Elizabeth practiced international social work in a faith-based setting through serving as the coordinator of social services for Veritas in Sighisoara, Romania and as a faculty member for the Romanian Studies Program. Elizabeth has published and presented on various topics related to international social work and study abroad.

**Sandra Sherman** is an Ursuline Sister of Toledo, Ohio and is the Superior/President of her Community for the 2014-18 term. She has also been involved with Stop Trafficking of Persons (STOP), and Lucas County Human Trafficking Coalition. She also works with Rahab's Heart in North Toledo, a ministry to women trapped in street prostitution.

**David A. Sherwood**, earned his BA from Lipscomb University; his MSW from Bryn Mawr; and his PhD in Social Work from the University of Texas, Austin. He has helped develop BSW and MSW programs at Christian colleges and universities, including Baylor University, Roberts Wesleyan College, Gordon College, and Oral Roberts University. He has written extensively on ethics and topics related to the integration of Christian faith and social work practice. Dr. Sherwood is a

co-editor of *Spirituality and Religion in Social Work Practice: Decision Cases with Teaching Notes*. He has served two terms on the Commission on Accreditation of the Council on Social Work Education, continues to do Commissioner visits with programs in candidacy for accreditation, and consults with social work programs in Christian colleges and universities. Dr. Sherwood has served on the Board and as President of the North American Association of Christians in Social Work and is Editor of the journal *Social Work & Christianity*.

**Kesslyn Brade Stennis** received a BSW from Oakwood College (now University), MSW from The Ohio State University, MDiv from Howard University and PhD from Howard University. She currently serves as Chair and Associate Professor of Social Work at Coppin State University. She is also the Board President for the North American Association of Christians in Social Work and CEO of The PhD Consultants which allows her to mentor emerging scholars through masters and doctoral programs. Throughout her career she has worked on numerous grants and research projects that address intimate partner violence, victims of crimes, HIV/AIDS and gentrification. She has also published several articles and presented at national conferences on her research and passions that connect spirituality, religiosity, women, people of African descent and the Black Church.

**Hope Haslam Straughan** earned a BA from Samford University (Alabama), a MSW and Certificate in Theology from the Carver School of Church Social Work at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Kentucky), and a PhD in social work from Barry University (Florida). Presently she is Interim Chair and Associate Professor of Social Work at Wheelock College, and the Director of the MSW program (Massachusetts). Previous social work experience has been as consultant to APERFOSA (Spain) around the establishment of an AIDS hospice, serving as a Volunteer Foster Care Case Reviewer for the Department for Children and Families, and co-leading a dynamic collaborative within the community of Codman Square (Boston) in order to improve the lives of children and families in a diverse, impoverished, and complex neighborhood. Her research interests include spirituality within social work practice with children and families, spiritual development across the lifespan, transracial adoption narratives, and community and organizational collaboration. She is currently working with two other NACSW members to establish a MA Chapter of NACSW, and serving as a board member for FAMILY, Inc.

**Frederick J. Streets** is the Senior Pastor of the Dixwell Avenue Congregational United church of Christ in New Haven, Ct. He is the former Chaplain of Yale University and the Carl and Dorothy Bennett Professor of Pastoral Counseling at the Wurzweiler School of Social Work, Yeshiva University in New York City. He is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and holds adjunct faculty appointments at Yale Divinity School, Columbia University School of Social Work, and the Spirituality, Mind and Body Institute, Teacher's College, Columbia University and the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma. The Reverend Doctor Streets was

a 2007-2008 Senior Fulbright Scholar in the Department of Practical Theology and the Department of Social Work at the University of Pretoria in South Africa, where he taught and did research examining the intersection of modern medicine, social work practice and spiritual care of families and children infected and affected by HIV and AIDS. As a Fulbright Specialist in 2010, he conducted an assessment of the cultural transformation process since the fall of apartheid of the University of Free State in Bloemfontein, South Africa.

**Allison Tan** received her BSW from Taylor University, her MSSA from Case Western Research University, and her PhD in Social Work from Loyola University of Chicago. She worked for nearly a decade in the field of HIV, both as a program director at a faith-based community health center and as a consultant. Currently on faculty at the University of St. Francis in Joliet, Allison is a member of the NACSW Board of Directors and an adjunct instructor at Trinity Christian College. Over the past 5 years, she has advanced a research agenda focused on the intersection of religion/spirituality and LGBT issues.

**Rachel Venema** is an Assistant Professor of Sociology & Social Work and Director of the BSW program at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She received a BSW from Calvin College, an MSW from the University of Michigan, and a PhD in Social Work from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She has published papers on violence and victimization, specifically the criminal justice system response to sexual violence, the role of faith in social service organizations, and teaching methods in the social work research class. She remains actively involved in research and program evaluation in local social service organizations. For the past six years, she has been involved in teaching and research activities in a collaborative effort with a BSW program at the Mother Patern College of Health Sciences in Monrovia, Liberia.

**Celia Williamson, Ph.D.**, founded the first anti-trafficking program in Ohio in 1993. Dr. Williamson completed 9 studies, 17 articles/reports, and edited 2 books on sex trafficking. She received federal funding from 2002 to 2012 to conduct research in this area. Dr. Williamson founded the International Human Trafficking and Social Justice Conference, the Lucas County Human Trafficking Coalition, she chairs the Research Committee for Ohio's State anti-Trafficking Commission, and is an Editorial Manager for the Journal of Human Trafficking. In addition, Dr. Williamson is the Director of the Human Trafficking & Social Justice Institute at the University of Toledo.

# APPENDIX A

## EPAS Connections Organized by Competency number

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This chart suggests potential connections between competencies listed in the Education Policy and Accreditation Standards of Council on Social Work Education and specific chapters of this book.

<b>Competency</b>	<b>Competency Details</b>	<b>Chapters Related</b>
Competency 1	Demonstrate Ethical and Professional behavior	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15
Competency 2	Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice	3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19
Competency 3	Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice	1, 2, 6, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19
Competency 4	Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice	10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 19
Competency 5	Engage in Policy Practice	1, 2, 3, 6, 16, 19
Competency 6	Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19
Competency 7	Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19
Competency 8	Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 19
Competency 9	Evaluate practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 18, 19





# APPENDIX B

## EPAS Connections Organized by Chapter

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This chart suggests potential connections between specific chapters in this book and competencies listed in the Education Policy and Accreditation Standards of Council on Social Work Education.

Chapter	Chapter Title/Author	Competency
1	Good News for the Poor: Christian Influences on Social Welfare Mary Anne Poe	1, 3, 5
2	“To Give Christ to the Neighborhoods:” A Corrective look at the Settlement Movement and Early Christian Social Workers T. Laine Scales and Michael Kelly	1, 3, 5
3	“Go in Peace and Sin No More”: Christian African American Women as Social Work Pioneers- Tanya Smith Brice	1, 2, 5
4	The Relationship Between Beliefs and Values in Social Work Practice: Worldviews Make a Difference David Sherwood	1, 2
5	Calling: A Spirituality Model for Social Work Practice Beryl Hugen	1, 2
6	Social Work for Social Justice: Strengthening Practice with the Poor Through Catholic Social Teaching Julia Pryce, Michael S. Kelly, and Mary Lawinger	1, 3, 5
7	Social Work as Calling Diana R. Garland	1, 2, 6
8	Doing the Right Thing: A Christian Perspective on Ethical Decision-Making in Social Work Practice David Sherwood	1, 2, 6
9	The Helping Process and Christian Beliefs: Insights from Alan Keith-Lucas Helen Wilson Harris	1, 6, 7, 8, 9
10	Models for Ethically Integrating Faith and Social Work Rick Chamiec-Case	1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9
11	Spiritual Development Hope Haslam Straughan	4, 7, 8, 9

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Chapter Title/Author</b>	<b>Competency</b>
12	Working with LGBT Clients: Promising Practices and Personal Challenges Allison Tan and Michael S. Kelly	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8
13	Spiritual Assessment: A Review of Complementary Assessment Models David R. Hodge and Crystal R. Holtrop	4, 7
14	Family Circles: Assessing family and spiritual connections with Military Clients Dexter Freeman	2, 7
15	Evidence-Based Practice: Towards a Christian Perspective Jim Raines	1, 4, 9
16	International Social Work: A Faith Based, Anti-Oppressive Approach Elizabeth Patterson	2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
17	Preaching and the Trauma of HIV and AIDS: A Social Work Perspective (Reprint) Frederick J. Streets	2, 3, 6, 7, 8
18	“Lessons Learned: Conducting Culturally Competent Research and Providing Interventions with Black Churches.” (Reprint) Kesslyn Brade Stennis, Kathy Purnell, Emory Perkins, and Helen Fischle	2, 3, 4, 6, 9
19	Social Justice and Spiritual Healing: Using Micro and Macro Social Work Practice to Reduce Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (Reprint) Tasha Perdue, Michael Prior, Celia Williamson, & Sandra Sherman	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9



# Christianity and Social Work

FIFTH EDITION

*Readings on the Integration of Christian Faith and Social Work Practice*

T. Laine Scales and Michael S. Kelly, Editors

*Christianity and Social Work* is written for social workers whose motivations to enter the profession are informed by their Christian faith, and who desire to develop faithfully Christian approaches to helping.

Especially useful in the classroom or social work trainings, *Christianity and Social Work* supports several major curriculum areas outlined by the Council on Social Work Education's Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards. Nineteen chapters, written by Christians in social work, address social welfare history, human behavior and the social environment, social policy, and social work practice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Three decision cases and an online version of *Instructor's Resources* provide teaching tools for application of concepts.

The 5th edition of *Christianity and Social Work* is organized into four units to promote integration throughout the social work curriculum:




- Christian Roots of the Social Work Profession
- Christians Called to Social Work: Scriptural Basis, Worldviews and Ethics
- Human Behavior and Spiritual Development in a Diverse World
- Christians in Social Work Practice: Contemporary Issues

In response to suggestions from readers of previous editions, this edition has 19 chapters including ones focused on working with clients from the LGBT community, evidence-based practice (EBP), congregational social work, military social work, human trafficking, and spiritual assessment.

**DR. T. LAINE SCALES** is Professor of Higher Education and Associate Dean of Graduate Studies at Baylor University. She served 15 years as a social work faculty member in three universities before joining the Baylor School of Education in 2008. She has published 9 books and over 40 articles and chapters in the areas of teaching in social work, faith and social work practice, rural social work, and higher education.

**DR. MICHAEL S. KELLY** is Associate Professor at the Loyola University Chicago School of Social Work. He has published over 50 articles, book chapters, & books on school social work, evidence-based practice, and the intersection of Christianity and social work practice. He was a section editor for *The Journal of Family and Community Ministries* and now serves as Associate Editor of *Social Work and Christianity*.



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