

SOCIAL WORK & CHRISTIANITY

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ARTICLES

Rethinking Client Self-determination in Social Work:
A Christian Perspective as a Philosophical Foundation
for Client Choice

Introducing a Hospitality Framework to Encounter
Diverse Others in Professional Social Work

Points of Discourse: Reconciling Christianity and
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Barriers Confronting Food Pantry Clients:
Lack of Kitchen Supplies: A Pilot Study

Mama Dorah: Uplifting Grassroots Efforts to
Combat Human Trafficking

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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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Rethinking Client Self-determination in Social Work: A Christian Perspective as a Philosophical Foundation for Client Choice

Terry A. Wolfer, David R. Hodge & Janessa Steele

Currently, the concept of client self-determination has near unquestioned support within the social work profession. However, this support for client self-determination tends to overlook some perennial tensions and has not yet taken seriously some emerging problems. To explore these issues, this paper summarizes several major justifications for client self-determination and describes several factors that challenge or undermine it. Against this background, the paper considers limitations of the concept from a Christian perspective and provides an alternate basis for respecting decisions by people, including social work clients. To construct this foundation, we draw on several streams of thought within the Christian tradition: critique of self-determination as a sacred concept, the paradoxical nature of our relationships with God, and reckoning with human vulnerability

“Some paradox of our natures leads us, when once we have made our fellow men the objects of our enlightened interest, to go on to make them the objects of our pity, then of our wisdom, [and] ultimately of our coercion” (Trilling, 1950, p. 221).

CURRENTLY, THE CONCEPT OF CLIENT SELF-DETERMINATION HAS achieved broad, near unquestioned support within the social work profession (Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried & Larsen, 2010). As shown by its endorsement in professional codes of ethics, textbooks, and 'kitchen talk' between practitioners (Furlong, 2003b, p. 227), the concept of client self-determination has become part of social work orthodoxy. For that reason, "rethinking" client self-determination may seem unnecessary or even inappropriate.

In this paper, however, we argue contemporary strong support for client self-determination obscures some of the fundamental tensions inherent in the concept and represents something of an anomaly in social work history. As recently as the 1970s, the concept of client self-determination generated major controversy within the profession (Biestek & Gehrig, 1979; McDermott, 1975b), which helped to shape and invigorate social work theorizing and practice. Because of the profession's broad current support for client self-determination, we risk reducing the concept to a truism.

More recently, against this backdrop, a few authors have offered critiques from cross-cultural and empirical perspectives, and raised concerns about potential damage to clients by stressing the concept of self-determination. Some authors focus on the Western, enlightenment origins of client self-determination and especially challenge its individualistic assumptions (e.g., Ewalt & Mokua, 1995; Fan, 1997; Freedberg, 1989; Furlong, 2003b; Spicker, 1990). Others address the frequent discrepancies between normative and empirical descriptions of actual social work practice (e.g., Kassel & Kane, 1980; J. Rothman, 1989; J. Rothman, Smith, Nakashima, Paterson, & Mustin, 1996). Finally, some argue that pressing self-determination could traumatize some clients or even amount to peddling a myth (Carse, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2006). From diverse perspectives, these critiques invite reconsideration of client self-determination.

In this paper, we seek to provide an initial contribution to a distinctly Christian perspective on the concept of client self-determination. While some scholars acknowledge the Jewish and Christian origins of the concept (e.g., Biestek, 1975; Fan, 1997; Horsburgh, 1987; Spicker, 1990), Jewish and Christian sources contribute relatively little to contemporary understandings. Indeed, some references to the concept's Christian origins are disparaging.

We will draw several ideas from Christian scripture and theology to explore the concept of client self-determination in a preliminary way. Though not achieved in the course of this paper, our eventual goal is a "thick" Christian discourse regarding client self-determination (Barrigar, 2005) that will inform and enrich our understanding of the concept and guide its application in professional practice, especially for Christians in social work. We believe this preliminary effort will clarify the continuing value of client self-determination, enrich our understanding of the concept,

and elaborate some of its conceptual and practical limitations for social work practice.

We begin by offering several definitions of client self-determination and briefly summarizing justifications for client self-determination. Subsequently, we focus on long-standing and emerging difficulties with the concept to provide background for discussing several theological concepts that seem relevant for Christians in social work.

Defining Self-Determination

It may be helpful to start with the concept of autonomy before trying to define client self-determination. Autonomy is generally considered the more fundamental and philosophical concept, and self-determination its somewhat more concrete application. Merriam-Webster defines these two concepts as, respectively, “self-directing freedom and especially moral independence” and “free choice of one’s own acts or states without external compulsion” (Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2018). While the two concepts share the element of freedom, self-determination calls attention to an absence of external restraint or compulsion. Accordingly, an emphasis on self-determination in social work has often served to limit professionals’ imposition of their own values, beliefs, or behavioral expectations on their clients. By emphasizing self-determination, the profession has sought to limit its exploitation for purposes of social control.

Although many professions value client autonomy, social work stands out for its longstanding emphasis on the closely related concept of client self-determination. Autonomy depicts the individual as an independent moral agent while self-determination emphasizes the individual’s right to decide.

In social work literature, self-determination refers to the “capacity and right of individuals to affect the course of their lives” (Weick & Pope, 1988, p. 10). The ordinary meaning of the phrase seems obvious enough: “determination of oneself by oneself; or, paraphrasing it more freely, the making of one’s own choices and decisions, as opposed to submission to those made by others” (McDermott, 1975a, p. 127). More eloquently, Perlman defines it as “the expression of our innate drive to experience the self as cause, as master of one’s self” (Perlman, 1975, p. 79). Autonomy is necessary for self-determination, and thus the two concepts will at times be addressed together throughout the course of this paper.

These overlapping definitions hint at some of the justifications for the concept of client self-determination in social work. The significance of the concept of self-determination in social work practice can be further seen by its place in the National Association of Social Workers’ Code of Ethics as one of our first obligations to clients:

Social workers respect and promote the right of clients to self-determination and assist clients in their efforts to identify and clarify their goals. Social workers may limit clients' right to self-determination when, in the social workers' professional judgment, clients' actions or potential actions pose a serious, foreseeable, and imminent risk to themselves or others (National Association of Social Workers, 2017).

Related Terms

At this point, it is also useful to clarify some related terms that help us understand both autonomy and self-determination. Particularly when used in a Western context, the term "autonomy" is at times understood to be interchangeable with "independence" or "individualism" (Ryan & Deci, 2006). In response to criticisms that we will address later in this paper, current research has been careful to make it clear that the concept of autonomy in self-determination does not mean a complete lack of influence from outside factors, nor does it mean unlimited choice; but rather a willingness and assent to a goal, whether it proceeds from individualist or collectivist processes of decision-making (Ryan & Deci, 2006). For the purposes of social work, then, self-determination could mean, not that clients make all their decisions independently, but that they feel supported and heard in treatment as part of the process (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Justifying Client Self-Determination in Social Work Practice

Rothman (1989) identified several common justifications for the concept of self-determination in social work literature. These include self-determination as an ethical imperative, utilitarian practice tool, source of political and emotional liberation, and existential reality. Subsequent authors support these rationales and also argue that self-determination is a basic human need.

Ethical Imperative

Self-determination is often presented as a general rule of action. For example, Rothman notes that many social workers consider self-determination "a basic human right that stands as a moral imperative on its own terms" (Rothman, 1989, p. 600). Similarly, Spicker (1990) asserts: "Self-determination is, first and foremost, an ethical principle" (p. 224). As an ethical imperative, the concept carries the notion of ought or obligation. Consistent with this perspective, McDermott (1975b) argues that self-determination:

Owes its status in social work to its importance in the hierarchy of values to which we, as an avowedly liberal society, subscribe. Far from being a mere means to any goal, the individual's right to make his own decisions and choices in matters affecting him, has long been regarded as one of the cornerstones of the moral framework to which democratic western societies are committed; a framework determining both the goals that may be justifiably pursued, and the means that may be chosen to attain them (pp. 1-2).

As mentioned in our definitions, the value of self-determination is also included in the profession's Code of Ethics (National Association of Social Workers, 2017) and thus is not optional for social workers. A failure to abide by this ethical imperative not only undermines social work's professional legitimacy in society, but also represents a potentially profound violation of our clients' rights. As Rothman notes, this "absolutist" perspective is commonly expressed in social work literature but, as we will see later, it also creates and heightens some tensions in practice.

Utilitarian Practice Tool

In contrast, another common category of justifications for self-determination reflects a more utilitarian philosophy, i.e., client self-determination seems to "work." While endorsing the fundamental right of clients to exercise self-determination, social workers increasingly came to appreciate its pragmatic value in professional practice. Early on, Hollis recognized that "self-direction is a core principle through which the multiple objectives of casework can best be achieved" (Rothman, 1989, p. 600). Whittington (1975) elaborates on Hollis' insights:

As a therapeutic technique it promotes the desirability for the client to be an active participant in the treatment process. One of the reasons for encouraging such an attitude is that it forestalls or combats the client's tendency to become dependent on the worker. It also has other possible and therapeutically desirable results which may heighten the worker's influence in at least two ways. The more the client's active participation can be obtained, the more he commits himself to the 'movement' which the worker is trying to induce. Furthermore, the client has greater difficulty in mobilizing his resistance against a collaborative than a directive worker (pp. 88-89).

In short, self-determination fosters the client's active involvement in treatment and aids goal achievement. It reinforces the client's motivation, coping efforts, and willingness to collaborate, and may help to sustain treatment gains following termination (Hodge, 2011; Sue & Sue, 2013). Increasing client effort lessens or at least simplifies the effort required by the social worker. "The caseworker should in general refrain from exercising a controlling influence over his client's behavior because as a matter of fact this normally hinders rather than helps the achievement of the aims of casework" (Stalley, 1975, p. 100)

According to this utilitarian rationale for self-determination, even though some client goals may seem unrealistic or even risky to the social worker, that alone should not negate them. Clients have a right to fail because:

only through life itself can the client really try, test, and temper his abilities, his fantasies, and his goals. No amount of talking about 'heads' and 'walls' or testing the comparative strengths of heads and walls will have as real an impact on the client as his banging his actual head against a real wall. This is how all people grow, how they gain a more mature view of themselves and the world. They succeed and fail and through success and failure they learn (Soyer, 1975, p. 61).

In other words, actual experience may be a better, more efficient teacher than the social worker's counsel. Thus, respecting self-determination can ultimately benefit clients, even when their decisions seem ill-advised in the short run. Allowing clients to make their own decisions and fail may be more efficient than trying to convince them to do something else.

From this perspective, when social workers fail to consider client self-determination they undermine their professional effectiveness and efficiency. Not respecting self-determination often sparks resistance, jeopardizes motivation and commitment, and makes intervening slower and more difficult. It may even take away opportunities for clients to grow and develop.

Source of Political and Emotional Liberation

Consistent with the social work profession's commitment to social justice, the concept of client self-determination has been periodically portrayed in social work history as "a tool for liberating and politicizing the masses" (Rothman, 1989, p. 601). Early in the past century, for example, social workers adopted Freudian theory partly because they saw it as a liberating force. Although that may seem counterintuitive now, these workers saw Freud's theory as a means of aiding "the id in its struggle with society" (Keith-Lucas, 1975, p. 46), a method of freeing people from the onerous constraints of law, morality, and culture.

Subsequently, during the Great Depression, social reformers “linked self-determination to political ideologies and the need for radical change in society” (Rothman, 1989, p. 601). More recently, modern and postmodern social movements have used the concept of client self-determination at group and community levels as a basis for social change (Brueggemann, 2002). Whether at the individual or group level, in each instance social workers have tried to honor client preferences and encourage their decisions, especially in the face of domination and oppression by mainstream society. As stated by Ryan and Deci (2000), this contributes to “the movement of history toward greater freedom and voice for citizens within cultures and governments” (p. 1).

In addition, the emphasis on client self-determination provides a counterweight for the profession itself, a way to offset power imbalances. Several writers have advocated for client self-determination as a general constraint on social work practice (Dominelli, 2002; Freedberg, 1989; Keith-Lucas, 1975; McDermott, 1975a; Newman et al., 2008; Thomas & Forbes, 1989) and a specific constraint on social service bureaucracies (Rothman, 1989). In both cases, “the main function of the principle of self-determination is to provide a moral restraint upon social workers in the pursuit of their professional aims” (McDermott, 1975a, p. 136). Such restraint is considered necessary given the reality of professional expertise and power. It is sometimes easy for social workers to unintentionally intimidate or influence clients because so many clients feel keen dependence upon practitioners, programs, resources, and policies.

From this perspective, social workers who do not promote client self-determination will instead contribute to social control. They do so by actively implementing, or even passively allowing, undesirable, unnecessary, or unjust policies and practices in their work with clients. This implementation is not necessarily conscious, but is often a byproduct of the power differential that exists between social workers and their clients.

Furthermore, countertransference biases represent an ever-present threat in clinical settings (Hodge, 2015). Unresolved issues can result in practitioners unconsciously working through personal hurts in therapeutic relationships. Vulnerable clients may not possess the skills or personal awareness to realize what is occurring or to deal with the resulting clinical dynamics. Honoring client self-determination helps to safeguard, at least minimally, against such biases.

Existential Reality

Following Keith-Lucas, Rothman (1989) suggests client self-determination can also be considered an existential reality. “It is not a right; it is a fact. Certain kinds of decision cannot be made by anyone other than the person

about whom they are made” (Keith-Lucas, 1975, p. 49). Some of the most fundamental decisions in the helping process—to take help or not, to get well or remain ill, to grow or regress—fall in this category and profoundly influence how a client will respond to professional services (Keith-Lucas, 1975, p. 50). Thus, certain uses of the term ‘self-determination’ merely recognize that there are areas of clients’ emotional or cognitive lives that are their own personal reserve (Hodge, 2015). In appreciating this, “professionals are not respecting a right, but acknowledging a reality within which meaningful helping activity must take place” (Keith-Lucas 1975, p. 2).

In short, some decisions can only come from clients. This perspective reflects something more than an ethical, practical, or emancipatory approach. It recognizes the capacity to decide as an essential part of human experience. If they fail to recognize this reality, social workers may attempt to make decisions that clients simply do not endorse and will not accept. Such attempts represent a violation of clients’ subjective realities.

Universal Human Need

Finally, Ryan and Deci (2006), prolific writers on Self-Determination Theory, describe self-determination and autonomy as a basic human need, “a central characteristic of healthy functioning” (p. 1565). They assert that this need is felt cross-culturally and comprehensively, and is necessary for mental health, though in each cultural context decision-making will look different. Others agree, and frame this need similarly to Ryan and Deci’s understanding of self-determination that requires human interdependence (Carse, 2006; Nagel, 2010). Some insist that for self-determination to fulfill a basic psychological need, it requires relatedness to other people in the self-determining process (Bartholomew et. al., 2011).

This idea of interrelatedness and interdependence requires interaction with others, and thus some interpersonal vulnerability to allow others to influence the decision-making process without surrendering autonomy. Carse (2006) sees this interdependent vulnerability as inherently necessary for human flourishing as well:

While our flourishing can be imperiled by our vulnerability, it also *requires us to be vulnerable*... Being open, receptive, flexible and tender, being emotionally invested in relationships or committed to undertakings, being capable of nurturing and being nurtured, of loving and growing are necessary to realizing some of the most profound “goods” of human life (p. 35).

For these authors, true and full agency not only includes, but requires participation as an interdependent and vulnerable existence with others.

These five conceptual justifications for client self-determination entail differing obligations on the part of social workers. For example, believing that clients have an inherent right to self-determination suggests a greater sense of obligation than believing that respecting client self-determination will generally yield greater success in practice. Some practical difficulties in practice highlight these differences.

Long-standing Substantive Difficulties with Client Self-Determination

Despite the broad support for client self-determination within social work, several difficulties have long been recognized, and others have emerged more recently. Indeed, some believe these difficulties are so great that the concept has little continuing relevance for the actual practice of social work (Spicker, 1990). In this section, we briefly summarize several perennial difficulties Rothman (1989) identified, including: limited client capacity to decide, external restrictions on choice, and competing values and professional considerations. We also explore the implications of scientific determinism.

Limited Client Capacity to Decide

While most social workers agree their clients have a right to self-determination, they frequently encounter significant limitations in their clients' abilities to exercise that right. As a result, not all clients appear able to assume full responsibility for self-direction (Rothman, 1989). In their study of how the concept of client self-determination has evolved in social work, Biestek and Gehrig (1979) found:

A persistent question throughout fifty years was the relevance of self-determination to some categories of clients. In the early decades the question referred to the aged, children, clients in correctional settings, and to public assistance clients. Later the reference was to the multi-problem client, the nonvoluntary client, the retarded or mentally ill client, and the institutionalized patient (pp. 182-183).

Subsequently, some writers have identified other, more subtle individual characteristics rather than client categories as potentially undermining the decision-making ability required for self-determination. These include "different amounts of experience, astuteness, physical or mental wherewithal, emotional maturity, and ability to cope with frustration or disruption resulting from ill-conceived actions" (Rothman, 1989, p. 602). In these and other ways, efforts to permit and encourage self-determination

have often run into apparent limitations in the internal capacities of clients for decision-making.

However, not all limitations originate in clients themselves, as social work's person-in-environment perspective has helped clarify (Hepworth et al., 2010). Many clients have limited capacity to decide because of contextual factors such as their social networks and socio-economic resources (Bernstein, 1975; Thomas & Forbes, 1989). For example, clients have differential access to educational and social services, and these resources influence the nature of their preferences and of their preparation for decision-making.

Beyond the obstacles posed by internal or external conditions, many clients exhibit ambivalence and confusion in their decision-making. Such factors may be at the root of their problems in living, or at least heightened at the time of seeking or being referred for help.

Suppose we help a person do what he wants to do today, but tomorrow he wants the opposite. How do we know what he wants? . . . Ambivalence turns one straight path into at least two, going in different—sometimes opposite—directions (Bernstein, 1975, p. 34).

Furthermore, some clients have difficulty articulating or even knowing what they want. For these and other reasons, client self-determination is often not a straightforward process, involving both the decision-making and communicating capacities of clients. In fact, social workers often help their clients at just this point (Hodge, 2015). By helping clients to sort out their multiple and sometimes conflicting needs and desires, social workers can help clients to chart their course and set goals. But this work inevitably introduces some influence by social workers, as their values implicitly shape and inform clients' choices (Tjeltveit, 1999).

Even taking these complexities of decision-making into account, however, research finds that a level of self-determination and participation in choosing one's own preferences is important for the wellbeing of all clients (Bacon et al., 2011). In fact, for some authors, the processes described above—both receiving assistance in making decisions and having opportunities to change one's mind—are important facets of the self-determining ability (Carse, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2006).

External Constraints

In addition to their decision-making capacities, clients face a variety of external factors that limit their choices in concrete ways. Like all citizens, clients must operate within constraints established by social norms, law, and public policy (Rothman, 1989). They also face the consequences of how,

for good or ill, their decisions may affect others, and such knowledge may constrain their choices. Such factors function to limit options in families, group settings, and residential facilities.

Further, there may be obstacles to client self-determination in agency function. The organizational context for practice inevitably sets limits of various kinds:

Each social agency, whether public or private, has been established to perform a more or less specifically defined function in the community. To achieve its purpose the agency has the right and the need to establish limitations to its services. These boundaries are incorporated into agency function and are concretely expressed in rules, standards, eligibility requirements, and kinds of services offered (Biestek, 1975, p. 31).

Accordingly, clients cannot expect particular services within certain settings. They may desire Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, or secular services from a given agency, but that particular agency may not be equipped to provide such services (Canda & Furman, 2010). Similarly, clients may not qualify for particular services, may not get as much treatment as they desire, or the type of therapy they want, and so on.

Competing Values and Professional Considerations

Social workers routinely operate in the context of multiple, competing values. Some of these values belong to social workers, their clients, and the multiple communities of which each is part (Sue & Sue, 2013). To the extent that individual social workers and their clients hold membership in diverse cultural groups and communities, they must contend with disparate values. Values appreciated and emphasized by one person or group may be less important for or even opposed by others (Hodge, 2015). For example, many social workers value justice, equality, efficacy, efficiency, competence, and rationality in problem solving (Rothman, 1989, p. 605). Some of these values will be at cross-purposes, so that maximizing one value directly conflicts with another (Sherwood, 1998). A specific example occurs in relation to client self-determination:

The counterpart to criticism of practitioners as being too directive and controlling is denunciation of their lack of action in situations calling for professional responsibility and assertiveness. It is said this downplaying of responsibility may result in harm to clients and others (Rothman, 1989, p. 605).

Thus, social workers must always balance initiative and restraint or passivity and flexibility in their relations with clients.

Perhaps less obvious but more troubling, social workers must confront a basic contradiction in their roles as client advocate and as the intermediate agent of the broader society in which their clients are disenfranchised. As Freedberg (1989) observes:

Day-to-day contact with clients involves confronting an inherent dilemma in the philosophy of self-determination: To deliver necessary services to the community, the agency (an instrument of that community) and its agents (social workers) must maintain control of the services and to that extent also maintain control of the clients (p. 33).

If social workers cannot actually maintain control of clients, in some involuntary and residential settings they certainly exercise considerable power on behalf of the community. For example, they may need to make judgments about their clients' threat to self or others which will be considered in courts of law.

Furthermore, beyond whatever formal role they have as agents of the community, social workers themselves tend to identify more with those in power than with their clients.

This identification [is] understandable, given that social work is sanctioned institutionally by the class whose economic contributions legitimate its function. In this context, a truly democratic relationship between worker and client, based on democratic values of self-determination and individuation, is impossible insofar as social workers are the representatives of a society that has disenfranchised clients (Freedberg, 1989, p. 37).

In summary, some value conflicts related to self-determination are inherent in the social work role. The power differential that exists between clients and social workers, as societal representatives, serves to constrain clients' choices. In addition to the more apparent situation- or client-specific conflicts reviewed above, this professional-status of social workers also threatens client self-determination.

Emerging Challenges and Threats

In addition to these perennial difficulties, recent developments in American society and the social work profession have posed new challenges and threats to the concept of client self-determination. These include: scientific determinism, empirically based practice with its attendant emphasis on

outcomes, growing paternalism and use of authority, diminished resources, non-Western cultural perspectives, excessive freedom, potential client harm, and the argument that coercion is inevitable. Coming, as they do, from differing perspectives, these difficulties reflect a mixed bag of conflicting claims. We find that even in the wake of literature that continues to promote self-determination theory, these objections to self-determination have not been resolved (Ryan and Deci, 2006).

Scientific Determinism

Throughout its history, but especially in the past few decades, the social work profession has sought to be more scientific (Poppo & Leightner, 2011). An increasing emphasis and reliance upon scientific research brings with it a tendency to adopt the deterministic perspectives associated with the scientific project. “Conventional notions of determinism and causality guide virtually all behavioral science theory and research as well as prescribed treatments. With few exceptions, behavioral scientists limit themselves to studying past events in attempting to understand the present” (Slife & Williams, 1995, p. 96). They do so to achieve predictability, a key goal of science. While individual scientists may acknowledge non-deterministic influences on behavior, including their own behavior, their research provides limited evidence of it (Howard & Conway, 1986). As Slife and Williams (1995) conclude, “It is difficult to overestimate the importance of determinism in the behavioral sciences” (p. 94).

We contend this growing reliance on science, at least as traditionally operationalized, raises the possibility that determinism will tend to usurp a more humanistic perspective in the profession’s understanding of human behavior that “seeks to re-establish the focus of social work as empowering and liberating rather than problem-solving in character” (Payne, 2014). To be clear, determinism is not always problematic: operating from deterministic assumptions, scientists have generated considerable understanding of human systems and behavior. It becomes problematic, however, to the extent it obscures human agency and volition (Rychlak, 1979). Practically speaking, increasing adoption of deterministic explanations (of, e.g., poverty, violence, mental illness) may undermine the concept of client self-determination in social work practice.

Evidence-based Practice and Emphasis on Outcomes

The growing influence of science in social work may be most evident in relation to the increased emphasis on evidence-based practice. As noted above, deterministic assumptions tend to guide prescribed treatments (Webb, 2001). Ideally, improved information about intervention effectiveness will

safeguard clients by directing practitioners away from ineffective or even harmful interventions and toward more effective and efficient interventions. Furthermore, the evidence-based practice movement notes the importance of client preference in the decision-making process (APA Presidential Task Force on Evidence-based Practice, 2006; McNeece & Thyer, 2004).

On its face, this movement seems beneficial for clients. However, outcome-oriented and competency-based practice requisites may encourage social workers to take greater initiative and to retain greater control in professional practice, despite the cited importance of client preference.

As the knowledge base of the profession has increased, practitioners' ability to take better-informed and more reliable initiatives has grown. They are increasingly being held accountable by the community and managed care policies to deal resolutely with serious and disturbing problems. These changing circumstances call for a firm hand in carrying out professional responsibilities (Rothman, Smith, Nakashima, Paterson, & Mustin, 1996, p. 396).

In other words, current practice realities tend to exacerbate the perennial tension between initiative and restraint mentioned above. Indeed, empirical research indicates that social workers exert greater authority in practice than professional rhetoric suggests. As Rothman et al. (1996) conclude: "Directive intervention seems to be a well-kept secret of social work practice" (p. 404).

On balance, the emphasis on evidence-based practice and outcomes likely heightens the demands of professional practice in mostly positive ways. Nevertheless, the underlying philosophical principles that animate the evidence-based practice movement may also foster increasingly prescriptive program procedures and policies, as well as reinforce a self-protective occupational culture (Thomas & Forbes, 1989). One unfortunate result is a more technical approach to intervention: "doing things to or for people rather than with them" (Thomas & Forbes, 1989, p. 143).

Inadequate Resources

While the profession is amassing evidence about what works, unrelated social trends continually introduce new social problems. Resources must be reallocated for changing priorities, and the research base and available interventions may be unable to keep up. For these and other more political reasons, available resources seldom match the need. Inadequate resources create additional pressure on helping professionals. They must achieve as much as possible with limited resources, on both micro and macro levels.

In the context of relatively abundant resources, social workers and social programs may allow their clients greater access, more intervention options, greater flexibility in implementation, longer periods of intervention, and more generous benefits overall. Conversely, diminished resources typically force professionals to limit and selectively target resources, reinforcing the role of social workers as experts (Rothman, Smith, Nakashima, Paterson, & Mustin, 1996). Such conditions pressure social service organizations and individual social workers to more actively target and limit service provision.

Further, accountability puts pressure on organizations and workers to make judicious use of their resources. "With a 'backs against the wall' mentality, the temptation, at all levels, is to err on the side of caution and defensiveness, with the professionals protecting themselves more adequately than their clients' rights" (Thomas & Forbes, 1989, p. 145).

Paternalism and Use of Authority

Encouraged by perceptions of diminished resources and increasing professional expertise, social workers and their organizations may be more inclined to use their authority and power on behalf of clients. "Belief in their [own] authority, expertise and professional values can lead workers to assume, too readily, the incompetence of clients to direct their own help" (Thomas & Forbes, 1989, p. 137). In fact, various writers have noted the creeping paternalism of politically conservative approaches to social programs (e.g., Thomas & Forbes, 1989) as policy makers attempt to shape and reinforce desirable behaviors through social policy. Interestingly, many of these critiques mirror similar critiques of politically liberal approaches (Rothman, 1978). Indeed, it appears that program critics are more sensitive to the paternalistic aspects of programs than proponents (Rothman, Smith, Nakashima, Paterson, & Mustin, 1996).

In relation to paternalism, Salzberger (1979) tries to distinguish between (appropriate) influence and (inappropriate) manipulation by focusing on the client's individual desires. He argues, "Casework involves intervention that may on occasion depart from a client's express[ed] desires. Therapeutic strategies become manipulative, however, when the caseworker attempts to apply universal criteria to the client's situation" (p. 400). For example, Salzberger suggests that such universal criteria include "the best course of action," "the most rational plan," or "the plan most likely to succeed." In any case, the social worker is left making decisions on behalf of the client and justifying this intervention with reference to external criteria.

Interestingly, some thinkers have cast fresh light on the concept of paternalism as it relates to issues of autonomy. Conly (2012) posits that human decision-making capabilities are in fact so flawed and changeable

that outside interference is at times necessary. Though this concept and its potential abuses might make social workers squirm, it may also adequately express the uncomfortable position social workers often find themselves in as both experts in their field and agents of empowerment for others.

Non-Western Cultural Perspectives

While the profession pursues empirically-based practice grounded in a Western scientific perspective, the increasing variety and growth of immigrant groups in the United States raises another, more radical challenge for the concept of self-determination. For some cultural groups, the very notion of self-determination, in an individualist sense, is problematic (Hodge, 2005; Ryan and Deci, 2006). "Separation from external influences in one's decision-making is so highly valued in the United States that autonomy is considered to be a benchmark of one's maturity. However, self-determination without consideration of group-oriented values is discordant with non-Western and some Western orientations" (Ewalt & Mokua, 1995, p. 168).

To expose the basic differences in decision-making orientation, Fan (1997) suggests these questions: 1) Who decides? 2) On what basis? and 3) For what value?

Other things being equal, the Western principle of autonomy demands self-determination, assumes a subjective conception of the good and promotes the value of individual independence, whilst the East Asian principle of autonomy requires family-determination, presupposes an objective conception of the good and upholds the value of harmonious dependence. They differ from each other in the most general sense and basic moral requirement (Fan, 1997, p. 309).

But note this is not simply a matter of alternate surface values. This alternate perspective includes alternate decision-making processes as well. In other words, there are not only differences about 'what' but also 'how' to decide.

Lest we overlook how fundamental the difference is, Fan (1997) provides an example that puts the issue in sharp contrast:

For Western people, the issues of life, disease and death are too important to be left with others, even if they are members of one's family. For East Asian people, however, these issues are too important to be left only with oneself, even if one is competent. Since one can make mistakes about one's goods or long-term interests, one needs to share one's decision-making with one's intimates. Moreover, since one

must live one's life with others together, especially in close connection with one's family members, one needs to rely upon them to take care of one's interests when in sickness, as one in turn does the same thing for them when they are in need (p. 319).

Working respectfully with clients who operate from this perspective may require serious engagement of their family members, and considerable patience in sorting through any apparent differences that exist (Sue & Sue, 2013).

Emphasizing the contextual, group-relevant aspects of self-determination for clients from non-Western cultures has implications for social work beyond client decision-making. "In eschewing relatedness, the Western view of the self as autonomous is exposed as no more than an historically and culturally specific 'indigenous psychology' or, put even more simply, is an ideological category" (Furlong, 2003a, p. 10). Taking seriously such alternate perspectives suggests important questions about the social work project in modern, liberal democratic societies. For example, Furlong (2003b) asks: "might we as clinicians, therapists, and case workers risk attenuating our clients' current relationships, and their future prospects for quality connection, if we pursue the goal of self-determination over zealously?" (p. 177).

As such questions suggest, increasing multiculturalism poses an implicit challenge to the notion of self-determination as populations that prioritize communal decision-making over individual decision-making proliferate in North America. Interestingly, increased cross-cultural experience helps to expose what may be a deeper American problem from a different angle.

Misinterpretation of Self-Determination as Individualism

Less a criticism of self-determination theory itself and more of the discourse surrounding it, multiple authors are concerned about terminology leading to a misrepresentation of the concept (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Carse, 2006). As mentioned above, when the notion of self-determination is presented in a Western context, we can be tempted to make self-determination and autonomy almost interchangeable words. However, this Westernized understanding of the meaning of self-determination has staunch challengers. For some authors, for self-determination to be truly whole and beneficial, it must include shared experience and ability to depend on others in decision-making: "A form of 'control'... is realized, not in simple self-determination or brute independence, but in a renewed sense of empowerment through processes of shared exploration" (Carse, 2006, p. 45).

According to Carse (2006), a prime failing in writings about self-determination is that it sometimes leaves out this communal factor.

Others would agree, and see no conflict between the idea of autonomy and interdependence:

Philosophical traditions thus have been concerned with the kind of autonomy we do have: autonomy as the reflective endorsement of one's actions, grounded in the congruence between actions and one's abiding values, interests, and priorities. In addition, these traditions make clear that autonomy is not independence. One can be autonomously or heteronomously dependent, interdependent, or independent (Deci & Ryan, 2002, p. 221).

Indeed, Ryan and Deci provide some helpful ways of defining the concept of self-determination that include a broader network of supportive relationships, writing that self-determination as "regulation by the self" is not incompatible with more communal cultures (Ryan & Deci, 2006, p. 1557). Rather, they focus on willingness and wholehearted assent rather than independence from others' input:

For an act to be autonomous it must be endorsed by the self, fully identified with and "owned" ...to be autonomous there must be some relative unity underlying one's actions; they must be congruent and endorsed by the whole self. Finally... autonomy is not defined by the absence of external influences but rather by one's assent to such influences or inputs. Autonomy is thus not equivalent to independence (p. 1561).

Elsewhere, they write that "autonomy refers to being the perceived origin or source of one's own behavior.... Autonomy concerns acting from interest and integrated values" (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Finally, these authors offer the following sharp and comprehensive response to these misunderstandings:

Autonomy is a fundamental human need... independence is not a universal need; having many options is not a basic need, nor is it even always edifying; nonconscious determination can undermine autonomous functioning, but it need not; and autonomous functions still require a brain (Ryan & Deci, 2006, p. 1580).

Excessive Self-determination

Schwartz (2000) turns the cultural argument back on American society itself, questioning an inherent flaw. He argues that

When self-determination is carried to extremes, it leads not to freedom of choice but to tyranny of choice.... Unconstrained freedom leads to paralysis and becomes a kind of self-defeating tyranny. It is self-determination within significant constraints—within rules of some sort—that leads to well-being, to optimal functioning. The task for a future psychology of optimal functioning is to identify which constraints on self-determination are the crucial ones (p. 80-81).

Without a doubt, social work clients are less likely to experience excessive freedom than other Americans, given their more limited educational opportunities, material resources, and social position. For them, it seems entirely appropriate that we continue to seek increased freedom. Nevertheless, Schwartz (2000) raises an important issue for our consideration. What are the ideals toward which we strive? And what, if any, are the unintended costs of the perception of unbounded human choice? According to Ryan and Deci (2006), the American ideal of completely unconstrained choice amounts to a straw man. The idea that choice is ever completely unconstrained is an artificial construct, and belief in this possibility leads us to misunderstand self-determination.

Potential for Client Harm

The above authors have also criticized the emphasis on self-determination because of the potential risks it seems to hold for vulnerable clients (Carse, 2006; Nagel, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2006). Their criticism includes the concern that when trauma is involved, self-determination can exacerbate survivors' problems. Traumatic events can be extremely isolating. Encouraging autonomous decision-making at certain points can increase survivor's isolation by compounding their sense of alienation and guilt, as described here:

In efforts to sustain the myth of self-determination and control to which we are so attached, victims are frequently blamed for the violation they endured.... A parallel tendency accompanies attempts to account for illness by appeal to bad choices in diet or lifestyle, to view the ill as "defective," irresponsible choosers. And when we ourselves are wedded to society's dominant "scripts" of responsible agency, or invested in an identity tied to control, independence, or self-sufficiency... we are susceptible to shame, humiliation, even horror.... The terrorized aftermath of violent assault is notoriously burdened by shame on the part of the survivor (Carse, 2006, p. 39).

Others allude to the possible “tyranny” of decision-making in similar cases (Ryan & Deci, 2006).

Authors concerned about the issue of client harm also contend the whole idea of self-determination is flawed because it is simply too burdensome (Nagel, 2010). The increased number of options available for any given choice, particularly in Western societies, and the vast array of necessary decision-making moments every day holds, can be crippling rather than empowering.

When combined with staunch individualism and independence, the problem worsens. This leads to the final concern on this point: that interdependence is requisite for human flourishing, and clients could be deprived of the opportunity to form necessary supportive relationships if too much focus is given to self-determination (Carse, 2006).

Autonomy and self-determination in the above instances are not only false interpretations of human experience, but also potentially harmful. States of suffering often cause people to experience loss of autonomous experience or the ability to be self-determining, such as in the instance of trauma survivors (Carse, 2006). If people are essentially self-determining rather than vulnerable, then it is easier for them to believe they are somehow at fault for trauma or for preventing it.

Coercion is an Existential Reality

Almost a mirror image of the assertion that self-determination is an existential reality, is the argument that it is a myth. In other words, self-determination is an impossibility because all behavior is determined by factors outside of our control (Carse, 2006; Ryan, Legate, Niemiec, & Deci, 2012). Because of external factors, Carse states that self-determination is neither existentially nor experientially real, but rather that human growth and flourishing most often occurs out of vulnerability.

At present, the problems we have noted have not yet coalesced to disrupt or seriously threaten the social work profession’s broad support for client self-determination. We suggest, however, that these problems may grow, eventually forcing social workers to question both their philosophical and practical commitments to client self-determination. Furthermore, this brief review suggests some reasons for not treating client self-determination as absolute or sacred. If readers agree, then we may have created some space for reconsidering the concept of client self-determination and for seeking alternate justifications from a different philosophical or theological perspective.

The Paradox of Self-Determination

The arguments for and against self-determination are varied and ongoing. Interestingly, some research indicates that the arguments may not be so opposed after all.

Ryan and Deci (2006) suggest that uneasiness with self-determination rises from a misunderstanding of what it means. They state that rather than falling on one side or another in the debate, it can be important to balance human vulnerability and self-determination and hold the two ideas in tension as co-existing realities (Ryan et al., 2012). They also strive to clarify another definitional problem touched on above: the notion that self-determination requires actions completely independent from any cause. They assert that self-determination is important for human beings to function well, and it makes them better prepared to deal with traumatic events in their lives.

Likewise, Nagel (2010) encourages social workers to support self-determination but without turning it into a “moral obsession,” as is sometimes the temptation in social work. Instead, Nagel encourages a focus on mutuality in decision-making that will benefit the client. In fact, Ryan et al. (2012) argue, “Some kinds of free will may not be worth having” (p. 218). They go on to state:

The most popular attacks on free will and self-regulation from social psychologists should not disturb anyone who is listening carefully, because the concepts they knock down are not consistent with practical living (p. 218).

By this, they mean that to execute self-determination and be autonomous does not require the individual to be the only cause of decision-making. They, like Carse (2006), do not see a problem with a self-determining person in the context of societal and cultural influences. The two are not mutually exclusive.

The Complexity of Self-Determination

As demonstrated above, the arguments for and against the concept of self-determination and its application have spanned numerous decades. Several scholars have argued that self-determination can be best understood by embracing these complexities. For instance, rather than attempting to ascertain whether humans are self-determining or not, Ryan and Deci (2006) suggest it can be helpful to balance self-determination with human limitation and hold the two ideas in tension as co-existing realities (Ryan et al., 2012). In short, to have self-determination does not mean a person can decide without influence.

Through use of perspectives that express the complexity of self-determination and what it means to be human, we can find some building blocks for a Christian understanding of the concept that keeps theology and ethics in mind.

The Sanctity of Self-Determination in Social Work

Sociologist Christian Smith says that American sociology is driven by a “sacred project.” Smith (2014) utilizes Emile Durkheim’s definition of the word “sacred”: “Things set apart from the profane and forbidden to be violated” (p. 1). He argues that sociology is guided by values and concepts that are held in highest regard, to the point that they are revered as sacred, even though few sociologists might actually identify them as sacred.

The same might be said of the profession of social work. Though many secular social workers may not identify them as such, certain aspects of the profession have achieved sacred, unquestioned status. Self-determination may be one such concept. The idea that human beings should be self-determining and autonomous is not neutral. Rather, it is laden with beliefs and values about the nature of humanity and how things should be. Smith (2014) asserts that setting a high value on self-determination is itself part of a system of values and beliefs that is part of a larger “secular salvation story” (p. 20).

There may be something to be gained from understanding our own profession in this manner. For social workers who self-identify as Christian, it allows them to draw parallels with their own faith and thus increases the meaningfulness of their professional work. As Smith (2014) states, “American sociology’s sacred project’s emphasis on human autonomy, self-direction, and agency parallels Christianity’s teachings on humanity’s absolute ontological distinction from God, capacity for meaningful free will, and the moral responsibility to make righteous and obedient choices” (p. 19).

However, there are also risks to this approach as well. If our social work values are indisputable, there is no room left for limitations or meaningful critique. When considering self-determination, the lack of constructive engagement may lead to a less helpful application of the concept in practice settings. Viewing the concept of self-determination as a sacred ideal may miss some important points about our humanity. Consequently, developing a more complex understanding of self-determination may be warranted.

Theological and Philosophical Complexity

Persons of faith throughout history have identified a paradox in the human condition that aligns with the tensions in our discussion of self-determination. More specifically, human beings are at once decision-making

agents as well as subject to external forces guiding their lives, including God (Ramachandra, 2008). The concept of autonomy discussed in this paper does not fully fit our lived experience as human beings, nor does a strict adherence to the belief in absolute autonomy seem to fit our need for interdependent relationships with others. Many persons of faith have argued that true freedom is found in a relationship with God, which is a relationship that puts certain demands and limits on human beings (Wuthnow, 2007). Yet, they contend this posture of submission is where flourishing and wholeness is found.

Yet even one's relationship with God must arguably also include autonomous qualities to be authentic. As Ramachandra states, "coercion does not lead to genuine faith" (p. 165). This principle can be applied to human decision-making in general, and it gives us a window into why no matter what the cultural context, or how many options a person has access to, it is rather full assent to a decision that seems to matter. People need to believe in their decisions to be satisfied with them, no matter what the context.

Ramachandra (2008) anticipates Smith (2014) in his complex application of human freedom and his understanding of it as ultimately a moral issue:

There is no nonmoral conception of liberty. Negative freedom (freedom from coercion) is only intelligible in the context of the prior question, What do we want freedom for? If liberty merely means freedom from intentional coercion, then a primitive society with very few laws and meager economic resources would be more free than a modern society. This would be absurd. Laws and other social institutions serve some conception held within a particular society about what are the important human purposes that need to be protected and realized, and these involve deep moral judgments. (p. 165)

In other words, true freedom involves the ability to devote oneself to some purpose, which ultimately will impose its own constraints on a person. To be truly free is, paradoxically, to also be ruled by something.

Two thinkers who have written on the tensions between these concepts, and how they may work together, are St. Augustine and Soren Kierkegaard. Both recognized the two concepts as paradoxical in nature, but scripturally based and simultaneously true interpretations of the complex character of people and of God. For Augustine, this was notable in the ways in which he saw humans and the divine working together in salvation (Stalnaker, 2004). For Kierkegaard, these two concepts could not be separated and needed to be embraced together in paradox for a robust and whole view of the Christian faith (Chapa, 2016).

These insights can help shed light on the tensions that might be present when we consider the concept of self-determination as it impacts our own lives and those of our clients. In the same way that theologians have understood that God is both sovereign and offers freedom, it is possible to view the human condition as requiring a holistic view of self-determination: not one that is caught up in individualism or isolation, but that requires human fellowship and partnership in decision-making. This view posits that human beings often make a series of winding decisions.

Some scholars do see a need for a more complex understanding of self-determination and associated concepts (Heller et al., 2011; Messer, 2015). They believe that the issue of self-determination has been over-simplified. Messer (2015) states new findings in neuroscience suggest an understanding of absolute self-determination does not align with the way our brains actually work. There is, he writes:

Neuroscientific evidence that human beings' freedom of choice and action may be constrained in hitherto unsuspected ways by aspects of human neurobiology. We might instinctively feel troubled by evidence of hidden constraints on our freedom. However, Christians who hold the theological view of freedom, responsibility and sin . . . should be remarkably untroubled by such claims. . . . [T]he freedom that matters most to Christians is the freedom to orient oneself fundamentally to the good. That freedom is compromised not by our creaturely finitude, but by our sinfulness, our fallen condition: the radical alienation from God that we are both born into and perpetuate through our own willing and choosing. Perhaps, therefore, some of the constraints on freedom mapped by neuroscience can be understood theologically as ways in which individual, corporate or structural sin compromises our freedom to orient ourselves to the good (pp. 168-169).

Room for exceptions is allowed within the profession when it comes to self-determination—for instance, when working with clients who must be hospitalized against their will. However, beyond these exceptions it is often honored as an absolute, and the complexities described above tend to be rejected. When we talk about the complexity of self-determination, we are not talking about the exceptions, or considerations for how to apply the concept differently throughout life stages, as some do (Heller et al., 2011).

Human Vulnerability and Self-Determination

What, then, is the path forward? Govorun (2011) describes Hauerwas' idea that "ethics should be re-united with theology and the practical life of the Church and as a result Christian ethics should go beyond self-sufficiency" (para. 7). Christians in social work might adopt a similar conceptual stance and suggest a holistic view of self-determination that is also united with theology and practical life.

Christians can echo the critiques of self-determination provided by Nagel (2010), Carse (2006), and Ryan and Deci (2006) in the sections above, affirming the notion that freedom and human flourishing are found in the context of supportive relationships that guide and protect the decision-making capabilities of individuals. Nagel encourages readers to support self-determination without turning it into a "moral obsession," as is sometimes the temptation in social work. Instead, Nagel encourages a focus on mutuality in decision-making that will benefit clients.

According to Henson (2014), though, these sorts of relationships do not always come naturally to us and vulnerability can be uncomfortable. "Men and women naturally eschew the thought of being a burden on another. Yet," quoting Hauerwas, "it is only by recognizing that in fact we are inescapably a burden that we face the reality and opportunity of living truthfully.' We place burdens on one another time and again" (p. 18).

Conclusion

Bernstein (1960) asks whether self-determination is "King or Citizen in the realm of values?" He concludes that "While self-determination is not supreme, it is supremely important. Only through the rich utilization of this concept can we fully honor the human-worth value" (p. 8). He also argues that to "richly utilize" the concept, it must remain in its place as citizen and not a king. Similarly, it is important to leave space for critical examination and nuance in applying this important social work value.

Govorun (2011) writes along the same lines:

If moral norms become self-sufficient in a person's life they may turn into a fetish replacing the genuine goals of Christian life. In this case a Christian becomes a Pharisee for whom the observance of ethical prescriptions substitutes the living communion with God and openness to God's grace. Ethical norms can and must play an auxiliary role helping a person on his way to perfection. They should lead him to the goal of Christian life without replacing these goals (para. 7).

Heeding such warnings can facilitate the practice of another important social work value: self-awareness. Applying this value fosters the ability to examine one's own biases, be aware of personal beliefs, and critique one's views (Hodge, 2016). In this paper, we seek an honest look at self-determination for what it arguably is—a value in the profession's sacred story that has more complexity, nuance, and potential pitfalls than is frequently assumed.

The depth and complexity associated with the concept of self-determination can enrich the experience and practice of Christians in social work. In the context of the Christian story, people are broken and vulnerable but possess a fundamental right to be respected as bearers of God's image (Hoekema, 1986). As such, practitioners who ascribe to this story are called to walk alongside people assisting them with dignity and respect as God's image-bearers. A Christian understanding of self-determination provides practitioners with solid philosophical ground to demonstrate human interdependence, vulnerability, dignity, and responsibility to one another. ❖

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Introducing a Hospitality Framework to Encounter Diverse Others in Professional Social Work

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Social work regulations require social workers to “encourage and support diversity” (Canadian Association for Social Work Education, 2014, p. 3) in all areas of social work from the classroom to the field. The purpose of this paper is to describe and explore the potential of an alternative framework, new to social work, to respond to this demand. The framework referred to here is drawn from Christian scholarship related to hospitality. By providing conceptual and pragmatic strategies for hospitably encountering diversity, this article adds to the wealth of social science approaches and frameworks that have been established for encountering diversity (Anderson & Carter, 2003; Baines, 2011; Constance-Huggins, 2012; Dominelli, 2002; Sheppard, 2006). This article also responds to the call by some (Hodge, 2011) for “new methods that foster inclusion and respect for difference” (p. 246). While this framework is theological in its nature, it offers conceptual strategies to all social workers (not just those who identify as Christian) for encountering diverse others.

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION IN CANADA AND AMERICA STATE social work education and curriculum must be continuously improved to ensure there is “respect for human diversity” (Canadian Association for Social Work Education, 2014, p. 2; Council on Social Work Education, 2008, p. 1), and that social workers “encourage and support” (Canadian Association for Social Work Education, 2014, p. 3) and “engage” (Council on Social Work Education, 2008, p. 4) diversity. This is echoed in other Canadian, American, and international policies and regulations, such as in Codes of Ethics (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2005; International Federation of Social Workers, 2012b; National Association of Social Workers, 2017) as well as in international standards (International Federation of Social Workers, 2012a). The imperative to respect, encourage, support, and therefore

encounter, “diverse others” (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007, p. xvii) is more than a regulation. For the purposes of this article, an encounter is defined as a purposeful or accidental verbal, intellectual (e.g., through scholarship) and/or spiritual interaction of any purpose of function between two or more parties. The profession of social work is actually advanced by learning about and integrating diverse voices, perspectives, worldviews, and realities into social work activities (Hodge, Wolfer, Limb, & Nadir, 2009).

Over the last 50 years, a variety of social sciences-derived approaches and frameworks have been established to provide conceptual and pragmatic recommendations for encouraging and supporting diversity and encountering others (Anderson & Carter, 2003; Baines, 2011; Constance-Huggins, 2012; Dominelli, 2002; Sheppard, 2006). Among them are the multicultural approach, critical race theory (Constance-Huggins, 2012), strengths perspective, empowerment approach, and feminist framework (Anderson & Carter, 2003). Two of the most popular are the anti-oppressive practice framework and the inclusion/exclusion framework (van Wormer, 2005). The anti-oppressive practice approach was inspired by a commitment to resolving the micro- and macro-level oppression that inhibits encounters (Baines, 2011; Dominelli, 2002) and the inclusion/exclusion framework seeks understanding about why certain diverse groups and/or persons become excluded so that they might be inclusively encountered (Sheppard, 2006). These existing social work frameworks offer valuable insights and strategies for encountering diverse others. Yet, the reality in social work is that there are still many challenges to encouraging and supporting diversity; and tension, discomfort and conflict exist when certain types of diverse groups and persons (e.g., religious, political) are encountered (Hodge, 2011). As such, novel thinking and “new methods that foster inclusion and respect for difference” (Hodge, 2011, p. 246) are needed.

Toward this end, theologian Henri Nouwen (1986) specifically recommends the discovery of the “great wealth contained and preserved in such ancient concepts as hospitality” (p. 67). The purpose of this paper is to describe, as well as explore the potential for, a hospitality framework rooted in Christian theology for successfully encountering diverse others in professional social work. A strength of this theologically-driven framework is that it offers conceptual and pragmatic, and theological and spiritual insights coupled with thousands of years of experiential wisdom related to hospitably encountering others. This wisdom includes successes and failures in hospitably encountering diverse others written about in the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Christian Bible, including stories of Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 18), Sodom (Genesis 19), Jesus’ hospitality toward the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7), and a woman who was regarded by the religious establishment as having “lived a sinful life” (Luke 7). Additionally, scholars and theologians write about the hospitable actions

of Christians throughout history. For instance, FitzGerald (2011) writes about monastic communities and Duce (2013) considers the shift from macro to micro hospitality over the last three centuries. Nouwen (1986) contends social science disciplines like social work have contributed much to learning about encounters. Yet, the contributions of social science have come at the expense of benefitting from the knowledge and insights of other forms of thinking. Theology generally, and Christian theology specifically, has something to contribute. While theological in its nature, the Christian hospitality framework offers conceptual and pragmatic strategies to all social work practitioners, educators, and researchers, not just those who identify as Christian, for encountering diverse others in the classroom, in practice, and intellectually through scholarship. While the primary purpose of this paper is to describe these concepts, I also include several examples of how social workers might implement concepts from this framework in practice.

Literature Review

Christian hospitality is a rich concept (Boys & Alexander, 2012; Nouwen, 1986) that moves beyond good manners or providing tea and cookies to friends or strangers (Jones, 1992; Pohl & Buck, 2004). Christian hospitality involves creating a welcoming space for encounters to occur such that those encountered feel safe, free, loved, and “at home” (Kinnamon, 1999, p. 160; Koyama, 1993; Nouwen, 1986). It involves a particular type of welcome: where the people who encounter one another are more willing to open their lives to one another, join together in life’s struggles, and journey together (Frambach, 2011; Pohl & Buck, 2004).

Christian hospitality has been described as a paradigm (Brandner, 2013; Kinnamon, 1999), a virtue (Boys & Alexander, 2012; Cornille, 2011; FitzGerald, 2011; Jones, 1992; Nouwen, 1986; Yong, 2008), a discipline (FitzGerald, 2011), an attitude toward others (Gaddy, 2012; Nouwen, 1986; Yong, 2008), and ultimately “a way of life” (Pohl & Buck, 2004, p. 12). Christian hospitality has also been referred to as a vital moral (Cornille, 2011) and “ethical injunction” (Kinnamon, 1999, p. 159; Brandner, 2013; Vosloo, 2004). As such, it shapes the way encountered others are thought about, and then behaved toward. It is not to be viewed as a task, but rather, an “alternate way of looking at *all* of our tasks” (Pohl & Buck, 2004, p. 11, emphasis added). Having said this, demonstrating hospitable behaviour can alter attitudes and thinking (Pohl & Buck, 2004) toward encountered others.

Hospitably encountering diverse others can have life-changing implications for both host and guest (Nouwen, 1986; Pohl, 2012) who feel blessed, and may sense that their lives have been improved (Pohl, 2012). Hospitable encounters can bring people “to life” (Pohl, 2012, p. 25). Not

only that, but “in the context of hospitality guest and host can reveal their most precious gifts and bring new life *to each other*” (Nouwen, 1986, p. 67, emphasis added).

While “hospitality” is not always named or overtly discussed in the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Christian Bible, it was embodied throughout Judeo-Christian life. It is also evident throughout history. For instance, the demonstration of hospitality was evident in early Christian monastic communities in the creation of hospitals and the provision of accommodation for travelers (FitzGerald, 2011). Interestingly, the words “hospital” and “hospitality” share a common root.

The direct study (“theology”) of hospitality has only recently been rediscovered by scholars (Anderson, 1998); the current study’s literature review found few modern sources prior to the 1930s. Contemporary interest could be the result of many factors. The early 20th century ecumenical movement (Adeney, Bidwell, & Walker, 2012; Yong, 2008) which focused on *intra-*, and later, *inter-*religious ecumenism (Yong, 2008) is one example. Growth in multiculturalism (Augustine, 2012; Yong, 2008) due to immigration and globalization is another. The more recent post-September 11, 2001 attention on ensuring religious rights and freedoms (Yong, 2008), as well as consideration given to treating others hospitably in light of religious and civil wars (Kearney & Taylor, 2011), may also have instigated attention to the theology of hospitality. These and other historical events raised questions about how to best encounter diverse persons (Adeney et al., 2012), and create environments where dialogue and seeing “beyond differences” (Adeney et al., 2012, p. 34; Kessler, 2012) can occur while simultaneously encouraging society’s pluralistic citizens to maintain their differences (Nouwen, 1986).

Method

Selection of Scholarship and Search Strategy

Social workers and social work students are mandated to facilitate positive encounters with “diverse others” (Adams et al., 2007, p. xvii). Insights about *how* to encounter diverse others were gained from an exploration of the literature on a theology of Christian hospitality as part of a larger doctoral thesis. Literature was sought that contained information on the history and undergirding motivations, values, philosophies and/or theoretical underpinnings of the framework, as well as methodologies related to encountering others, using various search engines (e.g., Scholars Portal) and resources (e.g., librarians, scholars knowledgeable about the framework) to facilitate a deep exploration of the framework. Once relevant literature was discovered, reference lists were mined for additional

resources. The search was not limited by key words, publication date or publication type.

Most scholarship came from books, including the Holy Christian Bible and grey literature (materials not academically published such as reports and government documents), that introduced a theological overview of the framework, defined terminology, described the theological tenets driving the framework, and the like. Most also provided an overview of what hospitality looks like in practice. Little, if any, included data-based empirical scholarship as it is understood in the social sciences. Instead, most applied biblical lessons and theological thinking in relation to hospitality to intra-religious (ecumenical) or inter-religious activities in a variety of contexts. Importantly, peer-reviewed and grey literature from other disciplines like social work or other religions like Hinduism or Buddhism for instance, was not drawn upon because the aim was to present a *Christian* biblically-driven theology framework, unaltered to the extent possible by other perspectives. A sizable portion of the scholarship is American, but scholarship from authors in other countries was also included because Christianity itself is a worldwide religion.

Summarization and Interpretation of the Framework

Before any literature was reviewed, a predetermined analytic framework was established for identifying and describing the key dimensions and approaches taken in the hospitality literature for encountering diverse others. This analytic framework was constructed from a close reading of material from three different frameworks for encountering diverse others. This analytic framework was used to mine the hospitality literature for information on its (1) history, (2) Christian theological underpinnings, (3) motivations and values, (4) strategies (methodologies) for encountering others, and (5) any strengths and critiques to provide an in-depth understanding of the framework.

As relevant material was located, it was reviewed from beginning to end, coding the information that aligned with the dimensions of the analytic framework (e.g., history, theoretical underpinnings, values, etc.). For this initial stage of coding, I adapted the procedures described in grounded theory for data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These procedures forced me to move carefully through the data being attentive to things like the actual spoken words, their explicit and implicit meaning as well as their context (Charmaz, 2006). Words, sentences and/or entire segments of material were coded by copying them verbatim into a separate Word document and applying a conceptual label.

This coding process was accompanied by an interpretive analysis. For this, the interpretive description methodology (Thorne, Reimer Kirkham,

& O'Flynn-Magee, 2004) was adapted. This methodology allowed me to move beyond the limits of the original analytic framework to attend to things like repetitions and deviations across each of the resources as well as interpretive reactions toward, and appraisal of, the scholarship (Thorne et al., 2004). In the same document, I included questions and thoughts arising, patterns deemed interesting, and ideas considered against my professional knowledge and practical experience (Thorne et al., 2004). For this paper, I identified major themes related to encountering diverse others according to the hospitality literature I reviewed, and I present them in the next section.

Findings and Discussion: Introducing a Hospitality Framework

The remainder of this paper introduces the hospitality framework in order to explore the framework's potential for encountering diverse others in social work. This paper is primarily conceptual: I describe a number of important concepts within the framework. This includes several principles, practices and attitudes needed to achieve hospitality according to the theological scholarship. I finish by providing additional considerations for, and potential challenges to, implementing hospitality in social work, although these are embedded throughout all sections. A few examples of how social workers in various contexts might implement the concepts from this framework are explicated throughout as are the reasons why this framework serves to improve encounters with diverse others.

Important Concepts within the Framework

Hosts and guests. Central to the hospitality framework are the concepts of "host" and "guest." Pragmatically, in order for hospitality to occur, there must be a host who encounters a guest. The host invites and receives the guest (Boys & Alexander, 2012; Vogels, 2002), often, into their own homes, as is evident in both the Old and New Testaments. The guest is welcomed by being offered food, shelter, and conversation (see Genesis 18 for an example). Many scholars (Allard, 2012; Anderson, 1998; Boys & Alexander, 2012; de Béthune, 2007; Durley, 2012; Gible, 1981; Kessler, 2012; Koyama, 1993; Nouwen, 1986; Morgan, 1998; Sykes, 2014) point to the story of Abraham, Sarah and "the three visitors" (Genesis 18) to illuminate these concepts. Briefly, in Genesis chapter 18, the patriarch, Abraham, is found sitting "at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day" (Genesis 18:1, New International Version). When he looked up, he "saw three men standing nearby" (Genesis 18:2, NIV). In an act of hospitality, he "hurried" to encounter them, bowed to the ground, and offered them food, water, rest, and to wash their feet (Genesis 18: 3-8, NIV). He and Sarah, his wife, then prepared a meal from their best items including fine flour and a tender calf.

The roles of guest and host do not, however, fall neatly into dualities, nor are they mutually exclusive. Genuine hospitality necessarily involves paradoxical movement, role reversals, mixing, and blurriness between the roles of guest and host (Boys & Alexander, 2012; de Béthune, 2007; Nouwen, 1986; Reynolds, 2006). For instance, while it is the host who welcomes, invites, and receives the guest, giving gifts like space and food, the host must also be prepared to be a guest to receive their guest's talents and gifts which includes their conversation and stories (Reynolds, 2006). Both gain something from encounters (Reynolds, 2006), and thus, the "distinction between host and guest proves to be artificial and evaporates" (Nouwen, 1986, p. 67). Vogels (2002) points to the "reversal" (p. 165) of the guest and host roles implicit in the story of Abraham and the three visitors. When Abraham greets the visitors, he calls the guest "my Lord" and himself "your servant" (Genesis 18:3, NIV). While the rest of the story makes evident that Abraham is the host and the visitors are the guests, the *language* used by Abraham, and his accompanying actions in serving his guests, suggests the servitude inherent in biblical hospitality blurs the roles of host and guest, although both are needed for an (hospitable) encounter to occur.

Other-ness. A "guest" is always an "other" (Taylor, 2011, p. 12) (different or "other") from a self and so their unique differences are to be "delighted" (Mosher, 2011, p. 643; de Béthune, 2007) in, and recognized as important to discover through encounters. The welcome bestowed on the other, then, must not diminish or erase other-ness (de Béthune, 2007; Mosher, 2011). Instead, the other must stay an "other," and even more, be encouraged to "thrive as other" (Mosher, 2011, p. 643; Kinnamon, 1999; Yong, 2008).

Welcoming involves an authentic attempt to come to know the other (Boys & Alexander, 2012; Carroll, 2011) which is possible only when others are recognized as different, unique and valuable, and as having talents, gifts and offerings they bring to encounters (Nouwen, 1986; Pohl, 2012; Pohl & Buck, 2004; Vanier, 2008). It is not appropriate to eliminate difference such as through assimilation or by integrating them into one's "own universe" (de Béthune, 2007, p. 14; Reynolds, 2006). Instead, hospitality involves "a yielding or giving way, a means to be with or present to another" (Reynolds, 2006, p. 198).

There must, however, be a clear distinction between "self" and "other" for differences to be revealed and appreciated (Adeney et al., 2012; Boys & Alexander, 2012; Sykes, 2014). Welcoming the "other" also involves coming to know the "self" (Boys & Alexander, 2012). It does not involve giving up one's "self" (Reynolds, 2006) but rather a commitment to growing one's own self-awareness. Coming to know others facilitates this awareness by clarifying, confirming and teaching more about personal beliefs

(Adeney et al., 2012; Kinnamon, 1999; Yong, 2008) because the other is “one who does not see through our eyes and who, thus, can challenge our pet assumptions, can shake us from our conventional point of view” (Kinnamon, 1999, p. 164). Interestingly, guests who cause discomfort during encounters (e.g., by having a different worldview) offer powerful opportunities to learn about self by allowing hosts to consider why discomfort exists (FitzGerald, 2011).

Paradoxically, Christian hospitality involves breaking through difference by coming to know self and other. It involves seeking areas of unity and agreement (Nouwen, 1986). This is not the same as finding commonalities or compatibilities as de Béthune (2007) suggests. For many more scholars, hospitable encounters involve recognizing and affirming that differences can exist while seeking areas of unity and agreement (see Adeney et al., 2012; Nouwen, 1986, for examples). The ultimate “goal is unity of spirit” (Reinert, 1977, p. 303) whereby persons can sustain their own beliefs while valuing, respecting, and understanding the beliefs of diverse others, even when they are oppositional. In hospitable encounters, diversity and difference are accentuated (Reinert, 1997). I would add, using the words of The Reconstructionist (1947), “the encouragement of differences is itself a sign of humanity, for it is only when the individual is himself that he can love his brother as himself” (p. 7).

Naturally, questions have been raised about how to delight in differences, especially those that are oppositional. Offering encountered persons “the right of their own convictions” (Fortune, 1919, p. 17) is difficult, and people typically struggle to “achieve brother [sister] hood while preserving group difference” (The Reconstructionist, 1947, p. 6). An underlying *appreciation* “of the tensions and lessons” (Adeney et al., 2012, p. 38) diverse others offer is needed (Adeney et al., 2012; Yong, 2008). Further, taking a hospitable position means respecting the lines of difference, fostering an environment free enough to discuss differences and disputes, and permitting change to happen if appropriate (Kessler, 2012; Nouwen, 1986; Yong, 2008) without *forcing* it to. Hospitable “dialogue must respect the incompatible differences” (de Béthune, 2007, p. 14, emphasis added) between diverse others and find ways to approach difference constructively (Cornille, 2011), respectfully, responsibly, and with curiosity (Adeney et al., 2012; Brandner, 2013). Such an environment can feel uncomfortable (Cornille, 2011) and may even be conflictual (Reynolds, 2006). For instance, a hospitable attitude and welcoming dialogue may *invite* (Cornille, 2011), rather than resolve disagreement, disputes, and confrontation (Nouwen, 1986), which can be uncomfortable. Sometimes, there are no easy or ready solutions, and this is uncomfortable (Nouwen, 1986). Additionally, actions or thinking that inhibit welcome must be spoken out against, and while this is itself considered hospitable, it, too, can feel uncomfortable.

Helpfully, Jesus Himself illuminates how to respect other-ness and hospitably encounter diverse others, especially with those who have conflicting beliefs (Adeney et al., 2012; Boys & Alexander, 2012; Taylor, 2005). On more than one occasion, He spoke directly with those who were not Jewish, as well as provided them healing and other supports. For instance, Jesus responded to a non-Jewish Greek woman “born in Syrian Phoenicia” (Mark 7:26, NIV) by driving the demons out of her daughter (Mark 7:24-30; Matthew 15:21-28). According to Boys and Alexander (2012), this is an expression of hospitality “that knows no bounds” (p. 50). It evidences Jesus’ concern about hospitably encountering diverse others despite difference (Taylor, 2005). To Him, differences were less important than demonstrating hospitality.

Christian hospitality actually *calls out* fear, hostility, and the need to separate from, rather than encounter, diverse others (Carroll, 2011; Gible, 1981). According to Durley (2012), “the Bible stresses that each of us must overcome prejudice, racism, hate, and be unafraid to share one another’s stories. Every ethnic, racial, cultural, and faith group has a story” (p. 100). The attitude of fear, hostility and even competition between worldviews, values, ideas and ultimately people stand in the way of encountering them and hearing their stories (Mosher, 2011). Durley (2012) acknowledges that Christians have “ostracized” (p. 100) others and encountered them poorly due to differences such as religious beliefs or worship styles, but this makes hospitality even more important, *especially* when fear, hostility and conflict are present (Gible, 1981).

These insights helpfully extend considerations about how to encounter diverse others in social work, especially those who hold oppositional beliefs. For instance, professional social workers are already dedicated to engaging in reflexive practice (International Federation of Social Workers, 2012a) to examine how their own history and diversity influence their practice. This framework invites social workers to consider, more deeply, exploring and appreciating their own differences as whole persons in light of the differences of others. This includes clarifying and advancing personal *and* professional self-knowledge by intentionally coming to know the other.

Additionally, social workers might consider encountering diversity by suspending their own beliefs to welcome the diverse perspectives of others, especially those that are oppositional or contentious. This does not mean giving up their beliefs, but rather finding ways in the classroom or in clinical relationships to recognize the different perspectives, experiences and thinking others bring as valuable. Social work instructors, in particular, might consider implementing pedagogical practices that encourage students to sustain their own beliefs (e.g., due to experiential wisdom, political views, religion, etc.) and resist assimilating them into the instructor’s or even the profession’s worldviews.

Finally, social workers might consider drawing upon the concepts of host and guest when encountering others. In the classroom, for instance, a social work instructor may take on the role of host as they welcome and receive students into the classroom as guests. The paradoxical movement between the roles, however, means both instructor *and* students are expected to receive one another's gifts and offerings such as contributions to in-class conversations. As a host, for instance, an instructor would demonstrate servitude, and offer students their finest gifts, which might include time, attention, generous feedback, or experiential wisdom. They would also be prepared to receive the contributions of students, such as students' experiential wisdom shared in class and knowledge production in assignment generation. In other social work practice contexts, there would be similar movement between the roles of host and guest. Whether a social worker is a "host" in their role as clinician receiving a client or providing settlement services to newcomers, the distinction between roles is such that both experience hospitable welcome.

Principles, Practices and Attitudes Needed to Achieve Hospitality

Commitment to hospitality. According to Christian scholars (Brandner, 2013; Kinnamon, 1999), hospitality is a paradigm. Put differently, scholars contend there must be a commitment to living a life characterized by hospitality and to encountering diverse others hospitably. They claim that the story of Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 18) highlights this. Some scholars (see Gible, 1981; Morgan, 1998 for examples) argue it was not clear to Abraham at first that the three visitors to his tent were divine. Regardless of whether Abraham recognized the visitors as divine or not, his actions communicate a commitment to living hospitably and encountering any others in a welcoming way. There were no obligations, for instance, beyond Abraham's paradigmatic commitment to hospitality, to encounter (host) the visitors at all. In fact, welcoming the three visitors could have put Abraham and his wife in physical risk should they have been dangerous (Gible, 1981). With this said, it is worth mentioning that some hospitable actions like providing aid to travelers, in addition to being spiritually informed, were also culturally informed (Reynolds, 2006; Vogels, 2002). As Morgan (1998) argues, "it is this very sense of uncertainty about the identity of the stranger that tempts a host to decline hospitality" (p. 536). Trusting the good intentions of the visitors, Abraham welcomes them anyway (Gible, 1981). It is possible that Abraham immediately recognized the three visitors as divine based on his language. For example, in Genesis 18:3 (NIV), Abraham addresses one of the visitors as, "my Lord" where the word "Lord" is translated as "Adonay," the "proper name of God only" (Strong, n.d., p. 8). The findings suggest social workers

consider paradigmatically adopting hospitality principles rather than just hospitable practices. This means endeavouring to hospitably encounter diversity in any context whether that is the classroom or the field. This is in contrast to engaging in sporadic acts of hospitality.

Prioritizing the guest. In encounters characterized by hospitality, hosts are responsible for ensuring guests feel welcomed, for their physical care (Boys & Alexander, 2012), and prioritizing their needs (Anderson, 1998; Frambach, 2011). This is true whether guests show up expectedly or not (de Béthune, 2007). Further, the story of Abraham shows there must be a sense of eagerness rather than reluctance or hesitancy, to prioritize the guest even though the visitors showed up unannounced (see Genesis 18:2; Morgan, 1998). Abraham ran to greet the three visitors and Abraham and Sarah “hurried” (Genesis 18:2, NIV) to welcome them. More importantly, Abraham “outdid himself in caring for his guests” (p. 185) according to Gibble (1981). He did not have to demonstrate acts of hospitality nor offer his finest items including his “finest flour” or a “tender calf” (Genesis 18:6-7, NIV). His actions illuminate the *attitude* interwoven in hospitable behaviour. Abraham conveys the generosity, kindness, respect and value of the encountered other inherent in hospitable behaviour. Whether in the classroom or the field, this is tantamount to social workers serving others while having little concern about what is received in return, whether that is recognition, payment, reward, promotion or even gratitude.

Universalism. Many theologians and scholars agree that hospitality must be demonstrated toward “our fellow human being” (Nouwen, 1986, p. 67), in other words, everyone must be hospitably encountered (Cornille, 2011; de Béthune, 2007; Frambach, 2011; Jones, 1992; Kinnamon, 1999; Loring, 2001; Nouwen, 1986; Stark, 1996). This paradigmatic attitude should be “emblematic of all encounters” (de Béthune, 2007, p. 15; Nouwen, 1986). God loves, encounters, and welcomes all, without exception and without conditions (Cornille, 2011; de Béthune, 2007; Kinnamon, 1999) because for Him, every person is precious, sacred, and therefore ought to be treated with limitless reverence (de Béthune, 2007). Jesus, too, demonstrated the limitlessness of hospitality, ensuring all were welcomed, including “women, children and slaves, but also the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame...of the ancient world” (Luke 14:21 as cited in Yong, 2008, pp. 102-103). During encounters, He talked with them, and even shared meals, which is an important sign of hospitality (Sykes, 2014). It was especially the people others did not want to encounter that Jesus demonstrated hospitality toward, even though it went directly against cultural and social standards. To the shock of many, Jesus also encouraged others to do the same (see Luke 15:1-32 for an example).

Jesus hospitably encountered those who were considered strangers, “wrongdoers,” “the least of these,” and the unlovable in His time (Matthew

25:40 as cited in Sykes, 2014). For instance, God makes clear in Leviticus 19:33 that strangers (the Hebrew word is *ger*, which means “stranger”) (Strong, n.d., p. 28) are not to be mistreated, and even more, says, “you shall love the *ger* as yourself” (Leviticus 19:34, p. 163). This commandment is repeated elsewhere (see Deuteronomy 10:19). The word “hospitality” in Romans (Romans 12:13) is “philoxenia,” which means “to love strangers” (Koyama, 1993, p. 183). Koyama (1993), as well as Taylor (2005), point to the importance Jesus places on hospitably encountering strangers in His commandment in Mark 12:31 (NIV) to “love your neighbour as yourself.” In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), the “neighbour” might be considered a stranger. Strangers, then, can be anyone from “fellow shoppers in the mall” (Sackreiter & Armstrong, 2010, p. 205) to work colleagues, or even family members. They may be persons we do not know (Carroll, 2011; Kinnamon, 1999; Sackreiter & Armstrong, 2010), who are somehow “unlike ourselves” (Kinnamon, 1999, p. 159), people we “do not understand” (Sackreiter & Armstrong, 2010, p. 205), or are “unfamiliar” (Nouwen, 1986, p. 68). Strangers can also be those who are outside of our community, including persons of other religions (de Béthune, 2007; Carroll, 2011; Kinnamon, 1999; Sykes, 2014). Ultimately, the stranger can be anyone (Luke 10:25-37). Jesus even considered *Himself* a stranger (see Matthew 25:35), thereby contradicting the xenophobic attitudes and actions of His day and our day toward strangers (de Béthune, 2007), and commanding they be hospitably encountered (see Brandner, 2013; Carroll, 2011; Cornille, 2011; Kinnamon, 1999; Koyama, 1993; Nouwen, 1986; Sackreiter & Armstrong, 2010; Sykes, 2014; Taylor, 2005; Vogels, 2002).

There are several other groups, in particular, who ought to be hospitably encountered. These groups are named because encountering them is difficult and often avoided. They include those who have committed wrongs (see Matthew 5:44; Kinnamon, 1999; Loring, 2001; Sykes, 2014). “Wrongs” cover a wide spectrum: actions deemed wrong at a social level such as crime, at a moral level, or at a personal level (e.g., someone saying something harmful). Relatedly, enemies (Koyama, 1993; Loring, 2001) are also to be hospitably encountered. Enemies may be defined as individuals who are experiencing interpersonal conflict, as well as members of groups which are in conflict (such as citizens of countries that are at war with each other). The “vulnerable” (Pohl, 2012, p. 25) are also to be hospitably encountered. They include the “poor and needy” (Carroll, 2011, p. 523), refugees, and also those no longer connected with groups, like their family or work community, that are important to them (Carroll, 2011; Pohl, 2012). Those individuals who are forgotten by society, not because they are vulnerable, but rather because their lives are unnoticed or ignored (Durley, 2012; Pohl & Buck, 2004; Sykes, 2014) are also to be hospitably encountered. Interestingly, Nouwen (1986) claims that hospitality must

be demonstrated toward colleagues at school, work, and in other settings, such as athletic competitions. While seemingly obvious, Nouwen (1986) convincingly contends that social settings like the workplace or classroom environment are often characterized by competition, suspicion, hostility, fear, and even aggression. Where there is “a threat” to “intellectual or professional safety” (Nouwen, 1986, p. 69), people become fearful and defensive, and encounters are hindered. All these groups of diverse others (i.e., strangers, the needy, the wrongdoers, etc.) are not mutually exclusive. For instance, Koyama (1993) argues that demonstrating hospitality toward an enemy is the “ultimate” (p. 284) example of demonstrating hospitality toward a stranger. Further, those considered strangers or wrongdoers can be found in the workplace.

The framework states that everyone must hospitably encounter others, and that no one is to be omitted from the welcome (Frambach, 2011; Stark, 1996). Hospitality, then, can be *extended* to and *demonstrated* by anyone, at any time and any place. This aspect of the hospitality framework has the potential to be especially helpful in relation to encountering diverse others in social work. Arguably, social workers are already dedicated to welcoming the vulnerable, needy and forgotten in society (International Federation of Social Workers, 2012a). But, the findings suggest social workers might be challenged to extend this welcome. Most specifically, this framework challenges social workers to intentionally encounter those whose differences cause fear or competition, discomfort or hostility. A hospitable approach to social work education might include, for example, offering social work students who hold political or religious beliefs considered oppressive according to social work standards the space to speak in class. Hospitable social work research might involve purposely meeting with fellow social work researchers or faculty to discuss areas of interest when these are oppositional. In short, the hospitality framework invites social workers to find ways to demonstrate unconditional, unlimited hospitality, love, and reverence toward those who are difficult to encounter. This is not limited to just those served by social workers. It also includes encountering fellow social workers.

Additionally, a number of social work approaches for encountering diversity, such as critical race theory or the feminist framework, concern themselves with elements of diversity such as race or gender respectively. Of central focus are those experiencing marginalization due to their differences. The universality of the hospitality framework offers social workers an alternative way of thinking about encountering diversity. Rather than focus on one issue or group of persons at a time, this framework is meant to apply to all encounters.

Relationships and dialogue. Hospitality requires an encounter characterized by an “exchange” (de Béthune, 2007, p. 3) or dialogue.

Conversations characterized by hospitality can begin simply and casually (Carroll, 2011). They involve being invested in truly understanding the story of the other, and so sharing stories is encouraged as well as facilitated by asking questions about people's lives, experiences, and what is important to them and why (e.g., their faith, their hopes) (Durley, 2012). Clarifying questions should be asked, if necessary, to ensure stories are understood properly (Durley, 2012) because language is not neutral, and words mean different things to different people (de Béthune, 2007). Since the intent of hospitable dialogue is to strengthen understanding and relationships, not convince others of one's perspective (Mosher, 2011), judgement must be reserved (Durley, 2012). Instead, attentive, curious, interested, courteous, patient listening must be practiced (Mosher, 2011; Yong, 2008). Listeners should also share their stories (Durley, 2012) and do so in understandable ways (Brandner, 2013).

Dialogue itself, however, may not be hospitable unless the environment, and the attitude undergirding the dialogue, is hospitable (de Béthune, 2007). Where dialogue is characterized by hospitable attitudes such as humility, openness, and curiosity, it can "blossom" (Carroll, 2007, p. 522) into a relationship (Gaddy, 2004) or what theologians would call friendship (Koyama, 1993). In social work, this might be called development of rapport or therapeutic relationships (Tosone, 2004). In a hospitable space, honesty, mutuality, respect and trust can be established (Durley, 2012). Whether or not an encounter turns into a friendship or relationship (Kinnamon, 1999), hospitality must be present and make friendship possible. The relationships between parties, then, are prioritized over dialogue (Adeney et al., 2012).

Encounters where hospitable dialogue is present provide opportunities to see the "real" (Durley, 2012, p. 102) lives of others including struggles, experiences, and beliefs. They move beyond "mere" (de Béthune, 2007, p. 7) discussion or "exchanges of knowledge" (de Béthune, 2007, p. 6) or information, toward "communion" (de Béthune, 2007, p. 6) and intimate understanding (de Béthune, 2007; Kessler, 2012). They provide opportunities to learn how to "live together," "[envision a] future together" (Yong, 2008, p. 156) and work together. They allow each party to move away from their own perspectives, "meet" (de Béthune, 2007, p. 6) the other and "welcome them as a friend who is different" (Durley, 2012, p. 101). These dialogues illuminate common struggles, experiences and beliefs (Durley, 2012) and make the other less strange (Carroll, 2011). When encounters are characterized by authentic welcome, trust, and understanding (de Béthune, 2007), they can "[remove] stereotypes, [break] down barriers, [heal] old hurts, and [build] bridges" (Kessler, 2012, p. 383). This is particularly important for encountering diverse others. Much of social work practice involves managing cases or resolving problems and it can become almost natural to relate to those served in superficial and problem-focused ways.

As a result, barriers, especially due to expertise or authority between social workers and 'clients,' can easily become erected. Negative perceptions of those encountered, especially in difficult areas such as child protection or law enforcement, can become established. The findings suggest, however, that social workers consider finding ways to dialogue more relationally in order to commune with, rather than manage, those served, to listen with humility and curiosity as they tell their full stories, and search for the human in the clients encountered.

Unity. The hospitality framework is undergirded by a universalistic attitude toward encountered others and self. Encountered others are theologically perceived of as "brothers," (de Béthune, 2007, p. 13; Carroll, 2011; Pohl & Buck, 2004; Yong, 2008) or equals and at minimum, united in common humanity (Carroll, 2011). Human unity is a "traditional [Christian] doctrine" (Torbett 2005-2006, p. 120), "an article of faith," (Torbett 2005-2006, p. 127) with moral power (Torbett 2005-2006). The doctrine of unity and the usage of sibling language have "faith-based anthropological assumptions" (Torbett 2005-2006, p. 128). In other words, God created all human beings in His own image (Torbett 2005-2006) and so humans, like kin, are equal and united in humanity (Heaton, 1937; The Reconstructionist, 1947; Vanier, 2008). Theologically, Heaton (1937) adds, "God is no respecter of persons. He has no favorites...no man is intrinsically before God better than another" (p. 69). The moral imperatives and doctrines undergirding the theology of hospitality are summed up nicely by Pope John Paul II (1988) who said that:

It is Christ, in effect, "[who is] the first-born among many brethren (Rm 8:29), who makes us discover in every human person, friend or even enemy, a brother or a sister. Christ, who came "not to condemn the world but to save it" (cf. John 3:17), calls all humanity to unity (p. 120).

At the very least, "sibling language" (Horrell, 1999 as cited in Horrell, 2001, p. 301) is meant to communicate the "equal value" (Horrell, 1999 as cited in Horrell, 2001, p. 301) of persons (Carroll, 2011; Hebrews 13:2; Horrell, 1999 as cited in Horrell, 2001), although the words of Pope John Paul II (1988) capture deeper imperatives such as the moral importance of loving and "regarding" (Horrell, 1999 as cited in Horrell, 2001, p. 301) and being concerned about the other (Carroll, 2011; Horrell, 1999 as cited in Horrell, 2001). Through Jesus, Christians have a mission to "promote union" (Fortune, 1919, p. 17) amongst themselves and in broader society. Having said this, because all are united by humanity, arguably, this imperative is for everyone, not just Christians. The findings suggest social workers might consider perceiving encountered others, whether they are fellow social workers, students, or clients as brothers/sisters united in common

humanity. Taking such a stance may soften some of the hierarchies or distinctions between persons, such as between those who are 'social workers' and those who are 'clients.'

According to Torbett (2005-2006), the doctrine of unity also has "moral force" (p. 120). Unity and equality denies the prejudices that separate people and condemns "permanent, rigid, social distinctions" (Torbett, 2005-2006, p. 128) between people. This religious doctrine can, in fact, move people's thinking toward unity – even when there is personal resistance to it (Torbett, 2005-2006). Recognizing others as brothers and equals paradoxically challenges the "labels" and "identities" ascribed to people so they can be removed because it is these labels and identities that can emphasize distance and difference, and lead to the fear and hostility that erodes the willingness to hospitably encounter others (Gaddy, 2004). Instead, hospitable encounters characterized by brother/sisterhood and unity involve overcoming hostilities and reluctance to know others who are different by identifying others "in their humanity" (Volf, 1996, p. 29). It is very difficult to refuse to demonstrate hospitality toward someone perceived of as kin or as united. Identities remain, but divisive usage is challenged (e.g., prioritizing one's identity, avoiding those with different identities) (Vosloo, 2004). Jesus intentionally blurred the lines between various groups, making it obvious He was uninterested in differences, but instead, interested in unity. Further, He powerfully united different groups of people, like Jews and Gentiles (Boys & Alexander, 2012; Pohl & Buck, 2004; Sykes, 2014), who were historically in conflict with one another through hospitable encounters. Is it possible for social workers to similarly promote the same unity through hospitality? The findings suggest this framework may provide social workers ways of seeing past the divisions between people that can be created by labels and identities such as 'victim', 'perpetrator', 'newcomer', 'minority' or even 'client' to, instead, blur differences and unite people. This is not the same, however, as completely eliminating differences. There are and should be, for example, clear boundaries between 'social workers' and 'clients.' Instead, unity is somewhat akin to mutuality in social work where parties are united by their interaction and how they influence one other by being authentically themselves (Tosone, 2004).

Paradoxes. Christian hospitality is rich, textured, and multifaceted, and also paradoxical. Jesus Himself, throughout the New Testament, illustrates some of the inherent paradoxical rules, roles, practices and reception inherent within encounters characterized by hospitality (Boys & Alexander, 2012; Sykes, 2014; Yong, 2008). For instance, Jesus regularly acted as a guest and relied on the hospitality of strangers for refuge (de Béthune, 2007; Yong, 2008). In behaving as a guest, Jesus accepted food, shelter, and the kindness of many (Yong, 2008). Having said this, Jesus demonstrated the hospitality of God toward His hosts in His behaviour and kindness (Yong,

2008) and so He became the host. This hospitality, however, was not always appreciated because in His role as guest, He often “violated the prohibitions” (de Béthune, 2007, p. 15) of His time and culture (de Béthune, 2007; Vogels, 2002). These violations were necessary because they demonstrated and communicated appropriate God-driven hospitality in encounters.

For instance, when Jesus was invited to have dinner with the Pharisees in Luke chapter 7, some of the hospitable actions He was supposed to receive in the encounter with His hosts, the Pharisees, such as having His feet washed, were not demonstrated. Instead, when a woman “who lived a sinful life” (Luke 7:37-38, NIV) saw Him, she encountered Him by bringing perfume, and washing His feet with her tears and hair. In response, the Pharisees were shocked Jesus would allow Himself to be touched by the sinful woman (Luke 7:39). Disobeying His role as a guest, Jesus rebuked their failure in hospitably encountering Him, and commended her behaviour instead (Luke 7:44-46). In allowing Himself to be touched by a sinful woman, Jesus defied the accepted practice of hospitality on two levels. Not only that, His rebuke of the (non) hospitable practices demonstrated by respected religious leaders would also be deemed completely inappropriate in His day and culture, and in His role as guest. In His actions, He showed how “the real sinner is not the outcast but the one who casts the other out” (Kinnamon, 1999, p. 163). The findings suggest that Christian hospitality is not straightforward, and therefore, the concepts, principles and practices are not uncomplicated for social workers to consider or adopt. Social workers may experience situations where paradoxical and even counter-cultural practices may be desirable to ensure that encounters are hospitable. A field supervisor, for instance, may choose to defy their role as host to behave as a guest in order to welcome and elevate the ideas and opinions of novice or student interns. This framework, then, invites complexity in how social workers encounter persons in a variety of contexts.

Additional Considerations and Potential Challenges to Implementing Hospitality

There are a number of challenges inherent in the framework to consider (FitzGerald, 2011; Nouwen, 1986; Pohl & Buck, 2004; Yong, 2008). These challenges will be discussed, and consideration will be given to how they may actually be viewed as strengths.

Paradoxes. There are many paradoxes and tensions within the framework and these might be considered a challenge. On the one hand, the framework offers simple (not easy), concrete ways of thinking and action related to encountering others while simultaneously refusing easy, concrete thinking and action (Nouwen, 1986). The framework’s imperative, for instance, *to universally encounter others* is simple, but there is

simultaneously a refusal to offer specific *directives* for encountering diverse others because everyone, and every encounter, dialogue and relationship is unique. Instead of these paradoxes being problematic, however, scholars feel they are “fruitful” (Reynolds, 2006, p. 196; Nouwen, 1986). The discomfort that arises from uneasy questions and a lack of answers provides opportunities for careful consideration and demands intentional thought and reflection (Nouwen, 1986). Silence, having no answers, stillness, the unknown, and even contemplation are uncomfortable, and often lead to grasping for quick solutions and resolution rather than engaging in more careful thinking (Nouwen, 1986). In citing Don Juan, Nouwen (1986) asks “how we can ever expect something really new to happen to us if our hearts and minds are so full of our own concerns that we do not even listen to the sounds announcing a new reality”? (p. 75). This framework presents paradoxical questions and answers and invites contemplation, struggle, failure, and learning. This demands a willingness to “sacrifice time, energy, resources, and even adjust our daily priorities in order to open ourselves to receiving the stranger, the other” (FitzGerald, 2011, p. 162). This ought to be done repeatedly and consistently until it becomes typical of every situation and with every person encountered (Pohl & Buck, 2004).

Challenging one’s own tendency to be inhospitable. Successfully encountering others using this framework requires being quick to challenge one’s own tendencies to be inhospitable: to fear, resist, judge, emphasize difference between people (Carroll, 2011), or avoid encounters. It involves being prepared to “recognize [one’s] own vulnerabilities and incompleteness [in order to be] open to what others can contribute” (Pohl, 2012, p. 25). It involves adjusting one’s attitude to living a life of welcome and grace and choosing to cross divisions (Carroll, 2011; de Béthune, 2007). It requires humility and a commitment to learning how to do this, especially because this means facing personal fears, sins, or assumptions about others (Carroll, 2011; FitzGerald, 2011). In practice, this might mean that social work instructors, for instance, consider strategies for permitting students to voice contentious perspectives in the classroom when it might be easier not to do so. It might mean choosing or seeking opportunities to collaborate with those who hold oppositional, rather than similar, research interests or positions.

Hospitality must be free and unconditional, which means that guests must be accepted without having to agree with, or think in the same way as, their hosts (Nouwen, 1986). At the same time, hostilities do exist, and so there must be a willingness to acknowledge them (Nouwen, 1986). While the host need not accept the thoughts and behaviours of the guest, and can, in fact, challenge the guest, they must do so only after creating an hospitable environment and attitude (Nouwen, 1986).

Since this framework is universal, everyone is to be hospitably encountered and welcomed regardless of who they are, whether they are strangers, the unlovable, or even *an enemy* (Koyama, 1993; Luke 14:12-14), and regardless of the level of discomfort, fear (Carroll, 2011), reluctance or resistance to encounter them (Carroll, 2011; Gible, 1981; Pohl & Buck, 2004). Not only that, welcome is to be offered without “grumbling” (1 Peter 4:9, New International Version). All of this can be unnerving (Frambach, 2011) and challenging, precisely because those who have caused personal and/or social harm, or who are feared, are avoided rather than encountered. This is because they bring something uncomfortable, such as a different worldview. Encountering everyone is not deemed normal according to society’s standards, and therefore this challenges the status quo (Kinnamon, 1999), which, in itself, can be unnerving. According to Pohl (2012), challenging one’s own tendency to avoid encounters or behave inhospitably is also rewarding and people feel blessed as a result.

Failure. Scholars are quick to point out that Christians do not always successfully demonstrate hospitality in their encounters, as historical examples make evident (Boys & Alexander, 2012; de Béthune, 2007; Durley, 2012; Koyama, 1993; Pohl & Buck, 2004; Sykes, 2014). Of what use, then, is a framework that people fail to put into practice? The failures noted and discussed in this framework are actually educational as Christians, both individually and in their collective role as the church, acknowledge and confess their own past failings, challenge why they happened, learn from them, and aspire to, and move toward, transformation and change with God’s help (Boys & Alexander, 2012; de Béthune, 2007; Durley, 2012; Gible, 1981; Koyama, 1993; Pohl & Buck, 2004; Sykes, 2014). Lessons have already been learned about what does not work, in addition to what will lead to more successful encounters; this knowledge provides a foundation upon which to determine how to improve future encounters. Further, scholars regularly talk about hospitality as something that *ought* to happen in an aspirational sense, not as something that always *does* happen. Finally, it is Christians themselves who have failed, not the framework (Torbett, 2005-2006). Not only is acknowledging, learning from, and changing as a result of failure an asset in this framework, it may be argued that all religious traditions, persons and scholars might consider participating in a similar reflexive process regardless of whether or not they are Christian or utilizing this framework (Boys & Alexander, 2012).

A framework with theological roots in social work? The hospitality framework as it has been presented in this paper is necessarily embedded within Christian theology. An obvious strength, as mentioned, is its rich, historically extensive learnings. Regardless of how it is practiced, the Christian hospitality framework incorporates spiritual elements making it different from other frameworks (Anderson, 1998; de Béthune, 2007; Sykes,

2014). It is full of theological ideas and ideals, however, and these cannot and should not be divorced from the framework for it to remain a *Christian theological framework*. This rightly raises questions about its relevance and usage within social work. As one author does (see Sykes, 2014), I contend that just as metaphorical “space” (p. 66) is made for any new ideas that can reasonably be learned from, space can be made within social work for the ideas raised in this Christian, theologically-driven framework. Throughout this article, examples have been provided to illustrate how concepts from this framework might be implemented in a variety of contexts by social workers regardless of their personal faith tradition.

I recognize some would challenge the values, beliefs and truths this framework maintains. While perhaps a challenge, it might be argued in contrast that other frameworks offer their own beliefs, ideas, and truths. I agree with Amos Yong (2008), then, that everyone, regardless of their history, values, or beliefs, can be invited to assess their own beliefs and practices, and the alignment of these things related to encountering and welcoming others against this framework, especially since knowing about both self and other are important when encountering new ideas. At minimum, introducing this framework calls *all* encountered parties (e.g., Christians, non-Christians, social workers) to explore and understand their own perspectives for encountering diverse others, including one another. It calls all parties into dialogue about encounters generally, and to find ways to learn from one another specifically.

Conclusion

The necessity of encountering diverse others in social work is outlined in a number of professional social work regulations, policies, and codes (International Federation of Social Workers, 2012a, 2012b), yet it is unclear how best to do so. While the profession itself offers several helpful frameworks (e.g., anti-oppressive practice, inclusion/exclusion framework), many diverse others still remain unsuccessfully encountered.

The hospitality framework introduced in this paper is an informative alternative framework for encountering diverse others in professional social work. It is worth considering because its roots are in Christian biblical theology, and this promises a firm foundation upon which to learn about and appreciate diverse others as well as self. This framework affirms otherness and difference while offering strategies for encouraging diversity to thrive. Embedded within the framework are potential challenges and areas where Christians have failed, both of which offer additional opportunities to successfully implement the moral, ethical, and theological imperatives outlined in this framework. This framework delivers wisdom and insight to those social workers seeking novel, innovative ways to more successfully

support and encourage diversity, while remaining consistent with Christian doctrines and theologies. ❖

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Points of Discourse: Reconciling Christianity and Social Work through Critical Theory

Buetta Warkentin & Alexander Sawatsky

A conflictual relationship is present between Christianity and social work. This theoretical paper proposes a conversation between social work and faith that is emerging due to the shared experience of modernity and postmodernity through critical theory. The reader is invited to explore a possible intersection between social work and faith that allows for both to be changed in the encounter.

A CHASM APPEARS TO HAVE FORMED BETWEEN SOCIAL WORK AND Christianity. Modernity, augured by the era of enlightenment, has privileged rational thought and dismissed faith as irrelevant (Taylor, 2007). Expert knowledge, codified by degree-granting institutions, has become the only valid form of knowledge. Faith is, at best, perceived as a personal value and, at worst, a damaging and dangerous oppressive force. Value neutrality, or an objective, rational stance is seen as more valid than practice informed by faith. Put another way, in our quest to become a profession, social workers have seen how expert knowledge has superseded faith as the primary lens for practice.

The civil rights era provided a rich environment for theories that took aim at institutions and places of power, to challenge and question their role in society. The church, often seen as the birthplace of the civil rights movement, has also been criticized for its role in facilitating oppression rather than liberation. This current predicament stands in sharp contrast to a shared origin, a helping profession emerging from evangelical Christian theology and the Social Gospel movement (Bowpitt, 1998; Christie & Gavreau, 1996; Cnaan, Wineburg & Boddie, 1999; Coates, 2007; Curtis, 2001; Graham, Coholic & Coates, 2006; Vanderwoerd, 2011).

There is opportunity, however, for a dialectical exchange between Christianity and social work. The ideas or theories in social work related to critical theory may open up a space for both faith and social work theories to improve upon each other rather than to exist in opposition. This paper will explore this dialectic by engaging with critical theory, including its influence on current thinking in social work as well as on Christian faith. We intend to stimulate the reader into contemplating and seeking ways to engage in a dialectic of faith and practice that incorporates the very ideas that may have been used to dismiss or sideline Christian social workers from the greater social work discourse.

To do so, the paper will provide a brief description of the evolution of thought and practice in social work related to the emergence of critical theory. It will illustrate how critical theory has influenced social work. The remaining portion of this paper will then examine how Christian thought has been shaped in response to modern and postmodern thought, concluding with a suggestion of how to approach a new way of thinking about integrating contemporary social work and Christian perspectives.

Critical Theory and Social Work

In social work we have come to realize the limits of positivism and the search for objective truth tied to the modern scientific method, and the potential for postmodern critical theory to address the structural injustices of the world. Critical theory has its roots in the thought of Karl Marx and the commodification of not only products, but the workers that make them (Agger, 2006). The Frankfurt School developed critical theory in refining Marxist ideas about power and conflict while helping us to understand why Marx' revolution didn't occur (Agger, 2006). They would suggest that part of the problem is that the hegemony of the dominant ideology, made omnipresent in the media and our culture, prevents us from seeing alternatives. For example, democracy becomes not simply an idea, but the only definition of freedom and goodness.

Any suffering that society experiences has to be dealt with to maintain the status quo. For Marx (1970), religion was the opium for the masses. Suffering was valorized via faith and believers remain passive, awaiting their reward in the next life. In contrast, critical theorists sought to understand how faith is no longer the source of people's passivity and recast this as the present culture itself. Now media and consumerism and its manufactured popular culture keep us blind and passive (Agger, 2006). Critical theory teaches us that the notion of ever-increasing knowledge as evidence of moral advancement is foolish and even arrogant – that there is no need to assume that these grand narratives of a society evolving steadily towards a better society are true or even real (Leonard, 2001).

From a critical theory perspective, the expert is the one who holds the power of knowledge and wields authority over what is considered normal or rational (Blanchot & Foucault, 1987). Anything that doesn't submit to these new definitions is ignored or even destroyed. Foucault alerts us to this concern of power and the exclusion of that which is defined as non-normative or unreasonable, creating a version of reality that shuts down discourse and establishes a discipline of being.

While some critiques of Foucault exist (e.g., Wolin, 1988), a legacy of his writings is the idea that one ought to be critical of places where power is being exerted, be they prisons, institutions or even class rooms and religious institutions. "The pathologizing and fragmenting of people's lives thus served the interests of capitalist society and was counter-productive to notions of a collective class experience or response" (Martin, 2003, p. 22). The concern here is how social work is complicit in this act of exerting power for individual conformity as part of the "tinkering trades" (Goffman, 1961). Moreover, it may be difficult for social workers to even see themselves as oppressors, that they are in effect caught in their own hegemony.

Foucault advanced another important idea that affected social work: genealogy. His work on this concept involved looking at how previously unrelated concepts share a common root (Scheurich & McKenzie, 2005). For example, the social work profession emerged from within a social system. The post-Marxist critique took aim at North American and British social work, seeing the profession primarily as an agent of the state, providing a social control function via the welfare system (Martin, 2003). It shares a common connection to a system and other more overt agents of social control. Social work will not be able to resolve its own involvement in social control until it can see its own connection to the system. The profession cannot therefore be outside of the system due to myriad connections to the system within which it is lodged. It is worth stating that this is not an indictment of the character or even the intention of the social worker. The problem lies with how this is seen and understood. If welfare reform is seen as the solution to problems with poverty, we never stop to consider the capitalist structures that cause such inequity in the first place. Our collective blindness maintains a system that is essentially exploitative and oppressive to those on the margins.

Ultimately, the point of critical theory is to raise the consciousness of people in order for them to be able to liberate themselves by providing the intellectual tools (i.e., ideas) to do so. Agger (1998, as cited in Mullaly, 2007, p. 216) summarizes the main ingredients of Critical Social Theories. They must oppose positivism, challenge temporal views of a historical narrative that unearths exploitation via activism and visioning of a liberated future. All forms of domination are understood to be structural in nature, be they political, cultural or economic. Everyone's personal sphere is impacted by these structural forces that shape and subjugate one's experience of the world.

Another idea found in these theories is related to how change happens in everyone's personal life first. There needs to be an intimate personal experience primarily before greater social change is possible. Those who are seeking liberation ought not to do so at the cost of oppressing others (Agger, 1998, as cited in Mullaly, 2007, p. 216). This is an interesting point given the challenges that some have encountered when expressing their religious views or orientations and being told that this has no place in contemporary social work practice (Hodge, 2011; Thyer & Myers, 2009;).

What is interesting is that the growing influence of post-modernism would begin to shape ideas around critical theory, impacting current ideas around social work practice (Mullaly, 2007). Post-modernism speaks into critical theory's views of power and oppression by claiming that each individual experiences oppression differently and for different reasons. Hence, this needs to be the focus – to provide space in the discourse that dispenses with grand narratives and a view of history as the story of progress/the evolution or improvement of humanity. Rather, history is viewed with suspicion, seen as the articulation of dominance rather than a truth to be defended. One important idea in post-modernism is the idea of the other – that we ought to get out of the way and let the others speak for themselves (Mullaly, 2007). This idea has not only shaped practice but social work research as well. Qualitative approaches are now legitimate avenues for social work to engage in research with an interest in ensuring that knowledge generation be localized, personal and political (e.g., Fook, 2002).

Mullaly (2007) addresses the inherent challenges found in both modernist and post-modernist critical social theory. At the heart of his analysis is the idea that the post-modernist leaves us rudderless, without a clear approach as each individual experience is unique. He makes the case that the modernist's ideas around a unified theory of structural oppression and domination is perhaps worth revisiting. In effect, the dialectic of both ideas--modernism and post-modernism in critical social theory—is that modernism provides the target (of change/oppression) while post modernism reminds that each individual will experience oppression differently. For real change to occur, a focus point is needed. We need to remain restless, however, as we need to continue to be reminded of all the forms of oppression that need attention.

History of Christianity and Social Work

Christianity and social work have had a complicated relationship. Historically, social work was birthed out of the values and ideology of a socially conscious Christian ethos. As social work emerged into the status of a profession, it distanced itself from these Christian roots relying on positivism and scientific methodology of the modern era rather than the ambiguities

of faith. In concert with the rest of society, it became secularized (Bowpitt, 1998; Cnaan, Wineburg & Boddie, 1999; Graham, Coholic & Coates, 2006). Secular social work came to see itself as value-free and objective, and religion and spirituality were seen as imposing an inappropriate value base on the profession. There were concerns that attention to religion would violate the separation between church and state (Canda & Furman, 2010; Cnaan, Wineburg & Boddie, 1999; Coates, 2007).

In the late 20th century, European and North American societies experienced a continued decrease in interest and participation in organized religion, while interest in more individualized forms of spirituality increased (Coates, 2007; Cox, 2009). In social work, we have also seen a resurgence of interest in spirituality that is not necessarily grounded in religion and an openness to exploring spirituality as we seek to understand the whole person (Coates, 2007; Hodge, 2012). There has remained, however, a suspicion of Christianity, in part because of concerns of religious fundamentalism, and the assumption that Christians would discriminate against or place judgments, moral or otherwise, on clients whose choices are at odds with Christian beliefs, or that Christian social workers would cross boundaries and attempt to proselytize clients (Canda & Furman, 2010; Hodge, 2011; Todd & Coholic, 2007; Vanderwoerd, 2010).

Critical Theory and Christian Theology

As we explore the current potential for integration of Christianity and social work, it is important to understand that as social work has shifted and evolved, Christianity has also shifted and evolved in response to modernity and post-modernity. Betcher (2005), a post-modern theologian, notes that modernity had the effect of making us reach for “foundationalist” approaches to religion such as Biblical positivism or literalism, resulting in religious fundamentalism and scripturally-based evangelicalism (p. 320). It is these dogmatic beliefs that are often most at odds with secularism and with the values of the social work profession such as non-discrimination and client self-determination. Much has been written about the challenges of reconciling a more orthodox Christianity with the values of the profession (Hodge, 2011; Todd & Coholic, 2007; Vanderwoerd, 2010), and while there is still a strong evangelical and fundamentalist wing of Christianity, there has also been a strong development of Christian theology that responds to the post-modern focus on personal experience and power and oppression of critical theory (e.g., Mullaly, 2007). McLaren (2016), a contemporary Christian writer, also notes that Christianity has too long been allied with power and supremacy in a way that has oppressed others rather than recognizing that the message of Christ is a rejection of domination and supremacy. Betcher (2005) rightfully reminds us that “as Christians we live within the public

humiliation of Christianity – within the decades consequent to its imbrication with racism, sexism, colonialism, cultural genocide... critical theories, like the practice of confession, prevent us from simply burying our sins under the insecurities of our present time” (p. 319).

Critical theory’s critiques of power and oppression can be seen in liberation theology, feminist, womanist and queer theologies, post-colonial theology and voices from the global south who all understand that the Bible is deeply political, that it involves “recognition that God has taken sides in history and is the sponsor and agent of revolutionary transformation of the world” (Brueggeman, 2011, p. 5). These liberation theologies have brought the postmodern critical lens to Christianity. Rather than blindly accepting the doctrine of the Church on authority, they move us beyond the modern exercise of exploring only a rational Christian theology of academics to a post-modern incorporation of grassroots Christian communities to read and make their Christianity relevant to their world, recognizing and breaking with the hegemony of the Church (Rowland, 2011). Elisabeth Shussler-Fiorenza (1993), writes of feminist theology as a critical theology of liberation. “Theology has to abandon its so-called objectivity and has to become partisan. Only when theology is on the side of the outcast and oppressed, as was Jesus, can it become incarnational and Christian. Christian theology, therefore, has to be rooted in emancipatory praxis and solidarity” (p. 67). Post-colonial theology struggles with the “near ubiquity of colonizing power,” and speaks to the counter-imperial nature of Jesus and the early Christian movements (Taylor, 2011, p. 625). This is a different model from the moralizing that was said to depict the early religious interest in social welfare. These new critical theologies are rooted in the ground of the individual contexts of small-base faith communities who together discern and interpret the meaning of scripture in the particularity of their lives as a people oppressed. It is out of this context that we see actions like those of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (2016) who, in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, publicly reject the falsehoods and assertions associated with the Doctrine of Discovery and the 15th century Papal Bulls that resulted in the colonization of Indigenous peoples and was the root of centuries of pain and suffering.

Critical Social Work and Christian Theology in Conversation

West (1989) notes that it is not only religion that can be dogmatic. We should be “concerned with the forms of dogmatism and authoritarianism in secular garb that trump dialogue and foreclose debate... that secular policing can be as arrogant and coercive as religious policing” (as cited in Mendieta & VanAntwerpen, 2011, p. 11). West (2011) reminds us that there is a difference between those dominant religions that uphold the status quo, and

those “prophetic religions” that are a “fugitive affair,” for whom the “condition of truth is to allow suffering to speak” (p. 99). He reminds us that secular thinkers must be more open to hearing the voices of the religious, just as the religious must also open themselves with “empathy and imagination” to the voices of the secular, whether atheist or agnostic, and must learn to listen as well to the other religious voices around us (West, 1989, as cited in Mendieta & VanAntwerpen, 2011, p. 11). What then can secular social work learn from prophetic religions, and how can a prophetic Christianity be strengthened by the critical social work lens?

Critical social work has been noted to be devoid of spirituality, and Butot (2007) suggests that while Christian values, as evident in the early profession, functioned oppressively as an extension of colonization, the lack of space for spirituality has been a detriment to practice. In interviewing spiritually-informed critical social work practitioners, she found that spirituality was an important ground for emancipatory work, allowing practitioners to act from a stance of loving commitment towards others, and offering a grounding that can support and sustain the work.

Critical social work theory emerged with the post-modern movement away from the positivism of modernity and the quest for a universal truth to be found in secular rational thought. It believes that social reality is constructed, and that language is power (Mullaly, 2007). Feminist social work has brought the realization that the personal is political (Heinonen & Spearman, 2010). While this references the concept that individual problems must be seen as difficulties in community and worthy of advocacy in the political sphere, we can also use this logic to ground the belief that religious worldviews have a place in how we understand and respond to the problems of the individual in our world. In this context, discourse between religion and social work is important. To be a social worker is to be political, to work for justice and to enter into the particularity of our client’s stories, and to work to transform the unjust structures in society that serve to maintain inequality and oppression. Christianity, particularly those theologies that are grounded in the political nature of Christ’s message and God’s redemptive and saving presence in history, create space for a critical assessment of the role of the Church as a colonizer, as a power that was and is used to oppress, while also calling Christians to be on the side of the poor and marginalized (Baum, 1987; Betcher, 2005; Brueggeman, 2011; Gutierrez, 1988; McLaren, 2016).

Critical theory reminds us that inasmuch as social work has struggled with being part of the system, as Christians we need to own that we have been a part of the system, too. We are not outside, but inside, the system and need to examine ways that we can remove ourselves from this insider status, to allow critical social work to “make strange” our faith. In this way, we return to the roots of Christianity as a voice on the margins, questioning

the oppression of the established system, whether political or religious. An unsettling of our faith will actually help strengthen our faith and move it beyond belief in dogma and doctrine to an active and vibrant force for change. Critical social work theory can help us identify targets for change that allow us to move from lament and remorse to reconciliation and healing. Critical theory and Anti-Oppressive Practice can help to remind us of our prophetic voice for truth, “allowing the suffering to speak” (West, 2011, p. 99). They can help us to ensure that we are not speaking instead of the marginalized, but that we hear and amplify the voices of those affected directly speaking their own truth.

Jon Singletary (2005) articulates a potential method of applying the liberation theology notion of praxis to social work practice, inviting a cycle of reflection on the beliefs, as well as knowledge and values, that inform our practice, and that are subsequently shaped by our practice. He identifies this as a hermeneutical cycle where “faith informs practice informs faith” (p. 57). Christians in social work tend to work from the notion that their faith will in some way provide a lens through which they understand their practice (Chamiec-Case, 2007), but we often assume that our religious worldviews are inviolate, that social work as a profession will not have an impact on what we believe about or how we practice Christianity. On the contrary, we have seen how Christian theology has been impacted by the movements of the world around it, and we know that one cannot practice as a social worker and bear witness to the needs around us without having it affect how we read and understand the Bible and our beliefs about Christianity. There is not one Christian worldview, but a multiplicity of Christian confessions and beliefs that operate in various states of tension with the predominant secularist Western worldview.

Conclusion

If we are to integrate both social work practice and faith, we need to model how to be open to letting our faith be altered by social work-related ideas and concepts, and allowing our social work practice to be nourished by our faith. There is need for grace with each other as we grapple with this important piece. Points of conflict need not be avoided if we understand the purpose: to exchange ideas, examine places of disagreement, and emerge with a changed understanding of the world – both in faith and practice.

When we are open to transformation rather than resisting the ways critical theory informs faith and practice, we can potentially even look at how other aspects of our own religious experience is challenged. A critical examination of these potentially contradictory or uneasy alliances that seeks to confront and perhaps accomplish a dialectical understanding may create space for a transformative conversation of what it means to be a Christian

in social work in the 21st century. When we open ourselves with “empathy and imagination” (West, 2011, p. 11 in Mendieta & VanAntwerpen, 2011), we create new avenues to explore how social work with the marginalized can deepen our faith and how our social work in turn can be strengthened by that depth. ❖

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Barriers Confronting Food Pantry Clients: Lack of Kitchen Supplies: A Pilot Study

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Sixty-two percent of food pantries are run by faith-based organizations. Urban food bank consumers from 74 households were surveyed in a pilot study to better understand the kitchen resources (e.g., supplies used to store, prepare, and cook food), and other barriers that may prevent food bank consumers from eating the food they received from a food bank. Findings from this research reveal that a notable percentage of food pantry consumers do not have essential home kitchen resources such as a freezer, sharp knives, can opener, electricity in the kitchen, running water in the kitchen, plates, or bowls. Nearly one third of respondents indicated they had received food from a food pantry that no one in their household ate for a variety of reasons. Uneaten food was most commonly given to friends and family members. For Christian social workers, NASW's ethical mandates to assist people in meeting their basic human needs are accentuated by biblical teachings that call Christians to alleviate the suffering of people who are hungry and poor. This research adds to the limited existing evidence on strategies social workers can use when designing food pantry delivery programs.

PRESENT IN 12.7 % OF ALL U.S. HOUSEHOLDS AND OVER 16% OF households with children, food insecurity (defined as the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food), disproportionately impacts African American, Hispanic, and single-parent households (USDA, 2015). Given this ongoing deprivation, new ways of examining food insecurity should be considered. This paper reviews the use of food pantries as an intervention to assist individuals struggling with

food insecurity and investigates potential barriers that may obstruct the goal of reducing hunger and food insecurity among food pantry consumers, such as not having adequate home kitchen resources (i.e., running water, can opener, bowls). Given that nearly two-thirds of all food pantries are run by faith-based organizations Christian social workers may find these results useful in designing food pantry services (Weinfield et al., 2014).

Literature Review

Food Insecurity

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines households that are food secure as those that “have access at all times to sufficient, safe and nutritious food” (United States Department of Agriculture, 2014). Conversely, households are considered food insecure if they experience three or more of the following conditions: cutting the size of meals; skipping meals; running out of food with no money to buy more; being hungry but not being able to eat because of lack of food or money to buy food; and changing eating patterns away from purchasing healthier food options (e.g., lean proteins, fresh fruit, and vegetables) to a more basic diet dominated by lower-cost, less nutritionally dense foods (Companion, 2010). Significant physical problems are associated with food insecurity such as iron deficiency, over-nutrition, under-nutrition, developmental delays, and hospitalizations (Cook et al., 2006; Hampton, 2007; Ryu & Bartfeld, 2012). Even minor nutritional deficiencies can negatively impact productivity, school performance, attentiveness, learning readiness, family functioning, social relationships, and psychological health (Casey et al., 2005; Howard, 2011).

Food Pantries

A myriad of public and privately funded interventions has been developed to assist families who struggle with hunger and food insecurity. The five largest publicly funded U.S. nutritional assistance programs include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). A sizeable percentage (62%) of US households with food insecurity participate in one of the three largest federal food assistance programs (Coleman-Jensen, Gregory & Singh, 2014). Combined, these programs have reduced hunger; yet, food insecurity still persists in many of the households served by these programs. As a remedy, a growing network of food banks, food kitchens, and food pantries have emerged, providing over 3 billion pounds of food

and grocery items to more than 46.5 million Americans annually (Weinfield, et al, 2014).

Food pantries and soup kitchens are the primary providers of direct emergency food assistance in the US (Coleman-Jensen, Gregory, & Singh, 2014). Food pantries are designed to provide food to individuals who can store and prepare their own food, whereas soup kitchens provide prepared meals to individuals who may not have a home. Food banks distribute food to both food pantries and emergency kitchens. The US government provides commodities to over half of US food banks totaling 14 percent of the food distributed through food banks (Ohls et al., 2002 cited in Coleman-Jensen, Gregory, & Singh, 2014). In the US, there are an estimated 200 food banks that work with over 63,000 shelters and food pantries (USDA, 2013). Although accurate current data are difficult to obtain, it is estimated that 25.3 million Americans visited food pantries in 2006 (Companion, 2010). Even before the global economic recession, US food pantry use was increasing (USDA, 2013). Despite the growing availability of food pantries throughout the country, millions of Americans are still food insecure.

Move Toward Fresh Food

Many people who experience food insecurity receive an adequate number of calories, but they do not consume nutrient dense foods (Hampton, 2007). Individuals who are food insecure tend to be limited to eating low-cost, low nutrient foods like noodles, potatoes, and bread to stretch their budgets – items that are easier for community-based food pantries to have in stock. Previous research evaluating the nutritional content of food distributed at food pantries indicated variation, but overall suggested that the nutritional value in the food was below recommended levels of vitamins A, B12, C and the essential minerals calcium, magnesium and zinc (Akobundu, 2004; Irwin et al., 2007; Kaiser, Osso, and Thomas-Ramiley, 2013; Martin and Robaina, 2013.).

Recent efforts have been made by food banks to provide more fresh fruits, meat, poultry, fish, and vegetables (Irwin et al., 2007; Hanforth et al., 2013). For example, Feeding America launched the Fresh Produce initiative in 2012, and in 2015 distributed on average 2 million pounds of fresh produce weekly (Feeding America, 2016). Given this renewed focus on the distribution of fresh food, an evaluation of food pantry consumers' home kitchen resources is necessary to assure that nutritious food is able to be safely stored, prepared, and consumed. The Christian call to feed the hungry has driven many faith-based organizations to open food banks and the changes to the provision of food bank services may be designed and implemented by Christian social workers..

Supplies in Home Kitchens Owned by Food Pantry Consumers

Operators of food pantries often assume that food pantry consumers are able to store and prepare the food they receive from a food pantry; however, this is not always the case. Housing characteristics can play a role in how well food pantry clients can cook and store food. In the *Hunger in America* report, Weinfield et al. (2014) found that 6.9% of food pantry clients were in temporary housing. An earlier report found that 8% of pantry users were homeless (Briefel et al., 2003).

The literature regarding household supplies and appliances available for use by food pantry consumers is limited. Only one known study that measures food pantry consumers' access to kitchen supplies can be located (Weinfield et al., 2014). A sample of 6000 clients from 12,500 food programs (either prepared meal program participants or grocery food item participants) was asked, "Does the place where you live now have a stove, microwave, or hot plate where you can cook food?" and "Does the place where you live now have a place where you can store food to keep it cold so it doesn't spoil, like a refrigerator?" Only 77.3% of the meal program participants had access to methods of cooking food compared to 95% percent of grocery program participants. Only 75% of meal program participants had access to methods of keeping food cold compared to 95% of grocery program participants (Weinfield, et al., 2014). Obviously, the participants were self-selecting the programs based on their kitchen resources, adding to the importance of food pantry operators to fully assess clients' resources. We were able to find a study of North Carolina farm workers' housing that found 26% did not contain an oven (Gentry, et al., 2007). One other small study of low-income food stamp participants in Oklahoma found that 97% of households had needed kitchen supplies, though they found that households who completed the survey in Spanish reported less kitchen equipment. They also found a difference between urban and rural households in terms of access to stand alone freezers. The authors hypothesized that rural households were growing their own vegetables and may have obtained methods for storing surplus produce (Landers & Shults, 2008).

Concurrent with a rise in food insecurity, food pantry usage, and a distribution of fresh foods should be a quality assessment of food pantry consumers' home kitchen resources. Organizations running food pantries need to see their clients as persons in their environments and understand that food insecurity is a multi-faceted dilemma. Organizations need to complete a full individual and family assessment of available kitchen resources before distributing food. This study attempts to add to the limited scholarly evidence regarding the availability of kitchen supplies by food pantry consumers.

This Study: Food Storage and Preparation

There is an underlying assumption that providing people with food means they will no longer be food insecure, but this may not always be the case. Among other reasons, the lack of sufficient equipment to store, prepare, and serve food at home has the potential to negatively impact household food security. There is little research data available on food storage and food preparation practices in the home and none that focus exclusively on low-income, urban, food insecure households. Although past research (Weinfield, et al, 2014) has included access to appliances to cool and heat food, this research is unique in that it measures access to more specific food storage and preparation supplies and resources owned by food pantry recipients. This research is of value because lack of necessary infrastructure to store and prepare received foods may be undermining food pantries' efforts. It may be the case that relatively inexpensive kitchen supplies are needed in order to assure that food insecure households can consume the food they receive, or it may be the case that different foods need to be disseminated to accommodate the resources available to urban food pantry users.

A cross-sectional pilot study was conducted in person with clients of an urban food pantry. Surveys were administered in person over the span of 3 months. There were no incentives connected with completion of the study.

Sampling and Data Collection

A purposive sample of adults (N=74) who receive food from a small, urban food pantry in the Midwest participated in this study. IRB approval was obtained before the study commenced. While waiting in line to receive food at an urban food bank, potential respondents were approached by a research associate who described the project and invited them to participate. Written informed consent was obtained. Respondents were offered the choice of either completing a written paper and pencil instrument independently or of meeting with the research associate in a private area and having the paper and pencil survey (and the informed consent) read aloud to them while the research associate recorded the answers. Surveys took, on average, 20 minutes and were completed during the time clients normally wait in line to receive food from the pantry. Five respondents asked to have the survey read to them while the rest completed it on their own. There were no significant differences in the results between these two groups.

Measurement

Two surveys were completed by participants. Since this is the first study of this kind to measure household supplies, researchers designed

the first survey. The instrument was pre-tested during the design phase on N=30. The newly designed kitchen supply survey can be found in Appendix A. The second survey is the U.S.D.A food insecurity survey. The USDA, in collaboration with other federal agencies, policy makers and academics, developed the 18-question survey and have been collecting data since 1995 (USDA, 2016). The survey can be found at the following link: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/survey-tools/#household>. A series of questions was asked to assess demographic characteristics, food security status, possession of specific cooking supplies, and use of the food provided by food pantries.

Demographics

Quantitative demographic variables measured include age of adult respondent in years, number of senior citizens in the household, number of adults in the household, number of children in the household, and household size. Categorical demographic variables include gender of adult respondent, and race of adult respondent (White/Caucasian, Black/African American, Asian, or other) and Hispanic Ethnicity (yes/no).

Household Kitchen Resources

Respondents were also asked 32 questions (yes/no) to assess if they currently had in their home kitchen a variety of supplies, appliances, and utilities to preserve, prepare and cook the food they receive from the food bank. For example, “Do you have the following items in your apartment/ house to use when cooking food?” Examples of food storage and preservation items included a freezer or a refrigerator. Examples of food preparation supplies included sharp knives, sink, hot/cold water, and a can opener. Cooking supplies and appliances included a stove, oven, microwave, or crockpot in their home kitchen. The full list of supplies can be found in Table 2.

Food Use and Uneaten Food

Finally, three questions were included to assess respondents’ use of the food they received. The first question asked, “Have you ever received food from a food pantry that nobody in your household chose to eat?” (yes/ no). The second question was only asked of respondents who answered affirmatively to the previous question and inquires why the food was not eaten. Respondents were able to select as many of the following answers as they felt was appropriate: “Did not like the taste;” “Did not know how to cook it;” “Did not have other ingredients needed to cook it;” and “Did

not have the kitchen supplies needed to cook it.” They were also provided with a blank space labeled “other” where they could indicate another reason. The final question asked food pantry consumers, “What do you do with food that you get from food pantries that you do not eat?” Again, respondents had an opportunity to check all that apply. Answer choices included: “It just stays in my cupboard;” “Sell it;” “Give it to friends or family members in need;” “Throw it away;” or “Other.”

Food Insecurity

The 18-item U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module, which includes the U.S. Children’s Food Security Scale, was used to assess household food security status (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2012). The answers provided were aggregated to form a scale measuring food insecurity. For households with a child or children, affirmative responses to all questions indicate high food security, negative responses to 1-2 questions indicate marginal food security, 3-7 questions indicate low food security, and 8-18 questions correspond with very low food security. For households without children, exclusively affirmative responses indicate high food security, whereas negative responses to 1-2 questions indicate marginal food security, 3-5 questions indicate low food security, and 6-10 questions indicate very low food security. Households classified as high and marginal are dichotomously categorized as *food secure*, whereas households classified as low or very low are *food insecure*.

Data Analysis

Frequency distributions and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. The nature of this pilot study is descriptive. Due to the small sample size, resulting in some low cell frequencies, bivariate and multivariate analyses were not run. Results from this study can be used to inform future research with larger sample sizes.

Results

Demographics

There were 74 participants in the study. Study participants were predominantly female (58.5%) and racial or ethnic minorities (61.7%). The age of participants ranged from 21 to 75 years of age (mean=51 years). Household size of survey participants ranged from 1 to 10 individuals (mean=2.8). Just over half (51%) of the survey participants had no children in their household. While most households with children had one, two, or

three children, the household with the most children had eight children living at home under the age of 18. Eleven percent of the households included at least one adult over the age of 60.

Food Insecurity

Over two thirds (79%) of participants in this study were food insecure. More specifically, 27% were *food insecure, without hunger*, 38% were *food insecure, with hunger (moderate)*, and 14% were *food insecure, with hunger (severe)*.

Kitchen Supplies and Resources

Although a majority of respondents indicated that they have essential home kitchen supplies, a notable percentage of food pantry consumers did not have essential supplies such as a cutting board (49%), freezer (39%), sharp knife (30%), dish soap (23%), a sink in the kitchen (19%), a can opener (19%), electricity in the kitchen (16%), running water in the kitchen (15%), a refrigerator (13%), a stove (13%), plates (11%), bowls (10%), and pots/pans (10%). Further, many respondents reported not having the following less essential supplies: a pressure cooker (81%), rolling pin (77%), toaster oven (74%), food processor (70%), basting brush (69%), cheese grater (61%), soup ladle (58%), whisk (55%), mixer (53%), potato masher (51%), vegetable peeler (51%), crockpot (50%), measuring cups (39%), gas in kitchen (38%), strainer (36%), toaster (34%), dish cloths (27%), spatula (26%), oven (24%), and microwave (20%).

Food Use

Nearly a third (31%) of participants indicated that they received food that no one in their household ate. The most common reason cited was dislike of the taste of the food (57%). Other commonly cited reasons for not eating the food included not having all of the ingredients needed to cook it (35%), not knowing how to cook it (17%), and not having the kitchen supplies needed to cook it (9%).

Food Use

When asked what they did with the uneaten food, well over half indicated they gave it away to someone outside their household. Seventeen percent indicated the unused food stayed in their kitchen cupboard, 9% sold the food, and another 9% gave it away. See Table 1 for complete results.

Table 1: Food Use

a) Have you ever received food from a pantry that no one in your household chose to eat?		
YES	NO	TOTAL
23 (31%)	51 (69%)	74 (100%)
b) Why not? (Reason for not eating the food)		
		%
"Did not like the taste of the food"		57%
"Did not have all the ingredients needed to cook it"		35%
"Did not know how to cook the food"		17%
"Did not have the kitchen supplies needed to cook it"		9%
"Received too much food at the pantry for one person to eat."		4%
"The food contained too much sodium."		4%
c) What did you do with the uneaten food? (Action)		
		%
"I gave the unused food to friends or family members outside of the household, or to strangers."		65%
"The unused food stayed in my kitchen cupboard."		17%
"I sold the unused food."		9%
"I threw it away."		9%

Demographics

Previous research has indicated that demographic characteristics associated with food security include being white, non-Hispanic, married, having no children, and being elderly (Coleman-Jensen, Gregory, & Singh, 2014). Consistent with previous findings, the majority of food pantry users were female racial minorities with children.

Food Insecurity

This study exclusively sampled urban food pantry users. Urban areas have a higher prevalence of food insecurity compared to suburban areas (Coleman-Jensen, Gregory, & Singh, 2014). Food insecurity also varies by state. The Midwestern state sampled for this research has a higher rate of food insecurity than the national average. Indeed, the average US prevalence is 14.6% compared to 16.0% in the state sampled (Coleman-Jensen, Gregory, & Singh, 2014).

In this study, the majority (78.8%) of respondents report varying levels of food insecurity. While it might be hoped that food pantry usage would

protect respondents from food insecurity, a robust percentage (51.5%) of respondents reported moderate or high-level food insecurity despite the use of the food pantry. This is consistent with the limited previous research which finds that food insecurity persists despite layered interventions. Indeed, it has been found in previous research that 85% of households that receive food from food pantries are food insecure (Weinfield, et al, 2014). This also holds true for households served by other government-run nutrition programs-- 62 percent of households that participate in one of the three largest federal nutrition assistance programs (SNAP, WIC, NSLP) report food insecurity (Caswell & Yaktine, 2013; Coleman-Jensen, Gregory, & Singh, 2014). An Institute of Medicine report found that, in order for food stamps to provide food security, families would need sufficient time to prepare the low-cost, unprocessed foods on which SNAP benefits are calculated. When families begin to buy foods that are processed and take less time to prepare, the adequacy of the benefit is reduced (Caswell & Yaktine, 2013). Our findings suggest that when food requires time to prepare, it also requires kitchen supplies and equipment, which contributes to food insecurity. It is clear that many food pantry programs in the U.S. are not sufficiently meeting the nutritional needs of food insecure Americans.

Kitchen Supplies as Key Resources

Foods distributed most often in community-based food pantries include non-perishable items like peanut butter, canned meats (i.e., tuna), spaghetti, and canned vegetables and fruits (Weinfield, et. al., 2014). In order to increase the nutritional content in the foods distributed, recommendations have been made to increase the perishable foods distributed at these centers to include fresh fruits, vegetables, dairy, and meat (Irwin et al., 2007). Previous research identified fresh fruit and vegetables (55%), meat or other protein foods (47.1) and dairy products (40%) as the items to which food pantry consumers most frequently report wishing they had access (Weinfield, et. al., 2014).

Given this push towards fresh foods, it is valuable to know if food pantry consumers have the kitchen resources needed to store, prepare, and eat those foods. Hence, study participants were asked if they had 32 different kitchen utensils, appliances, or resources in their home, some more essential than others. Given the recent push among urban food pantries to get more fresh fruits and vegetables into the hands of those in need, it is worthy to note that less than half of the participants (49%) in this study had a vegetable peeler or sharp knife (30%) at home –essential tools to use when eating many fresh vegetables.

Another significant result found through this data is that less than two-thirds of the survey participants had access to a freezer at home.

Therefore, if consumers received frozen meats or vegetables (which tend to be a healthier option than many non-perishable, processed food items) at a local food pantry, a significant number of them would have no way of storing the frozen food long-term and would be forced to eat it all immediately (which is often not possible due to large portions), or throw it away.

Research indicates that 93% of food pantry users have some way to keep food cold (Weinfield, et al., 2014). In this study, when combining those who have a freezer (61%) and those who have a refrigerator (87%), the percentage of households without either is 8.3%. Previous research tapping this construct simply asked if the household had a way to keep food cold; therefore, food pantry consumers may have answered affirmatively even if they only had a sub-standard cooling option such as a cooler. This variation in the way the question was worded may explain the higher percentage of clients without a refrigerator or freezer in this study.

One important contribution of this study is clarifying the resources owned by the food pantry consumers to keep the food cold. Findings revealed that a hefty percentage of food pantry users did not have a freezer. This has important implications for the types of foods (i.e., frozen) that are disseminated. Likewise, in this study 13% of food pantry consumers did not have a refrigerator. This is important to note since a sizeable portion of items disseminated at a food pantry require refrigeration (e.g., such as fresh fruits and veggies (10.5%), meat products (15.8%) and dairy products (10%) (Weinfield, et al., 2014).

It was also found that 13% of consumers did not have a stove or oven, 20% did not have a microwave, and 50% did not have a crock pot. Combining all heating appliances, 100% of those surveyed did have at least one appliance to heat their food available for use. Future research should examine if clients may have a mismatch between the types of containers they have to heat food in and the appliance they have available to heat the food. For example, if the food pantry consumer's only method to heat food is a stove or an oven and the client does not own any pots, pans, or baking dishes, then this may be a barrier.

In the same manner, many food pantries are now encouraging consumers to follow recipes using the food they receive at the pantry (Flynn, Reinert, & Schiff, 2013). Yet a sizeable percentage of the participants in this study said that they do not have essential tools needed in order to follow most recipes such as measuring cups (40%), plates (11%), or bowls (10%).

Another unique finding from this research was the lack of kitchen resources needed to promote proper sanitation. Indeed, 19% of households did not have a sink in the kitchen, 15% did not have running water in the kitchen, and 23% do not have dish soap. This elevates the risk of food-borne illness (for example from not being able to properly wash raw chicken) (Redmond & Griffith, 2003). A similar safety concern is that

36% of households did not have a strainer that can be used when rinsing food or draining hot water from food. Additionally, 47.2% of households did not have a cutting board, an important piece of safety equipment to reduce the risk of accidental cuts.

Food Use

Besides a lack of kitchen supplies as an explanation for underutilizing food pantry goods, many food pantry consumers report that food went uneaten by their household members because they dislike the taste of meals provided, or they didn't have the other necessary ingredients to cook it and of not knowing how to cook the food. Some food pantries are "choice-pantries," allowing clients to choose which food they would they like to take, while others provide pre-packaged bags of food. This may help eliminate the above described barrier. Providing recipes and making sure all needed supplies (like cooking oil) are available could help, too.

The pantry examined in this study distributed pre-packaged bags of food. This allowed for a large number of clients to receive food in a short amount of time. A disadvantage to this method was the increased chance of clients' receiving food that no one in their households would eat.

An additional, notable consideration is the growing need and demand for food pantry items and the co-occurring decline in hours of operation, staff, volunteers, money, and food available to food pantries (Weinfield, et al., 2014), making pre-packaged bags a more efficient method of distribution.

It is important to note that food waste was not an issue unique to food pantry consumers (31% reported at some point not eating what was provided). Indeed, evidence suggests that one-third of all food available for human consumption goes uneaten, with vegetables generating the greatest numbers of pounds of food lost (Buzby, Wells, & Aulakh, 2014). The reasons for food loss overall are varied and include production factors (such as spoilage) as well as consumer factors (e.g., plate waste and distaste for certain foods). Most food is perishable, and food safety, storage, and temperature are other factors to consider when trying to reduce food loss.

Food Use

When left with uneaten food in the household, individuals face the dilemma of what to do with that uneaten food. Among survey participants who received food from a pantry that no one in their household chose to eat, most of them said they gave the unused food to friends or family members outside of the household or to strangers. This is the most desirable option available because it promotes nutrition in the community and the

food is not wasted. This is also consistent with previous research in which family and friends were a primary coping strategy utilized to address food insecurity. Specifically, previous research indicated that over 50% of food pantry consumers received help from family or friends to assure that they had enough food (Weinfeld, et al., 2014). Sharing uneaten food perpetuates reciprocity.

Implications

Clinical

The results have important implications for social workers and, perhaps especially, Christian social workers. As noted in the NASW Code of Ethics (2017), all social workers are called to help address people's basic human needs, particularly those who are vulnerable and living in poverty. These ethical mandates underscore the importance of optimizing services for food pantry consumers.

For Christian social workers, these ethical mandates are accentuated by biblical teachings that call Christians to alleviate the suffering of people who are hungry and poor. To be clear, different understandings exist of how best to alleviate "food poverty" among Christians (Allen, 2016). However, the direct provision of food through faith-based food pantries and similar entities has long been a principle means through which Christians have operationalized God's call to pursue justice on behalf of those who have been wronged (Wolterstorff, 2010).

In terms of optimizing services, the results highlight the importance of individualizing the provision of material goods. Nearly a third of food pantry consumers surveyed indicated they received food that no one in their household ate for a variety of reasons. Allowing clients to make choices about the foods they find most useful might reduce such waste. Alternatively, if clients receive pre-packed bags, allowing them to quickly swap out items they know won't be consumed might also help ensure that more of the food is consumed. Although such procedures may take more time, the additional effort may reduce food insecurity by allowing providers to feed more clients with the same amount of supplies.

In the United Kingdom, some food banks have moved beyond food provision to offer a wider array of services, a trend supported by the findings of the present study (Cloke, May, & Williams, in press). More specifically, the results suggest that food pantries might consider stocking various home kitchen resources. This help would empower consumers to make the most of the food they receive.

Social workers might solicit donations from home kitchen suppliers to help stock food pantries with a variety of goods that facilitate the consump-

tion of healthy food. Congregations might also be approached and made aware of the often-critical role that kitchen resources play in food insecurity. Congregations provide substantial amounts of resources to help improve quality of life (Cnaan, 2006). Many are likely to look favorably upon such requests, especially if they are already engaged in fighting food poverty.

Individualization starts with an assessment, as this process provides the foundation for essentially all subsequent service provision (Hodge, 2015). For example, social workers might inquire if food pantry consumers have the necessary ingredients to prepare the food they receive. If the assessment reveals a lack of kitchen resources, then social workers can take steps to address the need.

It should be emphasized that the assessment, and the subsequent provision of goods, should be conducted in a way that affirms the dignity and worth of the client. Consumers can wrestle with feelings of shame as a result of seeking assistance from food pantries (Cloke, May, & Williams, in press). These feelings are often compounded by the fact that people frequently seek assistance in times of crisis. Consequently, consumers are often particularly vulnerable.

Social workers must be careful not to reinforce any feelings of stigma that consumers may feel. Every person bears God's image and, accordingly, should be treated with dignity and respect regardless of their status in society (John Paul II, 1995). Providing material resources that alleviate food insecurity is one way to affirm people's dignity and worth as Image-bearers. The provision, however, should not be limited to material resources. Psychological and spiritual resources can be just as important in supporting and enhancing people's dignity and worth.

Research

Given the small sample size in this study, it is obvious that future research should focus on a larger sample size in order to be generalizable to a larger population. The goal of this pilot study was to inform providers of the importance of considering kitchen supplies in the delivery of food items at pantries. It can also be said that this study informs researchers, and especially program evaluators, of the importance of surveying clients' access to kitchen supplies. Reducing food insecurity is not merely handing out food, but also making sure that what is provided can be utilized.

Limitations

An important limitation of this study is the small sample size and the method of purposive sampling. This study was completed in one small, urban social service agency with a limited number of research subjects.

Sampling bias is possible because selection was based on the researcher's judgement. This research is best understood as a preliminary study designed to assess the need for a larger study that extends these findings. Also, the small sample size prohibited the use of bivariate and multivariable analysis. Given the compelling nature of these findings, further research on this topic is needed with a larger representative sample.

Another limitation is the potential influence of social desirability bias. Although respondents were assured that their answers would in no way negatively impact future receipt of goods at a food pantry, some consumers may have been reticent to provide any information that suggested they do not eat all of the food provided to them. We did not separate the completed surveys by data collection method. There is potential for social desirability bias because data was collected at the site where food is obtained. Though they were repeatedly assured that their answers would not impact future receipt of food or services, the potential exists that they modified their response.

Conclusion

This study adds to the limited body of existing research about food pantry consumers' home kitchen resources and use of food received, and illuminates the frequent mismatch between food provided and the ability to utilize it. As major operators of food pantries nationwide, Christian social workers can utilize the strategies set forth to further enhance the programs they provide to hungry Americans. If food pantry operators begin to routinely ask food pantry clients about their kitchen supplies and resources and then appropriately match food donations to those resources, food insecurity may be reduced. Also, discussing food likes and dislikes with consumers of food pantries may also reduce food waste. The hope is that taking a little more time in the analysis of a consumer's kitchen supplies and food preferences, food pantries may be more successful in supporting household food security. Designing programs sensitive to the kitchen supplies of consumers, as well as their food likes and dislikes, might go a long way in reducing food insecurity. ❖

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Mama Dorah: Uplifting Grassroots Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking

Denise Anderson

Human trafficking, in which millions of children worldwide are trafficked annually, is the second largest organized crime superseded only by drug trafficking. This multibillion-dollar industry is a major issue throughout South Africa. The paper provides a brief history of the problem on trafficking throughout the world, but especially in Johannesburg, South Africa. It further shares a model for how one multicultural community church partnered with a grassroots organization, Dorah's Ark, to keep fifty orphaned children fed, educated and protected from human traffickers. The intervention was intentional and well-planned, but not without trials. The issues faced and how they were addressed are included. The paper presents the church's theology of caring for orphans and shows a way for social workers and faith communities/church leaders to work together to address important community needs.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS A MAJOR PROBLEM ALL OVER THE WORLD (Amato-McCoy, 2011) especially in South Africa. As a result of human trafficking in the West Rand District Municipality of Johannesburg, Dorah Mazibuko and a local church in South Africa partnered to combat the multi-billion dollar human trafficking industry. The partnership sought to prevent orphaned children from being lured or forced into trafficking, by pulling together their resources. Dorah Mazibuko, otherwise known as Mama Dorah, was an African woman who had a heart for children at risk. She started the grassroots project out of her own resources with only a few of her family members supporting the project. These efforts alone were not able to reach as many children as were increasingly in need. A nearby church, Cornerstone, learned about Mama Dorah and set out to partner with the grassroots project to help create a sustainable resource for the children in the community. Cornerstone was a multicultural evangelical congregation of about 200 people that began over sixty years ago by South Africans.

This paper explores the ways in which the two worked together to protect and provide holistic care for vulnerable orphaned children. The author served in the role as an American missionary/pastor/social worker at Cornerstone. The goal of this paper is to encourage all churches to look for, and partner with, organizations in their communities who are addressing the needs of the community but needing support. Too often the church begins her own programs rather than partnering with organizations that are already addressing community needs.

Human Trafficking

Exploiting people through sex and labor is a problem that cuts across all nations. "Trafficking in persons refers to the illegal trade or sale of human beings for sexual exploitation or forced labour through abduction, the use or threat of force, deception and fraud" (Perkins, 2005, p. 54). While primarily attacking women and children, human trafficking impacts all people and is seen as modern-day slavery. While it might look different in various cultures and countries, its impact can be felt worldwide (Manjoo, 2014). The prevalence of the problem is a challenge to measure as it frequently goes unreported and undetected (de Vries & Dettmeijer-Vermeulien, 2015). Accurate and detailed statistics are needed in order to address the overall details of human trafficking. Without knowing who, what, when, where, and how, effective intervention cannot occur (de Vries & Dettmeijer-Vermeulien, 2015).

Global Impact

According to the United Nations' *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* (2012, n.p.), over 20 million people are estimated to be victims of forced labor around the world. This includes victims of human trafficking. Further, this report purports that at least 136 different nationalities were trafficked and detected in 118 different countries, showing evidence to the broad scope of persons impacted by this global social problem. While the official number according to the UN is 20.9 million, many suggest closer to 30 million as the incidence of human trafficking (Hall, 2014, p. 856).

The statistics on Africa reveal that the highest incidence of persons trafficked are children. It is suggested that about 68% of all persons trafficked in Africa are children. While reports indicate forced labor (49% of the cases) to be more common than sexual exploitation (36% of the cases) in Africa as compared to other world areas, there is no doubt that children are at risk for all forms of trafficking in Africa (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime Report, 2012, n.p.).

South Africa

Specific to South Africa, human trafficking, while an historical problem, increased in intensity during the 2010 FIFA World Cup (van der Watt, 2015). While the 1996 constitution prohibits slavery, South Africa has no specific laws addressing human trafficking (Skinner, 2010). During a three-week qualitative study while investigating human trafficking syndicates, Skinner (2010) found trafficking to be very active during the World Cup. One of the informants told Skinner that he “found a lucrative trade in child sex. The children, sold for as little as \$45, can earn more than \$600 per night for their captors” (p. 54). The investigation led him to discover that the South African government was either superficial in their response to address human trafficking or at times supportive of the traffickers (Skinner, 2010).

Grassroots Human Trafficking Prevention: Dorah’s Ark

With the increased supply and demand of persons in trafficking during the 2010 FIFA World Cup in Johannesburg, South Africa, it became evident to Mama Dorah that something more needed to be done. She knew she could make a difference by reducing the supply of children at risk for trafficking (Wolf-Branigin, Garza, & Smith, 2010) but did not have the resources to offer more than she was already doing to help orphans in the community.

Mama Dorah had been operating a soup kitchen with her own resources in an area called Roodepoort. She recognized more children on the streets and heard of the growing concern of children going missing in the area. The missing children were believed to be abducted orphans who once lived on the street. As a result, Mama Dorah allowed the children to stay in the soup kitchen so they were safe at night. This eventually grew to turning the soup kitchen into a residence for orphans (D. Mazibuko, personal communication, August, 2012).

At the same time, Cornerstone church sought opportunities to better engage and be relevant to their local community. After researching current community efforts, Cornerstone church learned about Mama Dorah’s grassroots project that was effectively helping children but in need of additional support. Because the project did not fall under specified governmental requirements (mostly because the wait was too long to officially apply and receive approval), there were limited financial resources for Mama Dorah and her staff. Most of the staff worked for free despite their qualifications. Many staff, including Nomsa Tshaba were registered childcare providers. However, their commitment to the children was deeper than earning a salary (N. Tshaba, personal communication, November 2012).

When the soup kitchen was converted to a home for the children, staff members were needed to serve primarily as caregivers or house parents.

Previously, the same staff cooked and served the breakfast, lunch and dinner to orphaned children living on the street. If the children had not been enrolled in school, they assisted in registering the children and/or providing activities at the soup kitchen for young children or those unable to be enrolled.

Cornerstone: Multicultural Congregation

Prior to connecting with Dorah's Ark, Cornerstone church had been struggling to be relevant to her growing multicultural community (having been a white, English-speaking church under the Apartheid system). The church had also been struggling to attract young people. Just prior to this partnership, new leadership envisioned a church that reflected her community in age as well as diversity in ethnicity, race and even nationality.

The new church leadership was committed to social justice. At the same time, the leaders were aware of the growing concern of children being kidnapped while walking home from the local school. For several weeks, while not documented in the news, parents of children attending Roodepoort Primary School received letters warning them of children being kidnapped while walking home from school. As the church leaders considered how to respond, they realized Mama Dorah was already responding but needed help to effectively care for more children.

Leaders from Cornerstone contacted Dorah to learn more about the services she and her volunteer staff provided. They also asked how the church could partner when they learned there were more at-risk children in the community. This was the start of what continues to be an effective partnership between Cornerstone and Dorah's Ark.

Partnership

Like any effective partnership, the church was supportive and assisted Mama Dorah financially as well as in training and programming, without taking over the project. The partnership began, and continues to be, grounded in mutual respect and focused on protecting children (Pulido, Miglietta, Cortez, Stovall, & Aviles de Bradley, 2013). Initial meetings between the church and the organization centered on the mission of both the organization and the church. Cornerstone's compassionate ministry committee continue to meet with the board of Dorah's Ark on a monthly basis to discuss the partnership and evaluate the effectiveness of the partnership.

Since Cornerstone's mission is to "Make Christlike Disciples" (based on Matthew 28:19), with a focus of being the hands and feet of Jesus in the community and the world, and the mission of Dorah's Ark is "to provide the protections of shelter, sustenance, education, medical care, spiritual and emotional support, to needy orphans and vulnerable children in our

area” (Myeza, 2015, p. 4), both felt they could accomplish more by working together. Part of what they both desired to accomplish was to holistically provide for and protect the children. While Mama Dorah was able to house the children, feeding all of them and providing for their school needs as well as spiritual care was a challenge due to limited ability to transport children to a church as well as financial resources.

When the partnership began, Dorah’s Ark continued to provide housing, meals, transport and fees for school, school uniforms and some supplies as well as medical care. Cornerstone provided transport to their youth group on Friday evenings and Sunday morning services (Sunday School and Children’s church or regular church) as well as offer pastoral care. Additionally, Cornerstone bought about R3000 (approx. \$250 USD) of food each month, ‘adopted’ each child at Christmas (gift-giving that included a packet of school supplies for the coming school year), and offered extracurricular activities (P. Anderson, personal communication, March, 2016). Some of these activities included being part of the annual Christmas play, annual birthday party for Jesus on Christmas, youth group, holiday Bible club, Bible quiz team, and the opportunity to assist in yard sales and other events at the church.

Approximately 30 children attended the programs offered by the church on a regular basis. About 30 children gave their lives to Christ during a Friday night youth group and were baptized on a Sunday morning (P. Anderson, personal communication, March, 2016). The children regularly told people at Dorah’s Ark and the church (the author included) that they were members of Cornerstone or that Cornerstone was their church. While some of the Dorah’s Ark staff continued to fellowship in their home congregations (most of them specific language groups like Zulu, Tswana, or other African languages), a few of the staff attended and became members of the church where English was the primary language (with many of their home cultures represented in the multicultural congregation).

While the partnership was, and still is, considered a huge success, there were struggles along the way. The primary struggle was in the area of expectations and communication. Despite intentionally seeking to have open and regular communication through monthly meetings and regular visits by the pastors to Dorah’s Ark, there were times when expectations between the two organizations were different. One such example was when children were to be collected from Dorah’s for Friday evening youth group. Cornerstone provided youth services (pre-teen and teen) from ages 9-18. However, each week, the children being sent to the youth services were younger and younger. Because the church wanted to be ‘supportive’ to the orphanage, nothing was said for a few weeks until one evening a 5-year old was sent to youth group (P. Anderson, personal communication, January, 2016). At the next monthly meeting between the two organizations,

this was discussed, and expectations were made clear as to ages for youth services. While this was not a major issue, other minor miscommunications and expectations became important to clarify during in the regular monthly meetings between the church and Dorah's Ark.

Theology of Caring for Orphans

Caring for the orphaned and needy children are biblical mandates (Psalm 82:3). Therefore, the call for the church to assist or partner with organizations of like minds that are already responding to those in need is important. Just like Jesus instructs through the parable of the Sheep and the Goats that caring for the "least of these" is like caring for Him (Matthew 25), the church needs to take care of persons in need. Likewise, James instructs in James 1:27 that acceptable religion is that which looks after orphans and widows in their distress. Further, Isaiah 58:6 addresses the importance of loosening the chains of injustice and setting the oppressed free. These are only a few of the Scripture passages that supported Cornerstone's theology of compassion and care for orphans and others in need.

A Model that Works

As indicated previously, the essence of the success within this partnership was the mutuality (Pulido, Miglietta, Cortez, Stovall, & Aviles de Bradley, 2013) and communication. While the church, with ample resources, could have marched into the grassroots orphanage and attempted to be the savior to the children, it did not. The focus of the initial partnership was in asking Mama Dorah and the other leaders at Dorah's Ark what they were doing that was working and where they were struggling and desired support. Because the leaders of the church aimed to empower the leaders of the orphanage, the focus stayed on what they were already doing and how to help them do it better and for more children (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012) rather than taking over or undoing something good.

In addition to the resources provided directly for the children, the church offered training and opportunities for the staff in the areas of Human Trafficking, HIV/AIDS care and counseling, child development as well as basic counseling techniques to help the children cope as many of them were double orphaned (by both parents) and then taken advantage of by their extended families. Finally, the church offered support and respite as some of the members offered their homes to children as needed.

Each time someone from the church had 'an idea' about what might help the children, the first question asked was whether this was something Dorah and the staff could be doing on their own. This was evaluated during the

monthly meetings between the church and Dorah's Ark leadership. Finally, the focus shifted to whether or not it was sustainable and if it would really help or hinder (Corbitt & Fikkert, 2012) the mission of Dorah's Ark. What made this partnership work were the regular meetings, open communication in these meetings and regular revisits to the initial purpose of the partnership: Assist Dorah's Ark in holistically caring for orphaned children so that they are off the street and protected.

Conclusion

The Cornerstone leaders and Dorah's Ark staff continue to partner for the good of both organizations. These simple strategies, outlined in this article, were used from the onset of the partnership and continue. The life and excitement of having 30 children in children's church and youth group, helped to revitalize a church that had previously struggled in its ministry to children. As the church reached out to her community, the partnership assisted an organization by standing with them, encouraging them and supporting their efforts so they could continue to reach the children. Placido and Cecil (2012) suggest there is benefit to both the community and church when the two share values and mutual respect.

Currently, over 50 children are being holistically helped through the partnership between Dorah's Ark and Cornerstone Church. These children identify Cornerstone Church as their church. Their commitment to attend youth group, children's church and Bible quizzing show the benefit to these children. Staff members from Dorah's Ark have shared in the monthly meetings that they would not be able to provide the same holistic care for the children without the church's financial and spiritual programming support. The church recognizes the benefit both to the children as well as to their own congregation. In addition to the increase in children, the church doubled in size (from 90 to 200 in attendance) as well as in diversity of language, ethnicity and race. People from the culturally diverse neighborhood joined the congregation as well.

If churches seek to be the hands and feet of Jesus, rather than starting their own programs, they can consider looking for a program or service that is addressing the area of need God lays on their heart and partnering to help more people or help in a deeper way. Empowering a grassroots organization that is effectively meeting the needs of a population can extend the resources of both the community of faith and the organization. Local churches do well to know their communities. It is important to know the needs as well as the resources. Rather than starting something someone else is already doing, contact other leaders in the community and work collaboratively. When the church is working with the community, there are benefits to both the church and her community. ❖

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Keywords: multicultural, human trafficking, social workers, faith-community, South Africa.

Advocating for Justice: An Evangelical Vision for Transforming Systems and Structures

Steven Offutt, F. David Bronkema, Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy, Robb Davis & Gregg Okesson, (2016). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

In *Advocating for Justice*, the authors explore why evangelicals are not utilizing advocacy and encourage the use of advocacy for a wide range of issues. The book is divided into three parts, with the first devoted to investigating the existing problem evangelicals have with engaging in advocacy. The authors take a historical look at various denominations within the evangelical church to analyze past engagement with advocacy and then go on to define a specific type of advocacy called transformational advocacy. The authors define transformational advocacy as follows:

Intentional acts of witness by the body of Christ that hold people and institutions accountable for creating, implementing, and sustaining just and good policies and practices geared toward the flourishing of society. Transformational advocacy challenges injustice and obstacles to human flourishing at whatever level is practiced by humbly engaging with people who can address the wrong, trusting God's Spirit to change all those involved as well as the institutions themselves (pp. 11-12).

Transformational advocacy is in line with several of the values of social work outlined in the NASW Code of Ethics. The focus on holding people and institutions accountable and challenging injustice echoes the value of social justice. Further, pushing for policies and practices geared towards the flourishing of society connects to the inherent worth and dignity of individuals. The authors create a compelling argument for evangelical Christians to engage in advocacy, and not just for issues most traditionally associated with evangelicals. Social workers, especially Christian social workers, could use this concept to serve as a bridge between the church and policy makers, government officials, and others, to call to action those who may be skeptical towards traditional engagement and advocacy efforts.

The second part of the book examines the theology of advocacy and the role of the church. This section provides ample theological arguments for the importance of advocacy, and how to go about advocating in a theologically sound manner. The deep theological positioning of the middle

portion of the book, depending on the social worker's role, may not be relevant to his/her work in practice.

The final section of the book is practical in nature and focuses on how to implement or use transformational advocacy, including a discussion on how to overcome possible challenges that one may encounter when advocating for a range of issues. Included in the final portion of the book are examples of evangelical advocacy and discussion questions that groups could use to discuss and further examine the ideas presented in the book. Christian social workers could use this portion of the book as a tool to engage members of their church community in advocacy issues, and in exploring the role their church could take in advocacy.

The term "social worker" is never used in this book. Rather, the book is focused on the "everyday Christian and not those who are professionally engaged in public life" (p.12). Although social workers are not the authors' intended audience, this book still provides useful information for a Christian social worker, particularly a congregational social worker. Social workers are both educationally trained to engage in advocacy (see competency four from 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards), and have a professional obligation to engage in advocacy, as social justice is one of the core values in the NASW Code of Ethics. Additionally, the book speaks specifically to evangelical Christians. Thus, the content of the book may not resonate as strongly for Christian social workers who do not categorize themselves as evangelical, compared to those who self-identify as evangelical. For example, with respect to most of the issues discussed in the book, Christian social workers would likely take a similar approach and advocate together on the same side. On the other hand, a small percentage of the issues used as examples in the book are more divisive, even among Christian social workers. The authors take a traditional evangelical stance towards those divisive issues, and not all Christian social workers may agree on that stance. Overall, this book is a useful guide for challenging evangelical Christians to think in a broader way about advocacy, both as an individual Christian and as part of a church. ❖

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Policy Walking: Lighting Paths to Safer Communities, Stronger Families and Thriving Youth

John A. Calhoun (2016). Pennsauken, NJ: BookBaby.

This publication is relevant to the social worker's role in policy, social justice and macro level social work. An overarching strength of this book is that it is applicable in teaching social policy in a Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited social work program. It is highly recommended for faculty teaching a social welfare policy class. The wide array of topics – from gun violence, to home-based services, to addictions, and to families – are all areas of social work practice which are impacted by policy.

Competency number five from the 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) standards prescribed by CSWE (2015) requires social workers to be competent in policy practice. This includes a reference to skills needed to identify social policy at the local, state, and federal levels that impact well-being, service delivery, and access to social services. *Policy Walking* provides this knowledge through current examples of programs that are working such as a medical home-based program like Nurse-Family Partnerships (NFP) in North Philadelphia. From a broader perspective, the book also covers a program entitled the Community Renewal International (CRI) program which impacted such communities as Shreveport, Louisiana following a natural disaster.

The book also assesses social policy from the perspective of how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of, and access to, social services. YouthBuild, USA, is a program targeted towards teens who were once self-described as menaces to their community and are now described as ministers to their communities. Calhoun provides direct quotes through his interviews with teens who have experienced life-changing events. One such quote from a teen who was changed through YouthBuild, USA, stated, "I came here for a GED, but what I found was a family" (p. 68).

The book will empower readers to demonstrate critical thinking in order to gain policy skills. Such skills will be demonstrated in knowing how to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice. This book will most likely lead to practice behaviors that develop competencies in social policy.

The author used credible sources for providing a wide array of examples in understanding how policy impacts clients and their lives in numerous settings. The author provides applicable sources at the end of each chapter, helpful tools for the student to acquire further knowledge on current policy practices. There is also strong evidence of clear and effective development in how this publication is organized as the book utilizes easy-to-follow chapters which flow from subject to subject.

The author does not make specific reference to the Christian faith, however, there is no indication that the book could not be used in a Christian-based setting. My review of this book found little that would be challenging or potentially problematic for most Christians in social work. While there is no specific reference to a Christian foundation, the principles of social justice, empowerment, and strengths are included in the book.

I personally look forward to using this book in a social welfare policy course. I find that it will be helpful to students in grasping macro social work and policy practice. Overall, this is an outstanding publication that is well-written and applicable to social work practice. It is also likely to be a valuable resource for social work education. ❖

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Social Work with Families: Content and Process

Robert Constable and Daniel B. Lee (2015). Chicago, IL: Lyceum.

Long-time social work educators, Robert Constable and Daniel B. Lee, have updated and released a second edition of their important work, *Social Work with Families: Content and Process*. Updated clinical research and content, information on family life education, additional case studies, and an extensive list of discussion questions are new features of this edition. For readers who are unfamiliar with either the original or the current work, this ambitious book warrants the attention of social worker practitioners, educators, and students as it contributes to a field of study that is integral to the work of nearly everyone within the discipline.

The subtitle “content and process,” while ambiguous at first glance, actually characterizes the authors’ overarching approach to both couples and family work. They reference this important combination frequently, rightly suggesting that while an understanding of “content” like communication,

roles, family of origin issues, and lifespan changes are critical for families, it must be coupled with “process” or the experience of moving from cognitive belief and assent to the actual (generally messy) experience of movement toward healthy functioning. In the case studies (which are helpful and liberally included throughout the book), the authors often conceptualize cases through this two-fold approach. In the complex and often baffling process of assessing and attempting to assist couples and families, this basic approach provides a useful conceptual template. They write, “. . . both reflection (meanings) and action (behavior change) are necessary and interrelated the one to the other, similar to our concept of process and content. Successful change is a matter of developing the connection, in theory and practice, between the two” (p. 182).

The book is structured in the following way: the strengths-based approach to families, the importance of the family to society, key concepts such as differentiation and relationality, family life cycles, family structures, cultural variations, clinical concepts, and finally, working with families while employed within various institutions such as schools, child welfare, and the court system. While this coverage is both extensive and impressive, I kept thinking that the book would be stronger if it were actually sectioned into three smaller books—key concepts in family work, clinical concepts in family work, and the relationship of families and social institutions. While the content within each section is strong and highly worthwhile, readers may become “lost in the translation,” struggling to see what unites the various sections of this book.

A particularly strong area of coverage includes the chapter on “the relational person” which underscores key concepts of agency, differentiation, attachment, and interdependence—fundamental concepts which are highly foundational and practical for social workers who, again, are often attempting to make sense of a highly complex family.

The strongest section of the book, however, lies in chapters 6-9 which delineate important clinical concepts which will be useful to practitioners working on the micro level. I wish that the book title included a reference to “couples” because this section delves deeply into that area and those who read “families” may not necessarily assume the book will address couples, which it very capably does. In these chapters, the authors engage a realistic, yet hopeful, vision for marriage that strongly takes into account the need for qualities such as adaptation and intimacy. But they simultaneously demonstrate a solid understanding of the myriad of obstacles that thwart couples from a flourishing marriage such as the ongoing struggle to really know each other and a lack of what they term “empathic accuracy,” or the ability to put down one’s defenses long enough to truly and accurately take in the perspective of one’s partner.

The authors also include a helpful section about the “underorganized family” meaning those families with deficiencies in the degree of constancy, differentiation, cohesiveness, and flexibility. As social workers frequently encounter such families in practice, the suggestions regarding assisting families in simultaneously reconstructing both internal relationships and external relationships with their environment will be attractive and useful.

While the book does not deal specifically with issues of faith, Christians in social work will strongly resonate with the authors’ emphasis on family as “the society in which human solidarity and flourishing is first made possible” (p. xvii). Their discussion of the nature of marriage and family relationships will also remind Christian readers of the I-Thou concept first identified by philosopher Martin Buber (1937) wherein individuals grow most poignantly within the everyday crucible of relationships, especially when they can elevate the “other” by noting the presence of the divine within them.

But as Buber pointed out long ago, while couple and family relationships can gloriously point us to the divine, they can also represent places of great pain and struggle. As those who are deeply committed to the restoration of families, Christians in social work will benefit from this exploration of the enormous range of opportunity and struggle represented by couples and families. ❖

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Skills for Effective Counseling: A Faith-based Integration

Elisabeth Nesbit Sbanotto, Heather Gingrich & Fred Gingrich. (2016). Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.

In this ambitious work, the authors give definition and structure to the skills of counseling while also supplying figures and tables, working examples, and assignment templates. They particularly focus on micro practice skills and endeavor to draw applications for academics, clinical counselors, clergy, mentors, and other individuals in helping roles. The

breadth of application options serves as a strength of *Skills for Effective Counseling: A Faith-based Integration*. However, the book's strength is also its weakness. The attempt to provide helpful instruction for professional and lay-persons alike results in a very long read.

In defense of the length, I was pleased to find that the authors include valuable appendices containing answers to chapter exercises, learning activities, role-play exercises, and a discussion of the relationship between psychology and religion. These appendices are helpful for all levels of instruction by professors and ministry leaders. The authors recognize, moreover, that Appendix D, which appropriately details some of the issues related to the relationship between psychology and religion, is written from their own perspective, thus leaving room for diverse responses.

Other notable strengths of this book include its Programmed Learning Approach, its scaffolding of the learning process, its many thoughtful metaphors, the tuning-in reflections at the beginning of each chapter coupled with the reflective questions at the conclusion of each chapter, and its many diagnostic implications, which will be most useful for advanced students and clinicians. The sections that pursue an in-depth exploration of areas such as self-care, empathy, confrontation, and multicultural considerations are also very well written and include clear dialogue examples.

Furthermore, the authors' affirmation of the fact that human beings are made in the image of God clearly establishes the intrinsic value of each person. This contributes to the gracious tone of the book and guides the authors' application of biblical principles. The authors quote the French philosopher Simone Weil (1909–1943), "The extreme greatness of Christianity lies in the fact that it does not seek a supernatural remedy for suffering but a supernatural use for it," (Weil, 1947, p. 13) which captures well the book's focus on the empowerment of the counselee and its awareness that counselors cannot save individuals from their circumstances but can walk beside them as they discover and use their strengths and available resources.

One area of the book that I think could be strengthened is its use of scriptural texts. Greater exploration of the direct connections between the included biblical references and the topic discussed in each chapter would be useful. Additional examples in the "caution" sections would be beneficial as well. As a professor of social work, I was also disappointed by the absence of connections to this field. In fact, "social work" is not even included in the *Author and Subject Index*. Similarly, in the listing of nine organizations and resource contacts on pages 6 and 8, social work resources were notably missing. As a textbook-style volume with a wealth of cross-professional counseling micro skills content, some attention to such a significant profession would seem appropriate.

Except for these minor shortcomings, this book provides a useful foundation for individuals working across the "helping professions," and

it makes thoughtful connections to the foundational Christian understanding of the dignity and worth of each person. I applaud the authors for their instructional approach and the helpful ideas they offer to such a broad audience. ❖

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Spirituality in Hospice Social Work

Ann M. Callahan, (2017). *New York: Columbia University Press.*

Social workers often do not feel comfortable addressing spiritual issues with clients. Due to the nature of the practice setting, hospice social workers usually cannot avoid spiritual issues with clients since the end of life is inherently spiritual. *Spirituality and Hospice Social Work* by Ann Callahan helps readers gain confidence and competence in offering quality client-centered, spiritual care. The book is a practical addition to the *End-of-Life Care: A Series* published by the Columbia University Press. It fills a gap in the literature by comprehensively examining the elements of spiritual care in the hospice setting from a social work perspective. Callahan provides an in-depth review of the key components involved in spirituality in palliative care including spiritual awareness and diversity, spiritual sensitivity, spiritual suffering, spiritual needs, spiritual resilience, and spiritual competency supported by evidence from the scholarly literature. Her thesis is that spirituality in the therapeutic relationship with dying patients makes the end of life more meaningful since spirituality is essential in the provision of quality end-of-life care. Therefore, hospice social workers should strive to be spiritually sensitive and give competent spiritual assessment and intervention tailored to meet the unique needs of each dying patient. This is accomplished in the book using the framework of relational spirituality grounded in inter-disciplinary theory which results in better spiritual outcomes and meaning for all involved.

An overview of the contents reveals the value and use of Callahan's book: **Chapter One** reviews the social worker's roles on the interdisci-

plinary care team and examines the ethical guidelines for social workers as related to the guidelines for chaplains and pastoral counselors. The comparison clarifies roles to avoid confusion in teamwork. Chapter 7 adds case scenarios that go beyond the scope of practice for social workers to show when referrals to chaplains are needed. **Chapter Two** emphasizes the importance of understanding a patient's spiritual diversity through conducting a comprehensive, individualized spiritual assessment via the therapeutic relationship. **Chapter Three** addresses some common spiritual needs of hospice patients with suggestions about how workers can meet and measure needs using spiritual interventions such as prayer, readings, music, meditation, and reconciliation. **Chapter Four** is the most intense part of Callahan's book. The multi-dimensional types, causes, symptoms, and consequences of spiritual suffering are explained. Various spiritual coping skills, resources, and interventions designed to meet patients' spiritual needs are examined to reduce suffering and help patients become spiritually resilient. Callahan emphasizes throughout the book that the goal of spiritual care is not to give "answers to unanswerable questions, but to open spiritual dialogue" using teamwork (p. 184). **Chapter Five** ties the previous chapters together showing how relationships at the end of life can be spiritually therapeutic. The conditions, depth, boundaries, and connections of relational spirituality are discussed using various process models based on spiritual engagement and compassion. **Chapter Six** examines models of spiritual care from an interdisciplinary perspective focusing on recognizing personhood, being present and listening, reframing, affirming, normalizing, advocating, and sensing God's presence throughout the dying process. **Chapter Seven** encourages spiritual sensitivity to patient needs by clarifying values, demonstrating respect, being inclusive and creative, showing unconditional and hopeful openness, and seeking meaning. Spiritually-sensitive and practical helping activities and interventions are provided as derived from a spiritual assessment such as the spiritual ecomap, spiritual genogram, and spiritual history. Finally, **Chapter Eight**, focuses on spiritual competence and its challenges and ethical risks. The need for spiritual competency throughout the provision of hospice care is examined with guidelines given. Spiritual competency models across disciplines and settings are charted for a helpful in-depth analysis of their characteristics, values, skills, interventions, and evidence-based outcomes. Callahan then provides a social work model of spiritual competence for use in hospice that involves awareness, empathetic understanding, and use of evidence-based interventions that are sensitive to patients' spiritual worldviews and needs. Ethical dilemmas that often arise from the provision of spiritual care are included using case scenarios with resolution questions and responses which are useful for social work practice and education.

Callahan's book is like a handbook. It provides an in-depth overview of the literature on each of the key components of spiritual care that can be applied in any practice setting. It also provides useful evidence-based spiritual assessment and intervention tools with helpful discussions about their purposes and outcomes. Since the book's key components are interconnected, there are purposeful redundancies throughout the chapters. If the book is read as a whole, the redundancies may feel laborious; but for those who read only one or more parts of the book at a time like a handbook, the repetition is helpful and connective.

While the book seems inherently "Christian" in its approach, Callahan emphasizes the importance of providing spiritual care that meets the spiritual and religious needs of patients based on their spiritual views and not the worker's views. Therefore, the book is relevant and practical for workers with various worldviews who provide spiritual care to patients with diverse worldviews. Overall, the book is an excellent text for social workers and other care providers in any field of practice who want to give spiritually-sensitive, competent care. It enhances the understanding of spirituality, provides concrete evidence for its assertions, and effectively gives guidance to workers about how to be spiritually sensitive and competent. It is highly recommended and useful for both educators and practitioners interested in spirituality, especially in end-of-life care. Because of its generalizable concepts and methods, it will help social workers feel more comfortable and competent in addressing spiritual issues with clients. ❖

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Proposing Prosperity? Marriage Education and Inequality in America

Jennifer M. Randles (2017). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Nearly one-third of children in America are born outside marriage and more than half will spend all or part of their childhood in never-formed or broken families. With over \$150 billion going to welfare aid for single parents, the government-funded *Healthy Marriage Initiative* (HMI) is small-scaled in comparison – just one penny for every five dollars spent to subsidize single parenthood. Instead of merely distributing financial aid, the initiative encourages marriage by teaching relationship skills based on the notion that married couples provide the best emotional and financial stability for their children.

Randles ethnographically explored what solidifies social and economic opportunity for unmarried parents (referred to as “fragile families”). But, does social and economic stability really lie within the concept of middle-class marriage culture, as the HMI purports? For the Christian social worker addressing the concept of love and traditional marriage, stability holds value. For the social work generalist, Randles helps address concerns about initiatives that might stigmatize and underestimate family forms.

Agreeing that emotional and financial limbo leads to more discord, Gwenn and Isaiah, a struggling unmarried African American couple, enrolled in a HMI program called Thriving Families. After completing the seven-week long program, the couple said that the classes helped them to improve relationship skills and to identify with other participants, but the author found that “the communication and budgeting tips they learned were no match for the stressors they faced: little money, a new baby to support... and uncertainty about the[ir] future...” (p. 2).

While affirming that the initiative affords some practical benefits, from a collective standpoint, Randles points to the bottom line – there is no evidence that marriage education works to increase marriage and reduce poverty rates. Programs such as Thriving Families do not translate into measurable impacts on family and economic stability. She argues that the HMI “individualizes social problems such as poverty by ignoring the social and economic problems that undermined lower-income couples’ ability to realize their family-formation goals, including...[marriage]” (p. 15).

A recent Demos report seems to support Randles’ assertion about wealth distribution, pointing out that raising children in a two-parent household isn’t enough to overcome racial disparities in wealth given the median white single parent has 2.2 times more wealth than the median black two-parent household and 1.9 times more wealth than the median Latino two-parent household (see <http://www.demos.org/publication/asset-value-whiteness-understanding-racial-wealth-gap>). But, regardless of wealth or race, past research has shown that children who grow up with two continuously married parents are less likely to experience a wide range of cognitive, emotional, and social problems, not only during childhood, but also in adulthood. Randles doesn’t broadly emphasize these phenomena; rather, her agenda is pointed primarily towards the correlations of economic restraints to social inequality, regardless of marital status.

Randles concludes that learning and mimicking the tenets of middle-class marriage culture doesn’t reduce poverty and despair, rather love and commitment thrive most within the context of social and economic opportunity. Social and economic opportunities involve curtailing inequalities, particularly those related to gender and race, and recognizing and validating “the skills many of those in poverty already possess” (p. 216).

This conclusion leads me to pose these questions: How can Christian social workers foster the larger context of social and economic opportunities for the disadvantaged and their children? What biblical principles support economic equality?

As I ponder these questions and the concepts related to social and economic opportunity, I highlight the essay written decades ago by Professor Bruce C. Birch entitled, "Hunger, Poverty and Biblical Religion" (see <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1855>). Professor Birch wrote:

The rights of the poor are delineated most clearly in the law codes of the Old Testament; here concern for the poor is taken out of the realm of voluntary charity. The clearest statement appears in Deuteronomy 15:

There will be no poor among you...if only you will obey the voice of the Lord your God...If there is among you a poor man,...you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him, and lend him sufficient for his need....You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging....For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore, I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor...

This passage suggests that if the demands of the covenant were fully embodied, there would be no poverty, but since Israel, like all human communities, is a "stiff-necked people," some of its inhabitants will inevitably be poor. Therefore, God's people are commanded to care for them. This task is part of what it means to be the people of God, and it is not an optional activity.

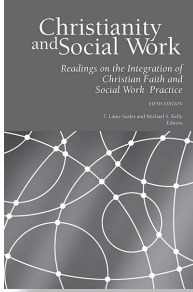
But, does the task simply mean providing a hand out? Hardly; in fact, God teaches equality, fairness, and compassion in our giving (2 Corinthians 8:14). Ultimately, our mission towards prosperity is much broader and evangelical: "...For the Lord has anointed [us] to bring [salvation] to the poor" (Luke 4:18). ❖

Reviewed by **James E. Phelan**, MSW, BCD, MBA, Psy.D., program coordinator at the Veterans Health Administration, Columbus, OH; adjunct on-line professor of social work for Liberty University; and a field practicum instructor for The Ohio State University. 420 N. James Rd., Columbus, OH 43219. Phone: (614) 257-5406. Email: james.phelan@va.gov

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM NACSW

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL WORK: READINGS ON THE INTEGRATION OF CHRISTIAN FAITH & SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE (FIFTH EDITION)

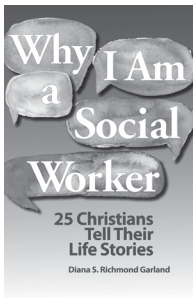
T. Laine Scales and Michael S. Kelly (Editors). (2016). Botsford, CT: NACSW. \$55.00 U.S., \$42.99 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies. For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.



At over 400 pages and with 19 chapters, this extensively-revised fifth edition of *Christianity and Social Work* includes six new chapters and six significantly revised chapters in response to requests by readers of previous editions including chapters on evidence based practice (EBP), congregational Social Work, military social work, working with clients from the LGBT community, human trafficking – and much more! The fifth edition of *Christianity and Social Work* is written for social workers whose motivations to enter the profession are informed by their Christian faith, and who desire to develop faithfully Christian approaches to helping. It addresses 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. *Christianity and Social Work* 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 and has an online companion volume of teaching tools entitled *Instructor's Resources*.

WHY I AM A SOCIAL WORKER: 25 CHRISTIANS TELL THEIR LIFE STORIES

Diana R. Garland. (2015). Botsford, CT: NACSW. \$29.95 U.S., \$23.95 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies. For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.



Why I Am a Social Worker describes the rich diversity and nature of the profession of social work through the 25 stories of daily lives and professional journeys chosen to represent the different people, groups and human situations where social workers serve.

Many social workers of faith express that they feel “called” to help people – sometimes a specific population of people such as abused children or people who live in poverty. Often they describe this calling as a way of living out their faith. *Why I Am a Social Worker* serves as a resource for Christians in

social work as they reflect on their sense of calling, and provides direction to guide them in this process.

Why I Am a Social Worker addresses a range of critical questions such as:

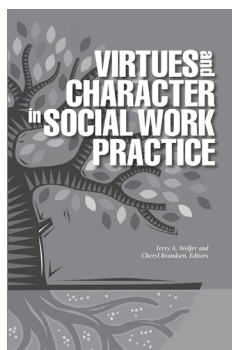
- How do social workers describe the relationship of their faith and their work?
- What is their daily work-life like, with its challenges, frustrations, joys and triumphs?
- What was their path into social work, and more particularly, the kind of social work they chose?
- What roles do their religious beliefs and spiritual practices have in sustaining them for the work, and how has their work, in turn, shaped their religious and spiritual life?

Dr. David Sherwood, recently retired Editor-in-Chief of *Social Work & Christianity*, says about *Why I Am a Social Worker* that:

I think this book will make a very important contribution. ... The diversity of settings, populations, and roles illustrated by the personal stories of the social workers interviewed will bring the possibilities of social work to life in ways that standard introductory books can never do. The stories also have strong themes of integration of faith and practice that will both challenge and encourage students and seasoned practitioners alike.

VIRTUE AND CHARACTER IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Edited by Terry A. Wolfer and Cheryl Brandsen. (2015). Botsford, CT: NACSW. \$23.75 U.S., \$19.00 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

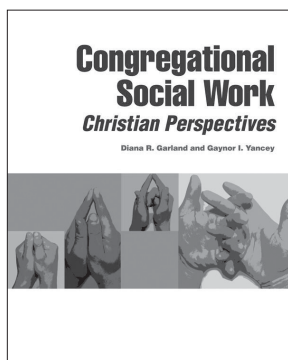


Virtues and Character in Social Work Practice offers a fresh contribution to the Christian social work literature with its emphasis on the key role of character traits and virtues in equipping Christians in social work to engage with and serve their clients and communities well.

This book is for social work practitioners who, as social change agents, spend much of their time examining social structures and advocating for policies and programs to advance justice and increase opportunity.

CONGREGATIONAL SOCIAL WORK: CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES

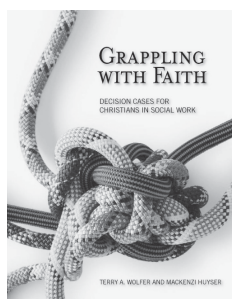
Diana Garland and Gaynor Yancey. (2014). Botsford, CT: NACSW. \$39.95 U.S., \$31.95 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.



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.

GRAPPLING WITH FAITH: DECISION CASES FOR CHRISTIANS IN SOCIAL WORK

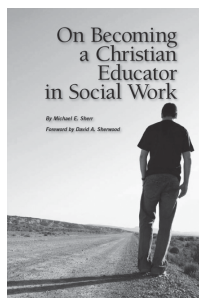
Terry A. Wolfer and Mackenzi Huyser. (2010). \$23.75 (\$18.99 for NACSW members or for orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.



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.

ON BECOMING A CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR IN SOCIAL WORK

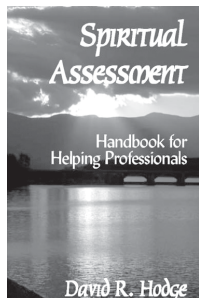
Michael Sherr. (2010). \$21.75 (\$17.50 for NACSW members or for orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.



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.”

SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT: HELPING HANDBOOK FOR HELPING PROFESSIONALS

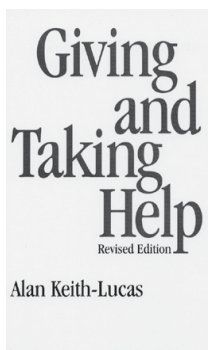
David Hodge. (2003). Botsford CT: NACSW. \$20.00 U.S. (\$16.00 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.



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.

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.

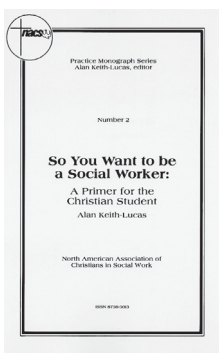


Alan Keith-Lucas' *Giving and Taking Help*, first published in 1972, has become a classic in the social work literature on the helping relationship. *Giving and taking help* is a uniquely clear, straightforward, sensible, and wise examination of what is involved in the helping process—the giving and 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.

**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.

To Order Publications:

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@nacsww.org or call 203.270.8780.



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