

SOCIAL WORK & CHRISTIANITY

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OF CHRISTIANS IN SOCIAL WORK

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AN OPENING WORD

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Exploring the Applied Heart of the Church: The Retributive vs. Restorative Justice Perspectives on Punishment and Incarceration

Exceeding Quotidian Kindness: A Christian Response to Lateral Violence in the Workplace

The Culture of Compassion in Social Service and Academic Settings: My Personal Experience

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Review of *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work*

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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). The purpose of SWC is 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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Submit your manuscript electronically to SWC as a Microsoft Word file which includes the following information: a) the full title of the article; b) an abstract of not more than 150 words; c) the full text of the article (without author identification); d) references and any tables or appendices (please use the current edition of the American Psychological Association Style Manual for in-text references and reference lists); e) keywords or phrases (4–8) to facilitate online searches.

Also, to ensure the integrity of the blind peer-review process, before you submit your manuscript, please delete the name(s) of the author(s) anywhere they appear in the text, and remove the author identification from the “properties” section of your document.

At least three members of the editorial board will anonymously review manuscripts based on: a) relevance of content to major issues concerning the ethical integration of competent social work practice and Christianity; b) potential contribution to social work scholarship and practice; c) literary merit; d) clarity; and e) freedom from language that conveys devaluation or stereotypes of persons or groups. The editor in chief will make final acceptance decisions.

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Social Work & Christianity welcomes book review manuscripts for the Reviews section of the journal. Book reviews should be relevant to SWC's readership and therefore should include content pertinent to Christians in social work. Book review authors should follow these guidelines:

- To submit a book review to SWC, go to: swc.nacsw.org.
- Ordinarily books should be fairly recent (published within two years); if later, reviewers should provide some justification for why an older book has current relevance.
- Reviews should be about 600–800 words in length.
- Reviews should include an overview of the book's main points, especially those pertaining to Christians in social work.
- In addition to a descriptive summary of the book's content, reviews should provide some assessment, critique, and analysis of the book's strengths and weaknesses, and its contribution to the field of social work practice, especially to specific audiences such as subfields of social work practice, students, academics, administrators, and church leaders.
- Reviews should adhere to general guidelines for formatting and writing escribed in the general Instructions for Authors.

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

Reviews submitted for a special topic issue should be clearly marked as such.

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

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The purpose of the Letters to the Editor section in *Social Work & Christianity* is to provide creative space for dialogue about complicated topics for Christians in social work. Our hope is that submissions in this form allow for the healthy exchange of ideas and perspectives. The Letters to the Editor section is grounded in our Christian values of humility, mutual respect, and generosity of spirit, as well as our professional values of critical thinking and integrity.

Letters to the Editor should be no more than 500–1,000 words in length and invite conversation as it offers the opportunity for readers to observe an open and civil exchange of ideas and perspectives. Letters which are a response to articles previously published in *Social Work & Christianity* will be shared with the article author(s), who will have the opportunity to respond to the letter. Such Letters to the Editor are encouraged to ask clarifying questions in a spirit of curiosity (as opposed to a spirit of confrontation), model careful listening, and seek common ground where possible as it shares alternative points of view for readers' consideration. Letters to the Editor which include personal attacks or denigration of individuals or organizations will not be considered.

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An Opening Word

Peter Szto

I HAVE A CONFESSION TO MAKE – I’M A TERRIBLE WRITER. AFTER I read what I wrote I’m often baffled by my own words. What was I trying to say? What does it mean? The first draft tends to be incoherent and opaque. Sorry, I know this is probably not what you want to hear from your new Editor-in-Chief (EiC). So why my candor?

There are at least four reasons for my openness. First, the advice to avoid bearing false witness is inspirational for a faith-based scholarly journal. This is especially true for a journal and profession dedicated to social justice and evidence-based practice. As people of faith, we should welcome the opportunity to profess believing in things seen and unseen. After all, our social work knowledge flows from a sovereign, transcendent, and all-knowing God. Publishing manuscripts honestly and reasonably was exemplified by my predecessor, Dr. Jane Hoyt-Oliver. During her tenure as EiC, she faithfully guided *Social Work & Christianity* (SW&C) into a mature resource for the social work profession. I thank God for our friendship and her editorial wisdom. By God’s grace, I hope to continue advancing the journal into its mission *to support and encourage the growth of social workers in the ethical integration of Christian faith and professional practice*.

A second reason for candor is because God so loved the world that he gave us the Gospel to share with the entire world. I believe expanding the impact of SW&C to all ends of the earth is the honest and loving thing to do. We have much to share, and more to learn, from the international community of Christians practicing social work. A quest guiding my editorship is how can we work together to advance domestic and international solutions for a hurting world?

Reason three is to be an inclusive “big tent.” Christian scholarship requires a critical discourse of ideas, values, and practices related to social work – to test their spirits, if you will. Capturing all thoughts under the Lordship of Christ requires an inquisitive, open, reflective, and Scripture-filled mind. Let us examine together in a spirit of trust and humility to advance God’s Kingdom, here, and towards the world to come.

And finally, cultural humility acknowledges that knowledge comes in different shapes and forms. Epistemological self-awareness is important to see the social world more clearly. Although we now see through a glass darkly, eyes of faith enable seeing a fallen world with renewed hearts and minds. May *SW&C* continue to boldly tell stories of integrating faith into practice.

Oh, one last thing, I'm a much better editor than writer. I am excited to work with our membership and reading your manuscript submissions.

Sincerely,
Peter ❖

Peter Szto, MA, MAR, MSW, Ph.D., Fulbright Scholar; Peter Kiewit Distinguished Professorship, Grace Abbott School of Social Work, University of Nebraska at Omaha, is the Editor-in-Chief of *Social Work & Christianity*, email: editor@nacs.org

Exploring the Applied Heart of the Church: The Retributive vs. Restorative Justice Perspectives on Punishment and Incarceration

Anupama Jacob, Michelle Asbill, & Amy Tauati

Mass incarceration is one of the key societal issues facing the US today. While numerous factors have contributed to this problem, a major one is the punitive approach of our criminal justice system. This paper examines the underlying justifications for our criminal justice system's emphasis on punishment using Christian and dominant cultural frameworks. The primary objectives of this paper are: (1) to compare and contrast the core tenets and values of two distinct philosophical approaches to punishment - retribution and restoration - both of which are active within the US criminal justice system; (2) to explore how these two approaches align with biblical values of justice, grace, mercy, and atonement; and (3) to discuss practical implications for how Christian social work educators, scholars, and practitioners can advocate for criminal justice reform based on clear Christian convictions.

Keywords: criminal justice; restoration; retribution; mass incarceration

THE UNITED STATES (US) IS INTERNATIONALLY recognized for having the world's highest proportion of individuals behind bars, housing one in four of the world's prisoners, with an overrepresentation of marginalized groups within the prison population (Grand Challenges for Social Work, 2021; Pettus-Davis & Epperson, 2015; Walmsley, 2015). This expansive criminal justice system, referred

to as mass incarceration, is deemed “one of the biggest social problems the United States faces today” (Pfaff, 2017, p. 18). Recognizing the multitude of challenges plaguing our criminal justice system, the social work profession has adopted “promoting smart decarceration” as one of the 13 Grand Challenges, or significant societal issues, of our time (Grand Challenges for Social Work, n.d.). Yet, despite the staggering rates of incarceration and increasing societal attention to this problem, a recent report suggests that the Christian community does not view criminal justice as a leading social issue (Prison Fellowship, 2019). Christian social workers working in the field of criminal justice or led to specifically address mass incarceration may find themselves trying to understand and reconcile this stark difference in perspective.

Numerous factors have contributed to mass incarceration in the US. One key contributing factor is our approach to and application of punishment in the criminal justice system. In fact, the US criminal justice system is considered one of the most punitive democracies in the world (Enns, 2016). This context compels us to reexamine our underlying justifications for why, how, and how much we should punish within our criminal justice system from both a Christian faith perspective and from broader cultural points of view; questions that moral philosophers, scholars, and political theorists have wrestled with over centuries (Materni, 2013).

van Prooijen (2018) argues that punishment is inherently grounded in our ideas of justice. We often hear people saying “justice has been served,” even though the term justice has no uniform or singular definition (Marshall, 2001; Materni, 2013). Marshall (2012) questions whether there are essentially objective elements in the concept of justice or if the concept is based on a social agreement, unique to the cultural and historical context of a society. As will be seen in this survey of the literature, people of faith have a view of justice that takes into account the existence of a just God whose just ways inform how we conceptualize and practice punishment, while others view justice merely on the basis of the social plane with the goal of social stability and safety. Consequently, our inherent understanding of what justice means fundamentally influences beliefs about how justice should be meted out and when justice is attained in response to a crime.

The U.S. Department of Justice (n.d.) states that its mission is “to seek just punishment for those guilty of unlawful behavior; and to ensure fair and impartial administration of justice for all Americans.” However, the understanding of what this just punishment is has remained a source of debate among philosophers over time. Philosophical approaches to punishment have ranged from more retributive approaches focused on the punishment of offenses to more

restorative approaches focused on repairing broken relationships. These philosophical frameworks are also embedded in Christian discourse, and Christians, too, remain divided on what constitutes just punishment. For instance, a recent survey conducted by the Prison Fellowship (2019) found that a greater percent of respondents who identified as practicing Christian respondents in the U.S. believed that restoration should be the primary purpose of the criminal justice system compared to adults who did not. However, while practicing Christians were more likely to support alternatives to incarceration, the survey revealed that they displayed greater preference for tougher punishments compared to the general public even when not justified.

These findings suggest that practicing Christians are divided on the purpose of the justice system, the appropriate level of punishment, and opportunities to make amends for one's crime. Furthermore, while the term justice is typically associated with the public sphere of lawmaking and enforcement in the Western world, a biblical understanding of justice goes further by including "comprehensive well-being, wholeness, and peace" (Marshall, 2001, p. 36). If we acknowledge that even incarcerated individuals are created in His image, then we are called to explore how different philosophical perspectives on punishment and incarceration align with a biblical approach to justice, mercy, grace, and redemption not just for the victim, but also the offender (Rice-Minus, 2020). Such reflections on justice and punishment also overlap with the social work profession's core values of service, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, and social justice, as described in the profession's *Code of Ethics* (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2021). In other words, Christian social workers find themselves with multiple ethical commitments, including the victim, the offender, and society.

The intersection of punishment and justice is naturally a large and complex area that this paper does not attempt to solve. A review of the literature yielded two prominent philosophical approaches to punishment, both of which are active within the US criminal justice system: the retributive approach and the restorative approach. The main goal of this paper is, therefore, to (1) compare and contrast these two overarching philosophical approaches, each with its own distinctive core tenets and values, as a means to better understand the dynamics of the US criminal justice system; and (2) to explore how these two approaches align with biblical values of justice, grace, mercy, care, and atonement. To meet this goal, some of the key ideas and arguments of leading thinkers and scholars will be presented.

This discussion will conclude with practical implications for how Christian social work educators, scholars, and practitioners can raise

awareness about the relationship between mass incarceration and our intrinsic views on punishment and justice, deepen our understanding of contributing factors to mass incarceration, and advocate for criminal justice reform based on clear Christian convictions. This is particularly relevant to social work scholars and practitioners who are called to critically examine the “utility and function of incarceration” as well as strategies that guide policy and program design to address the high rates of incarceration in “ways that are humane, socially just, and sustainable” (Center for Social Development, n.d.).

Philosophical Approaches Guiding Punishment and Justice

Few issues evoke as much debate as crime and the appropriate ways to punish criminal behavior. The literature identifies two different philosophical approaches for the legitimization of punishment that have guided Western penal codes over the years (Marshall, 2001). The first approach is retributive and views punishment as a response that is “deserved” or inherently “just” to restore the imbalance in the moral or social order resulting from a crime (e.g., Boers, 2008; Marshall, 2001; Smith, 2005). In contrast, restorative justice emerged as a paradigm shift in penal policy in the late 1970s to counter the shortcomings of a more retribution-oriented system by turning the spotlight on redressing the harms caused by the crime (Zehr, 1990/2003). This approach has gained growing interest as an alternative approach to responding to crime that involves not just the offender, but also the victim(s) of the crime and the community impacted. As such, the main goal of a restorative approach to justice is to repair the harm caused by the crime by involving the parties affected in determining an appropriate resolution (Centre for Justice & Reconciliation, n.d.).

Due to the sheer volume of literature on punishment and the criminal justice system, this paper will offer a panoramic view of the arguments and ideas of a few prominent scholars and thinkers in the field regarding retributive and restorative approaches guiding crime and punishment by (1) briefly describing the unique features of each approach and reviewing the main strengths and limitations of each approach; and (2) discussing the alignment of each approach with biblical values of justice based on the literature.

The Retributive Approach

Key Features

The term retribution stems from the Latin word *retribuere*, which

essentially means “repayment.” The word “retribution,” if seen in isolation, could imply retaliation or vengeance. However, when coupled with the word “justice,” the term intimates a “measured delivery of punishment as due recompense for wrongdoing” (Marshall, 2012, p. 13). Materni (2013) argues that a deontological argument, or moral foundation, for the retributive philosophy is that a person who intentionally chooses evil must face the repercussions of that choice. This understanding of retributive justice requires the consideration of four key elements: Guilt, desert, proportionality, and reprobation (Marshall, 2001, 2012; Materni, 2013).

Individuals who choose to break the law are to be held morally responsible for their actions (*guilt*). This idea is reflected in the biblical concept that “you reap whatever you sow” (*New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised, 1989, Galatians 6:7*). Consequently, “punishing the morally culpable is intrinsically good” because of an individual’s *desert* or blameworthiness (Moore, 2010, p. 29). In other words, punishment is justified because the individual who committed the crime deserves to be punished (Murphy, 2007). Guilt and desert lead to the concept of *proportionality* in that the punishment must be equivalent to the crime; fairness in this context means that punishment should be nothing more and nothing less. While often misinterpreted, the Old Testament principle of *lex talionis* (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth), was in fact created to moderate the human tendency to react with literal or excessive punishments in response to an offense (Soltis, 2011). Lastly, retributive justice involves the *reprobation* or *denunciation* by society for behaviors that go against established collective norms (Marshall, 2001). Furthermore, if individuals are acknowledged as morally equal, the argument is that each individual is responsible for respecting collective norms. While the benefit of such adherence to norms offers all members of the community liberty from interference and safety, punishment for non-adherence is justified “along lines of fairness and equality of obligations” (Smith, 2005, p. 442). The retributive approach to punishment has remained the dominant penal philosophy in the Western world with “just deserts” used as a term to describe modern retributivism (Lacey & Pickard, 2015).

Strengths and Limitations

One of the key strengths of the retributive approach is that the focus of punishment is on the individual and his/her actions and not on the larger societal benefits the act of punishment might provide (e.g., deterring crime in society). The individual is held morally responsible for the personal choice(s) to engage in criminal activity. As Marshall

(2001) notes, “punishment is justified only if it is just, it is just only if it is deserved, and it is deserved only if the crime is the result of free will” (p. 111). A related strength is that the retributive approach recognizes each individual’s right to be regarded as an autonomous, rational agent who is to be repaid based on their actions. Retributivism differs from more utilitarian approaches to punishment in that it refrains from paternalizing the offender (e.g., rehabilitative program focused on “curing” the individual of certain behaviors) or using the individual as an example to deter crime, but rather respects each individual as a free and responsible person (Marshall, 2001; Smith, 2005). Lastly, the proportionality feature of retributivism is believed to protect the individual from unnecessary prejudice or harshness in punishment, assuming of course that it is practiced purposefully (Duce, 2012). Nozick (1981) asserts that retribution should not be conflated with vengeance or revenge as “revenge involves a particular emotional tone, pleasure in the suffering of another, while retribution either need involve no emotional tone, or involves another one, namely, pleasure at justice being done” (p. 367).

There are however several philosophical and moral limitations of the retributive approach. One key philosophical debate is what offenses warrant punishment. While there might be a consensus regarding certain offenses like murder, Dolinko (1991) argues that not all misdemeanors are considered criminal, and decisions regarding which ones merit penalization call for utilitarian debates. As such, a related issue is how to rank the seriousness of crimes and the appropriate punishment for each. For example, what would a suitable punishment be for a person who physically abuses their child if the concept of proportionality of punishment were to be applied? Cultural norms and the community’s main areas of concern regarding crime might also fluctuate and shift over time (e.g., drunk driving, child abuse, tax evasion), and thus, in turn, what an appropriate punishment is or should be for various types of offenses. Hence, as Marshall (2001) contends, retribution cannot always be clearly separated from revenge as the community’s “moral indignation” regarding certain types of crime can result in “unmitigated hostility” where the individual is “regarded as the embodiment of evil and treated with considerable brutality” (p. 115).

Another key philosophical challenge is how to measure guilt, not just in terms of the actual actions, but the intent behind those actions. No human justice system can truly assess moral culpability or motivations; only God fully sees people’s actions in connection to their heart (Marshall, 2001). While the retributive approach may seek to encourage the individual to respect the collective values in

the future through reprobation and disapproval, it does not evaluate or reevaluate the punishment of those who express remorse or fully address the indifference on part of an offender (Morris, 1994); the emphasis is more on “due” punishment for the crime. On a related note, the fallibility of the human justice system means that sometimes the innocent get wrongly convicted for crimes. Although the “beyond a reasonable doubt” standard has been challenged (Walen, 2015), retributivists maintain that as long as this standard has been met, the punishers have acted “permissibly” even if the innocent are unintentionally punished in the process (Schedler, 2011).

According to Marshall (2001), morally, retributivism might enable human nature to be more punitive than needed. The problem of mass incarceration, Marshall contends, could be viewed as a result of our emphasis on retribution without adequate focus on opportunities for restitution. There is an idea that suffering and humiliation represent justice and that evil is to be restrained by harshness, not love or mercy (Zehr, 2003). It is intriguing, however, that an individual can owe “suffering” as compensation or repayment of a criminal act, which raises the question of how a criminal can be expected to repay their debt to their victim(s) or the larger society merely through suffering. The retributive philosophy essentially has expanded from debt repayment to deserved punishment (Walen, 2020).

The retributive approach also fails to pay attention to the social consequences of punishment. A narrow focus on the individual offender overlooks the fact that the individual is part of a larger community. While it may be easy to think that justice has been served when a person is sentenced, the longer-term impact on that individual’s family or community tends to remain hidden (Soltis, 2011). Furthermore, while not discounting the importance of personal responsibility, a retributive approach also does not take into account socio-economic-political factors such as poverty or racial inequalities that may contribute to crime. The context for individuals’ “free will” or “rational choice” in terms of their decision to commit a crime may thus be influenced by the conditions of their social environment, but with little allowance for judicial nuance in the criminal justice system for the role of such systemic issues and limited choices in furthering crime within our society (Marshall, 2001).

Marshall (2001) asserts that we must consider the “societal causes of crime” and our “collective responsibility for it - rather than being content to divide individuals into categories of guilty and innocent” (p. 118). The overlooking of social conditions also perpetuates an “us” vs. “them” attitude and essentially tries to “create justice by leaving out many of the relevant variables” (Zehr, 2003, pp. 72-73). This

attitude may lead to a further sense of alienation among individuals who start to believe that it will not be possible to develop any sort of meaningful relationship with society (Lacey & Pickard, 2015). Moreover, research has documented significant challenges formerly incarcerated individuals face in terms of reintegration as well as the shadow of stigma and mistrust that follows them as “ex-cons” even after they have served their time (Anazodo et al., 2019; Pettus-Davis & Kennedy, 2018).

The Restorative Approach

Key Features

Howard Zehr is considered the “grandfather of restorative justice” (Zehr Institute for Restorative Justice, n.d.). Drawing on Judeo-Christian principles, his seminal book, *Changing Lenses: A new focus for crime and justice* (1990/2003), provided a paradigm shift in the way the concept of justice was perceived. Although the 20th century did witness reformatory ideals and prison reform efforts within the criminal justice system (Griffith, 2020), the retributive approach has largely dominated the Western criminal justice system. Zehr (1990/2003), offers a radically different lens - restoration - through which to view punishment and justice. While the retributive approach focuses on the punishment an offender deserves based on their guilt, the restorative approach includes the offender, victim, and community in an endeavor to repair the harm caused by the offense (Soltis, 2011). Zehr (2002) admits that both retributive and restorative justice seek to right the balance in different ways. While retributivism appears to emphasize pain and suffering for vindication, a restorative approach is believed to find vindication by motivating the offender to assume responsibility for their actions and acknowledging the victim’s needs.

There is no consensus on the definition of restorative justice. However, the approach is characterized by three core principles:

1. Crime affects the victim(s), communities, and the offenders themselves. Since crime hurts, justice demands healing for all three parties, and this healing happens through the restoration of broken relationships (Braithwaite, 2002; Smith, 2005; Van Ness & Strong, 1997; Zehr, 1990/2003).
2. Victims, communities, and offenders actively participate in the restoration process; thereby, taking active responsibility for justice as a better future. Restorative justice has been described as “a process whereby all the parties with a stake in a particular

offense come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offense and its implications for the future” (Marshall, 1999, p. 5).

3. The duties and functions of the government in relation to justice should be reconsidered. The government’s primary responsibility should be to maintain order, while the community’s should be to promote peace (Van Ness & Strong, 1997).

Restorative justice is a relatively new approach to criminal justice but is gaining support as an alternative response to crime and punishment. Restorative justice practice in the US began in the 1970s as an effort to correct some of the weaknesses of the Western legal system while building on its strengths. The approach initially focused on crimes like burglary but has, over time, extended to include other offenses like rape and murder. Sentencing has included restitution and community service since the 1970s, and in the 1980s began to include victim-offender mediation programs (Zehr, 2002). This approach has been gaining popularity in the United States, since the 1990s, and many optimistically view restorative justice as a more positive and less punitive approach to criminal justice (Daly, 2013).

Today, several restorative justice-based programs embrace a faith-based and community approach to addressing crime. Countries like Austria, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom have also legislated commitments to restorative justice-based procedures at the national level (Sliva & Lambert, 2015). Another example of a restorative justice approach is the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. One more striking example is the Amish response to the murder of six young schoolgirls in rural Pennsylvania in 2006, where the community displayed a restoration-oriented response to the gunman and his family rather than demanding harsh judgment for the gunman (Sarre & Young, 2011). Within the US, 32 states have adopted statutory support for restorative justice practices for certain types of offenses within their adult and juvenile criminal justice codes, ranging from more general to specific structures and practices for implementation (Sliva & Lambert, 2015).

Strengths and Limitations

Restorative justice has its own share of proponents and critics. One of the core strengths of the restorative approach is that it acknowledges justice as a relational concept (McGeorge, 2016). Consequently, in comparison to the retributive approach that focuses on enforcing a proportionate punishment, a restorative approach concentrates its

attention on supporting the healing of not just the victim but also the offender by restoring their “moral and social sense” (Hermann, 2017, p. 80).

The conventional criminal justice system tends to view crime as an offense against the state rather than against an individual. While the penal system does consider the effects of the crime on the individual victim(s), the main focus is on the type and severity of the criminal infraction. The victims tend to remain in the margins of legal proceedings or may find themselves being questioned during a court proceeding. In contrast, the victim of the crime takes center stage in a restorative approach, and the offender is encouraged to understand and take ownership for the harm caused by the offense (Gabbay, 2005; Hermann, 2017). Positioned remarkably at the intersection of criminal justice, victims’ rights, and social justice (Sliva & Lambert, 2015), a related strength of a restorative approach is, thus, that it takes a more rounded view of the impacts and needs of the victim, community, and offender.

Another key strength of the restorative approach is how we interact with offenders. Johnstone (2011) argues that offenders should not be treated as our enemies, even if they might behave in that manner; if we view them as fellow members of our society, then they need our empathy just as much as our moral indignation. Braithwaite (1989) presents the idea of “reintegrative shaming,” where the action is disapproved or shamed, but the offender is to be regarded as “essentially good;” an idea captured in the phrase, “hate the sin and love the sinner” (p. 101). Isolating offenders in hostile prison environments would, therefore, offer us far fewer opportunities to demonstrate our care for them and desire for them to be able to reintegrate back into their local communities.

It is important to note that advocates of restorative justice emphasize that this does not equate to a soft-on-crime approach. Offenders must still be willing to take accountability for and repair the harm caused by their criminal behavior or action. Rather than be far removed from the impacts of their action(s), a restorative approach encourages offenders to face their victim(s) and the consequences of their action(s). Further, restorative justice-related activities can occur at multiple points during the legal process, during pre- or post-sentencing, as a supplement to the court process, or as a diversion from the judicial system (Daly, 2013).

Empirical evidence suggests that restorative approaches have better outcomes than the traditional justice system. Studies have shown that victims appreciate having a choice to participate in any sort of restorative or victim-offender mediation process (e.g., Strang &

Sherman, 2003; Strang, 2002). Noting that 95% of offenders in criminal cases in the US are found guilty based on a plea-bargaining process, Gabbay (2005) argues that this suggests that offenders are generally willing to take responsibility for their actions. Additionally, one meta-analysis of the effects of victim-offender mediation on recidivism found that restorative approaches positively affect recidivism rates, with re-offense rates of participants in victim-offender mediation, for example, ranging between 9% and 27% lower than non-participants (Nugent et al., 2003). Given the high rates of recidivism within our current justice system, such improvements warrant further research and attention. Costs incurred with legal proceedings (e.g., legal fees, inmate expenses) can also be lowered if punishment is not limited to imprisonment. For example, a restorative approach might determine that community service rather than imprisonment can meet the need to make sure that the criminal act is condemned while still offering the offender a chance to make amends.

A last key strength is the involvement of the community in conflict resolution. Johnstone (2011) contends that the state alone cannot be responsible for tackling crime. Community members must actively participate in promoting settlements, acting as mediators, and engaging with offenders who are repentant and want to make amends as they try to reintegrate back into society. Boers (2008) maintains that retribution cannot bring recovery. Fractured relationships between the offender, victim, and community can only be repaired through the “hard work of confrontation, confession, and forgiveness” (p. 62). The stakeholders thus take responsibility for justice as a better future.

Critics, however, argue that restorative justice is perhaps too quick to assume that offenders, victims, and the community are willing, ready, and able to reach an agreement on how and what the reparation process will look like. Johnstone (2011) asserts that restorative justice does not fully address the moral agency of the offender. Furthermore, the effects of crime for the victim may not just be material damage (e.g., property crime or burglary), but physical and/or psychological and mental trauma; it is much harder to make restitution for the latter. The vicarious effects of the trauma caused by the crime may also reverberate in the larger community. This raises the question as to whether adult offenders, even if they are genuinely contrite, can ever be completely exonerated, particularly when they are permanently labeled as an “offender” because of their crime.

Another criticism is in regard to the risks of physical and emotional harm in bringing the victim face-to-face with their offender. Victims could fear physical or emotional intimidation or be exposed to the possibility of re-traumatization in the presence of an offender who lacks

remorse for their actions. This requires that screening procedures be established to determine which cases could be considered appropriate for a restorative approach as well as the need for mediators who are skilled at facilitating difficult conversations (Gabbay, 2005). An intertwined concern in bringing affected parties to the table is in identifying who those parties or stakeholders are. Some argue that it should be the victim and the offender. Others include the family and friends of the victim or offender, and some expand the group to anyone “concerned” about the offense, the victim, and/or the offender in the broader community.

The role of the state or stakeholders from the criminal justice system in the restorative process is also debated (Dignan, 2005). Additionally, the level and type of participation that might be expected by the various stakeholders for the process to be considered restorative justice are not clear-cut. Dignan (2005) raises questions about acceptable types of questions or discussions at these meetings; whether the victim or a surrogate for the victim can voice their feelings or views; whether meetings need to be held in-person or if other modes of communication from the stakeholders can be included; and if the offender has to participate in any type of “victim awareness” exercises prior to any such meeting(s). The end goals of these meetings are also unclear; should the goals focus on the potential cathartic experience or opportunities for transformation of behaviors or attitudes of the participants involved? These issues could potentially dilute the effectiveness of a restorative approach to crime. The time, effort, and cost involved in bringing affected parties together to bring about reconciliation may be additional factors that need to be considered. A related criticism is victim support post-interaction with the person who has committed the offense. Often these interactions can be emotional, and/or they may present secondary trauma with no follow-up support (e.g. debrief, meeting with a clinician).

Lastly, the criminal justice system allows the public to feel that the criminal case received “due process” and that the offender received some form of “concrete” punishment for their crime. Judges often note that “justice must satisfy the appearance of justice” (Gabbay, 2005, p. 355). Restorative justice can seem to blur these concepts of fairness and justice when individuals want to see offenders held accountable for their actions. It is important, therefore, that stakeholders are clear on how a restorative approach addresses and attains justice in comparison to the more standard method of imprisonment.

Table 1 below summarizes the key features, strengths, and limitations of the retributive and restorative justice approaches to punishment and criminal justice.

Table 1

An Overview of the Retributive vs. Restorative Approaches

	Retributive Approach	Restorative Approach
Key Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime viewed as a violation against the state. • Guilt - individual moral responsibility. • Desert - blameworthiness. • Proportionality - punishment equivalent to crime. • Reprobation - denunciation of behaviors against collective norms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime viewed as a violation of relationships. • Crime affects the victim(s), community, and offender. • Victim(s), offender, and community actively participate in the restoration process; to repair the harm caused by the crime.
Key Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice viewed as a measured delivery of punishment to redress the crime. • Focus on individual's actions, not larger societal benefits of punishment. • An individual is considered a rational agent, morally responsible for their action. • Punishment is proportional to the crime, limiting excessive punishment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice viewed as a relational concept. • Victim takes center stage rather than remaining in the margins of legal proceedings. • The offender is encouraged to take responsibility for and consequences of their actions. • Focuses attention on healing not just for the victim and community, but also the offender. Consequently, seeks to bring the affected parties to the table as part of the reparation and restoration process. • Considers impacts and needs of crime on victim, community, and offender, and restorative practices can be implemented at multiple points during the legal process.

	Retributive Approach	Restorative Approach
Key Limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clear consensus on the type and ranking of offenses that should be considered criminal. • Moral culpability or motivation cannot be truly assessed. • Focus on deserved punishment, not on an individual's ability to repay his/her debt to the victim(s) or larger society. • Overlooks key systemic social, economic, and/or political factors that contribute to crime. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects of crime for the victim can be physical and/or psychological trauma for which it is hard to make restitution. • Hard to determine who should be allowed to 'sit at the table' during the restorative process - victim and offender; family/ friends of the victim and offenders; or the broader community affected by the crime. • End goals of the process; level and type of participation expected by various affected stakeholders; and the time, effort, and costs involved in bringing affected parties together are not clear-cut • Not all offenses may be suitable for a restorative approach.

Retributivism, Restoration, and Biblical Justice

According to Leary (2017), the word “prison” can be found 43 times in the Scripture. Leary notes that the Old Testament does not establish imprisonment as a form of punishment. Rather, retribution and restitution are the only responses to crime specified throughout Scripture. Christian theology and the western legal system are believed to have developed hand- in-hand. The legal system that began to take form in the Middle Ages sought the counsel of the church, which was essentially the Catholic church at this point in time. The church, in turn, was influenced by ideas of justice based on Roman law that became the foundation for “the elaborate structure of canon law, the first modern legal system” (Zehr, 2003, p. 111).

While forgiveness and reconciliation were emphasized in early Christian custom, the Canon law and its coextending theology began to view crime not only as a sin against a person but against God, making it the church’s responsibility to cleanse transgressions. Social order naturally also became associated with the will of God, and crime came to be seen as a transgression against this social order. Concepts of free will and personal responsibility, thus, became institutionalized by the Canon law. Moving away from the practice of resolutions between individuals, justifications for punishment were now set, and authorities

began to enforce punishments. In other words, crime began to be viewed as an offense against the state and not the individual (Sarre & Young, 2011; Zehr, 2003, 2009).

Zehr (1990/2003) notes that “shalom” was a core concept in both the Old and New Testaments. This concept, based on the covenant model, symbolizes not just peace, but also the “rightness” of relationships between individuals in terms of mutual responsibilities and commitments; fashioning ideas of justice, law, social order, and hope. It was restitution rather than punishment that rebuilt shalom in Israelite laws, and justice was a reflection of repaired harm. Punishment was a part of the process of restitution (Marshall, 2001). Retribution lost its grounding in this understanding of shalom and became an end in itself. Following Greco-Roman interests, justice became an abstract concept with no restorative goals (Zehr, 1990/2003). As Gorringer (1996) notes, the retributive philosophy was fortified through our faith and justice system, leading to an intensively punitive culture in the Western world. Cultural syncretism and the integration of societies were thus formative to our current ideas of law. Retributive principles can be found in the Bible in relation to the concept of justice, as can the four key features of the retributive approach (guilt, desert, proportionality, and reprobation). Guilt and penance form an integral part of the Pentateuchal codes; divine judgment takes desert into account; proportionality is reflected in the idea of *lex talionis*; and reprobation is evidenced in the call to cleanse the land from evil (Marshall, 2001, 2012). Theologically, biblical writers took seriously the moral consequences of an individual’s actions and God’s loathing of evil and injustice (Marshall, 2001). Crime was viewed as an offense because it ruptured relations and could precipitate further destruction within the community. Punishment was consequently seen as a means of diverting the consequences of the offense back to the offender in the form of divine or legal retribution. Punishment not only amplified the aftermath of an immoral act, but also restored the community to wholeness by purging the evil and thereby achieving justice (Marshall, 2012).

Moreover, since God is by nature just, His divine judgments throughout history are not arbitrary. The “just desert” principle can also be witnessed in the biblical account of the end times when God will repay “according to everyone’s work” (NRSV, 1989, Revelation 22:12). In other words, if an individual causes harm through morally irresponsible actions, then they deserve to be punished; blame and not forgiveness is the hallmark of this model (Lacey & Pickard, 2015). Justice is attained when the guilty are punished and “wrongdoers suffer” for their actions (Moore, 2010, p. 118).

The theme of retribution is, however, moderated by “nonretributive expressions of divine judgment” and God’s desire to extend grace, mercy, and forgiveness to the repentant (Marshall, 2001, p. 126). Biblical accounts offer several alternatives to retributive punishment including restitution, admonition, and forgiveness (e.g., Exodus 34:6-7; Micah 7:18), and seek to establish justice through the restoration of relationships (Marshall, 2012). In fact, the Christian gospel overturns the idea of just desert and retribution, and Gorringer (1996) claims that “The New Testament, far from underscoring retributivism, actually deconstructs it” (p. 58). Mercy rather than judgment or retaliation is exhorted because of the restoration of relationships offered through “the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (NRSV, 1989, Romans 3:24).

Marshall (2001) identifies two theological perspectives to examine if God’s order is based on the principle of retributive justice. The first is that retribution focuses on external actions and not on individuals’ character. A person’s true motivation can never be fully assessed by any human court. Authentic justice requires a full understanding of all contributing factors including a person’s intent and disposition, which ultimately only God knows. The second is based on Thomas Talbott’s (1993) argument that retributive punishment can never sufficiently meet the requirements of justice since the results of a criminal act must be fully negated for restoration. Justice demands that punishment lead to a genuine change of heart and repentance because “God’s justice can be ultimately vindicated not by retribution but only by reconciling forgiveness, for only thus are things made right” (Marshall, 2001, p. 128). Marshall cautions against viewing retribution as a complete justification for punishment based on a limited understanding of the biblical narrative and asserts that retribution cannot satisfactorily address the intricate social structure of punishment or the full scope of biblical testimony.

Growing dissatisfaction with the punitiveness and inefficiencies of our current criminal justice system has generated more interest in the Christian community in the concept of restorative justice and its alignment with biblical values of peace, mercy, and forgiveness (Carder, 2012). The approach affirms accountability, which is believed to be foundational for forgiveness and healing. The restorative approach also recognizes the dignity of every person made in the image of God irrespective of their actions and the potential for ongoing transformation and reconciliation; values that are central to the Christian faith (Hermann, 2017; Sarre & Young, 2011). In a similar vein, Leary (2017) insists that we pay attention to “who or what is being placed in a cage,” and that if we subscribe to the Creation framework, we must look at justice through the lens of *Imago Dei*.

Then “justice is not treating millions of image bearers like the very animals they are to have dominion over” (p. 24). While there are other scholars who discuss the alignment of the restorative approach with the biblical concept of justice, this paper highlights the arguments of Marshall (2012), one of the key thinkers in the field of restorative justice. Marshall asserts that restorative justice aligns with biblical justice at the linguistic, macro, legislative, and ecclesial levels.

At the *linguistic* level, Marshall explains that the terms justice and righteousness correspond with each other and are often used in synonymous parallelism (e.g., Amos 5:24). Righteousness is also associated with justice in the language of the New Testament. God’s righteousness in the gospel, Paul argues, is to be seen as the demonstration of God’s rescuing justice. The biblical understanding of righteousness, according to Marshall, focuses on one’s relationship with God and others. Engaging in a criminal activity thus defiles that relationship and requires restoration. While punitive methods are in place to rebuke the offense, the ultimate goal of punishment is to make things right and renew the ruptured relationships with God and with one’s community. God’s justice is normatively restorative and accordingly seeks to rebuild shalom.

The restorative nature of biblical justice can also be seen at the *macro* level in the larger canonical story that points to “God’s restorative justice at work” (p. 16). God created this world to be in harmony and right relationships, but the sin of humanity violates God’s law and His love. And yet, God actively began to pave the road for restoration and recovery from the harm caused by sin. His plan for restoring justice is exemplified in the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, essentially liberating humankind from the power and bondage of sin. The ultimate fulfillment of God’s restorative justice is described in the book of Revelation when this faithful and just God will “make all things new” (NRSV, 1989, Revelation 21:3-5).

Marshall notes that the *legislative* level can be seen within several individual events or chapters within the larger macro story. The covenant law specifies four ways in which offenders are to repent or make amends for “breaking faith with the Lord” (NRSV, 1989, Numbers 5:6-7). The first requires recognition of the sin and remorse for that transgression through confession. The second requires repentance by atoning for the sin and desiring to make things right again. The third requires compensation for the victims based on the type and severity of the offense. The last focuses on reconciliation with the individual who was harmed. This idea is captured well in Jesus’s charge to first be reconciled with one’s brother or sister before offering gifts to God at the altar (Matthew 5:23-24).

Finally, at the *ecclesial* level, biblical justice is concerned about the establishment of faith communities that reflect God's desire for restorative justice. Marshall provides two examples from Paul's letters to illustrate this point. In Paul's letter to the Galatians (NRSV, 6:1,), he encourages the believers to restore anyone who has transgressed back into the community "in a spirit of gentleness" and recognition of one's own frailty and vulnerability to sin. Similarly, in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul calls the believers to respond to a person who has sinned with forgiveness and compassion so that the penitent offender is not completely broken down by shame or despair (2 Corinthians, 2:6-7).

Paul stresses that if the community does not seek to restore the broken relationship with the offender and instead "clings self-righteously or angrily to its punitive stance, it risks being 'outwitted by Satan,' whose destructive designs are no secret" (Marshall, 2012, p. 19). Individuals who have been incarcerated speak of the isolation and deep loss of connection they feel while incarcerated; calling it, in essence, a "social death." They also refer to the emotional and psychological debilitation that comes from being dehumanized; where they lose their identity as a person and become just a number in a massive system (Miller, 2021). The church, argues Marshall, should be a place of healing and restoration; a place where believers demonstrate God's redeeming justice through Jesus not only in our profession of the gospel message but also in the way we respond to offenses and failures among our fellow brothers and sisters who God never stops seeing as His children made in His image.

Implications for Christian Social Workers

Social work intersects with the criminal justice system on numerous fronts, whether it is working within prison systems, with families affected by the justice system, or with formerly incarcerated individuals trying to reintegrate back into their communities. As social workers, a first step would therefore be to have strong self-awareness of our own values, beliefs, assumptions, and biases as they relate to the idea of punishment and justice, as well as how they influence our practice of social work and engagement with the criminal justice system. As Christian social workers, we are called to reflect on how our worldview aligns with our profession's mission "to enhance human well-being" and core values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence (NASW, 2021).

As social work educators, it is vital that our students are knowledgeable about the dynamics of the American criminal justice system and the underlying approaches to punishment that shape our penal policies. To facilitate and encourage students to engage in deeper conversations about the intersection of worldview with complex topics like punishment and justice, some examples of discussion questions educators might use in the classroom are provided below:

1. “In what ways does the Bible’s understanding of law differ from ours?”
2. What purposes does the law serve? Whom does it protect and whom does it afflict?
3. What purposes should the law serve? How could the law be made to serve victims, offenders, and the community?
4. How can our response to crime bring healing to relationships?” (Boers, 2008, p. 62)
5. How does our current criminal justice system honor or dishonor the Christian beliefs of *Imago Dei* and shalom?
6. How do our worldviews, including our values, biases, and assumptions align with the core social work values of dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, and social justice as outlined in our profession’s Code of Ethics?
7. Which lens to approaching punishment do you think best characterizes your own and why?
8. How should and could Christian social workers be involved in the criminal justice system?

Copeland and colleagues (2018), as part of the Grand Challenge initiative, have also created a guide for educators and learners that can be utilized in social work curricula to build knowledge and skills among students so they can work with individuals and families impacted by mass incarceration in various contexts.

The modern prison system sits right in the midst of the political, social, and cultural landscape of American society. There is, thus, room for extensive research among Christian social work scholars on the intersections of these contexts and their impact on the criminal justice system. The profession’s Grand Challenge to promote smart decarceration calls for greater understanding of issues such as key factors contributing to incarceration; effects of involvement in the criminal justice system on individuals, families, and their communities; and the access to and utilization of needed services and their correlation with recidivism rates based on factors like race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Pettus-Davis, 2012). More research is also needed to explore the perspectives of stakeholders (victim, offender,

community, criminal justice employees) regarding the benefits and challenges of restorative justice models as well as the long-term outcomes of such models to understand the long-term viability of restorative justice as a policy tool to address crime and criminal justice. Such research will not only contribute to the social work Grand Challenge of smart decarceration, but also position Christian social workers to make deliberate contributions to the significant public issues of our day by informing program and/or policy design and development.

Lastly, Christian social workers can actively engage their local church community on this complex and multifaceted issue. It is interesting that while practicing Christians, compared to the general public, are more likely to support the idea of restoration within the criminal justice system, they are also at the same time more likely to favor stronger punishments. Practicing Christians are also less likely to consider the positions of the individuals running for elections regarding criminal justice. However, perhaps of greatest concern in the context of this paper, is that around 25% of regular church-attending Americans stated that there were no efforts in their church communities to raise awareness about social issues like criminal justice or racial inequities (Prison Fellowship, 2019).

Christian social workers can act as bridges to initiate and facilitate conversations about topics like mass incarceration and its effects on families and communities in churches. Social work scholars are already engaged in raising awareness on issues such as mental health and race in the church (e.g., Payne, 2019; Payne & Hays, 2016). Such discussions also offer opportunities to bring various voices to the table including, for example, theologians/pastors, criminal justice academics and/or practitioners, and individuals or families involved or impacted by the criminal justice system. These conversations could help debunk myths about or misconceptions about this population. These discussions could also provide an impetus for churches considering how to serve those in prisons or meet the needs of individuals returning to their communities post-incarceration by identifying ways in which they might build partnerships with other local churches or nonprofit organizations. Ultimately, social workers can help fellow believers live in the tension of both God as a righteous judge and His call to love our enemies and do good to those who harm us; thereby, living out our belief in the *Imago Dei* and directives to extend forgiveness and promote shalom.

Conclusion

This paper focused on two distinct philosophical approaches to crime and punishment: retribution and restoration. Retribution focuses on the “just” punishment based on what the offense “deserves.” A retributive approach acknowledges the inherent value of a person by trying to ensure that only the guilty are punished for a crime. A restorative approach focuses on repairing the harm caused by the crime by bringing together the stakeholders affected by the crime. A restorative approach is not necessarily incompatible with a retribution-oriented approach because it seeks to encourage the offender to own their culpability and take responsibility for his/her actions and then work toward making amends. In contrast to the retributive approach, the victim is also placed at the center of the restoration process; the crime is seen primarily as an offense against the individual and not the state.

Prominent Christian and secular thinkers and scholars in the field continue to discuss the strengths and limitations of each approach, and the alignment of each to biblical concepts of justice, mercy, and atonement. Discussions in the literature continue to grow and call for Christians, particularly Christian social workers, to remain intentionally engaged with issues related to justice, punishment, and the application of our values and belief systems within the criminal justice system. If we believe that God’s redeeming love and mercy is freely offered to every individual and that “each one of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done” (Stevenson, 2015, pp. 17-18), then, as believers, we must find ways to reconcile our own belief systems with God’s call to love and serve the “least of these” in our communities. ❖

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Exceeding Quotidian Kindness: A Christian Response to Lateral Violence in Academe and Social Work

Gordon Pon, Doret Phillips

This paper presents a Christian view of kindness to address lateral violence in academe and social service settings among racialized proponents of conflict perspectives in social work such as anti-racism and anti-Black racism. Two examples of extraordinary kindness involving the Asian and African diaspora are presented to highlight the axiological and spiritual relevance of kindness as it relates to anti-racism and anti-Black racism, on one hand, and as a helpful intervention for addressing lateral violence in academe and social service settings, on the other.

Keywords: kindness, Christianity, anti-Black racism, lateral violence, social work

THIS PAPER PRESENTS A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF KINDNESS to address lateral violence in academe and social service settings among racialized proponents of conflict perspectives in social work such as anti-racism and anti-Black racism. Lateral violence refers to aggression and/or assaults that members of a particular group, such as racialized people, execute against fellow members (Friere, 2003; Mullaly, 2010). At an interpersonal level, lateral violence can include “gossip, triangulation, complaining, manipulation, blaming, name-calling, chronic hostility and resentment, undermining, and sabotage” (Kennedy-Kish et al., 2017, p. 168). In their comments on lateral violence among African Canadians, Kumsa et al. (2014) issue a call to Black people to cease attacking each other; and instead, to edify one another. Without a doubt, African Canadians represent a very heterogenous group comprised of diverse cultures and languages. Furthermore, this call is equally applicable to other racial groups as lateral violence does not only plague Black communities, but all racialized communities (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997) on Turtle

Island (North America). Lateral violence occurs in every walk of life, cutting across socio-economic status, and through all societal spheres, including academe and social service settings (Craddock, 2013; Magnet et al., 2016; Tran, 2014; Wane, 2002). Racialization can be understood “as the process by which societies construct races as real, different and unequal in ways that matter to economic, political and social life” (Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System, 1995, as cited in the Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2005, p. 11).

With respect to the call by Kumsa et al. (2014) to address lateral violence, we offer a path forward by sharing Christian insights into kindness; these insights highlight how the survival of racialized people in settler societies often involved individuals displaying tremendous courage and kindness to spare others from imminent death, while risking their own lives and those of their families. In this way, kindness is not a mundane matter, but rather one highly relevant for addressing lateral violence among racialized individuals who espouse conflict perspectives in social work.

The first author is a Chinese Canadian university professor who teaches social work. The second author is an African Canadian social worker, who works from an anti-Black racism and critical race feminism framework. We identify as Christians and draw upon Holy Scriptures to inform this paper. We take up this topic of kindness in a time of significant socio-political reckoning on Turtle Island (the traditional name for North America among the Haudenosaune Nations), and indeed the globe, around systemic anti-Black racism (Benjamin, 2003; Davis, 1983; 1998; Davis, 2017; Este et al., 2018; ; hooks, 1981; Kitossa, et al, 2019; Maynard, 2017). This reckoning reached a crescendo by the deaths of African Americans, such as George Floyd and Breonna Taylor among far too many others who were killed by police. Prior to and during the reckoning, the important activism of the Black Lives Matter movement (Diverlus et al., 2020; Kitossa et al., 2019; Taylor, 2016) has gained worldwide attention. This activism is important given the entrenchment of anti-Black racism which permeates all systemic levels on Turtle Island (Deliofsky & Kitossa, 2013).

This paper will proceed in the following manner: We begin by briefly discussing anti-racism and anti-Black racism. We then discuss definitions of kindness, followed by engaging with critiques of kindness. Next, we turn our attention to discussing lateral violence in academe and social service settings and conclude by providing examples involving Chinese Australians and African Americans to highlight the relevancy of kindness for anti-racism and anti-Black racism, and for addressing lateral violence in academe and social service settings.

Anti-Racism and Anti-Black Racism

Anti-racism education emerged in Canada in the 1990s because of decades of activism by Black parents, teachers, students, and community leaders (Bramble, 2000; Calliste & Dei, 2000). In its earliest manifestation in Canada, anti-racism was referred to as anti-racism education or Black education (Bramble, 2000). Dei (1996) explains that anti-racism education is a social justice-oriented approach that uses race as the primary lens through which to view and understand racism as a constitutive system of interlocking oppressions. He asserts that race should be explicitly used as the primary lens because of the pervasive denial of racism in White settler societies such as Canada (Dei, 1996). White settler societies refer to White European migrations and settlements in territories that involved the violent elimination of Indigenous peoples and their cultures, alongside the expropriation of lands and resources (Greensmith & Giwa, 2013; Thobani, 2007). Anti-racism's use of race as the entry point differentiates it from anti-oppression practice (AOP) because the latter is defined as an approach to social work that is centered on eradicating all forms of oppression (McLaughlin, 2005). In essence, AOP is an overarching approach that does not privilege any particular lens as its entry point.

Anti-racism and anti-oppression are implicated in a conflict perspective on society and social issues. A conflict perspective regards social problems as attributable to social structures, processes, and practices that favor some groups and oppress others along lines of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability, etc. (Mullaly, 2010). According to this perspective, society is understood as a setting within which various struggles occur among different groups whose interests, values, and behaviors conflict with one another (Mullaly, 2010). The conflict perspective endorses the view that humans are inherently good (Vanderwoerd, 2016) and that social change is attainable through radical social transformation (Vanderwoerd, 2016).

Anti-Black racism is a conflict perspective practiced by some social workers. It is a dialectic that refers to both the specific racism that targets Black people and the resistance by individuals of African descent to this oppression (Benjamin, 2003; Kumsa et al., 2014; Phillips & Pon, 2018). Anti-Black racism focuses attention on the history of slavery in Canada (Cooper, 2006; Maynard, 2017) and the United States of America, and its scaffolding of specific laws and practices that led to segregation experienced by Black people in education, housing, and employment sectors (James et al., 2010). Anti-Black racism also encompasses rigorous analyses of intersecting oppressions and misogynoir (Bailey, 2010) experienced everyday by Black women (Crenshaw, 1995; 1984; Collins, 1990; Davis, 1983; hooks, 1981; Maynard, 2017). Bailey (2010) coined

the term “misogynoir” to refer to a particular brand of hatred directed at Black women in American visual and popular culture.

A central goal of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is addressing anti-Black racism, including trans-phobia. Members of the Black LBGTQ2S+ communities are clearly emerging as leaders of the BLM movement (Kitossa et al., 2019; Maynard & Simpson, 2020). Queer Black women have long been involved in community activism but according to Maynard and Simpson (2020, p. 109), there is now a “refusal to hide that fact.” Among some of the central values espoused by anti-Black racism is the concept of love (Galette, 2020). Galette (2020) shares the following advice: “Take care of your community. They too, may feel alone, displaced, or constantly watched. Take care of each other, as Black love is real love and powerful love” (p. 235). Bell hooks (2002, as cited in Dauphin, 2002, para 7) also offers her view on love in her body of work, and its centrality to Black resistance.

Conflict perspectives such as anti-racism and anti-oppression, however, have been critiqued by some scholars (Baikie, 2009; Pon, 2007; Sinclair, 2008; Vanderwoerd, 2016). Chilisa (2012) argues that conflict perspectives are very Eurocentric. She contends that despite the ostensive prioritization of social justice embraced by critical theories, they nonetheless elide non-Western value systems that emphasize spirituality, humility, family, and sovereignty. Chilisa (2012) further notes that critical theories are “born of a Western tradition that emphasizes individuality, secularization, and mind-body duality” (p. 49). This results in critical theories being rooted within a value system that is predicated on Western priorities of individuation and accumulation. Vanderwoerd (2016, p. 180) states that anti-oppressive practice (AOP), and we would add here anti-racism and anti-Black racism, “stands in the modernist, Enlightenment tradition in which humans are autonomous, hold ultimate authority, are capable of infinite understanding, and possess unlimited powers to change the world for the better.”

In a related vein, Baskin (2016) asserts that Indigenous values, such as the Seven Grandfather Teachings, include: kindness, wisdom, honesty, humility, love, respect, and bravery. Indeed, Indigenous social work scholars, who write from a perspective of decolonization and/or anti-colonialism, place significant emphasis on the importance of kindness (Absolon, 2010, 2016; Allan, 2013; Baskin, 2006, 2016; Hart, 2007; 2009; Lavallee, 2007). “Kindness” appears frequently in the Holy Bible. This raises the following questions: How might one define “kindness”? How might kindness be manifested in situations of lateral violence in academe and social service settings, especially among racialized proponents of conflict perspectives such as anti-racism and anti-Black racism?

Defining Kindness

As mentioned above the Holy Bible has much to say about kindness. Cottingham (2019, p. 37) argues that loving kindness as preached in the Bible is not prescriptive rules for living, but rather entails cosmic significance. For example, kindness in scripture is described as being a quality of God: “thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness...” (*King James Version, 1611, Nehemiah, 9:17*). God’s kindness is also gracious and everlasting: “And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead” (*KJV, Ruth, 2:20*). The LORD’s kindness is also life affirming: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (*New International Version, 1978, Jeremiah 29:11*). Kindness is also a quality of love: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud” (*NIV, I Corinthians 13:4 NIV*). The Holy Bible also presents an axiological and ontological teaching by instructing people to be kind to each other as a quotidian way of living: “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (*KJV, Ephesians 4:31-32*). Similarly, from Colossians (*KJV, 3:12*): “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.”

We believe that examining Indigenous worldviews offers another powerful understanding of kindness. Indigenous social work scholars and practitioners have expounded robustly on the axiological and ontological importance of being kind, and how kindness is implicated in Indigenous social work practice. For example, Indigenous Elder and Traditional Practitioner Banakonda Kennedy-Kish (Kennedy-Kish et al., 2017) explains the centrality of kindness as it constitutes the first of four foundational principles of Indigenous traditional practice: kindness, honesty, sharing and strength. She states:

In teaching Indigenous social work, the very first principle of good practice is kindness. Kindness is not a value in itself; it is inseparable from belief, location, and belonging, to land and creation. Kindness is a way of seeing and being in the world. It is a landscape, an essential framework, a foundation that directs and informs relationship. Kindness would not exist without relationship. (Kennedy-Kish et al., 2017, p. 92)

She cautions that kindness is not to be mistaken for liberal discourses of charity or welfare. Rather, it is an axiological bedrock of the foundation

of her praxis, “Kindness has intention that is life promoting and life sustaining” (p. 6). Billie Allan (2013) contends that kindness also plays a paramount role in the lives of helpers: “the attention to our own healing and growth is paramount, as is committing to practice the care and kindness with ourselves that we would offer to anyone else we were in a helping relationship with...” (p. 172). The life sustaining nature of kindness articulated by Kennedy-Kish (Kennedy-Kish et al., 2017) and Allan (2013) recalls Galatians (NIV, 5:23): “fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

The Risks Associated with Speaking about Kindness

For many academics and those in the helping professions who are proponents of the conflict perspective, the lauding of kindness can be perceived as dovetailing too closely with Christian notions of benevolence and moral superiority. But as Brownlie and Anderson (2017) note, sociology has said little about kindness because it lacks the “heft of ‘solidarity’, ‘justice’ or ‘community’” (p. 1223) and hints at “prescriptive morality” (p. 1223), which sociologists are keen to eschew. It is worth noting that much of the colonial violence against Indigenous and Black people around the world was perpetrated by Christians (Jemal et al., 2020; Kasch, 2020; Warkentin & Sawatsky, 2018), who espouse kindness, benevolence, and soul saving (Antone, 2014, p. 31). Jemal et al., (2020) emphasize that “[e]arly colonizers used the Christian religion (such as citing scriptures) to justify racism to gain power and economic control” (p. 35). Settler colonial societies such as Canada and the USA were founded upon genocidal violence against Indigenous peoples, land theft, slavery (Cooper, 2006; Jemal et al., 2020; Maynard, 2017; Sharma & Wright, 2008/2009), and white supremacy (Baskin, 2016; Simpson et al., 2011; Thobani, 2007). Smith Brice (2019) reminds us that, “In the name of Jesus, the worst kinds of crimes have been perpetuated against Blacks in this country. Terrorist organizations, such as the Ku Klux Klan, proclaim to be Christian organizations...following the teachings of the Bible” (p. 15). For these reasons, many academics avoid speaking affirmingly about kindness so as not to be associated with the imperialist benevolence of Christianity’s history.

Similarly, proponents of conflict perspectives who laud kindness run the risk of being associated with a white bourgeoisie purity that is reminiscent of the nascent welfare state. Thobani (2007) maintains that the Canadian welfare state, which flourished following the Second World War, played a pivotal role in portraying Canadians as kind, benevolent, and compassionate, which belied the ongoing settler colonial project and racial

discrimination in immigration policies and practices. Concomitantly, the rise of the nascent welfare state provided white women with employment opportunities through which to lay claim to an exalted nationalism that championed whites as kind, caring, and compassionate, while demonizing Indigenous and racialized immigrants as constituting threats to the nation (Badwall, 2016; Thobani, 2007). As well, conflict perspective proponents are cautious of being implicated in the deployment of a kindness that was used by social workers to enter the private spheres of people's homes, under the aegis of helping (Margolin, 1997).

Clegg and Rowland (2010, p. 721) draw attention to the dynamic of embarrassment as a further risk for academics who wish to write and speak favorably about kindness. They note that the academy is a highly gendered sphere with successful male academics routinely delegating to women their care needs (for example, picking children up from daycare), which allows men to focus on writing tasks. In this way, academe becomes a very rationalist and masculinist workplace, despite the common perceptions of being gender-neutral higher learning institutions. To speak of kindness in academe is thus seen as out of place, which gives rise to feelings of embarrassment, since kindness is regarded as too sentimental, overly feminine, and a topic better suited to being explored in a forum of personal therapy (Clegg & Rowland, 2010).

Academe as a Site of Lateral Violence

While academics may eschew scholarly engagement with kindness, others contend that the academy is often characterized by aggression, animus, and lateral violence. As noted earlier, Kumsa et al. (2014) describe the dialectical nature of anti-Black racism as referring to both the specific racism that is directed against Black people *and* the resistance on the part of persons of African descent to this oppression (Benjamin, 2003; Kumsa et al., 2014). They assert that anti-Black racism also refers to the racism that Black people direct against other Blacks, or as Friere (2003) frames it, lateral violence (Friere, 2003). Lateral violence can entail aggressions that are directed by a member of one racial group against an individual from another racialized community. For this reason, Kumsa et al. (2014) issue a call to African Canadians "to stop tearing each other down and instead to lift each other up" (p. 28). As noted earlier, we extend this call to all racial groups, as lateral violence includes all races and is manifested in all sectors of society, including academe and social service settings.

Speaking on internalized racism and lateral violence experienced within academe, social work professor Magnus Mfofo M'Carthy (2014, as cited in Kumsa et al., 2014) recounts his own struggle with anti-Black racism when he partnered on a project with another Black scholar:

The first few months went very well. It felt like the within-group sanctuary that Watts-Jones (2002) says is the space of healing from the wounds of internalized racism for people of African descent...It did not take long for the dream to turn into a nightmare. I could hear others calling it déjà vu and I suspect they were even celebrating our failure...we support each other at the same time as we tear at each other, we dehumanize at the same time as we re-humanize each other. (Kumsa et al., 2014, p. 29)

In the above passage, Mfofo-M'Carthy alludes to how his research collaboration is experienced as a cruel and painful terrain where the lateral violence of anti-Black racism assails the confidence and psyche of even a highly accomplished professor like himself. In this "nightmare," he battles with an intense self-loathing which is rooted in internalized racism.

Mfofo-M'Carthy's (Kumsa et al., 2014) candid story of suffering as a Black scholar implicates a subject position of non-innocence, whereby he is both oppressor and oppressed. In other words, there are "no clean hands" as Bannerji (1995, p. 226-227) reminds us with respect to proponents of anti-racism. Put another way, the hands that provide care are also ones that tear at each other. Kumsa et al. (2014) explain that such a subjectivity is borne of a "double suffering": "double suffering where oppressed and marginalized groups forget the source of their suffering and tear at each other mercilessly" (Kumsa et al., 2014, p. 28). In the above passage, Kumsa et al. (2014) describe lateral violence as a reiterative and compounded suffering that results in unrelenting pain. Cleo, an African Canadian academic, states the following: "Sometimes we are our own worst enemies. We fight among ourselves and pull each other down" (Wane, 2002, p. 184). Wane (2002) and Craddock (2013) note that racialized women academics can be unsupportive of one another as they focus on their own respective battles and careers. Certainly, racialized academics and social workers are multifaceted and complex human entities with capacities to love, nurture, and protect others, while also embodying competitiveness, woundedness, unkindness, resentfulness, enviousness, and cruelty. Holy Scripture also reminds us that "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (NIV, Romans 3:23). The desire to engage in lateral violence crosses all racial boundaries, even occurring between racialized proponents of anti-racism and anti-Black racism.

The notion of the academy as a site of lateral violence and aggression is echoed by Clark's (2013) national survey of nursing faculty about uncivil faculty-to-faculty encounters, which revealed eight themes: berating; undermining and sabotaging, such as using others to gang-up

or join forces against another faculty; derailing and disgracing; gossiping and degrading; refusing workload; taking credit for someone else's work; blaming and accusing; and disrupting meetings. Twale and De Luca (2008) contend that some university professors are highly skilled in aggression: "masterful aggressors can use their social network and role opportunities to indirectly express anger and incivility by taking a circuitous route to conceal their behavior so as not to be detected or linked back to the aggression or victim" (Heim & Murphy, 2001, as cited in Twale & De Luca, 2008, p. 52). Miller et al., (2018) argue that harassment, bullying, and mobbing are commonplace among social work faculty. Writing about the struggles of feminist professors in Canadian and American academies, Magnet et al., (2016) describe the university as a site "where fear tactics, competition, and individualism have become central to work in the academy" (p. 8). As Readings (1996) points out, "few communities are more petty and vicious than university faculties" (cited in Twale & De Luca, 2008, p. 20). Clark et al., (2013) assert that unaddressed discord experienced by faculty can lead to a "high need for power, jealousy, spite or revenge" among professors (p. 2). Racialized students, as well, are not immune to engaging in lateral violence which can be manifested in internalized racism and exhibitions of competitiveness with each other (Hernández-Ramdwar, 2009).

Lateral Violence in Social Service Settings

Social workers in social service settings also face and/or perpetrate lateral violence. Bullying and lateral violence occur in many workplaces including social service settings (Collins, 2001; Croft & Cash, 2012; van Heugten, 2010; Webster, 2016). By social service 'workplace,' we adopt Van De Griend and Messias' (2014) thesis to help expand the workplace to better reflect the range of women's paid and unpaid work. The social work sector is predominantly comprised of women who often perform work such as community organizing (Kumsa, 2011), volunteering with faith groups, domestic work, and care for one's own family and other families. Webster (2016) argues that workplace bullying can be peer-to-peer rather than top-down. Understandably, bullying between social workers seems to be contradictory, given the values of the profession such as respect for the dignity of others.

Fields (1996, as cited in Collins, 2001, p. 32-33) provides the following examples of bullying in the workplace:

Constant criticism, often of a trivial nature that cannot be justified or reconciled with reality; Marginalising people, over-ruling their ideas and dismissing their contributions

as unimportant or irrelevant; Humiliation by belittling, demeaning and patronising people, especially in front of others; ...Undermining a person's authority to carry out their work; and withholding information and consent that people need to carry out their work...

Additional forms of bullying are identified by Clifton and Serdar (2000, as cited in Collins, 2001, p. 33): "Not recognizing positive contributions and achievements which do not receive any reward; Isolating and separating a person from colleagues, for example, in relation to positioning desks, offices or social events." The practice of such bullying tactics can be manifested as lateral violence, when the perpetrator and victim belong ostensibly to the same identity group.

Drawing from my own experience, I (the first author, Gordon) recall my own perpetration of lateral violence against a racialized woman social worker named Amy (a pseudonym). We were working on the same team in a child welfare agency. Our supervisor decided to transfer a file from Amy to me. However, when I asked Amy for the file, she refused to provide me with it. A power struggle ensued, and our supervisor had to intervene to mediate our conflict.

The file on this family involved a referral to child welfare from the police who had responded to a physical altercation between the parents. As the intake worker, I was tasked to investigate the incident and determine if there were any child protection issues. I went to the home and met with the mother, who was the only person there. She self-identified, as Chinese. She disclosed a history of intimate partner violence by her husband, which resulted in her calling the police for help. I felt a need to protect her. This countertransference fueled my desire for Amy to transfer the file to me as quickly as possible.

When Amy refused to transfer the file over to me, I became frustrated, and even angered by her actions. The file transfer was completed after our supervisor intervened. I retaliated against Amy by inserting a case note in the file about her refusal to transfer the file to me. This type of case note is inappropriate and has no clinical or therapeutic value for the client.

Unfortunately, the struggles that this family was dealing with proceeded to litigation between the parents who were now estranged. The child welfare file was accessed by the parents' lawyers through a freedom of information request. They became privy to my case note about Amy. This lateral violence which I perpetrated against Amy highlights how I targeted a colleague who self-identifies as female and racialized. Often individuals such as Amy, who occupy these intersecting identities of race and gender, are faced with daily oppressions that relentlessly denigrate, devalue, and dehumanize them. This example of my experience in child

welfare highlights how lateral violence can be perpetrated in a social service agency.

Croft and Cash (2012) use a postcolonial feminist lens to deconstruct lateral violence within highly gendered workplaces such as nursing. For these scholars, the labelling of lateral violence and bullying as “the result of individual conflict” is ineffective because “questions of power relationships within the organizations and the way the organizational agenda is implicated remains invisible” (p. 237). A postcolonial feminist lens also reveals how workplace bullying and lateral violence can be a method for surveilling and disciplining the workforce whereby employees come to accept such aggression as a normal part of the workplace (Hutchison et al., 2010). This acquiescence maintains and reproduces the status quo. Once this acceptance of the normal way of doing things is secured, “powerful actors can depend on others to ensure obedience to the dominant discourse” (Croft & Cash, 2012, p. 238). For Webster (2016), “organizational social work leadership that fails to address intimidating behaviour colludes with that behaviour and is in effect unethical” (p. 320). In summary, a postcolonial feminist lens offers a perspective on how workplace bullying and lateral violence constitute a technology for reproducing the dominant culture and practices of an organization. Echoing Croft and Cash’s (2012) focus on the gendered nature of workplace bullying, Van De Griend & Hilfinger Messias (2014) argue for the expansion of the understanding of workplace violence, including lateral violence, to include the whole range of women’s work. Moreover, they argue, research in the area of workplace bullying must include greater focus on intersecting identities such as gender, class, race, ability, and culture.

Internalized Racism and Lateral Violence: From Self-Hatred to Self-Kindness

While conflict perspective scholars have justifiably critiqued kindness as a component of imperial benevolence and colonial conquest, the specter of internalized racism and lateral violence nonetheless signals a degree of unkindness with respect to the self which warrants attention. Kumsa et al. (2014) argue that one of the most pervasive and deeply painful aspects of anti-Black racism is “Black on Black racism” (p. 27) or internalized oppression, which results in the lateralization of violence (Friere, 2003). Kumsa et al. also encourage us to reflect on the challenges of confronting internalized oppression with this powerful statement: “As if the anti-Black racism we struggle with from ‘out there’ was not harsh enough, we have to wage our anti-oppressive struggle against our own Black racism as well” (p. 27).

Fanon (2008) and Friere (2003) explain that the internalization of colonialist and white supremacist (Hooks, 1984) beliefs of Blackness has resulted in deleterious psychological impacts which often manifest as lateral violence. In Fanon's (2008) book titled "*White Skin, Black Mask*," he describes the internalization of racism, self-loathing, and self-hatred as such: "Shame. Shame and self-contempt...I turn away from these prophets of doom and cling to my brothers, Negroes like myself. To my horror, they reject me. They are almost white" (Fanon, 2008, p. 96). In the above passage, Fanon describes the horrifying pain and impact of the colonial gaze that he receives from his "brothers." Friere (2003) asserts that the internalization of negative self-images results in the oppressed striking out against other oppressed people, which he called horizontal violence. Similarly, Mullaly (2010) contends that it is the persons closest to oneself that are the most common targets of horizontal violence: "the only areas of autonomous action open to oppressed persons are their own community and family, and here feelings of rebellion, resentment, anger, and frustration are often acted out in forms of horizontal or lateral violence" (p. 173). Lipsky (1977) as well argues that the internalization of racism or oppression is the "turning upon ourselves, upon our families, and upon our own people the distress patterns that result from the racism and oppression of majority society" (cited in Graham, West, Martinez, & Roemer, 2016, p. 370).

In her critique of the white feminist movement, Bell Hooks (1984) brought forward an acute gender analysis to internalized racism and lateral violence. She asserts that women of color have absorbed white supremacist beliefs which led to self-hate and rage against one another. Her identification of white supremacy as inseparable from internalized self-hate recalls Thobani's (2007) incisive critique of settler colonial nation states such as Canada. She argued that the founding of the Canadian nation state relied on a white supremacy that deemed Indigenous peoples as aliens in their own land, white settlers to be exalted, and non-white immigrants to be demonized. Racialized people can internalize these white supremacist beliefs in a process of self-colonization. In other words, the personal feelings that a racialized individual can have about people from their diaspora can be negatively influenced by broader political discourses that demonize minoritized communities. As such, the personal is political in a deleterious and auto-colonizing manner.

Along the same vein, anti-Asian racism (Chan, 1983; Dua, 2007; Gilmour et al., 2012; Goossen, 2019; Lowe, 1997; Poon & Ho, 2008) is often internalized by Asians on Turtle Island and manifested as shame, repulsion, and even disgust toward other Asians (Poon & Ho, 2008; Pyke & Dang, 2003). In Pyke and Dang's (2003) study of second generation Korean and Vietnamese Americans, they found that:

[r]espondents referred to some Asians as “FOB” (Fresh off the Boat), if they were perceived to exhibit dominant stereotypes of unassimilated Asians. The researchers contend that the term FOB was a means by which Asian Americans monitored and controlled social behavior. They note that respondents genuinely felt shame, embarrassment, disgust and discomfort toward those to whom they applied the term [FOB] (Pyke & Dang, 2003, p. 160).

With respect to Indigenous communities, Kennedy-Kish et al. (2017) call upon the words of Maracle (2003, as cited in Kennedy-Kish et al., 2017, p. 168) in describing lateral violence as “our anti-colonial rage working itself out in an expression of hate for one another.” They further contend that lateral violence is directed not at the root cause of abuse and indignities but rather at “safe” targets such as family, friends, and one’s own community (Kennedy-Kish et al., 2017, p. 167).

Despite the pernicious and pervasive nature of internalized racism, Kumsa et al. (2014) conclude their paper with hope and a commitment to dealing with internalized racism as a contestation of the colonial project, “the aim of anti-oppression and, indeed, anti Black-racism is engaging in an ongoing process of liberation to re-humanize our identities and subjectivities... stop tearing each other down and start lifting each other up” (p. 28). In this call to “lift each other up” is the activation of kindness; a kindness which Kennedy-Kish et al. (2017, p. 6) describes as “essential in seeking, protecting, nurturing, and sustaining life... kindness is a seed full of everything that is possible in regard to life. Kindness has intention that is life promoting and life sustaining.” Desmond Tutu explains: “God feels vindicated by our kindness, our magnanimity, our nobility of spirit” (Tutu, 2005, p. 12); and “To be human in the understanding of the Bible is to be free to choose, free to choose to love or to hate, to be kind or to be cruel” (Tutu, 2005, p. 14). And as Galette (2020, p. 236) urges Black folk, “Love yourself!”

Asian Australia: Alimentary Bonds of Kindness

We now take up the notion of kindness as a fruit of the Spirit (*NIV*, Galatians 5:23) by examining historical examples in which the very survival of Asian Australians and African Americans depended on kind actions from persons within one’s racial group. These examples are the antithesis of lateral violence. The survival of Asians and Africans in the diaspora highlight the ontological paramountcy of kindness. These two examples with their attendant focus on kindness can provide a roadmap to mitigate lateral violence in academe and social service settings, particularly among proponents of conflict perspectives in social work

such as anti-racism and anti-Black racism.

Kindness has been vital to the survival of many Chinese settlers. This is evidenced in Vivienne Poy's (2015) memoir titled "*Heroes and Gamblers: Tales of Survival and Good Fortune of the Poy Family*." Vivienne Poy served as a member of the Senate of Canada from 1998 until her retirement in 2012. A telling example of kindness is evidenced in Poy's recounting of her family history in the mid-nineteenth century Australian gold rush. She writes the following of the hardships endured by Chinese gold prospectors Lim Ah Coon, son of Nan Coon, who was an ancestor of hers:

The Chinese miners walked over land to the central gold fields of Victoria (Australia)...through swamp, deserts, mountains, and plains, travelling in stages of about 20 miles per day...They passed through many towns leaving messages for their countrymen who followed, in the hope of making their journey easier. These messages were mainly about the location of fresh water sources or where wells had already been dug. Some of the guides were unscrupulous and left the Chinese in the desert. Others who would take them all the way, would leave a day before arrival at the gold fields knowing the hostilities of the European miners. The Chinese learned from these misfortunes and would mark the way, inscribing Chinese characters on tree trunks to leave a trail for their compatriots to follow. (p. 26-27)

The above attentiveness and concern for their countrymen and compatriots who followed in their footsteps through the demanding Australian terrain evidences a kindness which is reflective of the Holy Spirit (NIV, Galatians 5:23). Marking the pathway to fresh water for their fellow countryman, for their New Gold Mountain brothers, recalls how Kennedy-Kish et al. (2017) describe kindness as life sustaining and life promoting. This kindness was indeed life sustaining as fresh water is alimentary in the most fundamental way.

This love of home and countrymen is profoundly concretized by every message and tree trunk engraving that signified to compatriots the direction to the water of life. This nutritive signification can be understood as a call to brotherhood and hospitality to counter the harsh diaspora. Water sustains life and is revealed through Jeremiah (2:13): God reminds us that He is "the fountain of living waters." Rather than succumbing to debilitating bitterness, self-preservation, or collective self-recrimination, these overseas Chinese men instead epitomized an ethic of care, which replicates the loving kindness of God for: "He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work" (NIV Psalm 104:13).

Kindness is also evidenced in Poy's (2015) recounting of the courage of Chinese civilians who bravely offered water to another ancestor named Roy Poy. Roy Poy enlisted in the Australian military during the Second World War. On February 15, 1942, Roy's battalion was ordered to surrender in Singapore. As a prisoner of war under Japanese control, Roy and the prisoners were forced to march for miles without water. However, "Chinese civilians along the way sneaked out to give them food and drink. If they had been caught, they would have been in big trouble" (p. 97). Kindness is exemplified by the courage of the Chinese civilians who risked their own safety to provide nourishment to the prisoners of war. The provision of food and drink to the parched, weary, and already weakened soldiers, demonstrates a sterling care for others and a hospitality that is life preserving. This kindness recalls how in scripture the apostle Paul was met with astonishing kindness on the island of Malta: "The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold" (NIV, Acts, 28:2). The Poy family stories of survival demonstrate how kindness can exceed the quotidian as indicated by tremendous self-risk and reveals important ontological insights into courageous acts of sustaining the life of others.

African America: Property Bonds of Kindness

The history of African Americans offers another example of brave acts of kindness that not only sustained life but contributed to the civil rights of Black people in the United States of America. In the film titled, "*Dirt and Deeds*" (Shulman, 2015), tells the story of how Black property owners in Mississippi contributed to the civil rights of African Americans. During the Black Civil Rights Movement, many African American activists were jailed *en masse* in Mississippi for their advocacy to advance Black voter rights. Then, Black landowners, who were farmers, would put up property bonds to secure the activists' release from prison. These property bonds allowed the African Americans to be released until their day in court. For many activists, without the property bonds they would have remained or even perished in jail (Shulman, 2015). One such landowner was T. C. Jones, a Holmes County farmer. He would sign property bonds, risking his home, family, farm, and livelihood. On one occasion, Jones courageously secured the release of 49 jailed activists (Shulman, 2015). In total, Black landowners collectively used property bonds to free about 25,000 people (Shulman, 2015).

If any one of the released activists were to abscond, Black landowners such as Jones would have lost their farms and livelihood. However, in a tremendous display of honour, integrity, and gratitude, none of the freed activists absconded. The freed activists understood the tremendous

kindness of the Black property owners who had secured their release from prison. In essence, the Black farmers risked everything to secure their release, but these property owners understood and supported wholeheartedly the significance and necessity of the Black Civil Rights Movement. The Black farmers were willing to risk everything to contribute to the movement despite facing backlash from whites, which included gunshots directed at their farms. (Shulman, 2015).

The historical example of the bravery of the Black farmers demonstrates how kindness is manifested in the ontological act of sustaining the life of others. Moreover, the kindness of the Black property owners converged with tremendous courage and resistance in the quest for socio-political and economic gains for African Americans, and indeed, society at large. In this situation, kindness is not a component of a liberal discourse or colonial conquest, but rather a life promoting intention (Kennedy-Kish et al., 2017) that embodies a way of knowing and being. Kindness in the struggle for Black civil rights reveals the epistemological, ontological, and axiological trinity that informed the survival of a people and a movement.

In *Dirt and Deeds* (Shulman, 2015), Lawrence Guyot, the founding member of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, offers insight into how faith in Christ inspired the courage of a Black farmer and property owner named Jodie “Preacher” Saffold. Saffold put up numerous property bonds to free jailed freedom fighters including Guyot. In describing Saffold’s brave actions, Guyot states the following: “Mr. Saffold was the kind of man who waited for this day a long time. He felt that the LORD had sent us to do righteous work” (Shulman, 2015: 57:00). The example of African American farmers risking their farms and lives to help others is a testament to the power of love and kindness. For farmers like Saffold, the activists were doing God’s work and as a Christian, he felt compelled to aid and shield them.

Conclusion: Implications for Social Work

The central role that kindness has played in the survival of Asian and African diasporans has many implications for social work. First, kindness must play a more central and important role in curriculum, critical readings, and discussions in social work degree programs. It should also be critically discussed more centrally vis-a-vis social work codes of ethics and values. Lateral violence and its impact, as well, must figure saliently in social work curriculum, critical readings, and assignments. We especially urge proponents of conflict perspectives to take up discussions about kindness with greater rigor despite the inevitable discomforts and vulnerabilities (Clegg & Rowland, 2010). This critical axiology of kindness must be capacious enough to include other perspectives such

as Christian ones, even in secular social work programs. At the mezzo level, social service agencies should endeavor to include kindness in their mission and value statements, alongside an explicit dedication to identifying and addressing lateral violence. Agencies should also design and implement training of staff and managers about kindness and the phenomenon of lateral violence. As Hutchinson et al. (2010) reminds us, employers (which include university administrators) must respond efficaciously to bullying and lateral violence in the workplace, lest they collude with such a technology for maintaining an organizational culture marked by horizontal aggression.

The life affirming and life sustaining intentions of kindness, understood as a component of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, have a central role to play in the ontology of social justice, anti-racism, and anti-Black racism. For many racialized people in white supremacist settler societies, the legacy of kindness toward others emancipated many of our forebears, while sparing others from imminent death. Our future generations are relying on all of us to maintain and carry on the legacy of kindness. ❖

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The Culture of Compassion in Social Service and Academic Settings: My Personal Experience

Joshua Peter Englefield

This article uses the Scholarly Personal Narrative method to explore the author's own experience of compassion in social service agencies and academic settings. The idea of building a culture of compassion was born from this author's experience of "agency culture," the culture of different academic settings and the promotion of self-care and productivity. Lessons learned from this inquiry showed that self-care, as a concept in human services institutions, is an individualistic approach that does not solve the systemic/cultural problems in an agency. Further revealed is the fact that productivity is a utilitarian approach applied to human issues that dehumanizes the interaction between social workers, their colleagues, and clients. The author thus contends that creating a culture of compassion is an essential element that agencies and academic settings need to include if they wish to decrease social worker burnout and the negative impact of vicarious trauma and increase longevity.

Keywords: culture of compassion, self-care, productivity, agency culture, burnout

The fruit of love is service, which is compassion in action... I would rather make mistakes in kindness and compassion than work miracles in unkindness and hardness... If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.

Mother Teresa

EVERY DAY, SOCIAL WORKERS THROUGHOUT THE U.S. engage in important work that helps to shape the lives of individuals, families, groups, communities, countries, and the world. The work is difficult and often takes a serious toll on individual social workers. Many social workers express feeling tired, frustrated, and stretched too thin. Additionally, many social workers express a decrease in job satisfaction, relationship difficulties in their private lives, an increase in addictive behaviors, and overall poor health (Diaconescu, 2015; Lizano et al., 2019). Why do social workers experience burnout, vicarious trauma, and/or compassion fatigue? These three terms attempt to explain a similar phenomenon: social workers feel the weight of their work in body and mind (Lizano et al., 2019).

In this Scholarly Personal Narrative, I have two main purposes: first, to explore the issue of burnout experienced by social workers in professional social work settings, and second, by delving into my own experience, to offer a step towards solving the issue of social worker burnout, namely building a culture of compassion in professional social service and academic settings. In other words, the focus of this paper is to explore, discover, and offer insights gained from my own experience of social service agency and academic culture and the desire to build a culture of compassion in both settings. In doing so, I use my own experience of working in social service agencies and academic settings as the primary data. Nash and Viray developed the Scholarly Personal Narrative method, and they wrote, “understanding and learning from our pain is one of the best ways to achieve wisdom, and even transcendence” (2013, p. 52).

Nash and Viray (2013) propose that storytelling provides the most efficient and effective vehicle for bringing forth truth. They further state that finding one’s voice is the business of Scholarly Personal Narrative writing and that each person has a story to tell. Furthermore, Nash and Viray assert that the purpose of Scholarly Personal Narrative writing is to “encourage all writers to discover and cherish their own richly textured voices to communicate their insights and values to others with force, integrity, dignity, style, and grace” (Nash and Viray, 2013, p. 47). What follows is my Scholarly Personal Narrative focused on building a culture of compassion in social service and academic work settings.

Methodology

According to Nash (2019), Nash and Bradley (2011), and Nash and Viray (2013), Scholarly Personal Narrative research and writing is a style of intellectual storytelling and self-disclosure, one that draws from a variety of academic and nonacademic references and findings. In conducting this Scholarly Personal Narrative, I collected data using self-reflection on a

variety of experiences within social service agencies and the academy. The study design was a single subject design in which I was the only subject of the qualitative inquiry. Within this inquiry I reflected on my own experience of agency and academic workplace culture which included reflecting on my experience of suffering, burnout, and longevity. I reflected on why I chose certain jobs, why I stayed at certain jobs, and why I left certain jobs. The data were organized into story form and woven into a paper; it was not necessarily chronological. From the data analysis came five themes: 1. the purpose of work, 2. the primacy of productivity fuels disconnection, 3. productivity leads to isolation, 4. life events are opportunities for compassion, and 5. hope fuels compassion and compassion sustains hope. The remainder of this Scholarly Personal Narrative offers the themes, findings, and lessons learned from my own inquiry into experiencing agency and academic workplace culture.

Conceptual Framework

For the meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day and from hour to hour. What matters, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general but rather the specific meaning of a person's life at a given moment.

The conceptual framework of my Scholarly Personal Narrative includes Viktor Frankl's philosophy (2014). The Christian tradition as recorded in Sacred Scripture and written through modern Christian witnesses is interwoven throughout this manuscript. Finally, the conceptual framework includes compassion and building a culture of compassion. Furthermore, I use definitions, words of wisdom, and explanations of compassion found in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The lens through which I view compassion and measure the need for compassion has been fundamentally informed by Christian belief, spirituality, suffering, joy, and companionship found in what Brene Brown would call "whole-hearted" people (2010). To better explain this conceptual framework, I begin this section with a story focusing on an experience of work.

For I know well the plans I have in mind for you—plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope.

Jeremiah 29:11 (New American Bible, 2020)

Dreams Shattered

Expectations were high, my joy was complete, and my life had begun. I was certain that I had arrived at the goal of my professional life as I accepted the position and began the work where I had often dreamed of working. I expected a long, fruitful, and meaningful work experience; these expectations were never met. My expectations were that I would be working for an employer which was guided by the Golden Rule, *do to others as you would have them do to you* (NAB, 2020, Luke 6:31). Furthermore, my expectations were that as coworkers, collectively, we would champion the Beatitudes expressed in Matthew chapter five of the Christian scriptures, which is a series of blessings placed upon virtuous living. Blessed are the meek, the peacemakers, the pure of heart to name a few. The Beatitudes are a foundational teaching that Jesus taught to his followers while delivering the Sermon on the Mount. Within these ideals Jesus offered an exegesis on the Ten Commandments which had been given to Moses. With the Ten Commandments God had given Moses the basis of the law and the specific prohibitions regarding God, neighbor, and self. The Beatitudes, on the other hand, explained how to live the vocation of being a Christian, which is, in a word, love. Christians are called to love others and Christians can learn and demonstrate this love by living out the Beatitudes. It is a great disappointment when the Beatitudes are not practiced by Christians.

I expected an environment that would exemplify Matthews 25 of the Christian scriptures which requires followers of Christ to *notice* and *act* (compassion demonstrated) on behalf of the marginalized and oppressed in the community. Christ explained to his followers that “what you have done for the least of these you have done to me” (NAB, 2020, Matthew 25:40). Jesus did not offer exceptions and holiday from *noticing* and *acting* on behalf of those who are marginalized and oppressed. Rather, Christians are called to speak up when an injustice is occurring. I expected that when I was treated poorly by other co-workers that I would be met with so-called Christian compassion as expressed in the three passages mentioned above, but this was not what occurred.

The greatest frustration that I experienced was when I finally mustered the courage to be vulnerable and spoke with the administration about my experiences. All seemed to have great concern about what was occurring and promised to be discreet in how they approached the issues. Unfortunately, they broke my trust and discussed the situations with others which added more hardship. To add to my shame, I was told that I needed to change and adapt to the situation more effectively by other employees. I sat in shame for almost two years, until one fateful day a medical emergency occurred which opened my eyes and offered new opportunities. I realized that I was choosing to stay and that I could also make the choice to leave. I was

reminded of the great freedom that having a Master's degree afforded me and decided to utilize this tool to move on and move forward with my life. I decided that I would no longer live in a shattered dream, a nightmare, a world being designed and controlled by others. I chose life, freedom, courage, and dared to dream again.

New Opportunity

I remember calling my older brother expressing frustration and disbelief regarding the circumstances of my employment at one point in my career. This new position was supposed to mark the beginning of a new phase in my career, a moment in which I was to leave behind past work and take on a new role. Certainly, I had experienced dysfunctional situations, stifling individuals, and burnout in the social service field. When I applied for and accepted the position, my heart and mind synced together believing that at once my dream had been realized. However, the reality of my situation quickly set in, like a dew covering the fields in spring, I was saturated with disbelief and eventually a surrender to the inevitability of my fate. I had given up an established life and a revered position. The weight of all this dreaming, expectation, reality, and disbelief shaped the discussion with my older brother. He and I would have a series of conversations regarding the difficult situation facing me daily. In his wisdom, my older brother encouraged me to read or listen to Viktor Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning*.

He will call upon me and I will answer; I will be with him in distress; I will deliver him and give him honor. With length of days I will satisfy him and fill him with my saving power.

Psalm 91:15-16 (NAB)

Frankl's Explanation of Environment and Suffering

Frankl vividly explains his experiences in the Nazi concentration camps during World War II and he discusses his own reaction to the conditions of the camps. Additionally, he offers commentary on observations made of himself and others in reaction to inhumane treatment (Frankl, 2014). Why would my older brother encourage me to read Frankl's book? It would be over-dramatic to assert that my experience of a toxic work environment could be relatable, right? Frankl used the first half of his book explaining the two main reactions that humans have towards difficult, tragic, traumatic, toxic, and dehumanizing circumstances: *shock* and *apathy*.

I did not enter a concentration camp when I began employment, but I did enter a new reality which included great suffering. Frankl identifies “the will to meaning” as a primary purpose and function of daily life and the lifespan (Frankl, 2014, p. 93). He further expresses the need for people to encounter suffering in a way that allows for meaning making. Herein lay the wisdom of my brother’s suggestion, namely, that I review Frankl’s insights and allow them to inform my mind and heart regarding the workplace environment, my subsequent reactions, my interactions with others, and the mental schema that I was building.

Individuals Shape Culture

As I read through the pages of the Man’s Search for Meaning, I began to realize that I had experienced shock and apathy in the face of the toxic workplace culture/environment. When I arrived as a new employee I was filled with wonder, awe, and excitement. To be certain, it is normal to become more acquainted with a place after a few months and years of working at an institution, but this type of acquaintance and familiarity is not what I mean by apathy. And of course, it is entirely expected that one would realize that a place once idealized would look different on the inside compared to an outside vantage point. What I experienced was a toxicity that permeated the workplace and had turned once very engaging and seemingly caring people into a competitive, narcissistic, individualistic, and wounded disconnected collective. How could I have a frame of reference for this sort of analysis? I had previously experienced many of these individuals, which proved to be a vastly different experience than being a colleague. However, as I began to experience what I perceived as extreme individualism and a desire for recognition, I experienced a state of *shock*. This shock was compounded by the day-to-day dealings of co-workers who had been awarded power.

Looking back on this experience, I knew there was a problem due to the constant negative feedback regarding my job performance. This led to me attempting to assimilate to these new expectations and consistent cowering that would eventually lead to an apathetic state. I was subjected to insults, threats, and increased workloads; all the while being told that I was not good at what I did, would not endure and advance as an employee with my hapless attitude and work ethic, and that ultimately it was a mistake that I had been hired. In my attempt to assuage the authority in front of me, I began to change how I dressed, how I spoke, how people should address me, and many other aspects that I am too ashamed to spell out. None of these efforts were met with satisfaction and my road towards shame, depression, and solitude continued: in a word, burnout.

When Self Care is not Enough

As a social worker, I am keenly aware of the signs of burnout and know what I need to do when these signs arise. With that in mind, I increased meditative prayer, exercise, and kept close relationships with my wife and family (Lizano et al., 2019; Makkai, 2018). None of these self-care methods could solve the problem, however. Reading Frankl's words encouraged me to find meaning in the suffering and to not allow the suffering to change my inner character manifested in my interactions with others (Frankl, 2014). I contend that a more compassionate culture, in which colleagues take seriously the suffering of others and disallow bullying and toxic behavior needs to be concurrent with self-care. Is this type of culture of compassion possible within the workplace? Would a person be able to change organizational culture to reflect compassionate practices within day-to-day policy and practices?

Culture of Workplace Compassion Defined

Compassion "refers to both an understanding of another's pain and the desire to somehow mitigate that pain" (Merriam-Webster, 2018). A culture of compassion includes considering the overall health and wellbeing of individuals and groups of people. The Centers for Disease Control offers further insight, "the creation of a working environment where employee health and safety are valued, supported and promoted through workplace health programs, policies, benefits, and environmental supports" (Workplace Health Program Definition and Description, 2018). To add more clarity to the CDC's definition of well-being, the following definition is proposed: A culture of compassion is an intentional effort to construct a caring, supportive and lifegiving workplace environment that serves the well-being of all people (Charter for Compassion, 2021; Gilbert, 2019).

If we can develop compassionate work environments, then we can build a culture of individuals seeking the common good for all social workers. This common good is rooted in suffering with each other in solidarity rather than pitying the person who is suffering. This perspective rejects the notion that a person who is experiencing distress should be left alone to sort out their issue. Rather, the person is meant to be in communion with their colleagues as they navigate through difficult thoughts and feelings that arise due to the nature of the helping profession.

Compassion is illustrated best through the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Three men encountered an individual who suffered great harm at the hands of other people, and he was left to die on the side of the road. The first two men who encountered him moved to the other side of the road; both were considered part of the hierarchy of their culture. Both

felt pity (sympathy) for the man but could not be troubled with expressing empathy and compassion which would have led to an encounter that was deeply personal, messy, and possibly transformative. The third individual who noticed the man who had been harmed was an outsider in the culture, yet he felt pity for the man, felt the suffering of the man, felt compelled to act, and then moved his body towards the man, picked him up, placed him on his own animal, transported him to safety, and used his own money to help this man become whole again. Pity in isolation did not help this person receive the help needed and pity certainly did not move the individual on the outside of suffering to make a difference. Compassion and empathy permeated the third man's thinking and feeling which led to action. The above experiences encouraged me to write using the Scholarly Personal Narrative method of qualitative inquiry. In the following section I offer a literature review that assisted me in developing more knowledge and understanding regarding how to create a more compassionate organizational environment.

Literature Review

We are each made for goodness, love and compassion. Our lives are transformed as much as the world is when we live with these truths.

Desmond Tutu

A major theme which emerged from the review illustrated that American employment culture is clearly trending towards employees being expected to take care of their own well-being through self-care rather than shaping the workplace environment into caring and compassionate settings (Diaconescu, 2015; Leake et al., 2017; Lizano et al., 2019; Makkai, 2018). A culture of compassion is orientated towards an integrated care for self and for others. The self-care movement is strongly individualist and represents a long-standing tradition of rugged individualism in America (Mintz & McNeil, 2018). The term rugged individualism was established during President Hoover's 1928 speech which praised the advances and superiority of American tradition illustrated by self-reliance, personal responsibility, and hard work (Mintz & McNeil, 2018). The subsequent decade known as the Great Depression called into question whether Hoover's praise of rugged individualism was warranted or short-sighted. Moving back into present day, the research for this Scholarly Personal Narrative calls for a consideration of integrating the four domains of the human person: biological, psychological, social, and spiritual (Dubois & Krogsrud-Miley, 2014). Additionally, this integration will require a deeper understanding

of what it means to be human. Humans are interrelated with others in the environment and impact each other (Dubois & Krogsrud-Miley, 2014). Therefore, my hope is that we move forward from self-care only, which is deeply individualistic, towards a culture of compassion that is by its nature life-giving, nurturing, holistic, and honors the person as both individual and communal (Charter for Compassion, 2021; Crowder & Sears, 2017; Gilbert, 2019).

The culture of compassion builds on the strengths, resiliency, and goodness available within humans. This approach to agency and academic culture would encourage supervisors, employees, students, and faculty to intentionally engage in life-giving activities and modes of thinking. This overall culture of compassion could be critical to longevity in the social work field. Clearly, social workers experience burnout, stress, trauma, and turnover. We need momentum directed towards merciful and compassionate responses to professional social workers and faculty members (Crowder & Sears, 2017; Diaconescu, 2015; Leake et al., 2017; Lizano et al., 2019; Makkai, 2018).

Gilbert describes compassion as more than “an automatic response to suffering, a wish to be helpful; it involves a discernment, a reasoning process of what is best to do” (2019, p.109). He describes compassion as having a dual element within the person: feeling and motivation (Gilbert, 2019). He concludes that compassion requires the “courage and dedication” to notice the suffering of others, self, and community and then actually be willing to do something about the suffering in a responsible and ordered manner (Gilbert, 2019). Other researchers support this idea of compassion being both a cognitive and affective process that can be learned and improved upon over time with a willing subject and a willing organization (Gilbert, 2019; Kinman & Grant, 2020; McClelland & Vogus, 2019).

If we can develop compassionate work environments, then we can build a culture of individuals seeking the common good for all social workers. This common good is rooted in suffering with each other in solidarity rather than pitying the person who is suffering (Gilbert, 2019; McClelland & Vogus, 2019; Kinman & Grant, 2020, Rigoni, 2007). This perspective rejects the notion that a person who is experiencing distress should be left alone to sort out their issue. Rather, the person is meant to be in communion with their colleagues as they navigate through difficult thoughts and feelings that arise due to the nature of the helping profession (Kinman & Grant, 2020; McClelland & Vogus, 2019).

Building a culture of compassion could be a healing force in the effort to change this trend towards individualism. Professionals could build a life-giving culture in the academy that would socialize social work students towards compassion and in turn bring these habits, rituals, virtues, style of life, and way of being into their social work career. Tangible change in

agency culture could occur as recent graduates inundate agencies with compassionate individuals who wish to spread the culture of compassion. Emphasizing self-compassion and compassion towards other professionals would move us towards safeguarding the health, care, well-being, and longevity of professional social workers, similar to the way we prioritize professionalism and competency. Focusing on building the capacity for compassion more than simply being merciful is in fact a true and essential form of justice.

Current scholarship illustrates that within social service agencies and higher education, our social workers, social service employees, and social work faculty are subjected to very difficult conditions of employment that often lead to burnout. Most of the research addressing the issue of burnout focuses on individual self-care (Diaconescu, 2015; Lizano et al., 2019; Makkai, 2018). In this work, I ask the readers, social work educators, and social service professionals if it is time to reconsider care for self and consider the use of a different paradigm. The paradigm shift moves away from a capitalistic, individualistic, and Eurocentric idea of self-care toward a collectivist, interdependent, and shared responsibility of building a culture of compassion. In the next section I focus on how work is viewed and the paradigms that lead to burnout.

Themes, Findings and Lessons Learned

Purpose of Work and Burnout

The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, that way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity—even under the most difficult circumstances—to add a deeper meaning to his life. It may remain brave, dignified, and unselfish. Or in the bitter fight for self-preservation, he may forget his human dignity and become no more than an animal. Here lies the chance for a man either to make use of or forgo the opportunities of attaining the moral values that a difficult situation may afford him. And this decides whether he is worthy of his sufferings or not.

Viktor Frankl

This section of the paper seeks to explore the purpose of work, the experience of work, and how, why, and where burnout exists in social service agencies. Specifically, I use personal experiences as examples. I begin with a fundamental question: do people exist to serve the economy or does the economy exist to serve people? The answer to this question has serious implications for the overall well-being of all workers and specifically for

social workers in professional social work and academic settings. According to Catholic Social Teaching,

the economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected. (Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching, 2018, n.p.)

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) reminds social workers that one of our most important ethical principles is the dignity and worth of all people (NASW, 2020). When work reduces a social worker to merely a paper-pushing, productivity-driven, minimalistic practitioner, we are creating soulless social work that has finally acquiesced into a chasm of purgatory that seems endless and without purpose.

Free market economic systems demand workers to produce and sacrifice for the agency, company, client, and customer. These efforts are worthwhile, but what happens when productivity is the final goal at the expense of the person and their biological, psychological, spiritual, and social health? We witness the roots, the origins, the genesis of burnout when we look at Capitalism as guiding the construction, maintenance, and perpetuation of our employment sites across the U.S. Capitalism is not to blame, but rather the expression of productivity as supreme, even above human life and dignity (Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching, 2018).

The Primacy of Productivity Fuels Disconnection

Work is firmly entrenched in a productivity-driven environment and is implicitly and explicitly individualistic. I recall the first full-time social work position I took as a young twenty-something: the first part of the interview consisted of the supervisor explaining the productivity requirements. Naively, I did not understand that meeting the 100% standard of productivity was the most important value of the agency. A close second was client outcomes. This experience was the beginning of many more productivity-driven employers, and I quickly developed an individualistic approach to social work practice. I was certain that meeting productivity requirements was the most important value, even more important than building strong collaborative relationships with struggling co-workers. One day, a co-worker looked at me and said, "By the way we call you the super case manager." In that moment it was evident that I had become a "productive worker" and at the same time a detached co-worker. In his TedTalk from 2007, psychologist Daniel Goleman asks the question "Why aren't we more compassionate?" He concludes that we struggle with a "trance" in which we do not *notice*

other people around us and their suffering. I had slipped into this trance which was spurred by productivity, competition, and success. Amid my race towards *professionalism*, I risked losing my humanity.

All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.

Proverbs 14:23

As a son of an immigrant, I learned from my father that the economic system has endless opportunities and is also extremely harsh to those who do not show up and work hard. My brothers and I were raised in a three-bedroom mobile home for most of our childhood, which brought with it many joys and a few sorrows. We had what we needed as a family and we enjoyed time with other people through our church and neighborhood. What I noticed about my father was that he worked as much as was required to support our family. He would work 80 hours a week to pay bills and provide for our basic needs. Through his example he taught me that a man must work to support his family and that excuses are a waste of breath. When I began my career in social service settings, I was firmly entrenched in the following mindset: *work hard, get your work done, do the work well, make no excuses, only cultivate relationships with co-workers that will serve your well-being, dismiss the slackers, and keep moving forward towards the productivity goals.*

Productivity Leads to Isolation

This productivity-driven attitude disclosed above served me well as I strove to reach performance review goals at work. However, this way of thinking and interacting with the world led to a disconnection from my co-workers and the creation of a competitive approach to work, rather than a collaborative approach. I remember sitting in my office when I was a mental health caseworker feverishly completing my progress notes, because I was proud of my near-perfect submission rate. While I was *working hard* my coworkers were in the conference room enjoying each other's company, telling jokes, and developing connection points. I found myself desiring that level of collegial affiliation but feeling a pull to stay at my desk and complete my work. I chose to stay and complete my work; this would be the beginning of many choices that honored productivity and pushed away connection.

Building a Culture of Compassion

Sympathy and empathy have limitations. Sympathy looks at another person or group of people with pity and has a certain tone of condescension

(Charter for Compassion, 2021; Gilbert, 2019). Empathy is perspective-taking and feeling with the other person as they struggle with some type of issue (Crowder & Sears, 2017; Gilbert, 2019).

Compassion takes sympathy and empathy a step further and demonstrates a genuine care, concern, and partnership within the experience of suffering and difficulty (Charter for Compassion, 2021; Crowder & Sears, 2017; Gilbert, 2019). Compassion involves altruistic motivation which concerns itself with the good of other people as central to human relationships (Ricard, 2014). Compassion is cooperation, partnership, collaboration, merging of two or more individuals towards a common purpose, a movement towards connection, and movement towards wholeness (Brown, 2010; Seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching, 2018). Compassion moves past competition and personal achievement as the goal of work. Instead, compassion moves towards meaning-making and word-making that involves possibilities rather than problems (Rigoni, 2002). Compassion anticipates the spiritual deprivation that results from constant exposure to trauma through interactions with clients. Through this act of anticipation and noticing the difficult working conditions of social workers, co-workers and supervisors can move away from judgment and punishment of employees towards compassion, understanding, and the wisdom to know how to best support all employees.

Death and Birth: Moments that Offer Opportunities for Compassion

When did I experience compassion in the workplace? Two experiences represent compassion: the death of my brother and the birth of my son. Both life events occurred when I was working for a social service agency. The supervisor with whom I worked for several years was present during both events.

It was a cold January night when I received the call from my parents informing me that my younger brother had died. He was in his early 20's and had been sick with AIDS and cancer for a few years. His life, like most, was complicated and unlike most, stricken with drug use, disease, and jail. He had lived a life that made him very tired. I recall seeing him a few months earlier and he looked gray, emaciated, and weary. He had always been active, vivacious, and the life of the party, however his sicknesses had halted all the momentum that once seemed impossible to halt. My relationship with him was complicated, which made it even more devastating when he died.

When I received the call that he had died, I knew that I would be traveling across many states for the funeral arrangements and that I would need to be available to my parents and older brother. I had literally just accepted a job offer and I was concerned that they might rescind the offer if I did not report to work. This was not the case as my supervisor responded

with sympathy, empathy, and compassion, speaking to me in a kind way and encouraged me to take the time needed to properly honor and grieve my brother. She continued the same attitude of compassion when I arrived at work and throughout my early months as a case manager. This supervisor took time to check in with me daily during the first few weeks on the job to inquire about my mental and physical health. During the following months she would ask questions regarding my emotional state, and it never felt like I was being judged. Instead, I felt as though she genuinely wanted to ensure that the difficult work we were engaged in was not overwhelming.

New Life Brings Joy, Suffering, and Opportunities for Compassion

During the beautiful month of May in 2007, my second son was born prematurely at 31 weeks. We were celebrating my birthday party and my wife began to feel uncomfortable and she figured that she was experiencing normal pregnancy issues. She went to the hospital and was sent home to rest that same night. The next day, I checked in with her and she informed me that she would be seeing her doctor to determine if there was any real concern. I went to work and then received the call that she was being taken by ambulance to a hospital an hour away to try and keep our son inside of her for as long as possible. This news was alarming, and I immediately called my supervisor, informed her of the situation, and asked for time to take care of my family. Again, she responded with understanding, concern, and compassion. She told me to take whatever time I needed and that she would ensure that my clients were well-cared for while I was absent. Her words and acts of compassion helped as my wife and I experienced our son living in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit for the next 38 days. I continued to work while he was in the NICU and my wife went to be with him every day. When he was discharged from the hospital, again my supervisor encouraged me to go and take care of my family.

My supervisor did not have to notice, care, and demonstrate compassion towards me as an employee. From a productivity viewpoint, she could have required that I come back to work immediately and hold the agency line regarding time off. However, she put my overall well-being above the agency's financial bottom-line and in doing so informed me of what it means to work in a compassionate culture within a social service agency setting. She would check-in weekly with me regarding how I was handling the pressure of maintaining full-time work and caring for two children, one of which had a very difficult birth and extended stay in the NICU. If she noticed that my paperwork was later than usual or if my productivity was lagging behind, she would ask how I was doing and then discuss strategies to help manage the agency requirements while maintaining my overall well-being. Looking back on this experience with my supervisor

demonstrating care and compassion, I realized that many other experiences were shaded by what I believed was a standard for how to treat employees. As I began to take on more leadership and supervisory roles, it became clear to me that I very strongly measured workplace policies and practices against her example of how to supervise. The upside of this type of supervision and leadership is that supervisees often felt heard, understood, and safe within the workplace. The downside of this style of supervision is that upper management did not consistently support or appreciate the process and outcomes that resulted.

Juxtaposition of the Compassionate Culture vs. the Productive, Competitive, and Self-Focused Culture.

Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, 'Yu, u nobunto'; 'Hey so-and-so has ubuntu.' Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, 'My humanity is inextricably bound up in yours.' We belong in a bundle of life.

Desmond Tutu

Why do we move towards self-preservation, self-care, and individualism? A compassionate culture includes and makes space for all people and holding the well-being of others in our own consciousness and affections. In contrast, an individualistic culture allows “social Darwinism” to guide actions, interactions, transactions, thoughts, and feelings (Dubois & Krogsrud-Miley, 2014). Our productivity standards, demanding caseloads, and stressful client and colleague interactions can leave us feeling disconnected and unsure of where we belong in the agency, the academy, the social work profession, and even the U.S. As social workers we highlight our six ethical values and principles when we discuss them in Introduction to Social Work classes and throughout the four-year BSW process and the two-year MSW process. Furthermore, if we belong to the National Association of Social Workers as professional social workers, these six principles are meant to guide our work. What I have noticed over the past 20 years of working in the social service field and higher education, is that we have a lot of book knowledge regarding the six ethical principles, but we suffer amnesia during our practice and in the creation and cultivation of compassion within agency and academic culture.

The following broad ethical principles are based on social work's core values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. These principles set forth ideals to which all social workers should aspire.

NASW 2020

The passage above comes directly from the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics. Social workers are competent and serve the community well, which have been two of the great accomplishments of our profession. We also continue to fight for social justice and ask people in places of power to listen to the voices of the marginalized. However, some social workers struggle to demonstrate consistency within the realm of integrity, dignity and worth of the person, and the importance of human relationships. Why does this matter and what is my evidence that some social workers struggle with integrity, demonstrating that others have dignity and worth, and that human relationships matter? The phenomenon known as hazing, the mentality of "sink or swim," and the amnesia related to responsibilities towards colleagues in workplace settings is my proof. My contention is that we need to move our social service settings and higher education towards a culture of compassion to ensure that we will not lose our soul and become another productivity-driven entity.

A Culture of Compassion in the Workplace is/looks like...

Beloved: Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show his works by a good life in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice. Wisdom is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without inconstancy or insincerity. And the fruit of justice is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace.

James 3:13-17

A compassionate workplace is a place of justice, peace, wisdom, and connection. Justice guides a compassionate workplace which includes policies that strengthen the overall direction of how work is handled and how the workload is distributed. Peace is critical to social work employment settings as social workers and supervisors work together through conflict to develop a peaceful work environment. Peace includes selfless acts that look towards caring for others while at the same time caring for self. Wisdom is a spiritual gift from God. Social workers spend at least four

years in their undergraduate program and another two years in a graduate program accumulating knowledge, skills, and values. Wisdom is different from knowledge. Knowledge tells us what something is, whereas wisdom informs us of why something exists, which includes its uniqueness and purpose. Additionally, wisdom teaches social workers that gossip, slander, defamation, bullying, hazing, and other forms of harmful behaviors towards colleagues and clients build a culture of mistrust, abuse, and an overall toxic environment. Wisdom builds a culture of compassion that includes social workers who are pure, peaceable, gentle, compliant, merciful, and hard-working, integrated and who humbly regard others as more important than themselves (James 3: Philippians 2). Finally, a compassionate work environment builds connection. Connection provides the opportunity for social workers to see each other as unified members working towards a shared goal.

Social workers working in a compassionate academic and social service setting would ask how their co-workers are handling balancing professional and personal responsibilities. This process of asking would not lead towards blame and judgment, but rather be a starting point for communication and connection. Supervisors would encourage their newer faculty and direct practitioners to engage in self-reflection practices that would allow time and space for processing difficult situations with clients, students, and co-workers. Supervisors would refrain from gossiping about the social workers they are supervising. Instead, they would engage in strengths-based supervision and discussions with their own superiors regarding their supervisee. While meeting with social work faculty or direct practitioners, supervisors would highlight the areas of strength and resilience noticed in the person they are supervising. If the supervisor were to slip into deficits-based, blaming, and harmful language and attitudes towards their social work faculty member or clinical social worker, they would engage in self-reflection processes. These self-reflection processes would be an opportunity for the supervisor to self-regulate and attune towards connection rather than towards creating unhealthy and even hostile working conditions. If the supervisor did not self-correct, then the supervisor above them would call a meeting and work to help the supervisor develop more compassionate supervision practices. The above process is a systematic example of how to create a culture of compassion in the workplace applied to the supervision process.

Hope Fuels Compassion and Compassion Sustains Hope

Hope is defined as “to expect with confidence” (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Experiencing secondary trauma due to interactions with clients and empathizing with their stories of suffering led me to feel a sense of

hopelessness. I had to reconcile the stories that I had been told when I was young, namely that all people had been created good and were good but wounded. The feelings of dissonance washed over me and stirred within me at many points throughout my professional career. I remember driving to my interview at a social service agency and the administration had a sign displayed which read *there is hope*. Seeing this sign brought about encouragement and excitement about the possibility of working at an agency that believed in hope. What I would experience during my employment was the source of my own personal experience of secondary trauma, burnout, attempted self-care, isolation, and the origin of my re-consideration of all I had been taught and accepted as true.

When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known. So, faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13

When I was young, I was taught that God is goodness and love, that the world was created in love, that all humans were created good, and that all humans deserved to be treated with respect and dignity. What I found through this direct social service practice was a saturation of suffering, selfishness, abuse, trauma, and dysfunction which led to worker burnout, toxic workplace culture, and disconnection. How did I survive the vicarious trauma, burnout, toxicity, and feeling overworked? The truth is, I made a choice to move towards something else. I moved towards healing, wholeness, connection, hope, and compassion. I made the choice to survive so that one day I would have a chance to thrive. I embarked on the journey of seeking employment elsewhere and eventually accepted another job.

Hope lifts the spirit towards the disposition to believe that something else in life is possible and moves us away from despair. For me, hope fueled self-compassion and allowed space within my heart and mind to realize that I can move forward towards freedom and aspire for something more life-giving. Hope fueled compassion for me. Compassion sustains hope by reminding us that connection can and does exist. At times that connection may be formed between two or more people experiencing suffering and it may come in times of joy. Working as a social worker has provided many opportunities for connection. What I have discovered is that connection commences when I notice others, in their sufferings and their joys. The act of noticing and responding to another by joining with them is a compassionate response that has at its root, an orientation towards hope.

Conclusion

I have worked in the social service field and higher education for over two decades. Through the stories I shared in this Scholarly Personal Narrative, I constructed the idea of building a culture of compassion within social service agencies and higher education settings. Furthermore, I discussed and analyzed the promotion of individualism, which includes the focus on self-care and productivity. I made the case for creating a culture of compassion as an essential element that agencies and higher education need to include if they wish to decrease social worker and social work faculty burnout.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The first strength of this study is that I have many different experiences to choose from, as I have worked in community mental health, academic settings, private practice, a hospital, group home settings, and community outreach. The second strength of this study is that I tell stories about the truth of burnout, productivity, agency and academic culture, suffering, and compassion. While a more traditional form of research method would have included lots of statistics, a larger group of subjects and would potentially be more generalizable; this study humanizes the statistics by the time-tested method of storytelling which hints at deeper truths and shared experiences.

The first limitation is that there is only one subject of the study. I am the primary researcher for this study and at the same time I am the singular subject of this research.

The second limitation of this study is that the data are largely contingent upon my cognitions, affections, perceptions, experiences, and memory, which would carry intrinsic bias.

Implications for Future Practice, Policy, Recommendations, and Research

More research needs to be conducted to test the idea of a culture of compassion. I am currently working on a qualitative grounded theory study using an open-ended question survey sent out to social workers across the U.S. to explore experiences of social workers related to burnout and compassion. My desire is to discover how agencies and academic settings are creating compassionate cultures and then ask the who, what, why, when, and where questions about their reality-making efforts. The social work practice profession and higher education must recognize the need for compassion in their workplace settings and, in turn, develop policies and practices that promote compassion, connection, and unity. I recommend

developing compassionate practice training in agency settings and higher education.

In conclusion, social workers engage in meaningful, life-giving, and impactful work every day in social work and academic settings. It is my sincerest hope that we will learn from Frankl's wisdom which encourages individuals and groups to seek freedom of the mind, live with virtue and compassion towards others, and demonstrate genuine care and concern for all people. ❖

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Social Work Student Perceptions of Racism, Implicit Bias, and Other Forms of Discrimination: A Racial Justice Climate Survey

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This article discusses the findings of a racial justice climate survey using a mixed-methods design conducted to learn more about the areas of strength and areas of improvement related to racial justice in one faith-based School of Social Work. The framework for organizing the findings focuses on the three pillars of social work education: the explicit curriculum, the implicit curriculum, and field education. While the overall findings indicate that student experiences in our BSW and MSW programs related to racial justice are primarily positive, some of the data indicate otherwise. Findings suggest that the efforts being made in the explicit curriculum should continue and expand, while several recommendations for improvements should focus on the implicit curriculum. These findings will help our social work programs move towards more racially just pedagogy, policies, and practices, which could serve as a model for other programs within the College and for social work programs in other colleges and universities.

Keywords: racial justice; social work education; faith-based

AS A RESPONSE TO THE CONTEXT OF RACIAL UNREST in the United States in the spring and summer of 2020, the BSW and MSW programs at Alliance University (formerly Nyack College) collaborated, in the fall of 2020, to create the Racial Justice Task Force, a group made up of faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Alliance University, a Christian and Missionary Alliance educational institution, through its undergraduate, graduate and seminary programs, pursues its historic mission of preparing men and women to “take the whole Gospel to the whole world.” This mission is fulfilled by being academically excellent, globally engaged, intentionally diverse, personally transforming, and socially relevant (Nyack College, 2021a). Within this missional context, the BSW program uses a Christian context to prepare students to be generalist social work professionals who provide service with competence, compassion, and the highest ethical integrity. By equipping students with the requisite knowledge, values, and skills of the social work profession, the Alliance University BSW program aims to raise social workers who can enhance the well-being of all people and communities and promote a just and caring environment in a complex and interrelated global society (Nyack College, 2021b). Similarly, the mission of the MSW program is to prepare students in a Christian context for the social work profession with the knowledge, values, and skills for competent and compassionate service and leadership, with integrity, in order to increase the well-being of all people and promote just and caring communities locally, nationally, and globally (Nyack College, 2021c). The promotion of racial justice fits squarely within these parameters.

The purpose of the MSW/BSW Racial Justice Task Force is *to collaboratively build awareness while developing a common understanding of where we are and a shared vision and plan for where we need to go to actively advance racial equity across our social work programs. Our purpose is guided by our professional social work values and a Christian worldview.* Because the profession of social work emphasizes self-reflection, one of the first activities of the Racial Justice Task Force was to undertake an internal Racial Justice Climate Survey aimed at gathering and analyzing data that would enhance our efforts towards being more racially just.

Located in Lower Manhattan, the BSW and MSW programs at Alliance University serve a diversity of students. Most students enrolled in the MSW program live in New York City, while a few live nearby in New Jersey and Connecticut. While many students in the BSW program are also local, some come from anywhere and reside in the campus dormitory for a more traditional undergraduate experience.

According to institutional statistics from fall 2020 (Nyack College, 2020), 79.1% of MSW students were female while 20.9% were male. Race and ethnicity demographics are as follows: 52.3% were Black or African

American; 32.6% were Hispanic/Latino; 5.8% were White; 2.3% were Asian; 2.3% were non-residential/international; 2.3% were unknown; 1.2% were Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander; and 1.2% were two or more races. Age demographics are as follows: 4.7% were 22 or younger; 31.4% were 23-29; 26.7% were 30-39; 25.6% were 40-49; 8.1% were 50-59; and 3.5% were 60 or older.

In the fall 2020 semester, the overwhelming majority (87%) of our BSW students were women. African American students comprised 31%, Hispanic students, 36%, White students were 14%, and Asian students contributed 4%. Fifty-seven percent of students were 22 years old or younger, 10% were 23-29, 15% were 30-39, 6% were 40-49, and 10.5% were 50-59.

Literature Review

Status of Social Work Education and Racial Justice

Although research indicates that social work education does prepare students to advocate for racial justice (Davis, 2019), there is inconsistency across programs on how social justice is defined and taught (Benner et al., 2019); a lack of use of critical theories and frameworks that reflect the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) (Maglalong & Rao, 2021), and little evidence that anti-racism is assessed as a learning outcome (Copeland & Ross, 2021). One study suggests that faculty are a barrier to facilitating learning in the classroom around anti-racism due to lack of comfort and lack of skill (Perez, 2021). In addition, social work programs are not immune to racism as manifested through, for example, a whitewashing of social work history (Wright et al., 2021), microaggressions (Brown et al., 2019), and differing experiences in field placement settings (Johnson et al., 2021). There is limited research that focuses specifically on the *experiences* of students of color in social work education (Brown et al., 2019).

Using microaggressions as one example of racism in social work education, one study of college students in general (Robinson-Perez et al., 2020) found a positive correlation between the experience of racial microaggressions and psychological distress, particularly for students living off-campus. In a related study, 98.8% of respondents (minority students) reported having experienced microaggressions, and 24.8% of those respondents were social work students (Lilly et al., 2018).

Indications of What Social Work Programs Should be Doing Related to Racial Justice

Several articles provide insight as to the types of activities in which social work programs should engage to respond to racial injustice and become more racially just. These include, but are not limited to:

- Providing more historical knowledge of oppression in coursework, which can decrease color blind ideology (Davis, 2019), including an equitable history of the profession (Wright et. al., 2021).
- Improving cultural competence through activity-based learning and intergroup dialogue (Rodenburg & Boisen, 2013); one example of this is the Undoing Racism Workshop (Hamilton-Mason & Schneider, 2018).
- Incorporating an anti-racist approach into social work education, including values and skills (Benner et al, 2019; Brown et. al., 2019), using critical theories and frameworks (Maglalang & Rao, 2021); interracial team-teaching as an emerging pedagogical approach (Curiel, 2021); and assessment of racial justice outcomes (Copeland & Ross, 2021). It appears that the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2015) is moving towards this as a standard for accreditation in its upcoming 2022 EPAS.
- Supporting the specific needs of black students; supporting retention and progress of black students and their well-being (Brown et. al., 2019); and acknowledging the cost of 'being black' in the social work practicum (Johnson et. al., 2021).

Summary

Bhuyan et al., (2017) provide a model for the focus of this research study: what does racial justice look like in the three 'pillars' of social work education?

Explicit curriculum: this is defined as the “formal educational structure” (Council on Social Work Education, 2015); it encompasses social work curriculum, courses, and sequencing.

Implicit curriculum: this is defined as “the learning environment in which the explicit curriculum is provided” (CSWE, 2015), and encompasses the program’s commitment to diversity and fair and transparent policies and procedures.

Field education: this is known as social work’s ‘signature pedagogy,’ although field education is technically part of the explicit curriculum. “Signature pedagogies are elements of instruction and of socialization that teach future practitioners the fundamental dimensions of professional work in their discipline—to think, to perform, and to act ethically and with integrity” (CSWE, 2015).

Research Questions

Two specific research questions framed the Racial Justice Climate Survey. First, what are the student perceptions of racism, implicit bias, and other forms of discrimination [which indicate racial injustice] within the MSW/BSW programs at (name of college redacted)? Second, what are the MSW/BSW programs' areas of strengths and areas of improvement related to student perceptions of racism, implicit bias, and other forms of discrimination [which indicate racial justice]? The following definitions of key terms provide the conceptual framework for this study (Racial Equity Tools, 2020).

Racism: One group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.

Implicit bias: Also known as unconscious or hidden bias, implicit biases are negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed automatically, without conscious awareness.

Discrimination: The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, and other categories.

Racial justice: The proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.

Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods survey design. The sample (n=51) included current BSW and MSW students enrolled at Alliance University, and BSW and MSW alumni of Alliance University. A self-administered survey using both close-ended and open-ended questions was created using GoogleDocs. An email with the survey link, an explanation of the survey and its purpose, and an invitation to participate was sent to all students who were currently enrolled in both the BSW and the MSW programs. In addition, the same information and the link to the survey was posted on the School of Social Work Facebook page in hopes of recruiting alumni. Faculty were asked to remind students during classes about the survey and encourage participation. Two email reminders were sent as a follow-up, and the invitation appeared twice on the Facebook page.

The email addresses of respondents were not collected to maintain anonymity. Consent to participate in the study was assumed if respondents clicked the link to the survey; participation was voluntary, and participation

could be withdrawn at any time by simply not completing the survey. The definitions of key terms used throughout the survey and described above were included for review at the beginning of the survey.

The survey included:

- Demographic questions: race/ethnicity; gender; program and status; age.
- Several closed-ended questions using a 5-point Likert-type scale from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree.’ Examples include:
 - The BSW/MSW program is welcoming and inclusive to students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds.
 - I have experienced racial injustice in the classroom.
 - I would feel comfortable reporting instances of racism while in the BSW/MSW program.

Three open-ended questions:

- Provide examples of the situations you have witnessed or experienced related to racial injustice (from questions above).
- What are examples of the strengths of the BSW/MSW programs related to racial justice? In other words, what are we doing well?
- What are examples of the areas of improvement of the BSW/MSW programs related to racial justice? In other words, what could we be doing differently?

Results

Demographics

The following tables describe the study sample (n=51) on key demographic variables of race, gender, age, and program affiliation. The categories used for this study match those used for the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) in higher education for comparison purposes.

Table 1: Study Sample Demographics by Race

Race	Percent
Black/AA	37.3
Hispanic/Latino(a)	21.6
White	21.6
Asian	2.0
Two or more	15.7
Other	2.0
Total	100.0

The highest percentage of respondents identify as Black or African American (37.3%) or Hispanic/Latino(a) (21.6%). This is consistent with the overall demographics of the School of Social Work. However, there is a much higher percentage of White respondents than White students in the overall demographics.

Table 2: Study Sample Demographics by Gender

Gender	Percent
Female	88.2
Male	11.8
Total	100.0

The overwhelming majority of respondents identify as female (88.2%), which is on par with the overall demographics of the School of Social Work.

Table 3: Study Sample Demographics by Age

Age	Percent
<22	11.8
23-29	41.2
30-39	27.5
40-49	15.7
50-59	2.0
60+	2.0
Total	100.0

Most respondents (84.4%) fall between the ages of 23 and 49, which is not unexpected when considering both BSW and MSW students and alumni.

Table 4: Study Sample Demographics by Program Affiliation

Affiliation	Percent
BSW	25.5
MSW	47.1
BSW Alum	13.7
MSW Alum	9.8
Both Alum	3.9
Total	100.0

While there were respondents from each of the program affiliation categories, it is important to note that most respondents (72.6%) were

students (as opposed to alumni) and 47.1% of those students were currently enrolled in the MSW program.

Experiences with Racial Injustice

A set of statements intended to gauge the experiences of respondents related to racial injustice and the three pillars of social work education while in the BSW/MSW programs at Alliance University were included in the survey instrument. The following statements required respondents to utilize the following Likert-type scale: 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree), and 5 (Strongly Agree).

Table 5: Responses to 'I have witnessed racial injustice in the classroom (incidents not involving me)'

	Percent
Strongly Disagree	72.5
Disagree	5.9
Neutral	7.8
Agree	9.8
Strongly Agree	3.9
Total	100.0

While most respondents strongly disagree or disagree with this statement (78.4%), 13.7% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they witnessed racial injustice in the classroom.

Table 6: Responses to 'I have witnessed racial injustice in informal peer interactions (incidents not directly involving me)'

	Percent
Strongly Disagree	58.8
Disagree	13.7
Neutral	9.8
Agree	13.7
Strongly Agree	3.9
Total	100.0

While most respondents strongly disagree or disagree with this statement (72.5%), 17.6% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they witnessed racial injustice in informal peer interactions.

Table 7: Responses to 'I have witnessed racial injustice in interactions with faculty or staff (incidents not directly involving me)'

	Percent
Strongly Disagree	68.6
Disagree	19.6
Neutral	5.9
Strongly Agree	5.9
Total	100.0

While most respondents strongly disagree or disagree with this statement (88.2%), 5.9% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they have witnessed racial injustice in interactions with faculty or staff.

Table 8: Responses to 'I have witnessed racial injustice in field placement (incidents not directly involving me)'

	Percent
Strongly Disagree	62.7
Disagree	13.7
Neutral	13.7
Agree	2.0
Strongly Agree	7.8
Total	100.0

While most respondents strongly disagree or disagree with this statement (76.4%), 9.8% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they have witnessed racial injustice in field placement.

Table 9: Responses to 'I have experienced racial injustice in the classroom (incidents directly involving me)'

	Percent
Strongly Disagree	80.4
Disagree	9.8
Neutral	2.0
Agree	3.9
Strongly Agree	3.9
Total	100.0

While most respondents strongly disagree or disagree with this statement (90.2%), 7.8% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they have experienced racial injustice in the classroom.

Table 10: Responses to 'I have experienced racial injustice in informal peer interactions (incidents directly involving me)'

	Percent
Strongly Disagree	72.5
Disagree	9.8
Neutral	11.8
Agree	3.9
Strongly Agree	2.0
Total	100.0

While most respondents strongly disagree or disagree with this statement (82.3%), 5.9% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they have experienced racial injustice in informal peer interactions.

Table 11: Responses to 'I have experienced racial injustice in interactions with faculty or staff (incidents directly involving me)'

	Percent
Strongly Disagree	78.4
Disagree	11.8
Neutral	2.0
Strongly Agree	7.8
Total	100.0

While most respondents strongly disagree or disagree with this statement (90.2%), 9.8% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they have experienced racial injustice in interactions with faculty or staff.

Table 12: Responses to 'I have experienced racial injustice in field placement (incidents directly involving me)'

	Percent
Strongly Disagree	76.5
Disagree	13.7
Neutral	2.0
Agree	3.9
Strongly Agree	3.9
Total	100.0

While most respondents strongly disagree or disagree with this statement (90.2%), 7.8% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they have experienced racial injustice in field placement.

Inferential Statistics

A one sample t-test was carried out to determine the extent to which respondents feel that Alliance University is welcoming and inclusive. The sample mean ($M = 4.51$) was significantly higher than the population mean ($M = 3$), $t(50) = 12.577$, $p < .05$. Therefore, respondents strongly agree that Alliance University is welcoming and inclusive.

A one sample t-test was carried out to determine the extent to which respondents feel that the BSW/MSW Programs at Alliance University are welcoming and inclusive. The sample mean ($M = 4.57$) was significantly higher than the population mean ($M = 3$), $t(50) = 12.149$, $p < .05$. Therefore, respondents strongly agree that the BSW/MSW programs at Alliance University are welcoming and inclusive.

Differences in responses between groups were explored. A one-way ANOVA was carried out to test the hypothesis that respondents from different racial groups may feel differently about whether the BSW/MSW programs are welcoming and inclusive. A significant result was not found, $F(5, 45) = .640$, $p > .05$. Thus, there is no significant difference in responses to the statement 'The BSW/MSW Programs at Alliance University are welcoming and inclusive' between racial groups.

The responses from the following three questions were analyzed together as an indicator that the BSW/MSW programs at Alliance University may be promoting racial injustice: 'Racism is a problem in the BSW/MSW programs at Alliance University;' 'Implicit bias is a problem in the BSW/MSW programs at Alliance University;' and 'Discrimination is a problem in the BSW/MSW programs at Alliance University.' A one sample t-test was carried out to test the hypothesis that the mean score of the three questions combined (which indicates the programs may be promoting racial injustice) is significantly different than neutral. The sample mean ($M = 1.78$) was significantly lower than the population mean ($M = 3$), $t(50) = -8.190$, $p < .05$. Therefore, respondents do not agree that the BSW/MSW programs are promoting racial injustice.

The responses from the following eight questions were analyzed together as an indicator that the BSW/MSW programs at Alliance University may be promoting racial justice:

- The BSW/MSW programs practice culturally responsive teaching, which is defined as a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning.
- Diverse perspectives are offered and engaged as part of the BSW/MSW curriculum.

- The racial and ethnic diversity of BSW/MSW faculty reflects that of students.
- The racial and ethnic diversity of BSW/MSW staff reflects that of students.
- The BSW/MSW programs respond proactively to racism.
- The BSW/MSW programs respond appropriately to racism.
- The BSW/MSW programs provide avenues for exploring racism and bias.
- I would feel comfortable reporting instances of racism while in the BSW/MSW program.

A one sample t-test was carried out to test the hypothesis that the mean score of the eight questions combined (which indicates the programs may be promoting racial justice) is significantly different than neutral. The sample mean ($M = 3.82$) was significantly higher than the population mean ($M = 3$), $t(50) = 6.515$, $p < .05$. Therefore, respondents agree that the BSW/MSW programs are promoting racial justice.

Differences in responses between groups was again explored. A one-way ANOVA was carried out to test the hypothesis that respondents from different racial groups may feel differently about whether they would feel comfortable reporting instances of racism while in the BSW/MSW program. A significant result was not found, $F(5, 45) = .716$, $p > .05$. Thus, there is no significant difference in responses to the statement 'I would feel comfortable reporting instances of racism while in the BSW/MSW program' between racial groups.

Qualitative Findings

Participants were provided the opportunity to respond to a total of three qualitative questions.

Qualitative Question #1

The first question asked participants to provide examples of the situations you have witnessed or experienced related to racial injustice. Only four of the 51 respondents gave an answer to this question. Two respondents described scenarios where they observed or directly experienced discrimination within the student peer group. Another respondent expressed feeling condescended to by a professor who referred to her as a "smart girl." This respondent stated in the survey "I'm in my 30's. I'm not a girl, and the comments were condescending." A fourth respondent expressed experiencing conversations related to the election

they felt were biased. It is noteworthy that all of the statements provided to this question indicate concerns related to implicit curriculum. This may indicate that the injustices are not intentional from a program perspective. Rather, they may represent unconscious bias and a need for continued efforts to increase sensitivity and training for both students and faculty. Additionally, themes related to *difficult cross-cultural peer interactions*, and a *perspective of superiority/inferiority* were identified. No examples related specifically to field education were provided.

Qualitative Question #2

The second question asked participants to give examples of the strengths of the social work programs related to racial justice. Many more respondents, 12 of 51, gave an answer to this question in comparison to question #1. Related to the explicit curriculum there, was an appreciation for courses, discussions, and forums that directly addressed racial justice. However, comments related to the implicit curriculum were also expressed and were represented in statements made about “creating a safe space,” “willingness to listen,” “not shying away,” “open dialogue,” and “faculty are sympathetic.” This is another indication that most of the improvement may be needed as it relates to the learning environment. No examples related specifically to field education were provided.

Qualitative Questions #3

The third question asked participants to give examples of areas for improvement related to racial justice and 20 of 51 respondents gave an answer, which was the largest response for all three questions. Overall, continued and increased curriculum focus, discussions, and forums were recommended. More specifically, a few students commented on the need for greater inclusion and/or variety in the cultures that are discussed related to racial justice as well as a desire for more diverse literature.

Related to implicit curriculum, one respondent expressed a desire to learn about the perspective of other students to a greater extent which resonates with theme of *difficult cross-cultural peer interactions* identified in responses to question #1. Based on demographic identifiers, the concerns related to peer relationships seem to be specific to BSW students who may have social expectations as undergraduates that are different from those of graduate students. Another respondent suggested we obtain more full-time faculty that are “black,” and faculty needed to be “comfortable with letting uncomfortable conversations happen in their presence.” Lastly, a need for addressing the issue of racial justice beyond our specific program to an institutional level was indicated.

Although a small percentage of participants responded that racial injustice was witnessed or experienced in the field setting (see Tables 8 and 12), there was only one recommendation made regarding field education that field supervisors receive mandatory cultural awareness and sensitivity training.

Discussion and Conclusions

While the overall findings indicate that student experiences in our programs related to racial justice are primarily positive, it is important to not ignore the experiences that indicate otherwise. Findings suggest that the efforts being made in the explicit curriculum should continue and expand, while recommendations for improvements should focus on the implicit curriculum. While these findings do not suggest that our students are experiencing psychological distress, as emphasized in the literature review, they do suggest that our students have experienced several forms of racism, which is supported in the literature review. Regarding the third pillar of social work education, field education, the findings are not as robust.

Limitations to the Study

There are several limitations to this study. First, this is survey research from a convenience sample. It is difficult to know how representative the sample is for the entire population. It is not unusual to think that people who respond to surveys of this type are either those who are very satisfied or those who are very unsatisfied. It is also possible that, due to the nature of this survey, anyone who had negative experiences while in the social work programs might be reluctant to share those experiences or might be likely to think that completing this survey would be a waste of time. In addition, while the survey did include open-ended questions designed to gather corroborative data, it failed to capture truly in-depth information. Finally, this survey captured data from one moment in time and did not parse out the data to understand the specific time frames in which respondents were part of the social work programs to see if experiences were different over time. It also didn't focus on differences between the BSW and MSW respondents other than anecdotally. Future research could include a larger sample size, perhaps using a stratified sampling technique to capture more experiences across time, in-depth interviewing of several respondents, perhaps in a focus group setting, to augment the quantitative findings and gain a better understanding of the experiences, and a closer look at whether there are differences between BSW and MSW experiences.

Implications and Recommendations

One goal of this study was to provide data to the Racial Justice Task Force to use in making recommendations to the MSW and BSW program decision makers to enhance our efforts towards being more racially just. Based on these findings, it is recommended the School of Social Work write and disseminate a position statement on its approach to acknowledging racism, encouraging safe dialogue in and out of the classroom, and addressing racial injustices. As an institution of higher education, intellectual curiosity and critical thinking are central. In addition, anti-racist perspectives are not contrary to Christian faith; racial justice and anti-racist perspectives align with the core values of Alliance University, as they are particularly *intentionally diverse* and *socially relevant*.

A second recommendation for consideration is the enhancement of faculty development activities around acknowledging bias, managing difficult interactions in the classroom, culturally competent pedagogy, and anti-racist practices in higher education and in social work practice. Faculty development activities such as these that are designed to move programs towards racial justice should include full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, and field faculty so that the concepts and skills can be integrated across the explicit curriculum, implicit curriculum, and field components of the programs. In addition, staff may need to be included in some of the development activities.

As the qualitative findings indicate, students provided several specific examples of culturally competent pedagogy that should be considered. These include: increased conversations (particularly peer experiences) in the classroom about racism and directly addressing racism when it occurs in the classroom; more readings and perspectives throughout the curriculum that are outside of the dominant perspectives; more content on the racial injustices experienced by all minority groups in the U.S.; and an increase in the teaching of skills and strategies for not perpetuating racism and responding to injustices experienced in social work practice (clients, employers, and the community).

A third recommendation focuses on hiring practices related to social work faculty and staff. When positions are available, particularly full-time teaching positions, the net should be cast widely to find strong applicants who represent the diverse make-up of the student body. Job announcements should be disseminated in the recruitment places where diverse candidates are most likely to exist, with financial funding to support these efforts.

A fourth recommendation is to regularly collect data concerning the racial justice climate, particularly focusing on the student experience. That way, data can be examined over the course of time to note the impact of continuous program improvement, to identify patterns, and to understand

the ways in which what is happening in the larger environment is impacting the climate of the social work programs. While data on diversity is collected annually, and student 'satisfaction' with the programs' diversity and difference is measured by a few questions contained in the graduate exit survey, it is not as comprehensive as the data collected via this climate survey. As mentioned earlier in this report, in-depth interviewing of several respondents to augment the quantitative findings and gain a better understanding of the experiences of students seems important.

A fifth recommendation specifically speaks to the third pillar of social work education, field education. Field faculty have already been included in the discussion related to faculty development activities (recommendation two above), which would assist the social work programs in the enhancement of the curricular piece of field. As one student suggested in the qualitative portion of the study, there is a need to support field agencies in their diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racist efforts. If racially just and anti-racist practice is important to the BSW/MSW programs (as supported by a position statement), then support for those practices would extend to field as part of the agreement agencies make before committing to taking on a student intern. In addition, more explicit ways of getting feedback from students on agency commitment to anti-racist practice (as part of the overall feedback concerning the field experience) would be helpful in knowing if some agencies are not able to demonstrate a commitment to racially just practices.

Conclusions

Using Bhuyan, Bejan, & Jeyapal's (2017) model for exploring what racial justice looks like in the three 'pillars' of social work education, study findings indicate areas of both strength and the need for improvement in promoting a more racially just social work program. Specific recommendations that organically emerge from the data move the research into practical applications that are based in evidence and provide a starting point for continuous program improvement focused on racial justice. In addition, several further avenues for data collection to enhance and expand these initial findings are delineated. Because this study emphasized the experiences of students (and in this case, primarily the experiences of students of color), it expands the limited research that focuses specifically on the experiences of students of color in social work education as noted by Brown et al. (2019).

Utilizing the findings of the Racial Justice Climate survey will help the BSW and MSW programs at Alliance University move towards more racially just pedagogy, policies, and practices. In addition, this type of internal evaluation process could serve as a model for other programs within the College and for social work programs in other colleges and universities. ❖

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Teaching across Cultures: Contextualizing Education for Global Mission

James E. Plueddemann and Duane Elmer (2018). IVP Academic

In *Teaching Across Cultures: Contextualizing Education for Global Mission* (2018), missiologist and educator, James Plueddemann, PhD, draws from his wealth of cross-cultural knowledge and experience to share both theory and practice of teaching within cross-cultural settings. The goal of his book is to prepare educators, ministry and missions leaders for transformational cross-cultural teaching, which he defines as teaching people that are different from oneself. Plueddemann offers relevant strategies for anyone teaching those different from themselves, no matter the environment or subject. As social workers and social work educators are continually teaching within diverse contexts, this book is particularly applicable to our profession. He aligns his framework with scripture and orthodox Christian assumptions and expresses his viewpoints with an attitude of humility, teaching the reader from stories of learning through his own mistakes as well as his experiences with success.

Plueddemann begins by describing the strengths and weaknesses of common metaphors as models for teaching across cultures. He describes a pilgrimage model as a helpful metaphor for teaching cross-culturally and the need for a paradigm shift, or in other words, the need for a new set of eyeglasses for teaching across cultures. As an urban community development practitioner and former international social worker/missionary that now teaches social work, I valued his emphasis on the importance of applying community development principles of relationship building, listening and learning as a priority which can then be followed by teaching from one's area of expertise.

Next, Plueddemann explains the similarities of humans across cultures and people created in God's image that have unique differences between cultures that can guide us in both general relationship building and teaching principles within specific cultures, but he also describes the importance of not discounting the uniqueness of individual personalities within cultural groups. Plueddemann brings to the reader's attention a reminder of the various personality types individuals have, how their understanding of context vs. ideas impacts their abilities to teach those different than themselves and the importance of one being aware of the difference between high context and low context cultures. As he discusses the importance of understanding and being self-aware of one's tolerance for ambiguity, high power distance vs. low power distance, and individualist vs. collectivistic

cultures, the reader is reminded of teaching from a developmental perspective as it relates to the mission of Christians to love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. He emphasizes how cultural differences impact the teaching and learning environment, encouraging educators to harmonize the goals of high and low context cultures in order to avoid potential harm at worst and at best, lack of interest from the learner. He challenges readers on the benefit of learning through disequilibrium, which can be a supernatural process of growth and development.

Plueddemann ends each chapter with a story from an educator from a different country or culture who has practical experience teaching cross-culturally, where they describe their process of learning, even through mistakes and challenges, in order to become a more effective cross-cultural educator. I found both his personal examples and the applications presented by other educators, to be helpful learning opportunities, bringing the theory and practice concepts together in real life situations.

Up until the last few chapters, I was still looking for a more concrete explanation of how to apply some of his theoretical ideas to practice, so I was pleased that the final chapters brought together the ideas Plueddemann had discussed in a more practical way. He presented how the rail-fence model harmonizes the two completing educational models used across cultures, offering faith based examples that Christian social workers can relate to, such as how Jesus modeled meeting felt needs while presenting spiritual truths with eternal meaning. His final chapter discusses evaluation by comparing and contrasting evaluation methods from various cultural contexts, offering multiple ways to evaluate our teaching across cultures in order to benefit from the various cultural contexts within the teaching learning environment.

I believe that Plueddemann's perspectives align with social work values and Christian values that are particularly needed during this point in time when cultural and political values seem to polarize people. This book can be helpful for any educators working across cultural differences that include, age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, political identity, as examples. As I was reading the final chapters of Plueddemann's *Teaching across Cultures*, I was also preparing a syllabus for a Global Practice course that I teach. This is an undergraduate interdisciplinary course offered to both social work and global and international studies students from a variety of majors. I was excitedly writing down new ideas to help my students apply the theory and practice from their disciplines to serving in global and international contexts. ❖

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Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Love

Timothy Keller with Katherine Leary Alsdorf. (2012). Riverhead Books.

On September 23, 2021, Jonathan Malesic published a guest opinion essay in the New York Times titled, *The Future of Work Should Mean Working Less*. This essay explored the American relationship to paid work and how unexpected events can change this for us individually or collectively. Malesic offers the example of a woman who found incredible purpose in her paid work and when she was forced to step away from this work to focus on her physical health how this changed where and how she found her purpose. The collective example he shares is the situation we all find ourselves in at this particular moment in history, returning to work after nearly two years of remote work and massive levels of unemployment. In significant moments like these examples given, he states that, “every one of us will need to prove to ourselves and others that we exist to do more than just work” and thereby argues that now is the “time to reimagine how work fits into a good life.”

This call to action to reimagine how work fits into a good life parallels the question Timothy Keller and Katherine Leary Alsdorf asked of readers in *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (2012), namely, how our work fits into God's work in the world and how Christians can serve God through our work. While not a new question or concept for Christians to engage, Keller and Leary Alsdorf have offered a practical guide to the broader theological and philosophical conversation, one that provides focus and clarity while at the same time offering examples and practical advice that is helpful to the reader. At a time when Americans are making new choices about paid work (i.e., the Great Resignation) or being forced into making different choices than they wish about paid work, this book offers an opportunity for readers to step back and reflect on the purpose of paid work in our lives as Christians.

The book breaks down questions about the integration of faith and work and shares biblically based reflections in three areas: Why do we need to work in order to lead a fulfilled life? Why is work so often fruitless, pointless and difficult? And how can we overcome the difficulties and find satisfaction in our work?

The first area, uncovering God's plan for work, offers examples from the book of Genesis about how God created work and the forms in which this work was created. This work is good, noting the call to labor “is not a burdensome command; it is an invitation to freedom” (p. 26). Later chapters in this section build on God's design for work by exploring the dignity of work, work as cultivation, and work as service.

The second area, exploring our problems with work, includes four chapters which tackle issues that include how to respond when work

becomes fruitless, pointless, selfish and reveals our idols. Each of these chapters provides Biblical references and practical examples for the reader to consider. While these references and examples were helpful, readers may want to supplement reading of these chapters with conversation or private prayer and medication to allow for in-depth introspection into what problems they personally encounter with paid work. Activities like this may offer the reader a fuller experience that will allow them to know the issues they fall into so they can be set up well to consider alternatives in the final section on the gospel and our work.

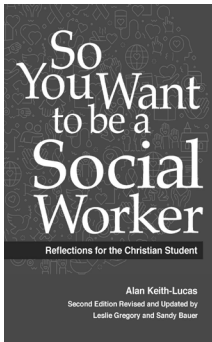
This final area offers new narratives for our paid work. Chapters include a new story for work, a new conception of work, a new compass for work and a new power for work. I appreciated Keller and Leary Alsdorf's chapter on crafting a new story for our work, one based on a Christian worldview and the call of the gospel. Christians in social work might find the subsection on "The Gospel and Medicine" most relevant as a comparable helping profession. The questions provided at the end of this chapter were also thoughtful and give the reader an opportunity for more reflection on how they might think about their paid work from a Christian perspective. I also appreciated the book's Epilogue where the authors shared structured opportunities provided to the members of Redeemer Presbyterian Church to lead them to integrate their faith and work.

While the literature on integrating faith and work is vast, during this season of reckoning with significant questions about our relationship to paid work, reading or re-reading Keller and Leary Alsdorf's *Every Good Endeavor* (2012) is worth considering. ❖

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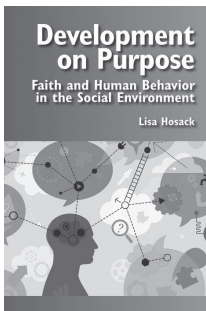
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**SO YOU WANT TO BE A SOCIAL WORKER:
REFLECTIONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN STUDENT
(2ND EDITION)**

Alan Keith-Lucas, Leslie Gregory, and Sandy Bauer. (2021). Palos Heights, IL: NACSW. \$14.95 U.S. (\$11.95 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 is 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.



**DEVELOPMENT ON PURPOSE: FAITH AND
HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT**

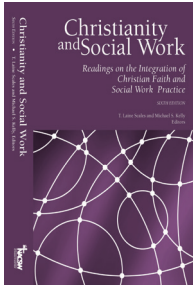
(2019) BY LISA HOSACK, MSW, PH.D.

NACSW. \$25.50 U.S., \$22.95 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies. For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

Development on Purpose provides both students and seasoned professionals with a coherent framework for considering human behavior in the social environment from a Christian perspective. It was developed to be a companion text for HBSE and related courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

Courses in human behavior and the social environment raise important questions about the nature of persons and our multi-layered social world. The Christian faith offers compelling answers to these deep questions about human nature and our relationships with one another and the world by providing a defining purpose for human development. Steeped within the Reformed tradition, Development on Purpose describes how this grand purpose informs our understanding of the trajectory of our lived experience and sustains our work on behalf of those at risk in the world.

To support the use of this book in the classroom and training environments, NACSW has developed a collection of online teaching resources for your use, which can be found at: www.nacsw.org/teaching_resources/hosack_developmentonpurpose.



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

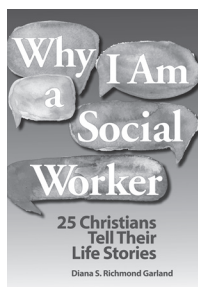
T. LAINE SCALES AND MICHAEL S. KELLY (EDITORS). (2020). BOTSFORD, CT:

NACSW. \$64.95 U.S., \$51.96 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies. For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

The 6th Edition of *Christianity and Social Work (CSW6)*, edited by T. Laine Scales and Michael Kelly, and is written for social workers whose motivations to enter the profession as well as their approaches to helping have been inspired and informed by their Christian faith.

The 19 chapters and over 400 pages of *CSW6* address social welfare history, human behavior and the social environment, social policy, and social work practice from a faith perspective at micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Four decision cases and an accompanying online instructor's manual provide rich teaching tools for the use of this material in a variety of social work and related classes. Especially useful in the classroom or social work trainings, *CSW6* supports several major curriculum areas outlined by the Council on Social Work Education's Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards.

NACSW has also developed an extensive electronic resource tool, *Instructor's Resources for Christianity and Social Work: Sixth Edition (2020)* by Tammy Patton to support the use of the *Christianity and Social Work* in classroom and trainings environments, which can be found at: www.nacsw.org/Publications/CSW6/CSW6thInstructorsResourcesFinal.pdf.



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. *Why I Am a Social Worker* serves as a resource

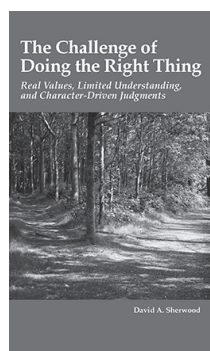
for Christians in social work as they reflect on their sense of calling, and provides direction to guide them

in this process. It addresses a range of critical questions such as:

- How do social workers describe the relationship of their faith and their work?
- 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?

The stories in *Why I Am a Social Worker* have strong themes of integration of faith and practice that will

both challenge and encourage students and seasoned practitioners alike.



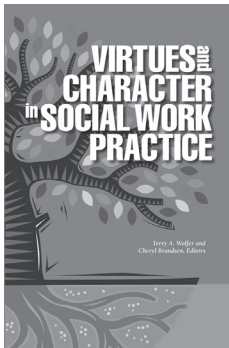
THE CHALLENGE OF DOING THE RIGHT THING: REAL VALUES, LIMITED UNDERSTANDING, AND CHARACTER-DRIVEN JUDGMENTS

David A. Sherwood. (2018). Botsford CT: NACSW. \$21.95 U.S., \$17.55 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies. Available as an eBook only. For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

The Challenge of Doing the Right Thing: Real Values, Limited Understanding, and Character-Driven Judgments is a 450-page collection of 44 editorials and articles

written by David Sherwood for *Social Work & Christianity* and for the North American Association of Christians in Social Work between 1981 and 2017 focused on integrating Christian faith, values, and ethics with competent

professional social work practice. In this book, Dr. Sherwood argues that in ethical decision-making, decisions frequently involve making judgments that functionally prioritize legitimate values that are in tension with each other. He contends that the mission of NACSW and *Social Work & Christianity* has been to walk the difficult middle road—clearly committed to both Christian faith and competent social work practice, not presuming to have the final answers in either, and helping members and readers to come as close to faithfulness and competence as possible.



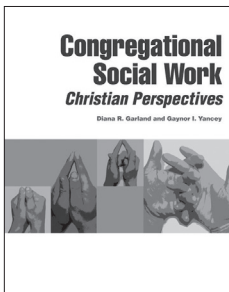
VIRTUE AND CHARACTER IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

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.

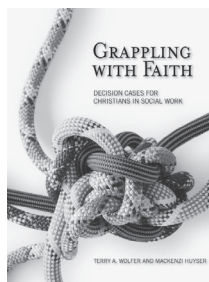
This book is for social work practitioners who, as social change agents, spend much of their time examining social structures and advocating for policies and programs to advance justice and increase opportunity.



CONGREGATIONAL SOCIAL WORK: CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES

Diana R. 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.

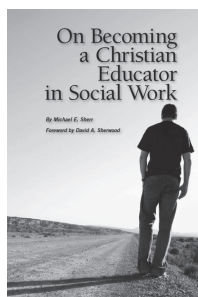
Congregational Social Work offers a compelling account of the many ways social workers serve the church as leaders of congregational life, of ministry to neighborhoods locally and globally, and of advocacy for social justice. Based on the most comprehensive study to date on social work with congregations, *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.

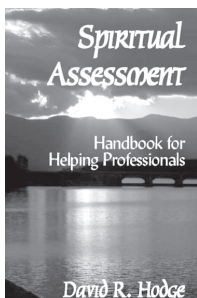
Grappling with Faith: Decision Cases for Christians in Social Work presents fifteen cases specifically designed to challenge and stretch Christian social work students and practitioners. Using the case method of teaching and learning, *Grappling with Faith* highlights the ambiguities and dilemmas found 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."

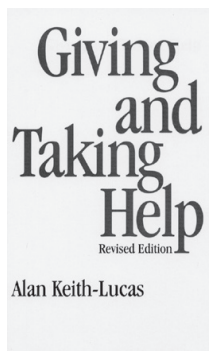


SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT: HELPING HANDBOOK FOR HELPING PROFESSIONALS

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.

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



*North American Association
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For additional information

Visit NACSW's website at: www.NACSW.org
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Coming in 2023, The 73RD Annual NACSW Convention

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Pennsylvania

Thursday-Sunday
November 9-12,
2023



“Leading the Brokenhearted Towards Healing.”
BRIDGING DIVIDES.

*For I will restore health to you,
and your wounds I will heal,
declares the Lord,
because they have called you an outcast:
“It is Zion, for whom no one cares!”
-Jeremiah 30:17*

**Opening Night
Plenary Speaker:
Saleem Ghubril
Executive Director
The Pittsburgh
Promise**

**Thursday evening,
Nov 9 at 7:00pm**

Presentation:
“You are Loved,
Empowered, and
Deployed”



**Featured Speaker:
Shane Claiborne**

**Saturday evening banquet,
Nov 11 at 7:00pm**

Shane Claiborne is a prominent speaker, activist, and best-selling author. Shane worked with Mother Teresa in Calcutta, and founded *The*

Simple Way in Philadelphia. He heads up *Red Letter Christians*, a movement of folks who are committed to living “as if Jesus meant the things he said.” Shane is a champion for grace which has led him to jail advocating for the homeless, and to places like Iraq and Afghanistan to stand against war. Now grace fuels his passion to end the death penalty and help stop gun violence. Shane’s books include *Jesus for President*, *Red Letter Revolution*, *Common Prayer*, *Follow Me to Freedom*, *Jesus, Bombs and Ice Cream*, *Becoming the Answer to Our Prayers*, *Executing Grace*, his classic *The Irresistible Revolution*, and his newest book, *Beating Guns*. Shane speaks regularly at denominational gatherings, festivals, and conferences around the globe.



**Alan Keith-Lucas
Lecture Series
Speakers:**

**Sandy Bauer, PhD
& Leslie Gregory,
LSW, MSW**

**Friday morning,
Nov 10 at 11:30am**

Academic Discussion:
the timeless tenets of
*So You Want to be A
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how it shaped the 2ND
Edition.



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NORTH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIANS IN SOCIAL WORK

NACSW's mission is to equip its members to integrate Christian faith and professional social work practice.

Its goals include:

- Supporting and encouraging members in the integration of Christian faith and professional practice through fellowship, education, and service opportunities.
- Articulating an informed Christian voice on social welfare practice and policies to the social work profession.
- Providing professional understanding and help for the social ministry of the church.
- Promoting social welfare services and policies in society which bring about greater justice and meet basic human needs.

