NACSW

North American Association
of Christians in Social Work

SOCIAL WORK & CHRISTIANITY

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Social Work & Christianity (SWC) is a refereed journal published quarterly in March, June, September, and December by the North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW) to support and encourage the growth of social workers in the ethical integration of Christian faith and professional practice. *SWC* welcomes articles, shorter contributions, book reviews, and letters which deal with issues related to the integration of faith and professional social work practice and other professional concerns which have relevance to Christianity.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS AND INDEXING

SOCIAL WORK & CHRISTIANITY

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OF CHRISTIANS IN SOCIAL WORK

CONTENTS

All Things New: Neo-Calvinist Groundings for Social Work

James R. Vanderwoerd

"There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain…. See, I am making all things new." This vision from Revelation 21—perhaps the most comforting words a Christian in social work will ever hear—provides a beacon of hope in the face of despair. This article grounds this hopeful vision within Reformed Christianity, specifically within the neo-Calvinist tradition, and highlights contributions of this tradition to social work and social welfare.

I N 1891, ABRAHAM KUYPER GAVE THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE FIRST Christian Social Congress in the Netherlands. The burning question on the minds of Christians across Europe was what to do about the torrent of social problems erupting in cities across the western world. Two emerging approaches battled for supremacy, each promising a golden future: capitalism and socialism. Both approaches rested upon the twin foundations of human autonomy and scientific rationality. Both approaches explicitly rejected God and the millennia-old traditions of Christianity as hopelessly outdated for the complex social problems at the dawn of the 20th century.

In this context, Abraham Kuyper emerged as a Christian David fighting a secular Goliath. Vehemently rejecting humanist diagnoses and solutions, Kuyper (2011/1891) unapologetically declared:

> We as Christians must place the strongest possible empha-
> sis on the majesty of God's authority and on the absolute
> validity of his ordinances, so that, even as we condemn the
> rotting social structure of our day, we will never try to erect
> any structure except one that rests on foundations laid by
> God (p. 58).

Kuyper was a whirlwind in Dutch public life in the 19th and early 20th centuries, pastoring rural and urban churches, founding and editing two newspapers, founding a university, founding and leading a political party, and even serving a term as prime minister (Bratt, 2013).

Fast-forward to the 21st century and we can scarcely imagine a prominent public figure speaking on so many contemporary issues with such unabashed and explicit reference to Jesus Christ as Lord over "every square inch," as Kuyper famously declared. Kuyper was one of the most prominent forefathers of what has become known as neo-Calvinism. To confront the pressing social problems of the day, Kuyper urged that we needed more architects and fewer physicians. That is, we need to get to the roots of the problems—"the rotting social structure"—rather than tinkering at the margins, or bandaging the wounds.

Armed with the incisive scalpel of Scripture, Kuyper provided an "architectonic critique" that sliced away the pretences and idolatry of both market-based and state-driven solutions to social problems:

> Only one thing is necessary if the social question is to exist for you: you must realize the untenability of the present state of affairs, and you must account for this untenability not by incidental causes but by a fault in the very foundation of our society's organization. If you do not acknowledge this and think that social evil can be exorcised through an increase in piety, or through friendlier treatment or more generous charity, then you may believe that we face a religious question or possibly a philanthropic question, but you will not recognize the *social* question. This question does not exist for you until you exercise an architectonic critique of human society, which leads to the desire for a different arrangement of the social order (Kuyper, 2011/1891, p. 44-45).

Kuyper was many things, but he was not a social worker; yet, it isn't hard for us as Christian social workers to be stirred by his words. Who among us does not share his sense that something is wrong at the very core of our society—as wrong now as it was then? Who among us does not also question the limits of piety or charity or philanthropy to get to the roots of the social problems we face? And who among us does not also long for the day when all things will be made new, and there will be no more mourning, crying, pain, or death?

My aim in this article is to provide an introduction and an overview of neo-Calvinism as it has developed in the past one hundred or so years, and how it has shaped our capacity as the body of Christ to engage in the architectonic critiques necessary to get to the roots of the social problems that face us as Christians in social work in the 21st century. I do not do this as a neutral observer: I grew up in, and for most of my life I have been

connected with, a small homogenous religious community made up of Dutch Protestant Calvinists, many of whom immigrated to Canada after the Second World War. Recounting war stories is a favourite activity in my family gatherings (see den Hartog & Kasaboski (2009) for an example), and one of the favourite topics was the Dutch resistance to the Nazi occupation. I swell with pride when I hear how my grandparents harboured a Jewish couple in their attic while being forced to feed German officers in their dining room, or how my father and his boyhood friends devised various schemes to thwart a German Panzer division parked in the woods near his house. But, then I heard the story of how my grandfather, before settling on Canada as the destination to resettle his family, seriously considered instead South Africa. I shudder at the thought that I could have been born there instead, because it was the same Dutch Calvinism that inspired resistance to the Nazis that was also the primary theological rationale for apartheid.

My own immersion in a specific Christian tradition has led me to dig deeper into its history, doctrines, and practices in order to better understand myself, but also to probe at its claims, contradictions and ambiguities. In doing so, I have at times been moved to pride, and at other times I have cringed in embarrassment. In this article I take inspiration from Terry Wolfer, who, in a previous Alan Keith Lucas Lecture, described the contributions of Anabaptist theology and practice for social work (Wolfer, 2011).

We are in an age when institutions and traditions have come under heavy criticism (Crouch, 2013). There is a profound level of distrust in the authority that comes embedded in institutions (Koyzis, 2014), and this distrust has worked its way into the church as well (Hunter, 2010). Increasing numbers of Christians seek to avoid denominational identification, preferring instead to a more individualistic expression. Sayings such as "*no creed but Christ*" and "*just the Bible and me*" capture this anti-institutional and individualistic mindset. In this context, First Things blogger Matthew Block's recent observations about interpreting scripture are instructive:

> Personal piety and a desire for truth are not guarantees that we always read Scripture aright. Consequently, we must rely upon our brothers and sisters in the faith to correct and rebuke us when we err, demonstrating our errors by Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16). And this reliance on brothers and sisters refers not merely to those Christians who happen to be alive at the same time as us. Instead, it refers to the whole Christian Church, throughout time (Block, 2014).

As Block suggests, too many Christians are ignorant of or misunderstand the history of Christianity or their particular place in that history. In that sense, Christians are no different than many North Americans, who have a decidedly ahistoric and presentist bias. As some Christian scholars ironically point out, even though these Christians "often deny being influ-

enced by any tradition at all…. In point of fact, there is a long tradition of antitraditionalism within the history of Christianity" (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2004, p. 89). We are human, after all, and as humans, it is impossible for us to inhabit some generic, abstract space. We exist in a particular time and place. Our walk of faith follows others' footsteps, whether we are aware of it or not. It is important to be aware of what traditions have shaped us, so that we are better able to see the insights and gaps in our own traditions but also in others. As a Christian and as a social worker, I cannot think of a context more suited to explore these ideas than NACSW. I have come to know NACSW as a safe place in which Christians from many traditions can gather. I have had the opportunity to learn a great deal from fellow sisters and brothers in Christ in the fifteen or so years that I have been part of this organization. I hope that this article contributes to an ongoing process in which we can learn from each other.

Neo-Calvinists on the Christian Family Tree

Picture the universal church as a tree with many branches. The trunk of the tree is the early Christian church established by Jesus' followers in the first century. As we know, the church has gone through countless divisions—many (most?) of them fractious—and our collective history is not always pretty (Marty, 1959). Nevertheless, we confess that the body of Christ finds its unity in a collective rootedness in Jesus Christ, and that it finds expression in a multitude of ethnic, cultural, doctrinal, and other kinds of diversity. Neo-Calvinism emerged from the Protestant branch of Dutch Calvinism in the 19th century. It traces its lineage back to John Calvin, and even further back to Augustine (Wolters, 2005a). It is so-named because it represented an explicit agenda to refocus the power of the gospel to the entire world, rather than limiting God's redemptive actions to only the personal salvation of souls (Kuyper, 1931, p. 118-9; Wolterstorff, 1983). Kuyper was one of the leading proponents of this movement and outlined the agenda of a new Calvinist project in his "Lectures on Calvinism," a series of addresses he gave at Princeton University in 1898 (Kuyper, 1931). Neo-Calvinism had a substantial impact on Dutch society in the 19th and 20th centuries, particularly in providing a theological and political argument for a unique social arrangement referred to as "pillarization" (or *verzuiling* in Dutch) in which government provided space and resources for various social institutions according to the four most prominent religious and political communities in Dutch society at that time: Protestant, Catholic, socialist, and liberal (Daly, 2009; Koyzis, 2015a; Monsma & Soper, 1997).

Despite Kuyper's lectures in Princeton in 1898, neo-Calvinism did not gain much traction in North America until the mid-20th century, and that impact was not primarily in politics, but in philosophy. In 1970, two philosophers at Calvin College, Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff,

spearheaded an academic movement that improbably revolutionized the field of philosophy (Smith, 2013). They both drew on Kuyper's claim that no one is neutral; everyone believes in something, and cannot help but bring their beliefs into whatever they do. While the secular field of philosophy claimed to be founded on the neutral solid ground of objective reason, Plantinga and Wolterstorff exposed the flaws of that argument, and posited instead that philosophers ought to come clean with their points of view, rather than pretending to be neutral (Bartholomew & Goheen, 2013).

Here they dovetailed with what we now recognize as one of the central insights of postmodernism: we're all biased; everyone tells some story that helps them make sense of the world, which we use to filter and interpret things around us. Further, the truths we once thought to be universal, objective, and neutral have turned out to be nothing more than particular stories that have all too often been used to marginalize and minimize others' experiences and participation (Middleton & Walsh, 1995; Smith, 2003). Plantinga and Wolterstorff recognized the prophetic genius of Kuyper and his Christian philosophic heirs and their insights about the worldview claims that all humans make. Thus, these two Christian philosophers were able to leverage the postmodern movement and carve out a legitimate space for Christians in philosophy.

The significance of this accomplishment radiated beyond philosophy. In fact, Time Magazine singled out Plantinga in a 1980 article, and followed that up by putting the "new Calvinism" on the cover of their 2009 issue, "Ten Ideas Changing the World." More recently, the New York Times declared that "Evangelicals find themselves in the midst of a Calvinist revival" (Oppenheimer, 2014; Joustra, 2014a). Admittedly, these mainstream media sources often mess up the nuances of the various streams of Calvinism (Robinson, 2014), and just about everything else about Christianity, for that matter. Nevertheless, neo-Calvinism has had a significant impact on North American Christianity (Bolt, 2000; Daly, 2009; Kits, 1987; Monsma, 2012).

The Distinctive Accent of Neo-Calvinism

To understand the differences among branches on the Christian tree risks accentuating disagreements rather than commonalities. Another way of thinking about these differences is to think of Christians as speaking the same language, but with different accents (Plantinga, 2002, p. xv). What accent do neo-Calvinists speak with? In this section I want to outline five key themes that mark the neo-Calvinist accent as distinct. Focusing on these distinctives is not the same as claiming that each on their own is unique to neo-Calvinists, for, of course, there is much that is shared among many Christian traditions. What I will claim is that these five *taken together* represent an approach within Christianity that is unique; that is, in these five areas neo-Calvinists speak with an accent that no other Christians do. At

the same time, this is not the same thing as suggesting that this particular accent is better than other accents spoken by Christians, rather, as I've said, each tradition has its own insights and gaps.

God's Sovereignty

Calvinists—neo or otherwise—usually begin by focusing on the absolute, non-negotiable and incomprehensible sovereignty of the triune God. Jesus declared before issuing the Great Commission that "all authority on heaven and earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18 NIV). Calvinists follow this truth to its logical consequence: even our salvation is ultimately God's choice, not ours. The Calvinist emphasis on divine election has generated much controversy, but the *neo*-Calvinist accent doesn't get hung up there, and neither will I (for more see Mouw's *Calvinism in the Las Vegas Airport,* 2004a).

Instead, another insight flows from recognizing God's sovereignty that particularly defines the neo-Calvinist accent, and that is the one captured by Kuyper's arguably most-often quoted passage: "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry out, 'Mine!'" (Kuyper, 1880). If you want to get a sense of what this means to a neo-Calvinist social worker, ask her to give you a tour of her agency and point out to you which parts of the agency are secular and which parts are religious. You will see her squirm and frown and eventually hear her say something that echoes Kuyper, "But it's all religious!" Because God is sovereign over the entire creation, everything is God's and nothing is outside his authority and control.

Creation—Fall—Redemption ("Grace Restores Nature")

The remaining distinctive aspects of a neo-Calvinist accent all flow from this recognition of God's all-encompassing, non-negotiable sovereignty. Not only is God sovereign over His entire cosmos (this is the word favoured by neo-Calvinists to describe everything that God created, both material and spiritual), but He is also committed to it. In other words, God has a sustaining investment in nurturing and upholding everything He has made. God cares about it all, and is not about to abandon any of it. As Biblical scholar Al Wolters (2005b) says, "God did not make junk, and God does not junk what he made" (p. 49).

Contrary to the "Left Behind" notion of a faithful remnant being snatched to safety as the rest of the world is left to catastrophic destruction, neo-Calvinists point to the scriptural evidence that, "God so loved the *cosmos* that He gave his only son"—yes, "world" in this verse is best translated as "cosmos," by which is meant the entirety of created reality, not simply the people in our world (Mouw, 2011, p. 12). How does

scripture provide evidence of God's commitment to the entire creation? Neo-Calvinists read the Bible as not simply a series of stories of God and His people that provide insights and lessons for our lives today, but rather as a lens, or a framework, or a worldview, through which one understands everything else (Greidanus, 1982; Wolters, 2005b).

That worldview framework can be captured in the phrase, "*grace restores nature,*" or in the three-part structure of creation—fall—redemption (Wolters, 2005b). To say that grace restores nature is to describe how God in His love relates to the world He made. It points to how God *has* acted, *is* acting, and *will* act intentionally to reclaim and renew all of what He made. God is not distant from His creation, but rather demonstrates His love for all of reality by being actively engaged to restore the world to the flourishing that He intended. A creation—fall—redemption framework highlights three foundational principles that guide how we interpret everything: God created the world as a context for *shalom* (Wolterstorff, 1983), but humans rebelled against God and disrupted not only the intended *shalom* but the very creation itself, and in response, God enters the world and sets about to restore His creation to its original goodness.

"It's All Good"

The central insight that the creation is good, but fell into sin through human disobedience, and is now being restored by God leads us to another insight: the world cannot be divided into sacred and secular, holy and unholy, good and evil. Christians sometimes struggle with how much we should separate ourselves from "worldly" influences so that we don't become corrupted. Since God created it good, there are no parts of his creation that are inherently evil. True, there is evil in the world, but that evil can be traced to human rebellion, not the things of creation themselves. In other words, each created thing is simultaneously good, but also tainted by sin. This makes more sense if we understand God's creation not only as all of the physical, inanimate, and non-human reality, but also humans and their societies and cultures as well. God created these too, although in society and culture, God gave humans the high calling of being His co-creators. That is one sense in which we are His image-bearers, because we image in a tiny way His creativity (Middleton, 2005).

Further, while God gives his laws for the operation and regulation of the physical world—laws of gravity, thermodynamics, the changing of the seasons, the ordering and movement of the stars, and so on—God's laws also apply to society and culture. Just as there is a structure and proper ordering for the physical world, so there is for the human and social world. Society is God's creation and operates according to God's laws, or at least it should. If you're thinking at this point that there is scant evidence of that, then you're right. The key difference between the laws of gravity, say, and the laws for the

social world, is the agency of humans. The physical world cannot choose to disobey God's laws, whereas humans can. In other words, there is a *structure* to social arrangements that recognizes these are not merely human inventions, but rather are parts of God's creation. When social arrangements conform to God's laws then we can say that they are operating the way God intended. The word *norm* can be used in this context to differentiate between God's structures for the non-human world, that is, His laws, and God's structures for the human and social world (Wolters, 2005b).

The implication of this insight is that human and social entities—marriages, families, schools, businesses, labour unions, governments, and so on—are part of God's creation and must conform to His norms. There is, in other words, a right way and a wrong way to structure a marriage, or a government, or a school; these social entities do not operate only according to the whims of humans, but rather must adhere to God's designs. When they don't, it is not because of the way God created them, but rather because of the way humans have misunderstood or misapplied—both wilfully and ignorantly—God's norms.

When we say that all of creation is good, therefore, we are saying that there is inherent good in the structures of things that God has made. However, we know full well that that not all marriages or schools or governments or whatever are actually good. What we see here are God's good structures that are being distorted or corrupted away from His intentions. They are misdirected away from His norms and instead, pointed to some other direction. This distinction—between the inherent structures of things, and their direction—either towards or away from God—helps us to avoid the sacred/secular, holy/unholy dualism (Chaplin, 2011; Wolters, 2005b).

Salvation Isn't Just For You and Me

Many western hemisphere Christians, embedded as we are in modern, liberal, individualism, have reduced the entire gospel message to what Jesus has done for *me* (Middleton, 2014; Peterson, 2005). However, the biblical story is not just about our own individual salvation. John 3:16 says "for God so loved *the world*—not, "for God so loved *Jim*," or even "for God so loved *the people*." Of course God dearly loves each one of us, but we misunderstand and limit the scope of God's love if we think of salvation as only something that He does for each of us (Peterson, 2005; Wright, 2008). Paul says in Colossians 1, "For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him [that is, Christ], and *through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven*, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross" (emphasis added).

The neo-Calvinist distinction between the structure and direction of creation—that is, in the inherent goodness of all of what God made, intertwined with the sinful human misdirections that have been embedded

into everything—alerts us to what God is up to. He is not content just to save our souls; no, He has much grander ambitions than that. God has set about to restore it all! He wants to reclaim and renew *all* of what He created (Middleton, 2014). When Jesus stilled the storm, the disciples said, "Who is this, that even the clouds obey Him?" And, when Christ gave up His life on the cross, the very earth trembled and shook, and the skies went dark. Clearly, this is bigger than we think. In fact, since we see through a glass darkly, we can barely grasp the immensity of God's plans.

Salvation, then, is the ongoing action of God to carry out His purposes in His creation to restore and renew it to the glory that He has in mind. Through God's grace, we are restored to relationship with Him, but it goes further than this. God's grace extends to the entire creation. Romans 8:22 describes creation as "groaning as in the pangs of childbirth," and thankfully, God hears those groans. That means that God's salvation restores not just humans, but human and social arrangements and artifacts as well. God wants to renew and restore marriages, families, businesses, choirs, hockey teams, movies, paintings, theatre productions, automobiles, can openers, combines, apps, websites, and on and on and on—all of it. God seeks flourishing and shalom and thriving in His creation, and to do that, He is invested in an immense project of restoration and renewal, the likes of which we can scarcely imagine (Peterson, 2005).

This should give great hope for social workers to invest in the tasks of working within the various settings—agencies, communities, neighbour-hoods, businesses—that God has placed us, because these settings are not just earthly things that God will rescue us from. No, these are His creation and He will not abandon neither us nor them.

The True Story of the Whole World

How is God doing this? How do we know how God is doing this? Because the Bible tells us so. At one level, the Bible is a jumbled collection of disparate historical fragments, varied literary forms, official and tedious records, breathtakingly beautiful poetry, incomplete correspondence, apoca-lyptic visions, and more. But step back from these seemingly incoherent pieces and what comes into focus is one broad narrative arc: God created the world, humans rebelled, and God is setting things straight. Between the seemingly trivial, sometimes bizarre, often violent and tragic particularities and that grand, simple story, one can detect the thread of a convoluted, messy plotline, a story about the world—not just the world of Bible times, but of our world, too—and how God acts through human means to carry out His purposes. Bartholomew and Goheen, in *The Drama of Scripture* (2004), suggest that the Bible is a drama that can be told in six acts: Act I: creation, Act II: fall, Act III: redemption initiated through the people of Israel, Act IV: redemption accomplished in Jesus' death and resurrection, Act V: the spreading kingdom

of God through Christ's body, the church, and Act VI: the final establishment of the kingdom of God in the return of Christ. If the first scene of Act V is the early church spreading throughout the Roman Empire, then we could view the story of the church since then as scene two.

For Christians, the Bible is not simply a collection of inspiring stories about other people; this is *our* story. We can understand our place in the world and make sense of the events of our time and place in terms of this drama, in which we join with the "cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1) and are now part of God's unfolding plan to reclaim and renew His creation by using humans to accomplish His purposes. We are not just random individuals whose puny efforts in social work are simply bandaging wounds that cannot be healed, but rather, we are actors in a drama that we did not write; God is writing and directing the play, and calls us to our parts. Our task is to be faithful and obedient to the parts we play in the drama and let Him worry about the rest.

Further, we place our hope in a dramatic and controversial claim: this Biblical story is not simply, as postmodernists would have it, our particular story that we tell ourselves to make sense of our own reality. No, the power of the Biblical story is its claim that it is *everyone's* story about *everything*. This is really the way it is. This story is the true account of how things really are and what really matters. It is, therefore, a metanarrative, a story that trumps every other story and subsumes all other experiences and perspectives to its account (Goheen & Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads,* 2008). As theologian N.T. Wright explains, "The whole point of Christianity is that it offers a story which is the story of the whole world. It is public truth." (Wright, 1992, p. 41-2).

This is not to say that everyone believes it, accepts it, or agrees with it. Not at all. This is why the Biblical story is both so powerful and so offensive. The Biblical story is powerful because it tells of the one true Lord and Saviour over all things, who alone holds the promise of complete healing and wholeness for all humanity's ills; and it is offensive because it unambiguously challenges every other pretender to His throne. No wonder it's easy to dismiss or reject this story, because to tell it and accept it is to submit to the true King and to conform one's life to His rule. And in our world, submitting and conforming to some other authority is not what we humans like to do (Koyzis, 2014). Instead, we like to make up our own stories about the world, and, not surprisingly, we tend to put ourselves in the lead role as the hero. But in the Biblical story, Jesus Christ is the hero, who, paradoxically, uses His authority by giving up His power (Crouch, 2013) and delegating us as co-heroes. When we have eyes to see the Biblical story in this way, then we are better able to understand our God, His world, and our place in it.

To summarize, the neo-Calvinism accent is a world formative Christianity (Wolterstorff, 1983, ch.1). Taking seriously God's authority as creator

of the entire cosmos, neo-Calvinists train the light of scripture onto every aspect of God's creation, searching for how God's laws are woven into every dimension of our existence. Neo-Calvinists celebrate and wonder at the goodness of all that God made, and yet lament how our human hearts, hardened toward God, have warped and poisoned it. But our lament pales in contrast to God's. As it turns out, His love and care for His creation runs deeper than we can imagine. He is so invested in what He made that He gave up His only Son in order to redeem it all. He does not do that with the snap of His finger, even though He could. Instead, He chooses to work slowly, empowering us as His co-workers to form and shape and develop His creation. Scripture reveals a grand story in which God invites us to be actors in His drama. Our hope lies in being "certain of what we cannot see," (Hebrews 11:1) which includes, in part, the end of the story: the end of all crying, mourning, tears, and pain (Rev. 21:5). Neo-Calvinism is world-reforming because we are participating in God's great work to restore His creation.

Neo-Calvinist Insights for Social Work and Social Welfare

When social workers wade into the murky waters of human pain, brokenness, and conflict, we do not do so objectively. The very act of engaging with another hurting person already reveals our bias: people matter. Social workers, unique among the professions, have a heightened sense of the all-important place of values to our practice. What we believe matters; beliefs shape practice. These five distinctive elements of a neo-Calvinist vision, therefore, are not just articles of doctrine that are important only to theologians.

I would now like to highlight briefly how a neo-Calvinist worldview provides a lens through which we can come to a fuller understanding of some of the complexities of the social worlds that confront us as social workers. I will focus on two areas that are particularly relevant to our task as social workers: specifically, what it means to be human, and how to understand the complexities of our current societal contexts.

Humans Created in the Image of God

A neo-Calvinist Christian worldview provides an understanding of the nature of humans and their roles and characteristics within diverse, pluralistic, and complex societies. The fundamental characteristic of humans, according to this view, is that we are created as image-bearers of God (see Genesis 1-2; Middleton & Walsh, 1995, ch. 6; Middleton, 2005). Exactly what that means has been a matter of much debate, but it includes at least that we image God's "we-ness" and his creativity. God said, "Let *us* make man in *our* image, in *our* likeness" (Gen. 1:26, emphasis added). God's

plural self-identification alludes to His three-in-one personhood as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (the relationship of the three persons of the Trinity is described as *perichoresis*, Keller, 2008, p. 214).

We can infer from this that God is relational and social, and that we, as His image-bearers, are also relational and social. To be human—to image God—is to be in mutual, harmonious, inter-dependent relationships with others. The reverse is also true. When we are isolated from others or when our relationships are constrained, limited, or broken, then we are in some way less than fully human as God intended. When humans gather together and associate with one another in many types of social arrangements, we get a glimpse of the many ways in which we humans have lived out our relational character.

We are also creative beings with the capacity to envision and imagine. We mirror God by harnessing our talents, gifts, and resources to build and establish physical structures and social arrangements and to make something of ourselves and the world (Crouch, 2008). Further, our being made in God's image as creative beings also carries with it the responsibility to use our creative energy for God's purposes and for others' benefit. Neil Plantinga (1995) describes this as follows:

> [W]e are to become responsible beings: people to whom God can entrust deep and worthy assignments, expecting us to make something significant of them—expecting us to make something significant of our lives. None of us simply finds himself here in the world. None of our lives is an accident. We have been called into existence, expected, awaited, equipped, and assigned. We have been called to undertake the stewardship of a good creation, to create sturdy and buoyant families that pulse with the glad give-and-take of the generations. We are expected to show hospitality to strangers and to express gratitude to friends and teachers. We have been assigned to seek justice for our neighbors and, whenever we can, to relieve them from the tyranny of their suffering (p. 197).

As image bearers of God, we carry both responsibilities and rights. We are responsible, as Plantinga argues, to both God and others. But, we have the right to basic treatment and conditions, not because we deserve them, or only because of our worth as humans, but also so that we have what we need in order to carry out those responsibilities. Responsibility cannot be exercised without adequate resources to enable us to fulfill our calling. Part of what it means to image God's creativeness is that we participate in creation and its unfolding. The capacity to participate is therefore a fundamental ingredient in our life together (Coffin, 2000; Goudzwaard, VanderVennen, & Van Heemst, 2007; Mott, 1996).

This biblical conception of the value of human persons rooted in and reflecting God's identity provides the roots and soil out of which springs social work's value in the inherent dignity of every single human being (Hodge & Wolfer, 2008). As David Sherwood (2012) has pointed out, "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" (p. 89).

Nature of Societies

As we have seen, a neo-Calvinist understanding of society posits that social structures were not created exclusively by humans, but rather were established by God as part of the created order. However, humans do have a unique role in developing, establishing, and refining these structures in response to God's created order, and can thus choose to do this in obedience or in rejection of God. Further, according to Wolters, these structures have characteristics and properties, similar to the laws that govern physical reality, which God built into them and that establish parameters for their functioning (Walsh, Hart, & VanderVennen, 1995; Wolters, 2005b).

Differentiation & Development

The overall purpose of social structures is to facilitate God's intent for humans in His creation, which is the abundant flourishing of human relationships in harmony—what the Hebrews in the Old Testament called *shalom* (Gornick, 2002; Wolterstorff, 1983). One of our tasks as humans is to seek understanding of and knowledge about the characteristics and properties of various social structures so that we might discern God's intent and purpose for them—and for us (MacLarkey, 1991).

To be sure, however, this is tricky business, in part because the Bible is not a social science reference book that provides simple formulas for universal application. God has given humans considerable latitude in developing social structures that are appropriate to specific times and places. It would be too simplistic to suggest that the Bible provides blueprints for particular social arrangements that are universal across the breadth of historical and cultural variation.

Nevertheless, humans are called to develop and utilize social arrangements in a way that is consistent with God's commands and in a way that either contributes to or detracts from shalom. That is, social reality, unlike physical reality, can stray from adherence to God's norms because social structures are established and realized through human effort, and humans, unlike rocks, water, and other inanimate matter, can be obedient or disobedient.

Further, creation is not static, but is continually changing, largely through the work of humans, who are empowered by God to work in

the world to develop it. Humans not only build physical things, but also develop social organizations, practices, and institutions. Societies evolve and change over time through human imagination and intervention; social forms and entities that exist today did not exist yesterday and may not tomorrow. Such variation is understood to be part of God's plan for His creation—albeit distorted and stunted by sin and human failing. Nevertheless, the differentiation and development of societies from agrarian rural to industrial and post-industrial are not seen as diverging from God's will, but rather as the unfolding history of God's kingdom in which humans play a primary role (Chaplin, 2011; Koyzis, 2003).

Principled Pluralism

There was a time when we could assume that we were all on the same page, but that is no longer true. Pluralism is our society's default now, which Christian sociologist James Davison Hunter (2010) describes as, "the simultaneous presence of multiple cultures and those who inhabit those cultures" (p. 200). Like it or not, not all citizens in a given nation are Christians, and even if they were, wide differences of opinion exist about how things ought to be. Further, we recognize that citizens have a right to believe what they want, and to express that belief freely. Indeed, this right is enshrined as the First Amendment in the Constitution of the United States, in Articles 2a and 2b of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and in Article 18 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But pluralism is more than the individual right to religious freedom. People do not "inhabit culture" only as individuals, but together with others. Pluralism must recognize not only individual difference but also communal difference. The neo-Calvinist conception of pluralism provides a multi-faceted understanding that helps us to sort out these matters (Koyzis, 2015b; Monsma, 2012).

There are at least three types of pluralism. The first, *directional* (also referred to as *confessional*) *pluralism* (Skillen, 1994), addresses diversity based on spiritual beliefs, religion, or confessions. This type of pluralism recognizes that individuals and groups within society may legitimately hold varying beliefs and, within the rules of law, act on these beliefs. It is this type of pluralism that makes space for differences in spirituality and religion, and provides guidance for how persons from different religious and confessional belief systems treat one another (including belief systems that are not explicitly religious).

In addition to religious differences, we gather together in many other ways: we join political parties, play on soccer teams, volunteer at the public library, sit on school boards, serve Thanksgiving dinners at the downtown soup kitchen, visit art galleries and museums, enroll our children (and their animals) in 4H clubs, hold memberships in the American Automobile Association, and send donations to Bread for the World. These are just a

few examples of a second type of pluralism referred to as *structural* (or *associational*) *pluralism*. This type of pluralism recognizes that society consists of a wide variety of types of organizations, and that individuals are free to join and associate together according to their own voluntary choices.

The third type of plurality is labelled as *cultural* (or *contextual)*. This type of plurality refers to the differences associated with ethnicity, culture, and language. While these may overlap with confessional/directional pluralism, distinguishing between these is important in that it prevents us from making erroneous assumptions that conflate beliefs and culture, for example, that all Muslims are Arab, or that all Indians are Sikhs.

As shown in Figure 1, a person could belong to particular societal structures (for example a school or a labour union) that specifically operate from within a particular confessional or directional context. Such confessional contexts could be explicitly religious (such as a Christian university, or an Islamic school, or a Jewish social service agency) but could also not be specifically religious. For example, an agency serving women and children who are victims of male violence could be explicitly situated within a secular feminist perspective; or, a labour union could be organized explicitly according to a Marxist-socialist perspective; or a child welfare agency could operate from an explicit anti-oppressive perspective.

Figure 1: Three Kinds of Pluralism
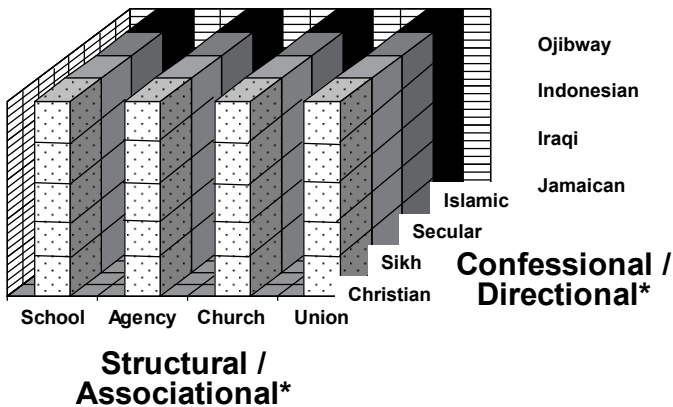
*Note that for each of the three types, the four specific labels are only examples, and not intended to be exhaustive. For example, under structural/associational pluralism, there are many more types of societal structures that could be included such as businesses, professions, families, community theatre groups, self-help groups, bowling leagues, etc. The same is true for confessional / directional and cultural / contextual pluralisms.

Together, these three types of pluralisms capture the idea that people organize and live their lives in terms of their fundamental beliefs about the world (i.e., directional/confessional), in terms of the purpose or function of the grouping (i.e., structural/associational), and in terms of their belonging to various ethnic and cultural groups (cultural/contextual). Further, this understanding of multiple pluralities allows for the recognition of how fundamental beliefs operate in different social contexts. While we may disagree with other individuals and their choices, we recognize that in a diverse society, imposing our own particular perspectives on others is not a legitimate response when we encounter individuals who make choices different from our own, unless such choices violate established rules of law.

The Role of Government and Other Social Entities

Of particular interest is how these numerous and different social entities relate to one another and how the overlapping, multiple, and sometimes contradictory claims of these entities can be sorted out. For example, who is responsible for teaching children about sexuality, parents or schools? What role should government have in sorting out such a question? Is government to be "above" parents and schools, telling them what they may or may not do? Or, are parents, schools (and other social entities) independent of government, and thus allowed to do as they wish?

The neo-Calvinist concept of *sphere sovereignty* addresses these questions (note that there are close similarities between this neo-Calvinist concept and the Catholic concept of subsidiarity; Chaplin, 1995; Daly, 2009; Koyzis, 2003; McIlroy, 2003; Monsma, 2012). God's work of creation includes an ordering of the social relationships and organizations of society such as families, marriages, schools, business corporations, unions, sports teams, neighborhood associations, and consumer groups. Sphere sovereignty asserts that these various social entities exist not simply at the behest of the state, but have a legitimacy and authority that ultimately comes from God.

Further, these entities possess autonomy appropriate to their social space and function. Local organizations and institutions have the right to govern their own affairs. For example, churches do not need to get government approval over their doctrines, nor do parents need government to tell them what to feed their children. In other words, these various organizations have the right to make decisions without interference from government.

At the same time, however, a neo-Calvinist understanding of government is not the same as the libertarian preference to minimize the state as an end in itself. Rather, sphere sovereignty argues that each social organization has a specific and central role that inheres to that organization as part of God's creation plan. The term *norm,* which we already encountered, refers to this role as the ideal standard to which organizations must aspire. Whether

a specific organization identifies itself as Christian or not matters less than whether that organization conducts itself consistent with God's norms.

The norm for government—that is, its central role and fundamental purpose—is to uphold public justice, that is, to encourage other organizations under its jurisdiction to fulfill their respective obligations and to adjudicate and protect the rights of other citizens and organizations to just and fair treatment in keeping with their unique, God-created norms (Koyzis, 2003; Skillen, 1994). Thus, government has a unique, overarching—but also limited—role with respect to all the other types of social organizations. Government is not simply one among other entities, but has special responsibilities and obligations toward all of the citizens and residents within its jurisdiction, unlike many other types of organizations that can limit their memberships and their activities based on their own particular preferences (Hiemstra, 2005).

Neo-Calvinist Influences in Social Welfare

Neo-Calvinist ideas have made their mark on the infrastructure of our social welfare systems in North America. In that respect, we could say that some of the girders of our social welfare system have been constructed using the "architectonic critique" that Kuyper advocated more than a century ago. In fact, he prepared the way for these girders by establishing institutions and practices in the Netherlands that have been adapted, modified, and implemented right here in the U.S. and Canada. However, some of these are not readily visible, in part because they form the frameworks of the building rather than the facades. I would like to briefly describe just a few of these, both as an example of neo-Calvinism's contributions, but more importantly, to provide some pathways and possibilities for how Christians in social work can be increasingly engaged in God's work of redemption.

Two organizing themes for these examples are religious freedom (Joustra, 2014b; Monsma, 2012) and public justice (Chaplin, 2011). Regarding religious freedom, I want to show how neo-Calvinism provides a fresh, nuanced, persuasive, and practical alternative to impasses and conflicts about religious freedom in three areas: the role of faith-based social services organizations, Christian education, and Christians in the labour movement. Regarding public justice, I will highlight some of the ways in which neo-Calvinists have been engaged in political advocacy to advance public justice in both the U.S. and Canada.

Religious Freedom

The neo-Calvinist conception of pluralism has enormous implications for what has been called our post-Christian society. At the risk of sounding alarmist (Flatt, 2014; Joustra, 2014c), I think it is safe to say that the

fundamental protection of religious freedom is being eroded in a society in which a secular viewpoint is taken as the norm (Hodge, 2009). To what discourse can we appeal to provide compelling reasons for, say, Christian colleges and universities to be accredited without giving up their lifestyle and sexuality guidelines, or for why pastors should *not* have to surrender their sermons to civic authorities, or to protect the legitimacy for Christian social work education programs within the Council on Social Work Education, or to allow employers to provide employee benefits consistent with their Christian values, or for Catholic hospitals to be protected from performing abortions, or for Christian family and children's services agencies to be free from coercion to approve same-sex foster or adoptive parents? In these and many other examples, how do we avoid the critique that we are just another "self-interest group" that clamours for "just us" rather than "justice"?

Faith-based Social Services

Many of us are familiar with the multi-faceted initiatives to increase partnerships between government and faith-based social services. Perhaps after more than a decade, we are both wary and weary of exaggerated claims of effectiveness, of cutbacks and restrictions for welfare programs, of arrogant boasting about moral benefits. However, despite these criticisms, there lies the germ of an idea that has its roots in a neo-Calvinist perspective (Daly, 2009; Glenn, 2000; Monsma, 2012).

Stanley Carlson-Thies (2006) gave a convocation address at Dordt College entitled, "Abraham Kuyper in the White House." As one of the founding staff members of the White Office for Faith-Based Initiatives, Carlson-Thies provides an insider's account of how the ideas of neo-Calvinism came to shape a substantial social policy revolution. In the dense networks of high-priced and well-placed lobbyists inside the beltway, how did the Center for Public Justice, the tiny three-person think-tank where Carlson-Thies worked, get the ear of the president? As Carlson-Thies described, "the Center is a small organization. But the Kuyperian idea [of pluralism] is a powerful one…. We were heirs to a powerful and just idea, and it was the idea that was needed [at the time]" (p. 16).

That idea is sphere sovereignty: because God created everything, including social entities, they owe their ultimate allegiance to Him. It is not government that created them or grants them the right to exist; the myriad social arrangements that make up civil society exist because of God's degree—they possess limited, but non-negotiable autonomy, or, as Kuyper puts it, they are sovereign within their own sphere.

Carlson-Thies has gone on to establish the Institutional Religious Freedom Alliance (IRFA), whose mission is, "to advance public policies and public attitudes that respect the character and service of faith-based

organizations. It supports and honors the spectrum of organizations that comprise the religious pluralism of our society" (Institutional Religious Freedom Alliance, nd). This neo-Calvinist idea has, in the words of former president G. W. Bush, unleashed "the armies of compassion" (Bush, 2001; see also Donaldson & Carlson-Thies, 2003, p. 58; McClain, 2008, p. 361) and freed up people of faith to extend their reach and their legitimacy.

"Free" Christian Education

In 1880 Abraham Kuyper founded the Vrije Universiteit, or what is called in English, the Free University of Amsterdam (Bratt, 2013). No, this does not mean a university with free tuition. Rather, Kuyper, pursuing the logic of sphere sovereignty, sought to protect university education from increasing encroachment from the liberal, secularizing influence of the Dutch state (as well as protect it from encroachment by the church). Free meant freedom from state control, and freedom to be openly, unapologetically rooted in a Protestant Calvinist worldview. Of course, there are thousands of examples of Christians founding their own education institutions from primary to higher education. However, what makes the neo-Calvinist approach different is not just the right to be religious and independent, but also the right to equal public support and legitimacy, including funding. As Kuyper and many of his followers have pointed out, all education is done from some worldview, and none is neutral.

The legacy of the Enlightenment is to establish liberal, public, secular, empirical education as the objective and rational default that demands allegiance for all educational pursuits, both in teaching and research. By contrast, the neo-Calvinist alternative is to recognize the sovereignty of educational institutions to define for themselves what worldview they choose to work out of, and to allow public space for a variety, rather than imposing an allegedly neutral secular worldview on them all. With this approach, a Christian university or any of its programs need not apologize for its unique Christian worldview and commitments to live out of it.

Christian Labour Unions

A final example where the neo-Calvinist ideas can be applied to defend religious freedom is in the labour movement. In his 1891 address Abraham Kuyper (2011/1891) rhetorically cried, "Socialism is in the air!" (p. 47). He was not just being alarmist, but was articulating a concern that many Christians shared. In the face of rampant problems associated with rapid capitalist industrialization, socialism was capturing the public imagination as a compelling alternative. But, as Kuyper foresaw, socialism is just as jealous a god as capitalism, and would demand submission as well. The mobilization of workers appeared to be the best way to challenge the

hegemony of the market, but it was not neutral. Instead, various unioniza-tion movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries coalesced into a one-size-fits-all approach that brooked no challengers. Certain principles were ironclad and defined as synonymous with worker justice: a so-called "closed shop" where every employee must join the same union, an adver-sarial posture in which employees and employers are pitted against one another, and widespread preference for a socialist rather than a capitalist economy (Grootenboer, 2005).

Here, too, however, a neo-Calvinist concept of principled pluralism led to the establishment of multiple and diverse labour unions in Western Eu-rope, including Christian unions. Dutch postwar immigrants to Canada took those ideas and attempted to transplant them in Canada, establishing the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) in 1952. Not surprisingly, CLAC has been relentlessly attacked by the mainstream labour movement.

A key court ruling in 1963, however, demonstrates how union plurality is also a matter of freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. Ontario Supreme Court Justice McRuer, upon examining big labour's argument that CLAC couldn't be a real union because it was too religious, ruled that, "If I supported the Board's refusal to certify the [CLAC] union on the ground that its members engage in prayer, read passages from the Bible and sing psalms and hymns at their meetings, the result would be that a union that required no standards of ethical or moral conduct and opened its meet-ings by reading from Karl Marx and singing the Red International might be certified but one that permits the practices here in question could not be" (Regina v. Ontario Labour Relations Board, 1963).

Despite an overall decline in unionization in North America, CLAC is now one of the fastest-growing unions in Canada, reaching nearly 60,000 members (Christian Labour Association of Canada, 2012). CLAC union representation is open to any worker regardless of their faith; the union operates by three key principles which it derives from its Christian world view: an open shop, in which employees are free to make their own choice about whether to join; a collaborative relationship between employers and employees, in which dialogue and mutual trust are emphasized; and a pursuit of broader goals beyond just compensation and profit, focusing on mutual responsibilities that both employers and employees are called to as members of a shared business community (Antonides, 1978).

Public Justice

Public justice, according to the neo-Calvinist perspective, is the unique responsibility of governments (Chaplin, 2011). By public I mean those matters that have to do with our lives together as citizens and residents within a particular political jurisdiction. There are other arenas, or spheres, to follow the neo-Calvinist usage, in which justice is important, but not

all are public. For example, as a university professor, if I award all of my students the same grade regardless of their work, that would be unjust, but it is not a matter for government to resolve. Similarly, if I allow two of my sons to use my car but not the third, he may rightly protest, "that's not fair!" but again, that is a matter of family or parental justice, not the state's.

The neo-Calvinist concept of justice argues that since we are made in the image of God, we have both rights and responsibilities. Contrary to the obsession with entitlements and individual liberty, neo-Calvinists recognize that justice is more than individual equality, but rather, requires a more contextualized assessment of what is necessary in order for persons and groups to be able to fulfill their callings.

Motivated by the desire to see Christ's reign over politics and our public life together, neo-Calvinists have established several advocacy organizations and think tanks to promote public justice and the common good. One of these is the Center for Public Justice in Washington, DC, which I've already described above. In Canada, two other organizations have also had an impact belying their size.

Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), based in Canada's capital, Ottawa, has been a respected participant in Canadian political affairs for more than half a century. CPJ has been involved in far too many issues to list here, but I will highlight two. First, CPJ was one of the first Christian organizations to advocate on behalf of Canada's Aboriginal peoples, and CPJ was instrumental in mobilizing a coalition to block a pipeline in the Mackenzie Valley in the 1970s. Second, co-founder Gerald Vandezande, who died in 2011, had a lasting impact on Canadian political affairs. Vandezande carried the Kuyperian vision into every political party (Vandezande, 1984). When Canada's Constitution was repatriated in 1982, he was part of a group that worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that this preamble was included, "Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law…" Vandezande received the Order of Canada for his lifelong work in pursuit of, as he often said, "justice, not just us"(Vandezande, 1999, p. 1).

Finally, Cardus is a Christian think tank with a bold vision, "…dedicated to the renewal of North American social architecture" (Cardus, n.d.; Van Pelt, 2008). Cardus seeks to do the kind of "architectonic critique" that Abraham Kuyper called for; one of the hallmarks of their approach is a refusal to become trapped in the partisan dilemmas that so often paralyze political discourse today. Just as Kuyper condemned both capitalist and socialist extremes in the 19th century, so Cardus stakes out thoughtful arguments and proposals that recognize the multiple entities that make up our society. Cardus draws on the neo-Calvinist insight that society is not simply a battleground staking individuals against government, but rather, a more complex array of groups, associations, allegiances, and alliances. Confounding critics on both the right and the left, Cardus pushes for

justice in labour, in business, in education, in urban planning, and much more. It is not often that you find a mutual fund manager and a labour organizer contributing to the same blogs or agreeing on much, but that is what Cardus does in pursuit of public justice.

Blindspots and Opportunities

Our traditions are both glasses and blinders; our traditions have formed us in such a way that whatever we see is filtered through our worldview, but these traditions also make us prone to blindspots. The psalmist David, in his psalm of praise and wonder at God's creative works, has this line of starkly honest confession tucked away within it: "But who can discern their own errors?" (Psalm 19:12). Which fish can see the water in which it swims? It's easy to be so immersed in one's own perspective that you don't see how others might perceive things differently. Egocentrism and ethnocentrism are notoriously difficult to avoid, despite our best intentions. And neo-Calvinists are just as guilty. Let me rephrase that: *I* am just as guilty. Speaking personally now, too often we neo-Calvinists are overly confident of our own certainty about what exactly God wants for this world. Given the emphasis on God's sovereignty, it's a tad disingenuous that we neo-Calvinists have an annoying tendency to make *ourselves* sovereign, and err on the side of being pushy, arrogant, triumphalist, and downright uncivil (Mouw, 2010).

This triumphalism leads to another significant problem: when Calvinists (and maybe all Protestants) encounter difference and disagreement, our default response is to take the ball and go start our own game. In the tradition I grew up in, we celebrate Reformation Day on October 31st. As one website (in the Calvinist tradition, but which I won't name) declares, the Reformation is "perhaps the greatest move of God's Spirit since the days of the Apostles," and, aside from its triumphalist tone, when you put it that way, it certainly seems worth celebrating. But, as the psalmist David reminds us, who can discern their own errors?

I admit that I never realized the downside until a Catholic friend gently asked me, "Why do you Protestants celebrate one of the most divisive movements in the church? Maybe you should be grieving, not celebrating." And it's true; Jesus prayed that we might be one so that the world will know Him (John 17). Meanwhile, there are almost as many Reformed Calvinist denominations as there are Calvinists! I If you Google "reformed denominations" you will discover an alphabet soup of disunity: CRC, RCA, URC, NRC, PCA, OPC, FRC, ORC, ARPC, EPC, EAPC, ETC, etc.!

Another blindspot in neo-Calvinism is our emphasis of head over heart and hands. In other words, neo-Calvinism is strong on the theoretical and philosophical aspects of worldview, but sometimes lacks follow-through. Neo-Calvinism is too prone to what Andy Crouch (2008) calls "the aca-

demic fallacy … that once you have understood something—analyzed and critiqued it—you have changed it" (p. 69). Or, as Calvin College philosopher Jamie Smith (2009) puts it in his book, *Desiring the Kingdom*, we're too focused on what we *think* and not on what we *love*. Smith explains,

> Being a disciple of Jesus is not primarily a matter of getting the right ideas and doctrines and beliefs into your head in order to guarantee proper behavior; rather, it's a matter of being the kind of person who *loves* rightly—who loves God and neighbor and is oriented to the world by the primacy of that love (p. 33).

It's a good thing, then, that God promises that His power is made perfect in our weaknesses (II Corinthians 12:9), because we Calvinists certainly have more than enough raw material for God to work with! And that's the beauty of it! Grace restores nature, which means that God's work of salvation restores us as well. Even in the midst of our weaknesses, we can be affirmed by God's appointment of us as His ambassadors (II Corinthians 5:18) and co-workers (I Corinthians 3:9), crowned with honor and glory to rule on God's behalf (Psalm 8). Ultimately, the neo-Calvinist accent is rooted in hope in the face of death, mourning, crying, or pain. This is not just an otherworldly, fatalistic, and passive hope. On the contrary, Jesus, who is seated on the throne, says in Revelation 21:5 "Behold, I *am* making *all things new*!" Not, "I *will* make all things new". And not, "I am making *all new things*." No, Jesus *is* doing this *here and now*.

Conclusion

When Christians confess that Jesus is Lord, we are making an audacious claim: that Jesus rules over *all things*, not just our hearts or our souls. This is a public claim that encompasses everything. At its heart, then, the neo-Calvinist accent reminds us of the world changing implications of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And when we say accent, we must remember that we are still talking about speaking a common language. Neo-Calvinism is not the only Christian voice calling for renewal; many Christians have said this same thing, and continue to do so, each with their own particular accent. In that vein, international development scholar, Center for Public Justice Senior Fellow, and Cardus contributor Robert Joustra (2014d), makes this observation:

> I wonder if we don't then also need to hear from another 19th-century voice, one whom Kuyper much revered in his own day, that of Pope Leo XIII and his encyclical Rerum Novarum. Leo's bracing argument in that encyclical was about development too, about the deep and widening di-

visions between the rich and the poor, about the abuse of laborers, and about building sustainable systems of public justice. Only two years after Kuyper's "On Manual Labor," Leo wrote in Rerum Novarum that "if human society is to be healed now, in no other way can it be healed save by a return to Christian life and Christian institutions." Abraham Kuyper and Pope Leo XIII, had much in common…, but one of the most significant commonalities was their call for a *public theology* to underwrite a renewed social architecture, a robust public justice.

Sure, sometimes each of us can be too deeply immersed in our own traditions. But at our best, there is one other thing that characterizes all three of the organizations that I have mentioned—the Center for Public Justice, Citizens for Public Justice, and Cardus—and that is this: although each of them sprung from neo-Calvinist soil, none of them are exclusively neo-Calvinist. Rather, all of them have explicitly sought to broaden their reach and draw in other Christians from other traditions, recognizing that "iron sharpens iron" (Proverbs 27:17) and that all of us need to be refined by the Refiner's fire (Malachi 3:1-3).

As Jamie Smith (2006) observed, "the viability of neocalvinism hinges on its being in dialogue with other Christian traditions" (p. 40), echoing Herman Bavinck, another Dutch Calvinist and contemporary of Abraham Kuyper, who insisted that, "The Christian life is so rich that it develops its full glory not just in a single form or within the walls of one church" (as cited in Mouw, 2011, p. 78).

Seeking greater knowledge of our own traditions should ultimately be motivated not by focusing on how we're different, but about how we're similar, and how God can use us to learn from each other. For that is also part of God's grand vision: "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb." (Rev. 7:9). ❖

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Perceptions and Experiences of Cyberbullying at a Faith-Based University

Karen Slovak, Hannah Crabbs, & Ben Stryffeler

Although cyberbullying is a growing concern, there has been little research exploring the levels of this phenomenon at the college level. Furthermore, this growing field of research has not examined the role of spiritual faith as a mediating variable. This study examined both of these variables in relation to cyberbullying. Data from this study came from a survey of students (n=282) at a small Midwest faith based university. Results indicated that cyberbullying occurred on the campus with a little over 20% reporting experiencing cyberbullying at some level and about the same amount stating they had posted hurtful things online. Level of faith appeared to have a buffering effect on cyberbullying experiences and perceptions. Implications suggest that universities, including those of faith, are not immune to this phenomenon and that steps can be taken to address the issue from a social work systems perspective.

S OCIAL MEDIA HAS BECOME UBIQUITOUS IN THE LIVES OF YOUTH WITH the majority being online and using social media interfaces. While the majority of American teens report overall positive interactions online, as many as 88% of those same youth reported being bystanders to negative interaction among peers in social media sites (Lenhart, Madden, Smith, Purcell, Zickuhr, & Rainie, 2011). This relatively new behavior, termed "cyberbullying," has been defined in a critical review and synthesis of research on cyberbullying victimization as "Any behavior performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others" (Tokunaga, 2010, p. 278).

This definition makes three clear points about cyberbullying that are important. The first is that it can happen over different media types such as Facebook, text messages, or Twitter. Second, there is intent to harm someone when the messages are sent, and last, cyberbullying consists of repeated intentional acts over a period of time. The issue of cyberbullying has been

estimated to impact as many as 29% of youth Internet users (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006), while more conservative surveys have suggested 9% have been subjected to online harassment (Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2006). The speed at which the Internet and social media materialized unintentionally created a cyberspace platform for harmful behaviors to occur among youth with rapid ease, relative anonymity, and rare consequences. In contrast to traditional bullying, cyberbullying is often anonymous, can occur at any time and without regard to geographical barriers, occurs outside of school, and can involve potentially millions of people with rapid distribution (Kowalski & Limber, 2007, Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Williams & Guerra, 2007).

The bulk of cyberbullying research has focused on middle and high school youth while the college population has remained largely unstudied. It is an unfortunate correlation that as technology grows, bullying within this realm will likely follow students as they transition into college. Online encounters from high school can spill over into the college setting; studies demonstrate that the experience of being a victim or perpetrator of cyberbullying in high school indicated an elevated risk of these same roles in college (Adams & Lawrence, 2011; Kraft, & Wang, 2010).

Baldasare, Bauman, Goldman, and Robie (2012) report several studies have indicated that the prevalence of cyberbullying at the college level is similar to middle and high school with reports ranging from 9%-34% (citing Anonymous, 2011; Englander & Muldowner, 2007; Finn, 2004; MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2010; Selwyn, 2008; Tegeler, 2010). Schenk and Fremouw (2012) conducted a study to investigate cyberbullying rates, impact, and coping methods among college students. They found that 8.6% out of 799 participants were victims of cyberbullying while attending the University of West Virginia. A smaller study was conducted by Walker, Sockman, and Koehn (2011) of 131 undergrad students and found that 11% of the students had been a victim of cyberbullying while attending the university. Over half of the students reported knowing a classmate who had been cyberbullied and 100% of the male students reported knowing about someone being cyberbullied. And, according to students' perceptions, much of the cyberbullying was not trivial, with almost half of the reports (46%) being of significant concern (Smith & Yoon, 2013).

Just as in younger students, older students are not immune to the psychological impact of cyberbullying. College students reported being negatively affected psychologically and socially as a result of being cyberbullied. Schenk and Fremouw (2012) reported that students "Felt frustrated, stressed, sad or hurt, angry, and/or experienced difficulty concentrating as a result of their victimization" (p. 32). In another study conducted by Adams & Lawrence (2011) students reported feeling isolated, threatened with physical harm, and being laughed at by their peers. They also had difficulty making friends at college and developing strong personal relationships.

Religion and Cyberbullying

In order to minimize the negative variables associated with cyberbullying, it is important to study factors of risk and resilience. Patchin and Hinduja, renowned researchers in the area of cyberbullying with their Cyberbullying Research Center (http://cyberbullying.us/research/), have studied many variables to provide a picture of race, gender, sexual orientation, and age with regard to victim and perpetrator status. Researchers have also studied how best to cope with this phenomenon and found that variables such as impulsivity, self-confidence, social relationships, and skills of communication, decision making, and conflict resolution were among those listed by experts as areas that impact the ability to effectively cope with cyberbullying (Jacobs, Dehue, Völlink, & Lechner. (2014). One element that has not been studied in the realm of cyberbullying is the variable of spiritual faith—the quality of a person's religious faith as a moderating variable in the incidence and frequency of a person's experiences with cyberbullying. Even with regard to traditional bullying, the extant literature is scarce on examination of the effect of faith. Only one study could be procured that associated bullying in childhood with lower levels of religiosity and well-being in adulthood (Sansone, Kelley, & Forbis, 2012).

While the connection between traditional bullying and cyberbullying with faith has not been studied, the literature demonstrates examples of the positive impact of faith on other problem behaviors in adolescents. Studies have demonstrated that faith among youth is related to higher levels of self-control and mediated marijuana use and drinking (Desmond, Ulmer, & Bader, 2013). A thorough review done by Cotton, Zebracki, Rosenthal, Tsevat, & Drotar (2006) outlines research that religion among teens has appeared as a positive coping variable among a variety of issues such as depression, better mental and physical health, limited substance abuse, and later sexual behavior. Spirituality has been noted as a resource in positive youth development associated with personal meaning and concern for others (Furrow, King, & White, 2004). It also has been proposed that these values and morals nurture attitudes and actions geared toward common good (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003)

In order to better understand and identify circumstances that mediate the risk of cyberbullying experiences, the religious faith of youth is a variable worthy of exploration. It would be helpful to know if faith is related to cyberbullying behaviors and attitudes. If faith among youth can be identified as an element that significantly impacts their cyberbullying experiences, this can increase our understanding of the causes, manifestations, and control of violence and aggression of this nature.

Purpose of the Study

Given the limited research on cyberbullying at the college level along with the lack of study on religious faith as a mediating variable in this type of research, this study aimed to collect information on both. The purpose of this research study was to assess the perceptions and behaviors of cyberbullying among college students at a small faith-based institution in the Midwest. This was an exploratory study and no hypotheses are proffered at this time.

Methodology

This study deployed a survey to college students in order to gather cyberbullying knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. The survey was distributed and collected at the beginning of different classes across the college. This research project was conducted as part of a social work research methods course. It was developed and completed by the students of this class in order to fulfill course requirements. The professor for the course supervised all aspects of the research and facilitated IRB approval from the university.

Sample

A total of 282 students (161 female and 121 male) were surveyed from fourteen undergraduate classes during the 2013 fall semester at a Midwest private faith-based university (total enrollment 1,674). Survey questionnaires were distributed to students in various classes at the university. While this was a convenience sample, classes were carefully chosen to represent different academic levels. Of these participants, 13.1% were freshman, 25.5% were sophomores, 29.4% were juniors, and 31.9% were seniors. The mean age was 20.4 years with a standard deviation of 1.9. Of this sample, 88% self-identified as White, 6% as African American, and the remaining participants as Asian, Hispanic, or Other. The gender, race, and age characteristics in this sample are closely aligned with the university demographics as a whole according to the university fact book. The university distribution of academic status was slightly different with 31% Freshman, 20% Sophomore, 21% Junior, and 28% Seniors. The status of students in this sample was concentrated more at the upper level status compared to the university as a whole.

Survey Instrument

The survey that was used in the study was created by students in a social work research course with attention to prior cyberbullying research surveys found in the literature. Literature reviews concentrated on locating

survey items that collected data on knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of cyberbullying among youth. The development of survey items was an iterative process. The research class started with numerous questions until focal areas were pared down and resulted in an 18 question survey. The survey included Likert type scale questions, categorical questions, demographics, and open-ended responses to gather behaviors and perceptions of cyberbullying on the campus. A single question to gather student's level of faith was prepared. Cyberbullying was defined for the participants at the top of the survey so respondents would operate from the same basic definition of cyberbullying. This definition was "sending or posting harmful or cruel messages or images" taken from research done by Willard (2007, p. 1). The full survey can be found in Appendix A. The present investigation concentrated on the variables of cyberbullying experiences, gender, and faith.

Method

Classes were selected by the research course students that were accessible and that would best represent the student population. Research students contacted the professors of different courses to get permission to enter the class and distribute the survey. Surveys were conducted over a 10-day period in November of 2013. Prior to handing out the survey, the research students read standardized instructions to the class about the topic of the survey and its length. They were instructed they would all be receiving a survey to look at and decide if they wanted to complete it. Consent was also explained as voluntary and anonymous; they did not need to finish answering questions, and would not be penalized in any manner for not participating in the survey. A consent letter outlining these issues and explaining that the university approved the research accompanied each survey. The letter also provided contact information for the researchers and for counseling services if the survey brought up unpleasant feelings. Respondents were asked not to put their names on the survey to maintain anonymity. Respondents were instructed to place their survey, completed or not, in a brown envelope at the front of the class.

Results

Descriptive Frequencies

Responses to questions about being a victim and perpetrator of cyberbullying along with questions examining belief of psychological harm and level of cyberbullying on campus are shown in Table 1. Cyberbullying responses were collected on a 4-point Likert scale of *Not At All, Only A Little, Some,* and *A Lot*. The majority of students reported not being a target of cyberbullying, with 78.5% responding with a non-victim status. This left

21.5% reporting being a cyberbullying target at some level of intensity, with most of this reported at the level of *Only A Little* (16.8%). Most students (80%) reported they do not post hurtful things online. This leaves 20% that did report posting hurtful items online, with most reporting this at the level of *Only A Little* (16.7%).

Table 1: Percent Responding to Cyberbullying Questions				
Survey Question	Not At All	Only A Little	Some	A Lot
I have been a target of cyberbullying	78.5	16.8	3.9	0.7
I have posted hurtful things online	79.9	16.7	2.8	0.7
How often does cyberbullying happen at the university	15.3	32.5	46.3	6.0
Is cyberbullying an issue that needs to be addressed at the university	24.2	34.7	30.0	11.2
How effective would a university policy on cyberbullying be	29.2	44.8	21.3	4.7
I believe that cyberbullying can cause psychological harm	5.0	4.6	28.1	62.3

An overwhelming majority of students (84.5%) reported that some level of cyberbullying occurs at the university, with almost half (46.3%) reporting this at the level of *Some*. Almost all students (95%) reported that these episodes of cyberbullying can cause psychological harm. Most students (75.8%) reported that it needs to be addressed at the university with 11.2% indicating it is needed *A Lot*. Many (70.8%) felt that a university policy would be effective to some degree but a significant portion of respondents thought a policy would help *Only A Little* (44.8%).

In Table 2, reasons are shown for the appeal of social media, indicating that the top reason was *Keeps me up to date on people* with 80% of endorsements. *Fast communication* and *Interesting* were the next reasons with endorsements of 75.5% and 61.7%. When asked about online behaviors, some respondents (11.3%) indicated that they *Pretend to be someone else online* (Table 3). Most (92.6%) did not post hurtful things online but 25% reported being the *Target of a negative post*. Almost half (48.9%) responded positively to *Defend someone online*. As indicated on Table 4, the responsibility to speak out against cyberbullying at the university was overwhelmingly reported to be the student body's responsibility (83.3%). The perpetrator was reported least responsible for this at 31.2%.

Table 2: Reasons for Use of Social Media	
Reasons (Variables)	**% Endorsement**
Anonymous	6.7
Ease	32.3
Interesting	61.7
Keeps me up to date on people	79.8
Fast way to communicate	75.5

Table 3: Online Behaviors	
Behaviors (Variables)	**% Endorsement**
Pretend to be someone else	11.3
Posted something untrue or hurtful about someone else	7.4
Been a target of a negative post	24.8
Defend someone	48.9
Report cyberbullying	6.0

Table 4: Responsibility to Address Cyberbullying	
Responsible Party	**% Endorsement**
Administration	55.3
Faculty/staff	54.6
Student body	83.3
Targets of cyberbullying	56.4
Perpetrators of cyberbullying	31.2

Levels of faith were reported on a 4-point Likert scale. With regard to level of faith, 57% of students reported *A Lot* of faith and 28.2% reported *Some* faith. Approximately 15% reported *Only A Little* faith and 2.5 % reported *No Faith At All*.

Multivariate Analysis

In order to determine if the gender of respondent and reported level of faith significantly influenced how a student responded to cyberbullying questions, a MAONVA was conducted on the six questions in Table 1. This determined if there was a main effect of gender, a main effect for level of faith, and the interaction of the two on how a student responded to cyberbullying questions. The MANOVA showed no significant main effect for gender and no interaction between the level of reported faith and gender

on the cyberbullying question responses. However, a significant main effect for level of faith on the cyberbullying variables was present with Wilks' λ = .814, *F* (18690.621) = 2.904, p <. 001, partial eta squared = .066. Power to detect the effect was .998. This implies that a respondent's gender did not significantly impact how the six cyberbullying questions in Table 1 were answered nor did faith and gender interact to significantly influence their responses. But, a respondent's level of faith significantly impacted reports on the cyberbullying questions. Tukey's post hoc comparisons indicated that most differences were between those with *A Lot of Faith* and those with other levels of faith. Each question will be addressed separately. For "Posting hurtful things online", those with *A Lot of Faith* (m=1.16, sd=.45) reported significantly less (p<.05) of this behavior than those with *No Faith at All* (m=1.71, sd=1.11).

For the question "How often it happens on campus", those with *A Lot* of faith (m=2.57, sd=.78*)* reported significantly higher (p<.05) levels of cyberbullying on campus than both those with *A Little* (m=2.16, sd=.79) and *Some* (m=2.27, sd=.79) faith.

For the question that cyberbullying "Needs to be addressed on campus", those reporting *A lot of Faith* (m=2.56, sd=.94) had significantly higher (p<.05) responses to this question than all other levels of reported faith of *Some* (m=1.97, sd=.83), *A Little* (m=1.82, sd=.87), and *No Faith at All* (m1.86=. sd=1.21).

For "Effectiveness of a policy", those with *A Lot of Faith* (m=2.21, sd=.82) responded to this at significantly higher levels (p<.05) than both those with *Only a Little Faith* m=1.65, sd=.73) and those with *Some* (m=1.8, sd=.8) level of faith.

Lastly, those with *A Lot of Faith* (m=3.66, sd=.63) reported significantly higher (p<.05) levels that "Cyberbullying can cause psychological harm" than those with *Some* (m=3.29, sd=.89) and those with *Only a Little* (m=3.03, sd=.79) levels of faith.

Limitations

This study is limited in its exploratory nature. The results of the survey could only cautiously be generalized to other student populations of similar schools: small- to medium-sized faith based college/university. This study is limited since the sample was not chosen randomly from the population of the university. Therefore it is limited in its representation of the student body at this university. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to larger public universities or other higher education institutions that are not similar to the university in the survey. Lastly, the questions were not normed, making it difficult to directly compare the findings to other studies of college level cyberbullying.

Discussion

Cyberbullying on the college campus is an understudied phenomenon. The variable of spiritual faith has also been neglected as a mediating factor in cyberbullying. This study explored both of these areas. The college campus surveyed in this study indicated a higher level of cyberbullying victimization at a little over 20% compared to the other studies reviewed, indicating levels ranging from 8.6%-11% cyberbullying victimization rates (Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Walker, Sockman, & Koehn, 2011). However, since the present study did not collect data on cyberbullying in the same manner, it cannot be presumed that there were truly more cyberbullying occurrences. What can be stated is that no university is likely immune to the phenomenon and the psychological distress that is related to it. While exploratory in nature, the present study can be used to inform approaches to cyberbullying that include faith perspectives and also a social work systems perspective. Cyberbullying is an individual, group, and cultural phenomenon and utilizing the social work systems perspective can help faith-based institutions approach the issue in a multidimensional manner.

At the micro level, the topic of cyberbullying has led to the investigation of a myriad of variables such as gender, but the topic of spirituality and faith has yet to be mentioned. Gender in this study did not have a main effect on students' experiences and attitudes towards cyberbullying. There is a lack of consensus in the literature on the impact of gender on cyberbullying and the findings on gender in this investigation adds to studies that have found cyberbullying to be gender neutral (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Li, 2006, 2007). With regard to spirituality, this has often been overlooked as a variable within scientific research (Sussman, Skara, Rodriguez, & Pokhrel, 2006). Findings from the present study add to the growing body of knowledge that identifies aspects of religion and spirituality as protective factors. This is true for both target and perpetrator of cyberbullying. Those who reported *A Lot of Faith* were just as likely to be targets of cyberbullying as other faith levels but they were less likely to be perpetrators. Those reporting *A Lot of Faith* compared to other reported levels were also more sensitive to the psychological harm of cyberbullying, reported a higher frequency of cyberbullying on campus, and thought the university should address it with a policy that would be effective. Thus, it appears in this study that those reporting a higher level of faith do have a different experience and perceptions about cyberbullying and the means to address it.

Research has indicated that faith and spirituality are linked to life purpose and overall well-being (Byron & Miller-Perrin, 2009). Perhaps those with faith are more likely to be concerned with the welfare of others, including those who have been cyberbullied, indicating empathy and social justice. Empathy is linked to more negative attitudes about cyberbullying (Doane, Pearson, & Kelley, 2014) and both empathy and altruism are

considered components of emotional intelligence (EI) (Gardner, 1993; Goleman, 1995). Gliebe (2012) states these elements of EI can be cultivated in Christian higher education in numerous ways, both at the micro and mezzo levels. Integration can be approached by synthesizing EI into academic curricula and teaching faculty these skills along with including EI into education for first-year students. And, incorporating faith-based perspectives into spiritual formation can be a natural way to emphasize EI skills such as empathy, which can be incorporated through biblical lessons such as the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25).

Emphasizing EI and addressing cyberbullying and its core motives at the college level are critical. It has been observed that the social networking sites among high school and college students have nurtured a culture of digital narcissism where there is a diminished sense of censorship in that people will say things online that they would not normally say to a person's face (Keen, as cited in Baldasare, et al., 2012; Suler, 2004). Aboujaoude (as cited in Baldasare, et al., 2012) has insightfully described this as an e-personality that can potentially be more toxic than our nondigital persona. The speed at which the internet and social media materialized unintentionally created a cyberspace platform for harmful behaviors to occur among youth with rapid ease, relative anonymity, and rare consequences. Motives for cyberbullying have been cited as "negative emotions, such as anger, hatred, revenge, or jealousy" (Schenk, Fremouw, Keelan, 2013, p. 2326). Others have found the motive to be relationship problems (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009) or revenge and jealousy (Varjas, Talley, Meyers, Parris, & Cutts, 2010). Approaching these motives from a faith perspective may help diffuse them and teach students healthy coping mechanisms.

This study was also similar to others on a micro level by showing that 95% reported a belief that cyberbullying causes some level of psychological distress. Often it is thought that the distress is concentrated in the victim population, but research has shown otherwise. Victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying have both been shown to display "similar psychological maladjustments, increased suicidal behaviors, and more aggressive/antisocial traits" (Schenk, Fremouw, & Keelan, 2013, p. 2326). Counseling centers at universities have documented rising levels of mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation among the students (Chapell et al., 2006) and care should be taken to individually assess for cyberbullying when these issues are present. University mental health professionals "concerned with the welfare of students need to keep abreast of their cyberbully troubles" (Walker et al., 2011, p. 37). This includes micro and mezzo initiatives such as continuing education on cyberbullying for themselves and conducting training for campus administrators, faculty, and students.

On a macro level, despite evidence of cyberbullying at the university level, the law has not developed fast enough to handle these problems created with the new technology. Davies and Lee (2008) write about the case law

that has developed in regard to universities and students. There has been a development in case law calling for "Educational institutions to engage their internal disciplinary processes to address allegations of Internet misuse by students" (p. 280). However, universities have the difficulty of threats of costly lawsuits and negative publicity that can impact future enrollment. They suggest that what universities should do to prevent cyberbullying among the student population is to create a clear policy statement on cyberbullying with the intent to keep pace with the issue and discipline guilty students, without the threat of costly lawsuits. The present study echoes this sentiment with many reporting that cyberbullying needs to be addressed on campus by students (83.3%), administration (55.3%), and faculty (54.6%). There are multiple layers of responsibility and students see themselves as having an important role in this arena. Students in this study appeared to believe that a policy on campus would only be minimally impacted, underscoring the important nature of empowering students to take ownership in the campus cyberbullying prevention and intervention strategies.

Conclusion

Cyberbullying has quickly emerged in the youth culture and the spill-over into the college setting is unavoidable. This study highlights the issue of cyberbullying on a college campus and one that is also faith-based. We believe this study adds to the knowledge base regarding cyberbullying on college campuses and also helps to illustrate the role that faith can play as a mediating factor in this phenomenon. Results of this exploratory study indicate that faith can impact the experience of cyberbullying as a perpetrator and influence the perceptions of this phenomenon in other areas of college life. Implications include the integration of EI and cyberbullying into the faith integration of a Christian campus and doing so from a social work systems perspective. Recommendations include micro and mezzo education for campus constituents as well as macro policy development. Approaching the cyberbullying issue from a multidimensional perspective and including the realm of faith can help Christian universities create programming and policies that establish a culture of nonviolence. Being the first study of its kind to examine cyberbullying and the role of faith, there is a need for future studies to look deeper into the connection of faith as a mediating factor in cyberbullying. ❖

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Appendix A: Cyberbullying Survey

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO FILL OUT OUR SURVEY!

1. **What is your definition of cyberbullying? Please write a short definition below:**

The next set of questions will ask your feedback on experiences with cyberbullying. <u>Please answer the following questions on the following definition of cyberbullying</u>: *sending or posting harmful or cruel messages or images.*

2. **I have been a target of cyberbullying.**
    <table>
    <tr><td>*1*</td><td>*2*</td><td>*3*</td><td>*4*</td></tr>
    <tr><td>*Not At All*</td><td>*Only A Little*</td><td>*Some*</td><td>*A Lot*</td></tr>
    </table>

3. **I have posted harmful things online.**
    <table>
    <tr><td>*1*</td><td>*2*</td><td>*3*</td><td>*4*</td></tr>
    <tr><td>*Not At All*</td><td>*Only A Little*</td><td>*Some*</td><td>*A Lot*</td></tr>
    </table>

4. **How often does cyberbullying happen at the university?**
    <table>
    <tr><td>*1*</td><td>*2*</td><td>*3*</td><td>*4*</td></tr>
    <tr><td>*Not At All*</td><td>*Only A Little*</td><td>*Some*</td><td>*A Lot*</td></tr>
    </table>

5. **Is cyberbullying an issue that needs to be addressed at university?**
    <table>
    <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr>
    <tr><td>*Not At All*</td><td>*Only A Little*</td><td>*Some*</td><td>*A Lot*</td></tr>
    </table>

6. **How effective would a university policy on cyberbullying be?**
    <table>
    <tr><td>*1*</td><td>*2*</td><td>*3*</td><td>*4*</td></tr>
    <tr><td>*Not At All*</td><td>*Only A Little*</td><td>*Some*</td><td>*A Lot*</td></tr>
    </table>

7. **I believe that cyberbullying can cause psychological harm.**
    <table>
    <tr><td>*1*</td><td>*2*</td><td>*3*</td><td>*4*</td></tr>
    <tr><td>*Not At All*</td><td>*Only A Little*</td><td>*Some*</td><td>*A Lot*</td></tr>
    </table>

8. **How frequently do you use social media <u>per day</u>? Check one**
    - ❏ 0 Times
    - ❏ 1-5 Times
    - ❏ 6-10 Times
    - ❏ 11-15 Times
    - ❏ More than 15 times

9. **Please list the social media site do you spend the most time on:**

    _____

10. Social media is appealing because (check all that apply):
- ❏ Anonymous
- ❏ Ease
- ❏ Interesting
- ❏ Keeps me up to date on people
- ❏ Fast way to communicate

11. When you are online, have you ever (Check all that apply)?
- ❏ Pretended to be someone else
- ❏ Posted something untrue or hurtful about someone else
- ❏ Been a target of a negative post
- ❏ Defended someone
- ❏ Reported cyberbullying

12. Whose responsibility is it to speak out about cyberbullying at the university (check all that apply)?
- ❏ Administration
- ❏ Faculty/staff
- ❏ Student body
- ❏ Targets of cyberbullying
- ❏ Perpetrators of cyberbullying
- ❏ Other: _____

DEMOGRAPHICS: Please check (☑) the appropriate response.

1. What is your gender?   ❏ Male   ❏ Female

2. What is your racial or ethnic group? (check all that apply)
- ❏ African American   ❏ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ❏ Asian   ❏ Hispanic
- ❏ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- ❏ White   ❏ Other:_____

3. What is your age? _____ Years

4. What is your academic status?
- ❏ Freshman   ❏ Sophomore   ❏ Junior   ❏ Senior

5. Where do you live?
- ❏ On Campus   ❏ Off Campus

6. How would you rate your level of Christian faith?

1	*2*	*3*	*4*
No Faith At All	*Only A Little*	*Some*	*A Lot*

Do you have any additional comments on this topic?

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Mindfulness as Enhancing Ethical Decision-Making and the Christian Integration of Mindful Practice

Regina Chow Trammel

The strong growth of research in mindfulness-based therapies reflects an integration of spirituality in social work practice. Mindfulness has been shown to improve self-awareness, promote cognitive flexibility, increase empathy, and develop resiliency in the social worker. When used by the social worker, mindfulness may also aid in the ethical decision-making process by helping calm reactive emotional states elicited when faced with complex issues in practice. As a result, its utility in practice is that it clarifies dilemmas and allows for a more intentional response, with the potential to help social workers avoid boundary violations that occur in our profession. Mindfulness is congruent with a Christian ethical framework because of its identification of the importance of values. Contemplative practices from the Christian religious tradition may be an alternative to the Buddhist framework that much of mindfulness research has as its base.

MINDFULNESS CAN BE DEFINED AS A MEDITATIVE PRACTICE THAT CULTIvates present-moment awareness and attention, a non-judgmental stance, intentional observation of one's thoughts, heightened sense of experience and self-awareness, which all lead to feelings of equanimity rather than reactivity (Birnbaum, 2008; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Hick & Chan, 2010; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; McGarrigle, 2011)The study of mindfulness is a relatively new phenomenon that has been introduced to Western researchers through the realm of medicine and championed by the work of John Kabat-Zinn, a physician, author and founder of the Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) clinic in Massachusetts. Today, mindfulness is an increasingly popular topic of research in the social sciences, including social work (Lynn, 2010; McGarrigle, 2011).
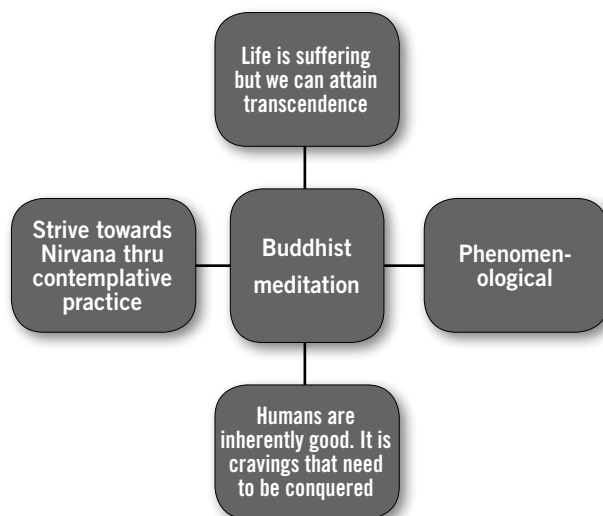
Buddhist Roots of Mindfulness

Mindfulness is part of the *eightfold path* in Buddhist religious philosophy, characterized by helping individuals to build self-awareness through non-judgmental observation of emotions, focused attention through contemplative practices and the present moment, and detachment from negative experiences (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011). In this way, mindfulness as a social work practice skill includes some underlying presumptions in line with Buddhism's *four noble truths*:

- All life is suffering
- Suffering is caused by our cravings in life; the truth is that there is impermanence in life
- Detachment to cravings and seeing that we are one will end suffering
- The path of cessation of attachment which is the Eightfold path (Maex, 2011)

Therefore, the epistemological basis of mindfulness practice assumes some spiritually based metaphysical reality. Most social workers who study mindfulness are quick to point out that one does not have to practice Buddhism in order to use mindfulness and secularize their approach and/or emphasize a neurobiological benefit of using mindfulness (Shier & Graham, 2011; Turner, 2009). However, the epistemological basis for the benefits of using mindfulness still points to an underlying Buddhist worldview. Nonetheless, with appropriate and intentional adaptations, the practice of mindfulness is both compatible with and supported by a Christian worldview.

Mindfulness Theory and its Application

Mindfulness as applied, particularly in clinical social work practice, often assumes that human beings are essentially good and have capacity to strive toward a self-actualized state by remaining consciously aware in the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Lynn, 2010). Through meditation, contemplation, deep breathing, and various other techniques, the person can "remain with an open heart" and not be afflicted with the suffering in this world (Kabat-Zinn, p. 150). The detachment from the world's sufferings is what helps individuals practicing mindfulness experience transcendence. The goal of transcendence is to realize that we [as humans] are all interconnected, which leads to compassion (Maex, 2011). Not only is this detachment a cognitive endeavor, but it is also experiential. In essence, the mastery of mindfulness is phenomenological. Please see Figure 1.
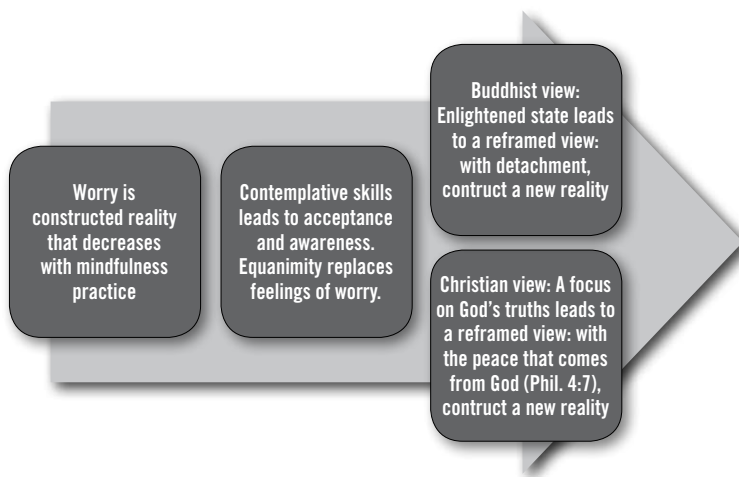
Figure 1: Mindfulness Meditation and Underlying Worldview

Life is suffering but we can attain transcendence

Strive towards Nirvana thru contemplative practice

Buddhist meditation

Phenomen-ological

Humans are inherently good. It is cravings that need to be conquered

Though mindfulness comes from an experiential framework rooted in Buddhist thought, its manifestation in clinical social work practice is interwoven into behavioral models of interventions such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). These therapies are often called the "third wave" of behavioral interventions (Hayes, Follette & Linehan, 2004; Howells, 2010; Springer, 2012, Tan, 2011). Decreased depression, anxiety, and trauma are outcomes that mindfulness practitioners and researchers have found in empirical and positivist studies, many using pre- and post-tests to correlate findings as well as MRI to show neurobiological effects (Hayes, Follette, & Linehan, 2010; Hansen, Lundh, Homman, & Wångby-Lundh, 2009).

In practice, a social worker using mindfulness may guide an individual suffering from anxiety or worry, for instance, in techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, internal observation, and intense focus on thought and attention. The goal in a clinical application is for the person using mindfulness to become aware of any negative thoughts or attachments/cravings that persist in keeping the person in a state of suffering and then to help the person transcend their emotional suffering. The negative thoughts encountered are then reframed to adhere to the underlying assumptions based on Buddhist philosophy. Detachment and an enlightened mental state is a goal which helps to alleviate depressive symptomatology (Hayes, Follette & Linehan, 2004; Twohig et al., 2010). In contrast, a Christian adaptation of a practice that incorporates mindfulness can include truths and assumptions from a Christian worldview. The techniques in practice of

a Christian application of mindfulness may look the same (e.g. deep breathing, meditation, internal observation), but the presuppositions that undergird the aims of the practice are completely different. Please see Figure 2.

Figure 2: Mindfulness intervention Progression

Buddhist view: Enlightened state leads to a reframed view: with detachment, contruct a new reality

Worry is constructed reality that decreases with mindfulness practice

Contemplative skills leads to acceptance and awareness. Equanimity replaces feelings of worry.

Christian view: A focus on God's truths leads to a reframed view: with the peace that comes from God (Phil. 4:7), contruct a new reality

Mindfulness Can Contribute to Ethical Social Work Practice

Social workers in social service agency, medical, clinical, and other human services settings often struggle with high caseloads, limited budgets, and an emphasis on documenting outcomes of their work (McGarrigle, 2011). As a result, protection from burnout, stress, and cynicism in social work practice has been a focus of concern in the profession that mindfulness has been able to address (McGarrigle, 2011; Shier & Graham, 2011). Mindfulness can also be used as a tool for social workers to stop, think, and intentionally evaluate the way they are processing ethical issues.

West (2002) posits that it may just not be possible to avoid all ethical dilemmas all the time and pessimistically asserts that the goal for any clinical practitioner is to minimize client harm. West also identifies, less pessimistically, a need for practitioners to practice "ethical mindfulness" by building growth in self-awareness, seeking consultation, and being open to evaluating the self. Attunement to the complexity of emotions elicited by the client/social worker relationship is enhanced by the contemplative characteristics of mindfulness.

For instance, in a setting where dual relationships can be expected, such as in a rural setting, the social worker may often "bump into" a client at the grocery store or gas station. The client may feel open to begin discussing her case management plan, for example, with their social worker

in such a public place. As a response, the social worker has to decide how much he should engage with the client on this topic, potentially violating ethical standards of confidentiality since other members of the community are within earshot of the conversation. Deep breathing, focused intentional thought about the social worker's potential responses, and breathing a prayer may help the social worker center his thoughts enough so that a response balances the inevitable ethical challenges of this situation. As a result, the social worker can weigh the cost and benefit of the nature of the conversation he will engage in to protect the client's confidentiality, maintain trust and rapport in the relationship, and adhere to values of the social work profession.

Garland & Yancey (2014) describe a setting where the roles of social worker and religious leader are intertwined. In congregations, a congregant may not understand the different roles and may feel free to seek out the social worker for clinical care. Dual-relationships are at times an inevitable outgrowth of the work a social worker in this setting. Protecting the congregant's/client's confidentiality and helping to maintain her self-determination in these situations can be challenging. Because these situations are common, maintaining constant vigilance in the face of repeated ethical challenges can be wearing. Mindfulness, therefore, can help produce and maintain the social worker's equanimity in a setting where almost every congregant is a potential client by providing the mental space and capacity to make judgments in the face of dual-relationships.

The NASW Code of Ethics (2012) provides the guidelines that social workers adhere to in practice. Abbott (2003) asserts that breaches of social work ethical guidelines can be rooted in a lack of self-awareness and/or a lack of training in the areas of countertransference and transference. An alternative explanation is that social work practice is so complex that despite the training social workers receive in their education, ethical violations will continue to affect the profession (Strom-Gottfried, 2000). From a Christian perspective, human frailty and our propensity toward sin are reflected in ethical violations within our profession (Romans 3:10).

 Sherwood (2012) indicates that certain values in social workers' ethics may come into conflict. Prioritizing these values requires appropriate judgment, and he encourages an exploration of the Christian social worker's faith to clarify such values. In practice, social workers often make ethical judgments amidst experiences involving ethical dilemmas. Social workers attempt to honor the Code of Ethics but can make decisions and judgments that not all social workers would agree with. These kinds of ethical judgments are part and parcel of social work practice; they are complex and may lead to tension. The ability to make sound ethical judgments can require mindfulness, insight and self-awareness.

Shapiro, Jazaieri, & Goldin (2012) conducted a study of graduate students using a Mindfulness-Based-Stress-Reduction (MBSR) training

that comes out of the work of Kabat-Zinn. They measured moral reasoning and ethical decision-making by using self-reported measures that included measures of anxiety, compassion, and stress, as well as presentation of moral dilemmas. The researchers found that MBSR training improved emotion and wellbeing of the participants. Although no significant change in moral reasoning occurred immediately after the training, after a two-month follow-up there was a significant improvement. The researchers explain that moral reasoning skills develop with practice and over time, so a post-measure immediately conducted after the MBSR training may have been too short a time to capture gains and skills made.

What their study also addresses is that, with practice, mindfulness can help individuals attune to shifts in emotion needed for ethical decision-making such as lower anxiety and stress, as well as increased compassion. Social work practitioners face pressures, which, when left unattended, can potentially lead to boundary violations (Strom-Gottfried, 2000). The contemplative aspect of mindfulness brings about an awareness of self by helping the social worker to stay in the moment and attend to feelings earlier rather than later. Much of social work training and education require an awareness of how one's own biases and presuppositions need to be managed so as not to pollute the client experience (Abbott, 2003). However, addressing the need for social workers to use coping strategies that can balance a social worker's self-care and responsibility to the client is warranted as related to ethical professional conduct. Being self-reflective enough to identify feelings that can lead to boundary violations can be protective for both client and social worker.

Social workers' own management of ethical decision-making is buttressed by the integration of a spiritual/faith model, which mindfulness embraces. As discussed earlier, inherent in mindfulness practice is an epistemological and metaphysical assumption of a spiritual reality, especially because mindfulness comes out of Buddhist religious thought (Birnbaum & Birnbaum, 2008; Maex, 2011). Chamiec-Case (2012) asserts that faith can be an asset to strengthening resilience, providing the support and coping strategies needed for long-term sustainment in our work. Hulsheger, Feinhodt, & Lang (2013) document how mindfulness helps increase job satisfaction and decrease emotional exhaustion. Mindfulness fosters an awareness of feelings of stress in the social worker and utilizing mindfulness skills can help increase well-being and improve the capacity of social workers (McGarrigle, 2011). This integration of the spiritual resources inherent in mindfulness practice can be identified as not only a way to relieve these pressures, but also supportive of moral reasoning and enhancing ethics.

Stassen & Gushee (2003) advocate a scripture-based ethical framework that, like mindfulness, attends to the inner character formation of the individual. They propose an ethical framework drawn out of spiritual disciplines, which admonishes the reader to seek out biblical truth as a

source. Lastly, they encourage individuals to seek out other authority (like social work supervision) because the Holy Spirit is active and alive.

A Christian Integration of Mindfulness

According to the Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life (2013), about 74% of people living in the United States describe themselves as Christian or Catholic and only 0.7% identify with the Buddhist religion. So far, most of the research literature on mindfulness has focused on Buddhist practices, and a prominent figurehead in mindfulness is a practicing Buddhist (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

Within the Christian faith tradition, a paradigm of Christian mindfulness has been present for many centuries. As far back as medieval Europe, Hildegard of Bingen was a German female mystic who saw visions starting at a very young age, usually after intense periods of prayer and contemplation of scripture. In 1112, she was formally accepted into the monastery and by 1136 was elected to be the leader of a women's religious group. She then went on and became a prolific writer, detailing her theology and mystical experiences (Dreyer, 2005). In her writings, she described her meditations based on visions she had seen. For instance, she associated images of fire with the Holy Spirit and Christ's passion visually represented by a burning love—red, orange, and yellow in color. She used elements of nature and weather to help the reader relate to characteristics of God; she likened love of God to a flowing river that "refreshes the earth and believer's souls" (Dreyer, 2005, p. 81).

Another exemplar of a Christian mindfulness practitioner can be found in the Jesuit founder and Saint, Ignatius of Loyola. St. Ignatius knelt for prayers for six hours at a time, meditated on passages for most of the day and from this devotional practice wrote and developed his *Spiritual Exercises* while living in Manresa, Spain in 1521 (Ganss, 1992). His exercises outline Christian contemplative practices and meditations as well as directives regarding the time of day one should use the exercises that Christians can find useful today (Warner, 2010).

Both Hildegaard of Bingen and St. Ignatius provide a template for a mindfulness practice that includes Christian practices and imagery. For instance, guided imagery has been used in clinical intervention which contains similar characteristics of meditation/contemplation (Fernros, Fuhoff, & Wandell, 2008). Therefore, visualizing God, Jesus, or other sacred Christian images can be integrated in guided imagery techniques.

Likewise, more contemporary Christian contemplatives identified other spiritual practices that address some of the goals of mindfulness. Thomas Keating, a member of the Cistercian monks since 1944, became exposed to meditation practice from Eastern religious philosophy during the 1960s and finds the meditative practices from Christian mystics com-

plimentary (Keating, 2008). One of these practices is a contemplative form of prayer, known as Centering Prayer. Keating (1999) describes this type of prayer as differing from the prayers of supplication—the type of prayer that many Christians follow. Instead, contemplative prayer is meant to improve our ability to be silent and hear from God; thus, the goal of this prayer is unity with God. He describes this type of prayer as a way to withdraw attention from the ordinary flow of thoughts in order to "awaken our faith".

Some methods to initiate Centering Prayer would include keeping eyes closed and sitting in a comfortable position, choosing a sacred word that helps express and open oneself up to God, and focusing awareness of this word each time your thought shifts outside. Then, as you direct more of your focus toward God, you allow your intention to flow and God to speak into your spirit. Hopefully, what follows, according to Keating, is finding moments of awareness and unity with God in ordinary moments of the day.

Like Centering Prayer, *Lectio Divina* is meditative in its characteristics and centers on developing heightened awareness and self-reflection. *Lectio Divina*, Latin for "divine reading" is an ancient monastic tradition that has roots in Catholicism before the 12th century and includes a meditative reading of a biblical text. Its basic practice is to call on the divine (*oratio*), read a scripture (*lectio),* meditate on the reading (*meditatio*), and then practice listening (*contemplatio*) (Howard, 2012). According to Keating (2008), the goal of this divine reading is to "interiorize the truths of faith so that we can understand them at the level of the heart as well as the level of the mind" (p. 47). Keating describes some of the steps to include the use of brief relaxation exercises, then reading the scriptures, a few words or paragraph at a time, and inviting God into the process in a united meditation with an invitation of the Holy Spirit to inspire and lead the process.

Perhaps because of the work of contemporary Christian contemplatives such as Thomas Keating, along with other contemporaries, such as Richard Rohr and Thomas Merton, a few Christian psychologists have begun to be more specific about how they incorporate Christian faith into mindfulness, which could inform Christian social workers in their practice as well.

Symington & Symington (2012) have distinguished aspects of mindfulness skills that differ between Buddhist and Christian philosophy. For instance, in mindfulness-based therapies, the use of breath is a frequent technique to help open up the less reactive centers of clients' emotion and intellectual process. According to the researchers/practitioners, the aim of the breath training in mindfulness, from a Christian perspective, is to reflect on God and find the presence of God's love and intention in the breath. This differs from the Buddhist aims in Mindfulness, which is part of the Four Noble Truths, in that breath reminds us that there is no self and attachments are the roots of suffering. Symington & Symington argue that the same practice (in this case, breath meditation) can differ in meaning to the client, when working from a Christian integration of mindfulness (Please see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Conceptual Map of a Christian vs. Buddhist Integration of Mindfulness Practice
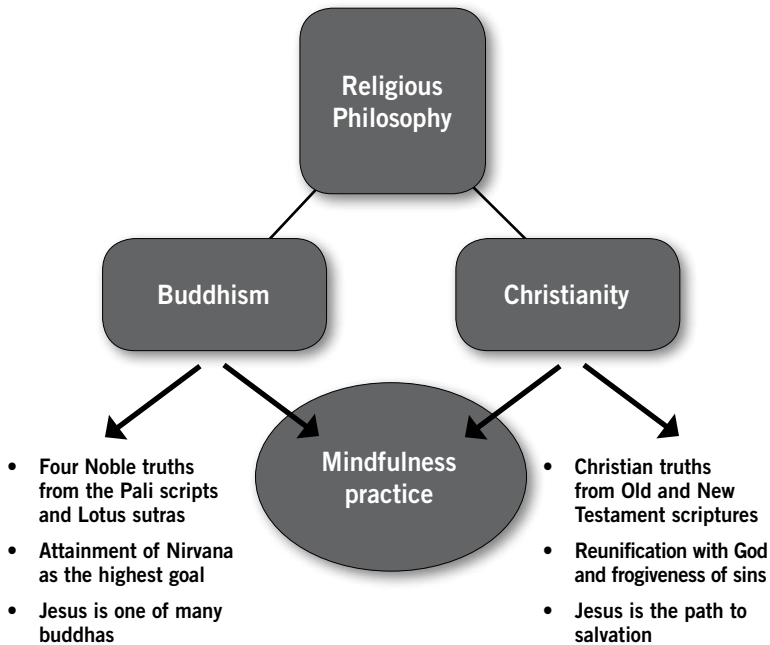
Tan (2011) also discusses how Christian practitioners can integrate and ascribe different meaning in their work while using mindfulness-based interventions. A Christian can retain her belief while still using mindfulness practice techniques that differ from the Buddhist presuppositions of those practices (Please see Figure 3). For example, Tan describes how even the practice of letting the mind flow to and fro can be brought into a Christian framework. He suggests that clients can reflect on those inner thoughts in a sacred space and the content of the thoughts can lead them back to the Christian truths found in the Bible, as well as in the characteristics of compassion and loving-kindness that are promoted within Christianity as well as in Buddhism.

Therefore, the internal process of finding Christian meaning ascribed by clinicians while providing mindfulness-based therapies, can form a basis for expanding the practice and utility of mindfulness. The evolution of mindfulness therapies from a Buddhist framework of understanding to one that can be inclusive by those who are more familiar with Christian integration models can only expand its reach and benefit.

For the Christian social worker practicing mindfulness, reaching into the contemplative tradition may just very well lead to a more ethical and

active practice as described in Micah 6:8 (ESV) "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you; but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

An Everyday Example of a Daily Mindfulness Ritual

In McGarrigle's (2011) study, social work practitioners participated in an 8-week meditative group session using a mindfulness-based practice manual that they adapted. The researchers explained the interconnectedness between a social worker's self-care and reflection and their impact on clients. The researchers proposed that mindfulness skill practice in the workplace can take various shapes. Though reflective-journaling was a central intervention, the researchers also included yoga practice, body scan, mindful walking, and listening exercises as part of their mindfulness work in general. What is notable is that most of these mindfulness skills are easily practiced, uncomplicated, and adaptable to fit the needs and settings of the social worker who uses them. Finding time throughout a workday to use any of these methods is easily done in most settings and the benefits, worthwhile and robust.

As a clinical social worker myself, I counted on my weekly yoga class to cope with the emotional stresses I carried both professionally and personally. With every amount of weight I bore, every twist and intentional breath of each pose, I subconsciously worked out my inner anxieties and literally felt their release from my body. Prayer, meditation on biblical scripture, and deep breathing are mindfulness skills I have used to help me center my thoughts and detach from my clients emotionally while maintaining feelings of empathy toward them. I acquired equanimity through this process that allowed me to better handle the information I received and guide my clients through their journey of healing, usually from the trauma of sexual abuse.

During the workday, between meetings or classes, I often prepare a mug of hot tea and use mindful breathing while uttering short prayers of gratitude to God for the privilege of work. I make requests for wisdom and guidance from the Holy Spirit as I prepare for field seminar, facing unexpected situations, or good discussions from my students. As I sip my tea throughout moments in class or back at my office, I pay attention to the warmth of the hot liquid as it slides down my throat and enters my stomach. For me, this is a symbolic act of receiving God's grace; with every sip I am taking in God's restoration and guidance, and acknowledging that He has heard my prayers. I am also able to connect to the truth that God's goodness not only extends to me, but also to my students. Through these simple acts, I feel better equipped to extend that grace to my students as well…even the most challenging ones.

The tea-drinking mindfulness practice I adhere to throughout my workday takes all of five minutes to accomplish, and the yoga practice, all

of one hour per week—hardly time commitments that could be considered burdensome by most. As a busy mom and social worker, these mindfulness skills are practical, and have been extremely helpful to me in navigating some complex client relationships in an ethical way. I was able to keep myself from premature termination with clients due to high stress in those situations and maintain appropriate boundaries in my dealings with others, even when clients tested the boundaries of our working relationship. With students, I can attend to their feelings of anxiety and respond in an empathic way, even as we sort through mistakes they make in the field. For these small victories, I attribute my faith and my practice of mindfulness for the last few years.

Summary

Mindfulness is a theory that comes from a Buddhist religious philosophy but is easily integrated with the Christian faith. In its application, social workers can root their mindfulness practice in a Christian religious framework that has historical antecedents. Its emphasis on self-awareness, non-judgment, and equanimity can bring about clarity in light of common ethical issues faced by social workers in practice. Mindfulness skills are practical, accessible, and attainable for every social worker. It can help social workers avoid emotional burnout, improve attention and assist in self-care needs. Lastly, mindfulness can help social workers attend to internal shifts that can inform them of potential ethical dilemmas in their work. A Christian social worker can use mindfulness to hone in on truths of scripture and develop character traits that could help him or her better navigate such dilemmas. ❖

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A Qualitative Study of Students' Perception of Spirituality and Religion

Man Wai Alice Lun

Since spiritual beliefs have a significant effect on how people understand and deal with problems in their lives, it is important that human service and social work educators prepare professional practitioners for competent practice regarding spirituality and religion. This exploratory qualitative study utilized an open-ended questionnaire aimed at exploring students' perception of spirituality as it pertains to their Human Services studies. Results showed the importance of early spiritual experience, as well as life experience, to students' religious identity. Spiritual diversity was also found. The value of developing and implementing resources for dealing with spiritual issues into social work and human services course curricula is reinforced.

T HE CURRICULUM FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS NOW GENERALLY includes competencies in addressing clients' diverse religious and spiritual lives. Past studies examined the importance of spirituality and religion in social work education and addressed innovative approaches to infuse the issue into social work curriculum (Ai, Moultine, Picciano, Nagda & Thurman, 2004; Cnaan, Boddie, & Danzig, 2005; Coholic, 2006). The inclusion of religious/spiritual content into the social work curriculum will influence professional values to incorporate the key elements of diversity sensitivity and client-focused practice, as established in the NASW Code of Ethics, and this will reflect more multicultural competency among human service and social work practitioners (Hodge & Derezotes, 2008; Williams & Smolak, 2007). Social work students themselves state the importance of spiritual values in their daily lives and the need to gain greater understanding of religious/spiritual diversity from their educational program (Graff, 2007). Students who have had religious/spiritual diversity as part of their curriculum had higher satisfaction with their overall learning experience (Ai, et al., 2004).

There is significant need as stated by professionals, students, and academia to include the issue of religion and spirituality in social work

education. This warrants further study to discover more about students' spirituality and students' perspectives, as well as their experiences, to aid academicians in developing and implementing spiritual issues into course curriculum.

Table 1: Selected Studies of Spirituality and Social Work Education

AUTHORS	PARTICIPANTS/ RESEARCH FOCUS	ANALYSIS	FINDINGS
Graff, D.L. (2007)	Quantitative study on 324 BSW students in TX	Descriptive and correlation	The vast majority of students in this sample are practicing Christians who have strong personal religious/spiritual beliefs and are relatively open to incorporating at least some religious/ spiritual content into their practice with clients. More than 82% indicate that they want their social work courses to include content on religious/spiritual diversity, and 87.6% indicate interest in content on how to effectively deal with religious/spiritual issues in practice.
Ai, A.L., Moultine, K., Picciano, J.F., Nagda, B., & Thurman, L.H. (2004)	MSW students' satisfaction	Chi-square tests	The results show that, when compared with cohort sections without such content, satisfaction with inclusion of topics related to spirituality were significantly higher for two courses. While these two courses specifically incorporated spirituality content, their approaches to integration were very different. Findings pointed to a plurality of ways to integrate topics of spirituality with topics of professional values in social work curricula.
Sheridan, M. (1999)	208 students from two schools of social work	Descriptive	Results revealed a generally favorable stance toward the role of religion and spirituality in social work practice and relatively high endorsement and utilization of spiritually oriented intervention with clients.
Rothman J. (2009)	40 interviews Random sample	Qualitative	Spirituality as defined by students included God, interconnectedness of everything in the universe, and human relationships. Experience spirituality included prayers in both individual and communal settings. Communicating about spirituality should include nonverbal communication. Listening is essential.

AUTHORS	PARTICIPANTS/ RESEARCH FOCUS	ANALYSIS	FINDINGS
Stewart, C & Koeske, G. (2006)	Social work students in three universities	Regression	Religious and spiritual beliefs, and regional culture are important for predicting attitudes toward use of religious and spiritual intervention.
Heyman, J.C., Buchana, R., Marlowe, D. & Sealy, Y. (2006)	400 NASW members	Correlational tests and t-test	Personal spiritual participation, number of years in the field of social work and specific coursework in spirituality are associated with social workers' attitudes toward spirituality.

Table 1 illustrates previous studies that have focused on including the topic of spirituality and religion within social work curriculum. In general, no studies have denied the importance of spirituality in the social work field. Infusing religious topics into human services and social work education is considered by most academicians and professional practitioners as necessary to prepare students for professional practice (Ai, et al., 2004; Sheridan & Hemert, 1999). Students who have strong personal religious/spiritual beliefs demonstrate a strong desire to incorporate religious/spiritual content into their practice with clients (Graff, 2007). Of special interest, Stewart and Koeske (2006) found that in addition to religious and spiritual beliefs, regional culture is also important for predicting attitudes toward use of religious and spiritual interventions in social work practice. This finding has also been corroborated in the Heymen, Buchanan, Marlowe, and Sealy (2006) study. In their study, three factors were associated with social workers' attitudes toward the issue of religion and spirituality: personal spiritual participation, number of years in the field of social work, and specific coursework in spirituality.

A different study found variety in the definition of spirituality and spiritual experience. In this study "spirituality definition" includes God, interconnectedness of everything in the Universe, and human relationships. "Experience spirituality" included prayers at both the individual and communal levels. The results indicate that personal and communal experiences are directly related to one's perception of spirituality. Social work and other professional practitioners' perception and experiences might lead to suggesting possible ways of communicating about spirituality to potential clients and colleagues within their professions (Rothman, 2009).

Based on these findings from previous studies, the research question of this qualitative study is to understand students' perceptions of spirituality and religion as well as their spiritual and religious personal experiences.

Method

The study was approved by the College Institutional Review Board and was conducted in Spring 2010. This qualitative study provided an exploration of students' current spirituality and their spiritual development as it related to human services skills development. A selection criterion of the study subject was students who were enrolled in the Human Services Program at a community college; students who were not enrolled but taking the classes taught by the investigator were not included. The principal investigator administered the survey instrument to students enrolled in the Human Services Skills classes, with permission of Human Services faculty. Mirroring social work educational programs, the Human Services program was designed for students who wish to prepare themselves for careers that focus on helping people to solve problems and to live more satisfying lives. These careers may involve jobs in the following general areas: social work, counseling, rehabilitation, recreation, child welfare, public welfare, social security, developmental and physical disabilities, substance abuse, and services for older adults and other special needs populations. The Human Services Skills course is a requirement of the program curriculum. The course trains students in the use of helping skills and techniques utilized in the field of human services. Some of the areas covered in the course include interviewing and counseling, assessment, group process, behavioral techniques, and self-awareness. The questionnaires were completed during regular class periods, and students' participation was anonymous and entirely voluntary.

Sample

This study was conducted in a community college, part of a public university system, that offers associates degrees. The community college is not affiliated with any religious entity and is located in the northeastern part of the U.S. Total enrollment of this university in 2012 was about 6,000, where Black students and Hispanic students represented one-third each of the total enrollment. Among them, about 800 students majored in Human Services. Most students were residing in the metropolitan area and represented a wide variety of cultural and religious backgrounds.

The sample was a convenience purposive sample of 28 enrolled students who were majoring in Human Services, and they took the class to fulfill the curriculum requirement. While 27 provided their demographic information, one did not provide this information. The age range of 27 students was from 18 to 52 years, and one respondent did not provide this information. The majority of respondents were between the ages of 18 and 24 (23 of 27); there were 17 female participants and 9 male and two did not provide this information. While three did not provide their ethnicity, the

major ethnicity was African American (11 of 26), eight were Hispanic, one was Irish, one Chinese, one Middle Eastern, and one was Indian/Guyanese.

Questionnaire

The qualitative research study described below was aimed at exploring students' spirituality. The purpose was threefold: (a) to develop a better understanding of students' spirituality, (b) understand the important factors affecting students' adaptation to religion, and (c) to provide direction in developing and implementing spiritual issues into course curriculum.

The survey instrument was a self-administered and open-ended questionnaire. Students were asked to answer questions including (a) "What does spirituality mean to you?" (b) "Think back on your childhood, did parents teach you to believe or not believe in a God, spirits, or other divine forces?" (c) "What are the thoughts, images, and feelings that you now associate with the terms religion, spirituality and faith?" and (d) "Think through the developmental process that you have gone through to move from your childhood experience of spirituality to your current experience. What were the key events that signaled change points in your spiritual perspective?" (See Appendix A)

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed based on the coding procedure suggested by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003). Data were examined for patterns and connections in relation to the overall research question—"How does the student perceive spirituality and religion?"

After all data were initially screened, the relevant data were identified and selected for further analysis. Second, repeating ideas were carefully examined by grouping together related passages of relevant data. Third, themes were organized by grouping repeating ideas into coherent categories. Fourth, abstract concepts were organized into themes and then developed into theoretical constructs. Last, theoretical constructs were organized into a theoretical narrative.

The analysis was consistent with a qualitative research paradigm, which took into account subjectivity, interpretation, and context. While the author was the only coder in this study, the author ensured the consensus of the findings by analyzing the data by following the steps described above two different times: once after collecting the data and the second time was done two months later. In addition, the author reviewed data twice on each step. As there were 28 participants, each step took about 3-4 hours to complete.

Findings

Four major themes were identified: 1) various meanings of spirituality, 2) family influences, 3) association with religion, and 4) spirituality, faith, and life experiences.

Various meanings of spirituality

Four basic trends in defining spirituality were illuminated by students' responses when asked about "the meaning of spiritualty": (a) God, (b) meaning of life, (c) inner self, and (d) norms.

Ten out of twenty eight students (36%) related the meaning of spirituality to "God" or "highest being." Three students stated, "it means to have a relationship with God." Two students stated that it meant being connected to a higher being. One student wrote, "To be spiritual is to believe in something greater than yourself." Another stated, "It means believing in a higher power to protect and guide you in life." A similar comment made by another student, "to me spirituality means believing in a higher power. Or believing in spirits, being in touch with the earth and its beautiful things." One student stated, "A belief that someone of a spiritual origin is looking over me." One student said, "Spirituality to me means devotion, commitment, praising, adoring and living for God." And another student stated, "I feel spirituality is your faith whether it's your belief in yourself or if you feel you will put yourself in God's hands."

Five students inferred the meaning of spirituality to be the meaning of life. One student stated, "It means having faith in yourself and in bad times knowing things will be alright." One student said, "Spirituality is the basis of my life really. Understanding it has allowed me to gain another perspective in life." Another student stated, "Having a state of mind of a certain belief." And yet another stated, "Spirituality means for me mind, body, and soul. It's using God as our spiritual guide in life and everything we do through our life."

Three students related spirituality to inner self. One student stated "spirituality means to be in touch with your inner self." Another student wrote, "Spirituality to me is something that comes from within. An inner peace that one feels within themselves." A different student explained, "Spirituality means getting in touch with your surroundings and looking beyond what is there. It means to get to know yourself better and take care of yourself well. It also means that you're in control of yourself and energy."

One student provided several quotations from the Bible to illustrate the meaning of spirituality:

> Spirituality means to be walking in the spirit, being led by
> the holy spirit, not to gratify the desire of the sinful nature

(Galatians 5:22), like impurity, selfish ambition, envy, drunkenness, sexual immortality, witchcraft, etc.…to be holy for God is holy, this doesn't make me better than anyone or holier than anyone, the difference is I'm redeemed by the blood of Christ. We also have to know that we do not fight with flesh and blood but against principalities and rulers of the dark world (Ephesians 6).

Two students intimated that the meaning of spirituality is about norms or morality of one's behaviors. One student stated the meaning of spirituality was "love." Another student stated that "to not do, to just be. Thinking is an action. And to use that experience to live cleaner and more effectively."

Family influences

Most were introduced to spiritual concepts by parents and other family members. A few said no one forced them to accept any religion, and a few stated that they were taught that they had the right to believe or to not believe in spiritual concepts/a higher power.

When asked if their parents ever taught them to believe or not believe in a God, spirits, or other divine forces during their childhood, most responded "yes." One student stated clearly that she grew up with a "strong" religious background. Another student stated "my parents always had religion play a big part in our household." Numerous students stated that the religion being taught to them was Christianity. One student remembered in detail, "Yes, ever since I was born I've been going to church every Sunday. I was presented to God when I was few only months old, and just last year in December I got baptized as a Methodist in the same church I was brought up in." Another student wrote a similar comment, "Yes, my parents did teach me to believe in one God and attend church every Sunday." One student stated, "Yes! Growing up I was taught that God exists and we should honor him and his son Jesus Christ. I was also taught that we shouldn't lie, cheat, steal or harm others in any way because it would lead to an everlasting life in hell." One student stated she was taught to believe in "God, Jesus, and Virgin Mary." Another student stated, "I've been raised in church, Pentecostal to be specific…." On the other hand, one Chinese student stated that her family "does religious stuff related to Buddhism because my grandma is a Buddhist. My mom got me into believing there are spirits from the deceased that are still around if they haven't fulfilled something they wanted to do."

A few students stated that they were taught about God and faith, but that they were never forced to believe in any particular faith or religion. One student stated, "It was never forced upon us, but more so implanted in us as we grew older." Three students responded that religion was not

addressed in their household during their childhood. One student stated "religion was not enforced in my home…." Another student stated "during my childhood, my household religion wasn't really enforced." One student stated, "My mother always made us feel that we had a right to believe or not to believe in God or any other divine spirits."

Association with religion, spirituality, and faith

Five students stated that when they think of Christianity they think of icons and concepts like the cross and the bible as associated with religion, spirituality, and faith. One student stated, "When I see a cross I instantly think about Christianity…." Another student stated "for some reason I think of artifacts such as rosary beads or crosses that people wear around their necks." Another student who was taught to believe in one God as her savior stated a similar comment, "A cross, peacefulness, pureness, bible, church." A student stated that "hope, faith, love are common terms I associate with faith. Also, disasters and the events happening all over the world since they are spoken of in the book of Revelation." One student provided a biblical quotation,

> My thoughts are now focused on having an intimate rela-
> tionship with God the creator of all humanity. Loving God
> with all my heart, strength and loving my neighbor as I
> love myself (Luke 10). My faith is the substance of things
> hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11).
> Psalms 115:4-7 images, there are none because that would
> be idolatry making images of God or of saints (Exodus
> 20:4, Leviticus 26:1).

Two students stated that spirituality or religion should not be associ-ated with any icons or images. Another student stated, "I believe that no matter the name, shape or form, your God is your God as long as you be-lieve and praise Him." One student also stated a similar sentiment, "When I think of religion I think of many different religions (views) that follow some kinds of divine force whether its God, Spirit, Virgin Mary, etc. Yet even though we all have different beliefs we are all one in God."

Eight students stated that they believe certain attitudes or behav-iors reflect what other people actually believe. One student stated, "… Secular spirituality would respect all cultures." Another student stated, "The thoughts and images that I associate with religion are faith, believe, honesty, guidance and love." Two students addressed that to be spiritual is to have "peacefulness" in their minds. One student stated, "my thought to having faith is that it will bring positive thinking and courage through any circumstances and downfalls you face." Another student had a similar comment, "The images that comes to me that I feel are important with re-

ligion is to see people look up to it and use it to guide them through times of need." One student stated, "My thought is that it is a personal way of life." Another student stated, "service to others/love."

Three students stated that religion, spirituality, and faith gave meaning to life, and reasons for events happening around us. One student stated, "I feel at ease with my religion in knowing that there is a purpose as to why things are the way they are." One student stated, "I have a clear under-standing of where I stand when it comes to what I believe in…. I used to believe in destiny but now I think that everything happened for a reason." Another student stated that "faith is what I live by to give me strength."

Three students had negative thoughts on organized religions. One student stated, "to be in a religion is to be spiritually lazy. Experience is more important than faith." Another student strongly commented, "religion sucks! Spirituality and faith is all I need. And I don't need a god to have those." Yet another student stated, "organized religion is a sham."

Life experiences

Four major themes were identified when students were asked about the process of their spiritual development by identifying key change points: (a) experience of someone's death, (b) going through crises, (c) gaining faith through learning, and (d) strong feeling connected with faith.

Three students mentioned their change point in their spiritual status was when their family members or relatives died, or when they faced a life and death issue. One student stated, "…there are so many events, like when my father passed away it made me stronger, when I was weak God strengthens me with his grace." One student stated that "near death experi-ences" were her change point.

Students' personal experience of major life events, usually a crisis, also was a change point of spiritual status. One student stated, "Key events were my encounter with God. He ministered to my life and told me about my friends that they were not real friends, and it came to pass they betrayed me and I almost ended up going to jail, there are so many events…. He saved me!" One student mentioned, "Moving out on my own, starting my own family, downfall within the process." Another student stated, "The transi-tion from high school to college." One student stated that "being brought down to a low level in my life and finding the strength to get out of it and move forward." Another student stated, "Constantly getting in trouble."

Some students indicated that their change point was through learn-ing and obtaining more understanding about their faith, and in so doing, gaining faith. One student stated, "I developed fear of Him as I grew and learned more about Him and what He can do." Another student stated, "The key points were actually reading the bible and doing my own research to discover facts." On the other hand, learning led one student to decide not

to believe in god. She stated, "The key event that made me stop believing in a god is learning the history of Christians."

Three students mentioned how religious-related activities led them to strengthen their emotional connection to their faith. One student stated,

> After just a few months of being born I was presented to God. Throughout my childhood I was forced to go to church; however I wasn't really interested in going until I began singing with my younger sister and later on joined and am still part of a young group at my church that consists of 6 female singers and the band.

One student stated that "special services in church" led her to deepen her emotional ties to her faith. Another student stated that "meditation is the End and the rest is figuring out different factors about religion and spirituality and there is one God who is a source of peace, love and joy."

On the other hand, religious activities do not always help people gain faith or strengthen emotional ties to faith. One student stated, "I remember how I used to go to service at temple but as I got older, I didn't want to go. I never started to become a strong believer in what the rabbi was saying." Another student stated, "The corrupt practices of religion as an institution. Learning faith through struggles, not through going to church."

Discussion

The findings in this study reinforce essential insights on students' spirituality. First, the results of various meanings of spirituality were consistent with the Rothman (2009) study. In her study, she found that a "spirituality definition" included God, interconnectedness of everything in the Universe, and human relationships. What was learned and noted during this study is consistent with other findings: acknowledging various meanings of spirituality among students during their learning process is foundational to human services and social work education. As suggested by Hodge and Derezotes (2008), ensuring that students' perspective of spirituality and religion is respected to essential in social work values. This study reflects that most students' definition of God has been rooted in Judeo-Christian doctrine as taught by their families. A few students pointed out their definition of God was quite different from Christianity, and students' own definition of God was influenced by their families and grounded by their personal life experiences.

Second, the results of this study provide another central insight about students' spirituality. The fact that most students were able to recall in detail their introduction to spirituality/religion through their families reflects the key role of family influence on students' perception of spirituality and religion, both positively and negatively. Spirituality and religion is not only

an individual experience but also a communal experience as suggested by Rothman (2009). When teaching or presenting the issue of spirituality and religion, social work educators' focus should be not only helping students to better understand themselves, but also to better understand the level of family influences on their beliefs. In this way, social work educators will help Christian social work and human services students obtain a more comprehensive life map regarding the development of their views on faith. The more students' self-awareness of faith increases, the more students will understand the importance of family influence on other social workers as well as clients, knowledge which will result in students' increased competency in their practice as required by National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethic (NASW, 1996, revised 2008).

Third, the study revealed that students' responses to association with religion, spirituality, and faith were diverse. Some associations were related to God and some related to certain human behaviors. These associations seemed to contain both positive and negative viewpoints from students. Most associations were related to Christianity while a few pertained to other religions. The complexity of viewpoints from students showed that the acceptance of students' various views of spirituality and religion is important.

Fourth, students expressed that their life experiences, usually crises, played a major role in developing their beliefs, and that their beliefs affect their world views. This insight reflects the need for educators to understand students' personal experiences in spirituality and religion. A couple of Christian students addressed how they encountered God and had spiritual growth when they went through some hardship in their lives. On the other hand, a few students mentioned that learning and researching about a particular belief also affected their adaptation to religions and spirituality. A few students mentioned that they adopted Christianity after they studied the Bible. Both subjective experiences and objective knowledge have an impact on students.

As this study illuminates, students' perspectives of spirituality and religion are diverse and this diversity needs to be addressed in order to improve religious/spiritual competency among students in their practice (Hodge, 2005). While training Christians in social work educational programs, curriculum could be augmented by fostering and incorporating various spiritual traditions around the world. While social work education programs might encourage social work students to take a world religion class as an elective in its curriculum, the topic of spiritual traditions around the world could be infused into existing courses and assignments. For example, part of the self-awareness training is to help students understand their own value system and affiliated religious beliefs. After understanding their own culture, students can then be assigned cross-cultural projects including observing and researching a particular group of people with a cultural and religious background different from their own.

Furthermore, educators should address faith-based social work values including self-worth and uniqueness in their course content. To support and prepare Christian students to integrate their faith in their practice competently and ethically, special courses relevant for social work and religion could be developed with the aim of equipping social work students through learning the use of "the whole self". This is a holistic approach advocated by NASW Code of Ethics, which includes understanding diverse spiritual and religious beliefs of practitioners and clients alike.

The need to balance objective knowledge and subjective experiences and feelings is evident in pedagogical strategy. An approach of pedagogical pluralism including modernism and postmodern strategies, as suggested by Hodge and Derezotes (2008), could be used in educating students. The pedagogical pluralism approach addresses understanding spirituality and religion not only by learning about factual knowledge through textbooks and lectures, but also by analyzing how the surrounding environment affects one's perception on spirituality and religion. While teaching and introducing various religious and spiritual traditions, educators should help Christian students explore their personal spiritual experiences. Subjective experiences are one way for students to gain a better understanding of spirituality, and its uniqueness to each person, which will lead students to better serve their future clients of diverse backgrounds. Course assignments can include comparison of the Code of Ethics and Christian faith. Another approach could focus on self-awareness exercises by looking into the influence of faith on individual values and worldview.

Implications for Competence-Based Practice and Christians in Social Work

The 2008 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) approved by CSWE (CSWE, 2013) aims to move social work to develop competency-based outcomes. Its approach to social work education is to help students graduate with the knowledge, values, and skills that social workers must be able to apply in practice as professionals. Such education analyzes problems holistically and designs and implements interventions aimed at multiple levels of systems that respond to client problems.

While it is clearly established that religion and spirituality are factors that can affect people's values and behaviors, there are differences between understanding of diverse religious and spiritual beliefs, personal Christian beliefs, and social work education and practice. Social work educators and helping professionals should assist all students, including those who identify themselves as Christian, to develop a holistic professional identity through practicing personal reflection and resulting internal change to assure continual professional development. The findings of this study provide some insights on this point. As students processed and wrestled

with faith-related questions in the study, they went to their foundations and experiences, often utilizing and quoting sacred religious texts. Christians in social work training should be aware of their faith and their understanding of God, and integrate this foundation of knowledge and experience into their professional practice.

This study also reminds us that as Christian professionals we should always be open-minded to diversity and variation of the meaning of God as based on personal experience. While developing professional identity and the different roles a social worker uses to help a client at different levels, Christians in social work can relate to the Christian doctrines in the nature of these roles and identify its congruence. This kind of practice will justify both competency-based expectations and their spiritual growth, which in turn affirms the interplay of one's faith and professional practice for themselves and fellow Christians.

In addition to adding the meaning of Christianity into social work practice, Christians in social work should also practice tolerating ambiguity while resolving ethical conflicts in professional practice. Expanding our understanding of each person's unique life experience, and that their different faith interpretations will be reflected in their values and behaviors, Christians in social work would benefit from use of person-environment fit perspective in the client assessment process. And, as clients' experiences change over time, especially as they undergo major life changing events, re-evaluation on different points of life contributes to a greater personal understanding of their development. Social workers can then assist clients in assessing life changes that either hinder or enhance growth, and interventions can be adjusted accordingly. When facing the difficulty of ethical conflict, Christians in social work should be reminded of the intention of God's willingness to love people regardless of their gender, racial, and religious backgrounds in a way that helping professionals should tolerate people based on their life experiences and respect their choices after providing all relevant information to help clients make decisions.

Limitations of the study include: (a) self-selected sample, (b) insufficient diversity in the sample, (c) small sample size, (d) one-time setting, and (e) single coder. The majority of respondents were members of minority ethnic groups, as based on their self-reported demographic information on the questionnaire, but this was reflective of the overall ethnic composition of the college and this course. All of these factors may affect the value of the findings; however, the insights that were offered by the respondents provide educators with concepts from which to infuse the context of spirituality and religion in social work and human services curriculum.

The findings of this study support the importance of the area of spirituality to the foundations of social work practice and social work education. Exploring students' diverse religious/spiritual statuses, as well as the progress of spiritual development, are important to incorporate

into human services and social work curricula. All social workers need to develop skills to understanding the meaning of spirituality and religion in the lives of their clients and to apply this understanding ethically and competently in their practice. ❖

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Appendix 1

The study aim is to examine the meaning of spirituality among Human Services students. Your participation is voluntary. If you submit the questionnaire, it is the equivalent of consenting to the study. However, you have the right to skip over any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. All answers are strictly confidential and no one except the principal investigator will see an individual questionnaire. Your response will not affect your grade. If you have any concerns, please contact the Principal Investigator. Thank you very much for your response. I appreciate if you can answer the following questions by writing at least 3-4 sentences:

1. What does spirituality mean to you?
2. Think back to your childhood, did parents teach you to believe or not believe in a God, spirits, or some other divine forces?
3. What are the thoughts, images, and feelings that you now associate with the terms religion, spirituality, faith, or any others that are important to you?
4. Be aware of the developmental process that you have gone through to move from your childhood experience of spirituality to your current experience. What were the key events that signaled change points?

To help us further analyze data, please state the following about yourself:
1. Gender ————————————
2. Age ————————————
3. Race/Ethnicity ———————————

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The Role of African American Churches in Promoting Health Among Congregations

Wanda Lott Collins

In nearly every key indicator of well-being, African Americans continue to fare worse than White Americans do as it relates to chronic illness and death. This article discusses health promotion strategies that social workers and faith-based practitioners can propose to African American pastors and congregants for successful community collaborations to reduce health disparities. Health promotion strategies such as speaking about health issues from the pulpit, adopting proactive practices to support kitchen committees, appointing a congregational health ministry, and building academic and church partnerships are discussed. The goal of this article is to describe practical health behavior strategies that can capitalize on the strengths, social networks, and institutional history of African American churches that can promote health and wellness among congregations.

IN NEARLY EVERY KEY INDICATOR OF WELL-BEING, AFRICAN AMERICANS continue to fare worse than White Americans do as it relates to illness and death (Hicken, Gragg, & Hu, 2011; Soneji, Iyer, Armstrong, & David, 2010; Williams & Jackson, 2005; U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014a). Health disparities related to cardiovascular disease (e.g., cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, and diabetes) remain higher in the African-American community than in other populations. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2014a), African Americans are more likely to develop cancer than persons of any racial or ethnic group, and have the highest cancer death rate of any racial or ethnic group. Compared to 30 percent of White men and 24 percent of White women, around 40 percent of African American men

and women have some form of heart disease. In 2010, African Americans were 30 percent more likely to die from heart disease, compared to non-Hispanic Whites (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014b). Similarly, compared to non-Hispanic Whites, African American adults are 40 percent more likely to have high blood pressure (Hicken, Gragg, & Hu, 2011) and half as likely to have their blood pressure under control (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014b). The National Stroke Association (2014), reports that strokes occur earlier in the life of African Americans and that African Americans are twice as likely to die from stroke as Caucasians. Researchers also note that African American adults are 77 percent more likely compared to non-Hispanic White adults to have been diagnosed with diabetes that often leads to long-term medical complications (Murphy, Xu, & Kochanek, 2013; National Diabetes Fact Sheet, 2011). These data confirm that African Americans are at increased risk for chronic diseases and health complications.

Appropriate programs that stress health promotion and disease prevention reinforce the need to have multiple education and lifestyle strategies in place to influence health behaviors, with special attention at the community level. The African American church seems to be a likely venue for increasing health awareness and developing widespread support for planning health promotion interventions that can improve health outcomes for African American congregants and the community. The term, "African American Church" defines worship styles, diverse cultural traditions, and religious practices for the expression of faith in church congregations that are predominantly African American (Frazier, 1964; Lincoln & Mamiya, 2001).

From slavery to the Civil Rights movement, the African American church has served in critical leadership roles and functions as a spiritual bedrock of nurture and hope in the African American community (Billingsley & Morrison-Rodriguez, 1998; Frazier, 1964). Historically the African American church represents spiritual, political, economic, social, and cultural significance to congregants and the community. Its influence unifies congregations and African American communities towards mutual support, goals, values, and beliefs that are grounded in religious tradition and reinforces a sense of family and community cohesiveness (Lincoln & Mamiya, 2001). Since its emergence, it has been a place for creating systemic change in an environment where individuals and communities are motivated to rebuild their lives. It is also a trusted organization that congregations and community members look to for advice in spiritual guidance, economic and personal affairs, educational pursuits, family issues, and general counseling (Lincoln & Mamiya, 2001). Furthermore, the African American church possesses community legitimacy as a result of its traditional history of social support and outreach in areas related to economics, politics, spirituality, health, and social welfare (Frazier, 1964; Lincoln & Mamiya, 2001).

Given that African Americans suffer disproportionately from an array of serious and chronic health issues that impact individuals, families, and communities, perhaps African American churches and their pastors are capable of contributing to the social, political, and health agenda of African American families as well as the betterment of the larger community (Baruth, Wilcox, & Condrasky, 2011; Lumpkins, Greiner, Daley, Mabachi, & Neuhaus, 2013; Williams, Glanz, Kegler, & Davis, 2012). It is therefore critical for researchers, pastors, faith-based leaders, mental health professionals, social workers, service providers, and health care professionals to seek community-based interventions that can impact prevention and health behaviors. The goal of this article is to describe practical health behavior strategies that can capitalize on the strengths, social networks, and institutional history of African American churches that can promote health and wellness among congregations.

The Pastor as a Significant Leader

As institutional leaders of the preeminent religious institution in the African American community, African American pastors are expected to respond to the critical needs of their constituents. The pastor is not only expected to be a role model for many in the African American community, but should also set an example of effective spiritual leadership that is centered on responding to the needs of the congregation and community. Pastors can serve as catalysts for behavioral and social change due to their influence and position as key leaders within religious institutions. Further, they are instrumental in determining the start or success of initiatives in the church (Rowland & Isaac-Savage, 2014; Williams, Glanz, Kegler, & Davis, 2012).

In order to fulfill a multiplicity of roles, the pastor of African American churches is multidimensional. He or she assumes the role of minister, educator, mentor, advocate, and counselor for the community and congregation (Massey & McKinney, 2003). In his or her trusted roles, the pastor will often address issues beyond religious and spiritual communication, especially since effective leadership is centered on responding to the needs of the congregation and the community. Both congregational members and those in the community may seek the pastor's advice and wisdom on issues ranging from personal angst to holy concerns. However, pastors can face many challenges given the multitude of roles they have to assume, especially when they are expected to be many things to many people. Besides teaching, preaching, and providing biblical insights, their spiritual calling is to provide spiritual direction and oversight over the congregation (1 Peter 5:2). Ideally, pastors are expected to promote the spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being of individuals within the congregation, all with an eye for mission, evangelism, and growth in their ministries (Frazier, 1964;

Lincoln & Mamiya, 2001). While providing congregational leadership not only for spiritual matters, African American pastors may also see value in cultivating a holistic view of wellness and faith.

Considering the historical significance of the African American church and the critical role of pastors, it can be beneficial to researchers to tap into this fertile faith-based environment to encourage interventions promoting health. For example, Butler-Ajibade, Booth, and Burwell (2012) share findings regarding the strengths and challenges of working with churches, the role of pastors in establishing successful programs, and identify key factors that are essential to reaching high-risk populations for cardiovascular health programs (Butler-Ajibade, et al., 2012). These researchers report that health agencies and church leaders can successfully unite to create health information and prevention programs. Another group of researchers investigated the perceptions of African American pastors regarding health communications (Lumpins, et al., 2013). This study suggests that African American pastors believe their communication will impact health behavior among underserved and minority populations.

Overall, pastors have the potential to play pivotal roles in galvanizing church members to embrace health behaviors that can impact healthy living and prevention of life-threatening disease (Foco, 2011). It is worthy to note that full church calendars, sermon preparation, over-stretched schedules, community commitments, bivocational demands, and evangelistic efforts are demanding challenges for pastors and their staff. It is conceivable that due to heavy ministerial demands, pastors may be hesitant to add to their full plate. However, it is in this capacity as a role model and sacred communicator that pastors can use their pastoral positions to inspire discussions about health issues and the integration of faith, provide instructions regarding wellness initiatives, and bolster credibility regarding health promotion materials targeting African American (Lumpkins, et al., 2013). Equally, in their role as gatekeepers and trusted messengers, pastors' endorsement and support are critical to ensure the participation and success of church-based health promotion interventions (Carter-Edwards, Hooten, Bruce, Toms, Lloyd, & Ellison, 2012; North Carolina Division of Health, 2010; Williams, et al., 2012).

Health Promotion Strategies

The African American church today still represents a natural point of reference in the Black community. It brings a holistic perspective to an understanding of health as being in harmony with physical, social, psychological, and spiritual well-being and therefore is ideal to offer health promotion activities. Additionally, it is a viable social and religious institution that can use its platform to advocate primary health promotion activities to meet the needs of congregants and to play a pivotal role in addressing health

disparities among congregational members. There are several church-based strategies that African American churches can adopt to promote health and wellness and reduce the risk of chronic disease of church members.

Speaking about Health Issues from the Pulpit

The pastor can play an important role in communicating prevention and health behavior changes and addressing the link between health and spirituality (Lumpkins, et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2012). Within the setting of the church, the pastor is the ideal leader to communicate sermons or health messages that promote health and disease prevention activities for the health and wellness of congregants. Inspirational messages could link scriptures (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 3 John 1:2) that connect with healthy eating and the spiritual discipline of caring for the body and enlivening an individual's faith and spirituality. While the main thrust of the pastor is to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20), communicating the importance of mind, body, and spiritual wellness can also be an essential part of ministry. Because pastors are perceived as trusted messengers, their verbal support for health initiatives that expose congregations to health programs, screenings, and health fairs might encourage individuals to take an interest in their health. Announcing that ushers will distribute information about the relationship between healthy eating and risk factors associated with cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, and diabetes, can be one of several ways to signal the importance of this message (National Cancer Institute, 2004). In contrast, members who have adopted healthier lifestyles could be commended from the pulpit by the pastor for their efforts to improve their health.

Additionally, the pastor could express support during pastoral announcements for lay members, social workers, or volunteers to set up community resource tables with information about vegetable gardens, fruit stands, farmer's markets, or the publication of healthy menus. Social workers within congregations could capitalize on opportunities to equip pastors with information about food markets, community organizations, and community-based outreach campaign and interventions that pastors can use to enhance their pastoral announcements.

Adopting Proactive Practices to Support Kitchen Committees

Since African American church life often includes food and eating together, it is important for pastoral and church leadership to adopt proactive practices to support healthy lifestyle changes in order for the membership to be fully impacted in mind, body, and soul (North Carolina Division of Public Health, 2010; Wilcox, et al., 2013). Implementing menu changes, adopting

policies, and offering programs and various informational or educational trainings could be best practice techniques to support kitchen committees and their volunteers in serving healthier food at church functions. In this light, kitchen committees may be critical to enhancing the health quality of food served at church celebrations, anniversaries, special events, or church-wide meals (Carter-Edwards, et al., 2012). Kitchen committees often function under the leadership of the culinary/hospitality ministry in some churches and are charged with the task of showing care, compassion, and love for God's people by providing nutritious and delicious food.

African American church ceremonies, rites, and traditions frequently revolve around food that may be prepared by kitchen committees with gravy or sauces and can include frying, barbecuing, and servings of homemade pies, cakes, and sugary drinks. Many of these foods are rich in nutrients, as found in collard greens and other leafy green and yellow vegetables, legumes, beans, rice, and potatoes. Other parts of the diet, however, are "low in fiber, calcium, potassium, and high in fat" (Ohio State University, 2010, p.1). It is these low fiber and high fat foods that are high in sugar, salt, calories, and carbohydrates that trigger health problems (Baruth, Wilcox, & Condrasky, 2011; Tussing-Humphreys, Thomson, Mayo, & Edmond, 2013). Foods in this high fat category might include white bread, fried chicken, collard greens seasoned with salty pork meat, and macaroni and cheese (Davis, 2013; Ohio State University, 2010).

Working proactively, kitchen committees could change recipes and menus to include baked or low-calorie foods, switch from cooking meals with high fat (i.e., stick margarine, shortening, butter) to using healthy fats (i.e., avocados, nuts, olive oil) and stock the pantry with more fruits, vegetables, and healthy choices for snacks, especially for children (North Carolina Division of Public Health, 2010). Simple changes might include "substituting herbs for high sodium seasonings, increasing the amount of vegetables, decreasing the amount of meat, and removing the fat and skin from meat" (Ohio State University, 2010, p.1). Changes in food prepara-tion and the availability of healthier food options would strongly influence faith communities to become places where congregants see healthy eating modeled and where they are supported in their efforts to commence healthy lifestyles (National Cancer Institute, 2004).

Kitchen committees could therefore take steps to embrace church policies requiring fruits, vegetables or vegetable dishes, and healthy snacks for all church events, whenever food is served. Such a move would result in this committee actively modeling healthy eating for the church-at-large. As a result of this small change, church members could have vegetables, fruits, snacks, and a range of other food items that are healthy food options. Water could be offered as the main beverage rather than sugary drinks and fruit could be offered as the dessert of choice (North Carolina, Division of Public Health, 2010). Although worshippers generally attend worship

services on Sunday, changing the food they eat at church can possibly influence how they eat at home.

Correspondingly, programs (Butler-Ajibade, et al., 2012) that model healthy eating could be recommended as a model for kitchen committees to follow. Body & Soul, a church-based program that is a model for churches adopting healthier eating, is an example. The program encourages African-American congregants to improve their health by eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables. The program was constructed from two previous research-based programs that promote healthy nutrition among African American church members. Program participants reported significantly greater fruit and vegetable intake as compared with a control group of nonparticipants, with a corresponding decline in fat intake (National Cancer Institute, 2004).

Ideally, social workers could collaborate with dietitians and nutritionists to augment kitchen committees' knowledge of food facts. Furthermore, social workers could coordinate informational training sessions (DeHaven, Irby, Wilder, Walton, & Berry, 2004) within and outside of churches to advise people on healthier foods to eat in order to lead a healthy lifestyle or achieve a specific health-related goal. By working with dietitians or nutritionists, providing trainings or educational opportunities, or offering how-to videos, volunteers assigned to work in the kitchen can be better prepared. Scheduling face-to-face time with nutritional experts and providing food preparation training to kitchen committees could help them to understand how healthy eating patterns can help prevent or minimize risk factors for chronic diseases.

Appointing a Congregational Health Ministry

A health ministry is another strategy to organize a team of people to sponsor regular educational events and experiences that promote well-being among congregants (Drayton-Brooks & White, 2004); National Cancer Institute, 2004). Developing a health ministry is an approach to wholeness and health that stresses wellness, health promotion, and disease prevention by encompassing congregational resources and community partnerships that focus on body, mind, and spirit. The leaders of the health ministry team can be appointed by the pastor or church officials to establish preventive health care programs and services that are focused on helping congregational members make changes that will make a difference in protecting their health and the quality of their lives.

Whether it is a formal health ministry or not, the primary targets are health issues that are problematic in the African American population. Activities may include educating the congregation on health through speakers, hosting an annual health fair, or coordinating surveys to answer health concerns. The advantage of including health and wellness fairs is that they allow churches to utilize social workers, doctors, nurses, fitness

instructors, and other health professionals to provide valuable health information and cost-effective screening services for many people at a single event (National Cancer Institute (2004). Additionally, it allows a unique opportunity to work with high-risk African Americans at various socio-economic levels (Butler-Ajibade, et al., 2012). Since nurses, physicians, social workers, and other health and social service professionals are members of congregations, these trained and skilled practitioners are generally willing to share their expertise in social and health issues for the promotion of health programs (Butler-Ajibade, et al., 2012) and as an outgrowth of their own faith practice. Their knowledge and professional connections would allow them access to current and reliable resources in their respective disciplines. For example, they could take advantage of professional contacts and resources to provide opportunities for sharing information. Equally, they could coordinate participation in physical activity, blood pressure screenings, and distribution of health messages in the weekly church bulletin, handouts, bulletin boards, or websites, and post up-to-date literature on health issues and eating smart in a common area (Baruth, et al., 2011; National Cancer Institute, 2004).

In particular, social work researchers could play an important role in a congregational health ministry by evaluating the effectiveness of various faith-based health programs and assisting the congregation in determining the success of programs, members' utilization of programs, charting plus or minus changes in health, or appraising whether programs are meeting the needs of the church. This type of assistance would allow congregations to measure how church members value healthy eating, what programmatic changes might be needed, and to better gauge future programs (National Cancer Institute, 2004). Using their generalist skills (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2015) social workers' involvement in one-on-one peer counseling or in organizing peer counseling teams could help motivate church members to eat more fruits and vegetables and also provide worshippers with individual and team feedback about potential risk factors (National Cancer Institute, 2004).

Building Academic and Church Partnerships.

Academic and church partnerships are a fourth strategy for tapping into African American churches' influence and universities' effectiveness in conducting research that generates new insights and solutions to health promotion programs (Carter-Edwards et al., 2012; Corbie-Smith, Goldman, Isler, Washington, Ammerman, Green, & Bunton, 2010; North Carolina Division of Public Health, 2010; Lumpkins et al., 2013). African American churches and universities are collectively more effective when coordinating and combining their efforts to research the understanding of disease prevention, health, and wellness promotion within the African American

community (Williams, Glanz, Kegler, & Davis, 2012), especially since cooperative partnerships between churches and academic partners are not a revolutionary concept (Carter-Edwards, et al., 2012; Corbie-Smith, et al., 2010; Lumpkins, et al., 2013; Timmons, 2009). Chronic health issues among African American families beg for collaborative partnerships that join together to build health promotion bridges that foster mutual respect, trust, and understanding (Markens, Fox, Taub, & Gilbert, 2002).

Such an alliance would draw upon the strength of African American churches and their status as a trusted spiritual nucleus within the community that provides spiritual refuge and renewal and serves as powerful vehicles for social, economic, and political change (Timmons, 2009). It would also be to the benefit of these entities to join forces to use their resources to demonstrate holistic models of disease prevention and health promotion in faith-based settings. However, if there is to be an honest discussion of faith-academic partnerships, there are complexities and synergy involved in this type of collaboration that enlists African American pastors as essential players in health behavior changes that are designed to target African Americans (Corbie-Smith et al., 2010; Lumpkins, et al., 2013) that should be understood.

Although health issues are important, it is essential to note that research is not a primary mission of the church (Wilcox, et al., 2013). Though there are many theologically diverse religious denominations that shape the African American church, some denominations may embrace an evangelical gospel that primarily support redemption and salvation efforts (Matthew 28:19). Others might give attention to a social gospel that champions benevolence, service, social support, social activism, and the promotion of empowerment ministries that impact congregants' quality of life individually and collectively (Barnes, 2005; Harrison, Wubbenhorst, Waits, & Hurst, 2006).

While improving health and quality of life is a motivating factor for involving African American churches, social work practitioners and academic partners must also weigh the extra demands placed upon faith-based communities. Although it is vital to receive data and support for research, it is also necessary to give something of value back to churches in the form of supportive programming or tangible rewards for the church's generosity in sharing and participating.

Conclusion

Implementing health programs and strategies within African American churches can play a critical role toward helping to generate successful prevention and health education programs to reduce health disparities (De-Haven, et al., 2004). Pursuit of these efforts can work for African American communities and have implications for social work practice. Social workers

should give careful thought to ways that community collaborations with African American churches and their pastors can be a vehicle to open the door to wider health participation and successful partnerships (Rowland & Isaac-Savage, 2014). These endeavors can help church membership gain access to health and education resources and to exchange ideas with a broader range of individuals from the community. Overall, research shows that African American pastors and lay leaders are generally receptive to efforts that address health issues within their churches (Markens, et al., 2002; Rowland & Isaac-Savage, 2014). Corbie-Smith and colleagues (2010) suggest that "pastors view that research partnerships could be an opportunity to address the health concerns of their congregation and is thus consistent with the church mission of a holistic approach for a healthy mind, body, and spirit" (Corbie-Smith et al., p. 828).

Going forward, sensitivity to denominational differences and the time needed to develop trust can enhance relationship-building partnerships with social work practitioners and researchers. Social workers and faith-based leaders are wise to see the value of community-focused health interventions that can be integral to health behavior change. ❖

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Handbook of Psychotherapy and Religious Diversity (2nd Ed.)
Richards P. S. & Bergin, A. E. (Editors). (2014). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

It is increasingly recognized that spirituality and religion are important aspects of human diversity. For many people, spirituality—typically manifested in the form of an individual's relationship with God—is more important in shaping one's beliefs and values than race, gender, class, or sexual orientation. The same can be said about religion, the shared cultural forum that typically mediates an individual's relationship with God or the transcendent.

One of the texts that played a role in fostering awareness of this reality is the first edition of this Handbook (Richards & Bergin, 2000). Indeed, Richards and Bergin have been leaders in introducing many important concepts into the academic literature including, for example, the notion of a theistic perspective (Richards & Bergin, 2005). Along with Brent Slife and others at Brigham Young University (BYU), these scholars have been at the forefront of widening understandings of diversity in professional discourse to include spirituality and religion.

The second edition follows the same general pattern as the first edition. The text begins with an overview of the religious diversity that exists in the world, with a particular emphasis on the United States and Canada. The majority of the book is devoted to discussing religious traditions that clinicians commonly encounter in North America. This discussion includes content on each tradition's history, distinctive beliefs and practices, and suggestions for working in a culturally sensitive manner with members of the tradition. This second edition has been extensively updated to reflect contemporary demographics, issues, and data.

This text is characterized by many strengths. Perhaps most importantly, the editors clearly understand that many people of faith are hesitant to seek professional assistance due to concerns that counselors lack sufficient levels of cultural competence regarding their spiritual beliefs and values. This is an issue of fundamental importance. If the beliefs and values of the clients are not respected, then the therapeutic relationship will likely be damaged. This text provides a lot of information to help ensure that damage doesn't occur.

Another strength is the extensive array of traditions covered. The groups discussed include Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Mainline Protestants, evangelical Christians, Pentecostals, Latter-day Saints, Seventh-day Adventists, Orthodox Jews, Conservative and Reformed Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. In recognition of the fact that spirituality and

ethnicity are often intertwined, additional chapters focus on spirituality as commonly expressed among African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and American Indians. Variation within traditions is also discussed. For example, Sunism, Shiism, Wahabism, African Americans, and Sufism are all discussed in the chapter on Islam.

Generally speaking, the authors of the various chapters do a good job of relating the beliefs and values of various groups to counselors. Nevertheless, some room for improvement exists in this area. Some content is relatively deficit-based—as opposed to strengths-based—and risks reinforcing the negative stereotypes cultural outsiders often hold about people of faith. Similarly, beliefs and values are sometimes presented as seen through the lens of the dominant secular culture, rather than as people within the tradition would tend to self-describe.

Take, for instance, the discussion on home schooling in the chapter on working with evangelical Christians. Culturally sensitive practice with families of faith who home school is facilitated by understanding why such families make the sacrifice to prioritize home schooling. The chapter appropriately provides a rationale. However, the rationale for homeschooling is framed as "to keep children unstained by the carnal influences of the public school system" (p. 134). This framing is relatively rare among evangelical Christians whose concerns tend to center around the lack of respect for diversity in public forums (Smith, 1998; Smith, 2000).

In terms of a rationale for home schooling, the chapter might have mentioned the ridicule and bullying that Christian students often encounter in public schools at the hands of both their secular peers and instructors. Indeed, the chapter might have noted how public school officials have banned students from sharing religious viewpoints, prohibited religious publications, banned student religious clubs, and barred spiritual groups from meeting (Hodge, 2009). Homeschooling is naturally appealing to parents concerned about the disparate treatment their children encounter in public schools. Relating such concerns in a way that reflects common understandings among families of faith helps counselors understand and relate to clients in a culturally empathetic manner.

The degree of framing bias varies from issue to issue and chapter to chapter, and is likely contingent upon the author's degree of assimilation to the dominant secular culture. It is important to note that people of faith from minority subcultures are under-represented in psychology, and most other helping professions (Koenig, 2013). In addition, the currents of assimilation are strong and authors may not always be aware of views, perspectives, and events that are well-known within a given tradition. This may explain why the chapter on evangelical Christians states that James Dobson is the leader of Focus on the Family, even though he resigned as president in 2003, and has not been involved in the radio program since 2010. Nevertheless, the issue of framing is a dynamic of which readers should be aware.

Although this issue should be borne in mind while reading the text, it does not distract from the importance of this handbook. Although written by psychologists, the content has clear application to social workers, especially those in clinical practice. Indeed, this handbook will be of use to essentially all readers interested in working with people from different religious traditions in direct practice settings. ❖

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Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches
Greggo, S. P., & Sisemore, T. A. (Eds.). (2012). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

The purpose of *Counseling & Christianity: Five Approaches* is to apply theories described by Johnson (2010) to help others learn how to engage in Christian counseling. There has been little information to help counselors integrate their own Christianity in the delivery of counseling. Therefore, the authors describe five approaches that include levels-of-explanation, integration, Christian psychology, transformational, and biblical-counseling for specific use with Christian clients.

The levels-of-explanation approach is said to be the most common approach used by Christians who engage in clinical practice, particularly in secular settings that involve third-party payers. For social workers,

this approach is comparable to the biopsychosocial and spiritual perspective. It requires the use of the best available theories and research from representative disciplines to holistically promote client functioning. A counselor's Christian beliefs are considered secondary to client concerns and evidence-based practices.

As part of the integration approach, a counselor's Christian beliefs filter the interpretation of relevant theories and research. Along with the use of evidence-based practices, the personal faith of the counselor will more directly shape therapeutic work with clients, but how is not necessarily clear. Therefore, the authors suggest that the manner in which counselors integrate Christianity in clinical practice is likely to vary across those who use this approach.

The counselor who employs a Christian psychology approach is expected to draw from best available theories and research but will specifically strive to manifest Christ in the delivery of clinical practice. The authors suggest that this approach further relies on the clinician's biblical understanding of the nature of human beings. The goal of treatment is to help clients develop Christian character traits and values so they can avoid sinful behaviors that are considered the root of emotional disorder.

The transformational approach emphasizes spiritual formation in ways similar to spiritual direction. It is believed that the spiritual health of the counselor and a healthy therapeutic relationship is essential for client spiritual transformation. Like other approaches, except for the levels of explanation approach, the counselor directly integrates one's Christian faith in practice. Psychological theories and research may be referenced, but religious materials are the primary resources.

The biblical counseling approach is based on the authority of the Bible and Christian beliefs that center on restoring one's relationship with God for emotional health. Biblical wisdom is viewed as being essential for correct interpretation of the client's experience. There is also an emphasis on deep listening and relational engagement in the counseling process. This approach may be more likely to prescribe the use of Christian practices for problem intervention. Traditional, or secular, psychology is not referenced as part of intervention. This approach is least likely to be used in non-church counseling settings.

The book largely consists of responses to a case study by experts who apply one of these five approaches to assist "Jake," a fictional college student who seeks Christian counseling. After these experts describe how they would assist Jake, the authors determine whether each expert's response is similar to or different from the traditional understanding of the expert's representative approach. The authors further discuss how the provision of care across each approach is similar to and different from each other. This discussion is intended to assist the reader in discerning which approach is the most appropriate given a range of circumstances and personal preferences.

The authors actually begin the book by encouraging the reader to consider how they would assist Jake. After reviewing each expert's response, the authors provide additional questions to assist the reader in assessing similarities and differences between the five approaches. Finally, the authors provide questions to help the reader consider how one's faith may inform practice and personal preferences in the selection of a treatment approach. Three new case scenarios are included for discussion and/or practice. This emphasizes the importance of consultation/supervision and training/education to ensure practice is consistent with professional ethics and core competencies.

Counseling & Christianity: Five Approaches provides excellent examples of Christian counseling with ease of use for teaching purposes; however, the authors of this book predominately reference the fields of counseling and psychology. Therefore, for social work education, this book should be coupled with more information about social work theory, evidenced-based practice, and treatment evaluation. The authors do employ the expertise of a social worker to explain how to counsel Jake based on the levels-of-explanation approach, so this may be a familiar starting point for Christian social workers.

Although it is perhaps beyond the scope of this book, the authors did not address how the application of Christian counseling approaches might vary across Christian traditions. For example, Christian counselors may have different beliefs about what is sinful behavior given the client's circumstances and/or may not believe sinful behavior is linked to emotional disorder as suggested by the Christian psychology approach. Clergy may be considered the only ones who know what is essential for spiritual growth, although this is required of Christian counselors in the transformational approach.

It is important to note that the focus on a single case study also limited deep and broad discussion about how to address other spiritual and/or religious issues through Christian counseling. More information was also needed about potential ethical issues. This discussion would have helped clarify how to ethically engage in Christian counseling with a client from a different faith tradition and what to do if the counselor or client is not a Christian. Therefore, as such, the material from this book should be employed with caution until key information and outcomes research can be incorporated for further development. ❖

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Uncapping Family Wisdom: Recognizing, Treating, and Reconciling Transgenerational Dysfunction
Pate, S. S. (2012). Rogers, AR: Phillip Monroe Publishing Company.

In *Uncapping Family Wisdom*, Sandra Pate examines patterns of trauma and dysfunction in families and proposes a systematic approach to address developmental barriers and promote holistic family growth. Pate applies the concept of "transgenerational dysfunction" (p. 5) within the framework of the language of families and describes concepts, processes, and structures within the family unit that stimulate or impede the transmission of developmental cues for healthy family functioning over time. She writes:

> Linguistic legacies, fears, and over-cautionary statements can interfere with natural human development. The speaking patterns often control the family dynamics and are passed down through succeeding generations. All too often, parents do not realize that they are hindering their children's development. The parents may have waited all their lives to receive the same permissions they need to offer their children. (p. 52)

Pate links information on the relationship of linguistics to human development, providing carefully researched background material on linguistic concepts and well-detailed case situations to develop the two connections. For example, in the case of Jim described in Chapter 2 she writes:

> Jim had little experience with evaluating the language and the assumptions of his language which he had inherited. For every mistake, he might have processed old messages such as, "You are stupid." Like others in his family, he has just integrated information, especially this type of subjective, shaming-value statements as truth. (p. 24)

The author explains the messages Jim received in his childhood as linguistic distortions that locked him into shame-based, self-destructive behaviors and prevented Jim's mastery of Erikson's second stage of psychosocial development dealing with autonomy versus shame and doubt. Attention to the inherited language patterns and appropriate modeling in therapy sessions "that it is permissible to make mistakes and take responsibility for the mistake" (p. 24) allowed Jim to master this developmental crisis and break dysfunctional language patterns established in his family of origin.

Pate proceeds to detail a program of intervention throughout the remainder of the text that explores characteristics of a strong family, communication barriers and bridges, developmental impacts, multiple application tools, and community building strategies that help to "uncap family wisdom" (p. 205) and broaden the impact of healthy family functioning

within the broader community context. Each chapter includes extensive conceptual information and well-structured exercises to support use of the suggested approaches. Facilitator tips to support effective use of the program are presented throughout the content of the text.

The author emphasizes the resilience of family systems and the importance of exposure to developmental principles that promote self-trust, authenticity in initializing communication, and information that families can adapt to their unique expression of family wisdom.

I recommend this book for all readers working with family trauma and seeking a developmentally sensitive, family systems approach to family health. The text provides insights and well-thought out interventions with excellent supportive material that addresses the needs of families at their point of need. Pate provides comprehensive information and tools for practitioners and families to use on their developmental journeys. It is a refreshing read with numerous resources that the reader can use to build practice knowledge and skills. ❖

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The Children of Divorce: The Loss of Family as the Loss of Being
Root, A. (2010). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Perhaps not since Frances Schaeffer first wrote *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* has a book challenged us to see where we are now and how we will determine to live. *The Children of Divorce* invites us to see how past decisions have affected our children. The book does not stop with a historical perspective, but goes on to outline roles, attitudes, and actions for church staff.

Root provides an overview of the history of marriage and the family as a way to understand the current challenge of divorce. The history "followed a broad progression in the last six hundred years when its objective shifted from property and power mergers, to labor, and then to love (p. 4)." Love as the basis for marrying became the purest form of individualism, which became more important than marrying. Earlier, marrying was important to strengthen wealth, build strong family ties, and gain social standing. "Couples became soul mates instead of work mates and marriage was now something chosen by the individual, not something constructed by the kin units or village communities. In the Enlightenment period marriage was held together

by the tissue of love (p. 16)." A love-based marriage lacked the strength and resilience of the earlier structures of mergers and labor. Root sees divorce as "the tragic underbelly of the liberation of marriage and family from being centered on land or labor to being centered on love (p.16)."

In the Victorian era the perspective based on love led to separate spheres for the sexes. Labor was no longer for shared labor; labor was then something done outside of the home. "Home was a haven to escape the pressure of labor and receive the loving embrace of the spouse and children. Men expected a sanctuary, and a woman, no longer a partner in labor, was left, alone, to provide the home environment, brimming with love and affection (p.17). "

Root observed, "after a time in the 1950s, some ideas were recast from similar values from the past with its love-based, separate-spheres perspective. The 'Leave it to Beaver' family was the zenith of the love-based marriage and was also its culmination (p.17)." The zenith of the era was the temporary return of the love-based ideas brought on by an economic boom after World War II, but the culmination of the era came when the love-based marriage became an unsteady vessel for the free individual self.

The weakness of love-based marriage began to appear in the mid-1960s. Enlightenment ideas, Victorian culture, and a modernized economy loosed the self to live in a world of freedom. Love was subjective and women began to feel unhappy, unfulfilled, and wondered if they loved their spouses. With jobs available when they felt no love was available, there was no reason to remain in a union. Divorce rates grew.

Based on his review of the history of marriage, Root then argues that a child discovers from the family who they are in the world (ontology) and how to act in it (agency). Ontology in divorce becomes the loss of being because of the change in relationships. Agency, how to act within the changes of structures in the family, is the real issue of divorce, which is sometimes very complex with new sisters and brothers, parent figures, and half-siblings. All of these factors and more cause ontology trauma. Root believes the church can be with and be for the family as they suffer ontology trauma.

The church that chooses to address those who suffer from agency and ontology trauma changes its identity. "It becomes an intergenerational community who is bound together not by the pure relationship, but by the confession that we have our being as we act with and for one another, through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ in suffering love. The church body of believers becomes the place where family members can find who they are in the world and how to act in the world (pp. 122-126)."

A weakness in the use of theory in this book is that parts of object relations psychology and theology are paired to lay out practices that a church might take in relationship to young people and divorce; however, cutting out parts of a theory does not equal a knowledge and application

of the whole theory. However, a Christian in social work would be an asset to the church staff. The great value of this book to Christians in social work is that a stage has been set for an informed community intervention where social workers can draw on the resources put forth in *The Children of Divorce*, which can provide a holy holding environment for clients experiencing divorce in their families. ❖

Sandra S. Pate, *MSW, PhD. practices individual and family therapy in Rogers, AR 72756. E-mail: dr.sandraspate@gmail.com.*

GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS OF BOOK REVIEWS FOR *SWC*

NACSW's quarterly, peer-reviewed journal, *Social Work and Christianity* (*SWC*), welcomes book review manuscripts for the Reviews section of the journal. Submit book review manuscripts electronically to the Book Review Editor, James Vanderwoerd, at jwoerd@redeemer.ca.

Book review authors should follow these guidelines:

- Reviewed books should be relevant to SWC's readership and therefore should include content pertinent to Christians in social work.

- Ordinarily books should be fairly recent (published within 2 years); if later, reviewers should provide some justification for why an older book has current relevance.

- Reviews should be about 600-800 words in length.

- Reviews should include an overview of the book's main points, especially those pertaining to Christians in social work.

- In addition to a descriptive summary of the book's content, reviews should provide some assessment, critique, and analysis of the book's strengths and weaknesses, and its contribution to the field of social work practice, especially to specific audiences such as subfields of social work practice, students, academics, administrators, and church leaders.

- Reviews should adhere to general guidelines for formatting and writing described in the general Instructions for Authors.

- All submitted book review manuscripts, whether invited or not, are subject to editorial review and acceptance by the book review editor, in conjunction with the editor-in-chief, who will make final decisions regarding acceptance for publication.

Please contact James Vanderwoerd, the Book Review Editor of *Social Work and Christianity*, at jwoerd@redeemer.ca with any questions or for additional information.

NACSW Announces the Publication of
Congregational Social Work: Christian Perspectives

NACSW is delighted to announce the publication of *Congregational Social Work: Christian Perspectives* (2014) by Drs. Diana Garland and Gaynor Yancey from the Baylor School of Social Work. *Congregational Social Work* offers a compelling account of the many ways social workers serve the church as leaders of congregational life, of ministry to neighborhoods locally and globally, and of advocacy for social justice. Based on the most comprehensive study to date on social work with congregations, *Congregational Social Work* shares illuminating stories and experiences from social workers engaged in powerful and effective work within and in support of congregations throughout the US.
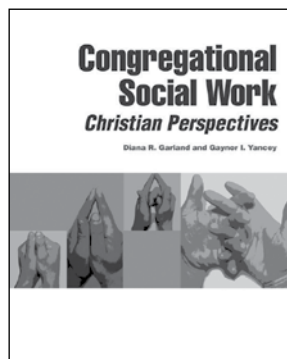
This important new work includes chapters on topics such as:
- What is Church Social Work?
- Congregations as Context for Social Work
- Social Workers as Congregational Leaders
- Leading from Charity to Justice
- And much more!

Congregational Social Work: Christian Perspectives (ISBN 978-0-9715318-8-8) is over 300 pages long and includes dozens of photos tracing the history of congregational social work. Copies are now available at the low cost of just $39.95 (or $31.95 for NACSW members or for orders of 10 or more copies). In addition, an e-version (pdf format) of Congregation Social Work is also available for $24.95.

For additional information about *Congregational Social Work* or to order a copy:
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CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL WORK: READINGS ON THE INTEGRATION OF CHRISTIAN FAITH & SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE (FOURTH EDITION)

*T. Laine Scales and Michael S. Kelly (Editors). (2012). Botsford, CT: NACSW $55.00 U.S., $42.99 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies. For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.*
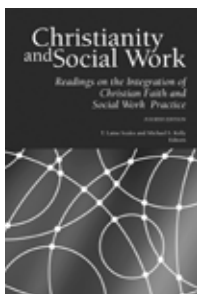
At over 400 pages and with 20 chapters, this revised fourth edition of *Christianity and Social Work* includes six new chapters in response to requests by readers of previous editions. We have included new chapters on issues of sexual orientation, Evidence-based Practice (EBP) as well as an enhanced section on the role of Christianity in social welfare history. It 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. The book is organized so that it can be used as a textbook or supplemental text in a social work class, or as a training or reference materials for practitioners. Readings address a breadth of curriculum areas such as social welfare history, human behavior and the social environment, social policy, and practice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

### SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT: HELPING HANDBOOK FOR HELPING PROFESSIONALS

David Hodge. (2003). Botsford CT: NACSW $20.00 U.S. ($16.00 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.
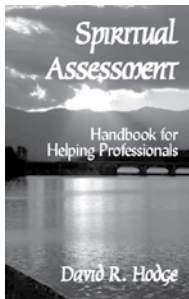
A growing consensus exists among helping professionals, accrediting organizations and clients regarding the importance of spiritual assessment. David Hodge's *Spiritual Assessment: Helping Handbook for Helping Professionals*, describes five complementary spiritual assessment instruments, along with an analysis of their strengths and limitations. The aim of this book is to familiarize readers with a repertoire of spiritual assessment tools to enable practitioners to select the most appropriate assessment instrument in given client/practitioner settings. By developing an assessment "toolbox" containing a variety of spiritual assessment tools, practitioners will become better equipped to provide services that address the individual needs of each of their clients.

GRAPPLING WITH FAITH: DECISION CASES FOR CHRISTIANS IN SOCIAL WORK

Terry A. Wolfer and Mackenzi Huyser (2010) $23.75 ($18.99 for NACSW members or for orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.
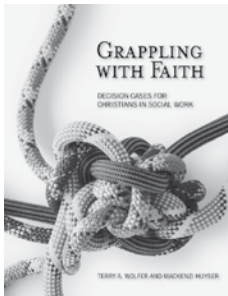

Grappling with Faith: Decision Cases for Christians in Social Work presents fifteen cases specifically designed to challenge and stretch Christian social work students and practitioners. Using the case method of teaching and learning, *Grappling with Faith* highlights the ambiguities and dilemmas found in a wide variety of areas of social work practice, provoking active decision making and helping develop readers' critical thinking skills. Each case provides a clear focal point for initiating stimulating, in-depth discussions for use in social work classroom or training settings. These discussions require that students use their knowledge of social work theory and research, their skills of analysis and problem solving, and their common sense and collective wisdom to identify and analyze problems, evaluate possible solutions, and decide what to do in these complex and difficult situations.

GIVING AND TAKING HELP (REVISED EDITION)

Alan Keith-Lucas. (1994). Botsford CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work. $20.75 U.S. ($16.50 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.
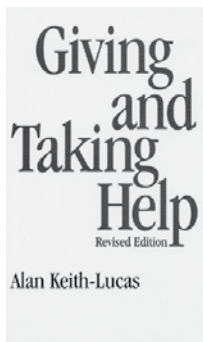

Alan Keith-Lucas' *Giving and Taking Help*, first published in 1972, has become a classic in the social work literature on the helping relationship. *Giving and taking help* is a uniquely clear, straightforward, sensible, and wise examination of what is involved in the helping process—the giving and taking of help. It reflects on perennial issues and themes yet is grounded in highly practice-based and pragmatic realities. It respects both the potential and limitations of social science in understanding the nature of persons and the helping process. It does not shy away from confronting issues of values, ethics, and world views. It is at the same time profoundly personal yet reaching the theoretical and generalizable. It has a point of view.

### SO YOU WANT TO BE A SOCIAL WORKER: A PRIMER FOR THE CHRISTIAN STUDENT

Alan Keith-Lucas. (1985). Botsford, CT: NACSW. Social Work Practice Monograph Series. $11.50 U.S. ($9.00 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.
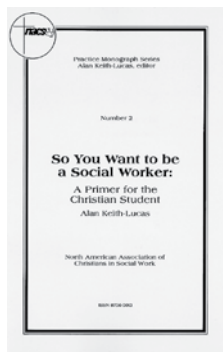
 So You Want to Be a Social Worker has proven itself to be an invaluable resource for both students and practitioners who are concerned about the responsible integration of their Christian faith and competent, ethical professional practice. It is a thoughtful, clear, and brief distillation of practice wisdom and responsible guidelines regarding perennial questions that arise, such as the nature of our roles, our ethical and spiritual responsibilities, the fallacy of "imposition of values," the problem of sin, and the need for both courage and humility.

ON BECOMING A CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR IN SOCIAL WORK

Michael Sherr (2010) $21.75 ($17.50 for NACSW members or for orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.
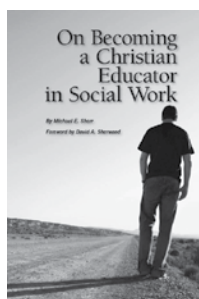
 On Becoming a Christian Educator is a compelling invitation for social workers of faith in higher education to explore what it means to be a Christian in social work education. By highlighting seven core commitments of Christian social work educators, it offers strategies for social work educators to connect their personal faith journeys to effective teaching practices with their students. Frank B. Raymond, Dean Emeritus at the College of Social Work at the University of South Carolina suggests that "Professor Sherr's book should be on the bookshelf of every social work educator who wants to integrate the Christian faith with classroom teaching. Christian social work educators can learn much from Professor Sherr's spiritual and vocational journey as they continue their own journeys and seek to integrate faith, learning and practice in their classrooms."

HEARTS STRANGELY WARMED: REFLECTIONS ON BIBLICAL PASSAGES RELEVANT TO SOCIAL WORK
Lawrence E. Ressler (Editor). (1994). Botsford, CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work. $9.25 U.S. ($7.50 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

Hearts Strangely Warmed: Reflections on Biblical Passages Relevant to Social Work is a collection of devotional readings or reflective essays on 42 scriptures pertinent to social work. The passages demonstrate the ways the Bible can be a source of hope, inspiration, and conviction to social workers.

THE POOR YOU HAVE WITH YOU ALWAYS: CONCEPTS OF AID TO THE POOR IN THE WESTERN WORLD FROM BIBLICAL TIMES TO THE PRESENT
Alan Keith-Lucas. (1989). Botsford, CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work. $20.75 U.S. ($16.50 for NACSW members). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

ENCOUNTERS WITH CHILDREN: STORIES THAT HELP US UNDERSTAND AND HELP THEM
Alan Keith-Lucas. (1991). Botsford, CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work. $11.50 U.S. ($9.00 for NACSW members). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

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To order a copy of any of the above publications, please send a check for the price plus 10% shipping and handling. (A 20% discount for members or for purchases of at least 10 copies is available.) Checks should be made payable to NACSW; P.O. Box 121, Botsford, CT 06404-0121. Email: info@nacsw.org 203.270.8780.

CALL FOR PAPERS
Religious and Spiritually-Oriented Interventions with Veteran and Military Populations

Special Issue of *Social Work & Christianity:*

Guest Editors: Dexter Freeman, DSW; Lanny Endicott, D. Min., MSSW; and Laurel Shaler, PhD, LCSW

Paquette (2008) described the relentless and unyielding atrocities of war that soldiers of today and yesterday are continuously enslaved to when she said, "The soldiers also bear witness to their dehumanizing behavior of not only killing the enemy but also innocent civilians…The inability to forget what they experienced and what they did in the name of war is the private hell many veterans live with for the rest of their lives" (p.143). Some refer to the battle-wounds that soldiers return with as wounds to the soul as well as wounds to the body. A plethora of studies have been performed over the past decade and have confirmed the effectiveness and significance of spirituality and religion in the healing process of soldiers and veterans who may be seeking to cope with wounds to their body and soul. This special issue invites practitioners, researchers, and educators to submit papers with an emphasis on demonstrating the effectiveness of integrating religious and spiritually-focused interventions with military populations. This special issue of *Social Work & Christianity* seeks to build upon the current knowledge and interest related to acknowledging the role of religion and spirituality in social work practice with soldiers and veterans. This issue is especially focused on the demonstration of spiritually-focused evidence based practices that have shown to be effective in alleviating the negative effects of the trauma that soldiers and veterans have experienced. In addition, this issue will focus on research that supports the integration of religion and spirituality in the treatment of veterans and military populations.

The intended audience for this special issue will be social work practitioners, researchers, and educators although it is understood that the depth and breadth of the papers selected will be designed to benefit any social work professional or behavioral health provider that may be interested in integrating spirituality and religion in their work with a veteran population. Interested authors may submit empirical studies, program evaluations, program descriptions that demonstrate the integration of religion and spirituality into evidence based treatment, and similar manuscripts for publication consideration.

About the Journal

Social Work and Christianity (*SWC*) is a refereed journal published by the North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW) in order to contribute to the growth of social workers in the integration of Christian faith and professional practice.

For this special issue, the editors welcome articles, book reviews, and letters that deal with issues related to the integration religion and spirituality into social work practice with veterans and military populations.

Instructions for Authors

Please submit abstracts and full manuscripts in Microsoft Word by **June 30, 2015** to dexter.r.freeman. civ @mail.mil . Manuscripts should be written according to the guidelines of the publication manual of the American Psychological Association (6th edition). The editors will review manuscript abstracts for suitability for inclusion in the special issue. Pending the outcome of the review, the editors will inform the author(s) of the status of their manuscript submission and all approved manuscripts will receive a full review according to the manuscript submission guidelines of SWC which can be found at: http://www.nacsw.org/SWCSubmission.htm.

Inquiries may be sent to Dexter Freeman (dexter.r.freeman.civ@mail.mil), Lanny Endicott (lendicott@oru.edu), or Laurel Shaler (doctorlaurelshaler@gmail.com).

Reference   Paquette, M. (2008). The aftermath of war: Spiritual distress. *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care, 44*(3), 143-145.

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