SOCIAL WORK & CHRISTIANITY

ARTICLES

PRACTICE NOTE

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SOCIAL WORK & CHRISTIANITY

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

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SOCIAL WORK & CHRISTIANITY

CONTENTS

REVIEWS

Integrating Faith and Practice: A Qualitative Study of Staff Motivations

*Kris Hohn, Mary McCoy, Dorothea Ivey,
Paula Ugochukwu Ude, & Regina T. Praetorius*

Social work courses at all levels are filled with young women and men who aspire to join the profession to put their Christian faith into practice. For them, the profession is a noble calling in which they can deliver the love of God to their clients through knowledgeable, caring, and evidence-based services to address the physical, psychological, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of the people they feel called to serve. Such an understanding of the social work profession is not outside the bounds of ethical practice. Unfortunately, these same passionate students are all too often told by professors and supervisors to suspend their religious beliefs while working with clients. This advice from professors is in the interest of promoting ethical practice and client self-determination. However, it is possible to professionally connect with clients through well-honed beliefs about faith without imposing religion on clients. This paper shares the characteristics of six mental health professionals who ethically integrate their faith into their practice of helping women leave the sex industry at a faith-based, nonprofit agency. Interviews were conducted by three of the authors from this study. Phenomenology guided the interview process to describe and explore participants' lived experiences and what these experiences mean to them.

According to a study by Mattison, Jayaratne and Croxton 2008), a majority of direct practice social workers in the United States who are NASW members ascribe to the Christian faith. Of those who cite their faith as important in their lives, social work practice is often viewed as an opportunity to deliver the love of God to their clients

through both religious and non-religious services that address the physical, psychosocial, emotional, and spiritual needs of the people they feel called to serve (Chamiec-Case, 2007; Kuilema, 2014). Such an understanding of the social work profession is not outside the bounds of ethical practice. Indeed, the NASW Code of Ethics (2008) states only that social workers uphold clients' rights to self-determination (1.03) and practice cultural competence with clients' religious beliefs (1.05); nowhere does the code suggest that social workers' religious beliefs must be compartmentalized and entirely removed from practice settings. Unfortunately, religiously minded social workers are often told by professors and supervisors to suspend their faith while working with clients in the interest of ethical practice and client self-determination (Canda, 2009; Ressler & Hodge, 2003). This occurs because religious faith has, at times, led to unethical practice, such as when a social worker's religious beliefs infringe upon clients' rights to self-determination (Jenkins & Johnston, 2004).

However, there remains an enormous strength within social workers who can connect with their clients through their faith, whether faith-informed words are spoken or not (Canda, Nakashima & Furman, 2004). It is regrettable that social work education and discourse is largely neglectful, or downright hostile, to the question of how Christian social workers can integrate their faith and practice (Streets, 2009). Incorporating faith, including the Christian faith, into social work education and discourse helps social workers become more self-aware of their beliefs, worldviews, and sense of calling, and deeply thoughtful about ethical boundaries (Sherwood, 1999). Those social workers who gain self-awareness are, in fact, following the NASW Code of Ethics (2008) mandate to "obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to… religion" (1.05). Too often, though, these conversations are avoided within social work education and professional development. Ethical concerns then arise about licensed social workers who lack training on how to integrate their faith using self-awareness (Sheridan, 2009). Another concern is that of the educational system that may overlook the source of core strength and resilience among social work practitioners of faith (Canda, 2009).

It is quite possible, however, for professors, social workers, and social work supervisors to view faith as a professional asset rather than an ethical liability. In this study, we examine how the staff members of one Christian faith-based, non-profit agency that serves women exiting the sex industry have enhanced the agency's services through the integration of Christian faith and practice, rather than in spite of it.

This particular agency's executive leadership places a high value on staff members who know how to integrate their Christian faith and practice in a compassionate manner. In fact, executive leadership notes that ethical Christian social workers and other mental health professionals are core to

program success. Findings from a previous study of the clients served by this agency reveal that client satisfaction regarding programming was based on their relationships with the staff and their ability to psychosocially and spiritually build trust with the clients (Preble, 2015; Preble, Praetorius & Cimino, 2016).

In this study, we define the integration of Christian faith and practice as a social worker's 1) Christian faith-informed motivation to provide services to clients; 2) ability to discuss a client's faith when the client desires to do so; 3) application of the Christian and social work value of the dignity and worth of all persons to their individual caseloads; and 4) belief that God is involved in the healing process of each client. This social work practice appropriately addresses the spiritual and religious needs and resources of clients without imposing the social worker's beliefs or values or exploiting the clients' vulnerability. This definition does not include religiously-based direct practice interventions. For instance, social workers at the agency do not regularly engage in prayer with clients, although prayer could be understood as one form of integrated faith and practice. If social workers pray with clients, it is because the client asks for prayer and directs the social worker towards her specific prayer needs. Because this activity and others like it are not directed by the social worker, we do not emphasize this or similar religiously-based direct practice interventions a part of our definition of integrated faith and practice (except as a natural extension of the second component of our definition).

The purpose of this exploratory qualitative study was to learn more about the staff at the agency where this study was conducted to ascertain how some Christian social workers have incorporated their faith and practice, and what could be used in further developing, recruiting, and retaining these effective staff members. We did so by examining two different lines of research questions. The purpose of our research was to both better understand how Christian social workers integrate their faith and practice, and to better understand how Christian faith-based agencies can retain the employees who do it well. First, we studied the characteristics of Christian faith-motivated direct practice staff members, most of whom are licensed social workers or counselors, in order to ascertain how they view the integration of faith and practice. Then, because this agency and others like it aspire to recruit and retain this type of staff, we 1) analyzed the inspiration of these faith-motivated staff members, and 2) investigated the job characteristics that encourage them to stay in the agency, as well as those job characteristics that may encourage them to seek employment elsewhere. The results of this study provide transferrable information to other Christian social workers who are interested in integrating their faith and practice, as well as recommendations for how agencies can recruit, develop, and retain these effective staff members.

Literature Review

The social work profession was initially established as an extension of its founders' Christian values to serve impoverished and disempowered human beings. From the profession's early charitable volunteers in settlement houses like Jane Addams' Hull House in Chicago, early social workers were motivated by their religious beliefs, and committed to integrating their faith into their practice with clients (Seyfried, 2007; Tennanbaum & Reisch, 2001). Following social work's early years, however, the profession began to place a heavy emphasis on interventions grounded in the social science of the day and psychoanalytic theory, in an effort to increase the profession's mainstream credibility (Senreich, 2013).

The ethical mandate to practice empirically sound interventions, as stated in section 5.02 of the NASW Code of Ethics (2008), was a wise one. The scientific emphasis of current social work education and practice, however, is one that has frequently had the effect of pushing faith to the margins of social workers' and clients' relationships (Gilligan & Furness, 2006; Sheridan & Amato von-Hemert, 1999; Streets, 2009). This remains true, despite the reality that the majority of practicing social workers still believe that the integration of faith and services is at least sometimes appropriate (Gilligan & Furness, 2006), and the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) standards require that social workers should be prepared to address a client's spiritual and religious concerns throughout holistic assessment and intervention (CSWE, 2015; Senreich, 2013; Seyfried, 2007).

It is odd that there is a disconnect between social workers' beliefs about faith and practice and the profession's insufficient response toward equipping social workers to do so in an ethical and competent way. Indeed, there is ample evidence that social workers are integrating their religious beliefs into practice in spite of their lack of education. Sheridan and Amato-von Hemert (1999) found, for instance, that social worker "respondents revealed a positive stance toward the role of religion and spirituality in social work practice," and that a majority of respondents supported the use of "religious or spiritually oriented interventions as appropriate for social work practice," which is a matter of concern since most of the study's participants indicated very little knowledge of how to do so from their formal education (p. 138-139). As a result of these findings and the dearth of social work educational textbooks devoted to spiritual integration in practice (Rosenbohm, 2011), it is reasonable to believe that most of the social workers who attempt to integrate faith and practice do so without effective training, and with insufficient understanding of the ethical implications of integrating their faith with practice (Senreich, 2013). In 2007, Graff conducted a survey of 324 baccalaureate social work students in the state of Texas and findings corroborated these ideas. The most compelling finding was that of the students who

integrate faith into all aspects of their lives, 62.7% believe it is appropriate to integrate faith into their practice, pray with clients, and talk about faith, despite no social work education on how to do so ethically. Graff (2007) also noted that many students in this sample reported relatively fundamentalist religious beliefs and concluded, "Social work educators need to be aware of these potentially strong and even possibly rigid religious/spiritual beliefs to provide a forum for discussion of such issues to promote ethical practice" (p. 252). If social work professionals are not trained on culturally and professionally appropriate use of religion and spirituality in practice, this relationship between untrained religious and spiritual integration into practice could prove to be problematic and oppressive for clients.

Some leaders within the profession have taken note of these critiques, and have encouraged a professional return to the importance of spirituality, faith, and religious belief as a domain for client assessment and intervention (Bullis, 2013). Indeed, the undefined and mysterious space in which the client and social worker interact with spirituality and faith, whether religious words are exchanged or not, is cited as a location in which the social worker and client could develop rapport, cultivate strength, and perhaps, as Preble, Praetorius, and Cimino (2016) found, serve as the cornerstone for client trust towards the social worker.

In 2010, Barker and Floersch found that their sample of 20 social workers with more than three years of post-MSW experience agreed that faith-based or spiritual practices could be an active process for individuals to create meaning and purpose, especially in times of need and crisis. Sermabeikian (1994) expands this thought by imploring social workers to recognize that a client's spirituality is a strength to access as a "constructive way of facing life's difficulties" (p. 181).

The question, then, is how social workers ought to do so. Barker and Floersch (2010) stated: "Much as we provide language for other concepts important to social work, such as social justice or diversity, social work education has a responsibility to provide comprehensive spirituality language that is useful in preparing effective social workers" (p. 364). Here, the argument is clear that social work education should train professionals about the concepts of spirituality in order to serve populations in need with the most culturally competent approach.

For the sake of this exploratory study, we posed the question of how Christian social workers can integrate faith and practice, and what motivates them to continue doing so, to a group of Christian social workers and mental health professionals in a faith-based agency that helps women leave the sex industry. We used an exploratory qualitative approach to examine what makes these professionals engage in their difficult work, how they integrated their faith into their work, and the workplace conditions that encourage or exasperate their desire to stay involved in the work.

Method

Prior to conducting the study, Institutional Review Board approval was obtained for the protection of human subjects. The study was part of a service-learning project in a doctoral level qualitative research class. Three of the authors (Hohn, Ude, and Ivey) were part of this class and conducted the interviews, analyses and composed a portion of this manuscript to meet class requirements. The community partner was a faith-based organization in the southern United States that helped women leave the sex industry.

Phenomenology guided the development of interview questions as well as the interview processes. We considered this an appropriate strategy because Creswell (2007) emphasized that phenomenology was a qualitative approach used to describe and explore participants' lived experiences and what these experiences mean to them. The overarching questions focused on what makes these professionals engage in their difficult work, how they integrate their faith into their work, and the workplace conditions that encourage or exasperate their desire to stay involved in the work.

Program Description

The faith-based agency provides services to women who are leaving the sex industry by providing the women and their children with access to education, job training, interim financial assistance, mental health services and spiritual support. Since its inception in 1997, the agency has provided services to more than 1,100 women and their children.

Data Collection

Participants. Six staff members were invited to participate in this study. The staff were an equal balance of majority and minority race. They held different positions in the agency, all interacting directly with clients. All of the participants were females between the ages of 20 and 40. The average length of employment was one year; and their education ranged from undergraduate to graduate degrees in social work. To keep the staff identities confidential, their names were changed and certain identifying details were omitted, such as their education.

Procedures. Six open-ended questions were designed in collaboration with an agency administrator to collect data from the staff:

1. What does success look like when a woman graduates the program?
2. What brought you to this work?
3. What role does faith play in your interventions?

4. How do you integrate faith with the women (give an example)?
5. What makes you stay?
6. What makes you want to leave?

Excluding question one, the questions were utilized to gain more understanding about how the staff members integrate faith and why they want to stay or leave the agency. Question one was asked first to build rapport since it is often easier to talk about others than oneself. Each participant was interviewed for approximately one hour, face-to-face. Authors Hohn, McCoy, and Ivey each conducted two interviews. The interviews occurred at the agency and each participant was interviewed in a private room for confidentiality and privacy purposes. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded to highlight themes regarding the integration of faith into social work practice.

Data Analysis

The authors who conducted the interviews coded them; coding was guided by the systematic approach outlined in grounded theory through open and axial coding processes. Upon completion of the first interview, the authors who conducted interviews met as a team and reviewed their coding to achieve triangulation of analysis. Ideas began to emerge as we discussed similarities and differences in the first three interviews. Then we separately coded the last three interviews and subsequently met to bring new ideas to the table and reformulate the overall themes.

In addition to triangulation of analysts, credibility was enhanced through triangulation of sources and theories (Patton, 1999). We triangulated our sources by conducting interviews with more than one staff member (Patton). Triangulation of theories refers to the merging of different methods of qualitative research, interpretation, and analysis (Patton). We merged the phenomenological method of data collection and design with the systematic manner of data analysis informed by grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). With this approach, each interview was coded into independent ideas, merged into larger themes, and finally revised into concise representation of each theme.

Researchers' Credibility

As Patton (1999) explained, all researchers should report their qualifications for conducting qualitative research in order to expose biases and strengths of the team for a more robust and transparent vision of the study for the reader. The experience the researcher brings during a qualitative research study is imperative as it affects the research result or finding's interpretation of results (Alvermann, O'Brien, & Dillion, 1996; Patton, 1999).

Kris Hohn. I am qualified to engage in this study about staff experiences working with trauma victims and faith integration due to several years of qualitative training, two years of nonprofit work, and a variety of faith-based research projects. As a trained MSW social worker and doctoral student, my experiences inform a professional systematic approach to collect, interpret, and report accurate information. Additionally, I have extensive knowledge about women exiting the sex industry and victims of sex trafficking. I am certain that my in-depth knowledge about individuals who engage in sex work and my practiced method of interviewing and coding research added greatly to this study. I fully acknowledge my biased attitudes against individuals who force, enslave, and abuse people through sex work, but I am confident that our team of researchers provided continuity across our experiences and preconceptions.

Mary McCoy. I am a licensed MSW social worker and a social work doctoral student. Prior to returning to school for my doctoral degree, I worked for five years as a direct practice case manager in crisis intervention, medical social work, and finally as a case manager for women exiting sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. In addition to my direct practice experiences in both secular and faith-based organizations, I also worked for three years as a macro level social worker and program evaluator in a faith-based international disaster relief non-profit. My personal bias stems from my experiences in hearing the stories and challenges of women who have been sexually exploited and trafficked, as well as my Christian faith and my deep commitment to the dignity and worth of all persons, but particularly those who have experienced exploitation. Despite this bias, I am committed to reporting study results exactly as I find them, as it is my responsibility to do so.

Dorothea Ivey. I hold an MSW and am pursuing a doctoral degree in social work. I have over ten years of experience in research and evaluation for programs serving disadvantaged populations. Two of those years of experience have been involved in research on populations involved in the sex industry and another 10 years in nonprofit administration—all in collaboration with faith-based organizations. I fully

recognize and acknowledge my biases toward individuals who force others into the sex industry for various reasons; however, I am confident that this research collaboration team made a strong connection and balanced responsibilities for a robust study.

Paula Ugochukwu Ude. My research interests are in mental health, program development, and evaluation. I am trained and professed as a Catholic Sister. I am also a licensed MSW level social worker and social work doctoral student. For over 20 years, I worked in faith-based organizations that provided services to women who faced persistent social, economic, and spiritual problems. I understand that personal bias and being a Catholic Sister may affect my views, conceptualization, and interpretations of the results; however, my responsibility is to ensure objectivity diligently.

Regina T. Praetorius. I taught the qualitative course in which this study was a service-learning project. I originated the partnership with the agency with which I have worked for several years for the project. I oversaw the study's administration, trained the students in qualitative methods, and supervised data collection and analyses. Finally, because each of the first three authors developed their own versions of the method, results, and discussion sections of this manuscript for the purposes of the class, I took each of their versions and merged these into a succinct description of the study.

Results

Two overarching themes emerged from the interviews. The first theme was God's Design of Person and Life Calling. This theme is composed of three subthemes: 1) Another Lie Calling, 2) Flexibility of Time and Schedule, and 3) Staff Involvement with the Change Continuum. The second overarching theme was Faith-Based Organizations' Struggles. The two subthemes were 1) Issues Common to Most Organizations: Disconnect Between Management and Direct Practice Workers and Resource Management, and 2) Faith-Inspired Commitment: Program integration and Professional integration of faith. See Figure 1 on the next page.

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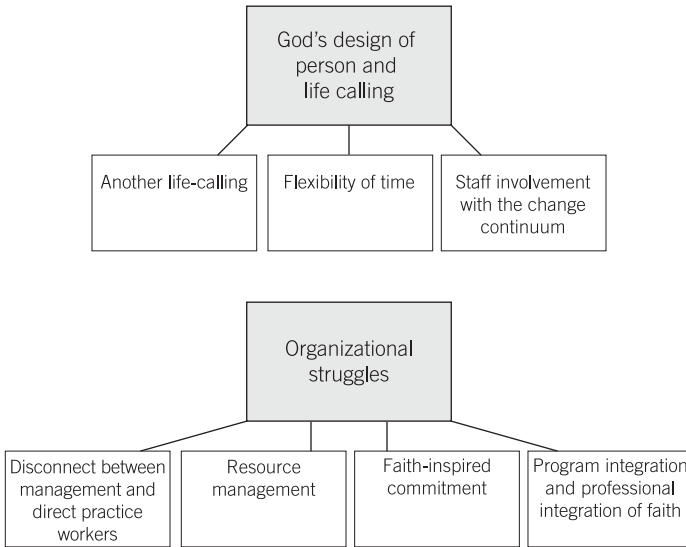
God's Design of Person and Life Calling

The first overarching theme emerged when interviewees reflected on the impact of God's plan for them, how His design guided their lives, as well as their sense of calling to the mission of their organization. Ashley reflected on her experiences and the affirmative calling she felt:

> There is some overlap between my experiences and the experiences that some of the women have. And so… the first time that I started [working with the agency] and saw how I could help, and…I knew that I wanted to be here.

Casey brought her belief in God's design on her life trajectory:

> I was designed to care and to walk in relationships with people and how it just turned out this way… I think God somehow…I think no matter what I chose, it would have still been an okay choice, a right choice, so to speak. But, he is still working in the midst of what I am choosing and still working in the midst of how I was designed characteristic-wise and heart-wise.

Other interviewees interpreted God's influence in the inexplicable connections made that led them to their life's calling. Kathy, for example, stated:

> I say, God sent me here, because, I mean, I never even knew where the agency was. I didn't know anything, no one else

has ever said anything, and then here pop, here they pop up. And, honestly, I think I put my résumé out on the job [market], but I didn't fill out an application until after I was hired. So my husband was like, that's got to be God.

Another life-calling. When some interviewees reflected on the issues that make them question their long-term plans with the agency, one clear message arose from a statement made by Casey:

I think when it is time for me to leave, whenever that is, it will be for the right reasons. And the right reasons will be that I feel led in a different direction about helping other people…And so at some point it may be because my focus is just changing. That for a little while it was work, for a little while it's going to be family, and then it may be work again.

Flexibility of time. The flexibility of an organization to embrace the needs of the staff and allow for diverse work schedules worked both for and against their desire to stay with the organization. Ashley for example talked about her appreciation of her status:

I don't know if it is this way for other staff people, but the fact that it is [flexible] for me, and I [have a child]. That's really helpful to me, to be able to have some flexibility.

From a different perspective, Cindy, a full-time employee stated:

The only thing I think, as far as wanting to leave, …you know, I have to use my vacation hours, or I have to work additional hours to have that time off, which I don't know the agency that will just give a person off.

Staff involvement with the change continuum. A powerful reason that makes the interviewees want to stay with their organization or inspires their work is their involvement with the change process. Tammy stated, "Seeing transformation in these women's lives is empowering to me and it's refreshing to me. And it lets me know that God is at work." As Kathy sought to find a workplace that embraced her faith-based lens, she explained, "I just prayed, I want something else meaningful, something where I can use my skills, my gifts, my talents to make a difference in someone else's, life like a huge difference." While balancing the weight of the work that needs to be done, Casey reflected:

Some days it's like I'm burnt out and they tell me that I'm valued, and that makes me stay. There are times that I stay because the work is so fulfilling that…you see a change in a person and you see, um, them overcome so much that it

> is just so fulfilling. It's, selfishly speaking, so fulfilling to be able to see them grow and see how much they have changed from the first day you met them to where they are at today. So, and in that sense, it is definitely worth staying.

In reflecting on the strength of the women seeking help, Sheila examined their resilience when she stated:

> The awareness of who they are as strong individuals, and the strength that has not only taken them to not only endure what they endure, but to decide I don't have to stay here, all of that has been enhanced to the point to where they are strong independent women now. Seeing any kind of improvement is a motivation to want to do more and to help more people.

Organizational Struggles

The second overarching theme emerged as interviewees explained not only the common management and financial issues faced by many nonprofits today, but also the unique experiences of being a professional person of faith.

Issues Common to Most Organizations. This theme originated from the reflections on the complicated levels of communication between direct practice workers and management. Additionally, financial strains impacted the staff perspectives on the agencies stability and mission.

Disconnect between Management and Direct Practice Workers. This theme originated from the reflections on the disconnect between direct practice workers and management. Additionally, financial strains impacted the staff perspectives on the agencies stability and mission.

Several interviewees reflected on the disconnect between different levels along the organizational hierarchy. Ashley stated:

> There is a little bit of a disconnect between some of the management and knowing actually what's happening, especially in the [department], because that work down there gets crazy… But I don't think the management knows how many people are coming through down there. And I don't think they understand how it is to triage all those people, their needs, and to serve them well.

Cindy expanded on this when she explained:

> There is often a great difference in what things are said and what things are really happening. And there is a lot of focus

on things looking good, and making sure that things seem right, instead of putting the energy into having the best we can have for the people that we serve.

Resource Management. The limitations of financial resources in the nonprofit world emerged through the analysis. Tammy specified: "I would love to [stay with the organization] but being that this is a nonprofit organization the funds may not be there." Ashley expressed the distribution of the resources in conflict with the slow change process when she stated:

> [There are] other indicators of success that I think are more important, than doing [therapy] quickly, uh, yeah. So, there's this conflict, that I feel whenever we sit down to budget meetings and we talk about money women are getting every month, and how quickly they are progressing through the program. You know, we talk about advocacy as a long-term program, and it is, it's like two and a half years. But I just feel like there is this watchfulness over how quickly it is happening. It's really hard.

Faith-Inspired Commitment. Organizational issues related to faith also emerged. This theme originated from the staffs' willingness to continue on with the organization regardless of some hardship in the workplace. It shows how they felt empowered to continue on in their work. Tammy stated:

> I want to be a part of this work. I feel like it is important. I feel like it is life changing not only for the women but for us as well. And I notice that working in the church and working here. I enjoy working here more.

Further, Casey reflected on the challenges faced by the spiritual leader who works with the women:

> She really gets everyone to really ask hard questions, and to do the work in thinking it through, rather than them being told it, um, from somebody else's perspective. And so that's something that we all try to do on different levels of helping them to make some of those decisions, so they are adopting it as their truth. And so those are some of the things that I think {name} really works hard on Wednesday night. It's really engaging the discussion, versus just teaching. So, as far as faith is concerned it's really um…and also challenging them to see things maybe a little bit differently than what their circumstances kind of created as a belief.

Program integration and professional integration of faith. As devout religious believers and licensed professionals, the women reflected on

how they negotiate these identities. They discussed the balance between reflection and intention. Ashley stated:

> I always hold my faith in my mind. I kind of hold it close to me and I don't bring it up unless somebody wants to go there. Because, um, I think that's important. A lot of women do want to go there. So, at that point, I will ask a lot of questions about what they believe. But I believe that a lot of my faith can kind of show through without me even saying anything about it. But just in the way that I let them ask the questions about God that they would be afraid to ask, uh, otherwise, like in a church-setting or whatever. So, it's really important to me to let my relationship with these women to be a place to say like whatever they want to say about God. Uh, it's really important to me, to know that I can handle it, that God can handle it. So, it's always in the back of my mind, but it doesn't always come out of my mouth.

Cindy expanded on this experience when she stated:

> It wasn't until I really got settled in here that I realized that my faith is a part of what I do here every day, and it was every other day that I was a [licensed professional], it just wasn't at the forefront of what I was doing with the professional work. It was just like, that is my profession, here is my faith, here is my family; and my family and faith. It was totally separate because in so many places it wasn't a part of that out loud. It is with your own relationship with Christ but it is not something that people pray before staff meeting and pray with clients if they asked you to or they wanted, it wasn't ever like that before.

Kathy discussed how her professional and faith identity do come together during group and supporting prayer:

> And we pray; every woman there with us; at staff meetings, we are praying for the women, we are praying for different things that happened, for God to move. And then even if, like if I'm having a day when issues, like, I'm tired, I'm drained, I've been dealing with this particular situation with a woman, and I'm praying about it, I don't just know which way to go, one of my co-workers will just grab my hand and pray with me right there. That to me, is faith-based, not just to say we were faith-based because we were started by a church.

Discussion

While there is a wealth of knowledge available for social service providers to use in the debate regarding integration of religion and spirituality in practice, there is a gap in the literature regarding staff perspectives on this issue. Most studies focus on the clients' evaluations or outcome scores, and not how the staff experienced the integration of faith into their practice. The overall findings of this study suggest that the faith-based organization and staff investigated ascribe closely to the framework of their Christian beliefs, compelled forward by their faith in God. Specifically, the theme of God's design of person and life calling represents how the staff members explored their beliefs in God's plan for their lives as well as how they are called to working with this population that makes them want to stay at the agency.

The theme of Faith-Based Organizations' Struggles demonstrates how the staff reflected on the barriers to both communication and financial stability. It highlights how they felt empowered, not only by being able to watch their clients grow, but also by having the freedom to incorporate their faith with their practice to connect with women and God.

Though staff explored complications common to nonprofit organizations such as management to direct practice disconnection and financial disputes, unique to faith-based organizations were their reflections on how they integrated and mediated the merging of their religious and professional paradigms. A religious paradigm may urge staff to focus on religious texts and teachings and to frame interactions with a client within that lens. A professional paradigm, such as social work, may require a person-centered approach, obligating the practitioner to allow the client to set goals, lead the direction of their collaboration, and refer to religious aspects of healing at the client's discretion. The unique blending of these lenses was successful with this specific agency and with this population.

As participant Ashley said, "I let them ask the questions about God that they would be afraid to ask…like in a church setting or whatever. So, it's really important to me to let my relationship with these women to be a place to say like whatever they want to say about God." She viewed her relationship with her clients as a place where they could relearn the value of their own thoughts and beliefs; that God could still love them even in the throes of doubt, questioning, and anger; that the compassion of God could be manifested in a relationship, even when the client's previous relationships (particularly those experienced as a result of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation) had been a source of grave harm. For her, the merging of religious and professional identities was a sacred act of faith.

To summarize another staff member's reflection, they have to be careful not to attempt to replace the women's pimps by trying to control what the women believed and imposing their religious teachings, since doing

so would likely harm rather than help the clients. For these professional social workers, then, a client's right to self-determination was seen as both a religious and ethical mandate. There was no delineation between what the social worker was required to do professionally and religiously; the NASW (2008) ethical standard of client self-determination (1.03) was seamlessly incorporated into how the social workers interpreted their religious obligations. This is an excellent example of social worker competence, which is a core ethical principle of the profession (NASW, 2008).

There is an ongoing discussion about whether or how social workers should integrate spirituality into their social services with clients, especially since spirituality can influence all systems of an individual (Hill & Donaldson, 2012). Some argue the importance of integrating faith into social service programming to provide more holistic care to clients, while others argue that this would infringe on client's rights. For example, Sager (2011) viewed the idea of integrating one's personal faith into practice with clients as an idea that would impact clients' lives positively and holistically. Contrastingly, Crisp (2011) argued that, "praying with clients is typically deemed to be professionally inappropriate" (p. 667). Other research indicates that the debate is not so clearly dichotomous. As Hodge and Horvath (2011) report, there are clients who want to have faith integrated into their services but their mental health practitioners do not fulfill this desire. Modesto, Weaver, and Flannelly (2006) found, however, that social workers do reflect on the clients' religion and religious involvement and the clients' perceptions of religious support in the community. One could argue, based upon this small exploratory study's findings, then, that it is not that some social workers do not integrate faith into practice, but instead aid in helping the client find those resources if desired. The nature of integration should vary considerably, depending on competent assessment of the client's needs and appropriate respect for client self-determination. Additional research is needed to gain a full understanding of how social workers both view and practice the ethical integration of their faith with their interventions.

Implications

Emergent themes provide support for the empowering nature of faith within the staff members interviewed. Their ability to connect with the agency's mission and other staff members through their faith constructed a foundation of empowerment and self-healing. Since many service providers struggle with burnout when working with stressful cases, the participants revealed that faith could be a method of decreasing and eliminating fatigue.

Agencies that employ social workers with a Christian faith motivation ought to be keenly aware that faith-based or spiritual supports may protect against employee burnout, and should perhaps consider these supports

an important component of an employee retention plan. Staff mentioned flexible schedules for self-care, relationship maintenance, and support from colleagues as particularly protective. Leadership should acknowledge that these staff members may respond less to traditional employee reward systems like promotions, raises, and excellent benefits, and more to flexibility and relationships. Further research should explore the specific types of benefits that are most likely to lead to the recruitment and retention of Christian faith-motivated social work staff.

Furthermore, as social work education systems struggle over how to professionally and appropriately integrate religion and spirituality, educators and supervisors can begin by practicing self-reflection. When social work educators and supervisors emphasize the value of self-reflection, they may encourage the same in their students or staff. For example, Barker and Floersch (2010) provided an assessment tool that can be used to help students and rising professionals understand their spiritual and religious context and how that influences their interpretation of the world around them. This is one step of many to help social workers build awareness of their biases, prejudices, and conceptualization of their life meanings. Further research should assess how an educator's or supervisor's emphasis on student or staff self-reflection influences beliefs about the integration of faith and practice.

Conclusion

Previous studies have shown that social work practitioners lack professional training on spirituality and ethical decision-making (Canda, et. al., 2009). The educational policy and accreditation standards, as established by the Council for Social Work Education (CSWE), support the importance of addressing the integration of spirituality in social work education. It specifically states from a human behavior perspective that social workers should apply theories and knowledge to better understand spiritual development. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) does not specifically support spirituality in social work practice but broadly addresses it as cultural competence in the social work profession. Sections 1.05(a-c) of the NASW code of ethics make implications on cultural competence from human behavior, societal, and diversity perspectives.

It is possible for professors, social workers, and social work supervisors to view faith as a professional asset rather than an ethical liability. On the contrary, it is also a possible option for social workers to avoid spiritual and religious issues altogether and refer clients to chaplains and other clergy. In this study, we examined how staff members of an agency have enhanced services through the integration of Christian faith and practice. The profession of social work provides social workers with a unique opportunity to

professionally and ethically integrate faith with practice in all situations. Avoiding spirituality and religion would be professional incompetence. Therefore, it is important for social workers to focus on integrating faith in practice without imposing their religion on clients. ❖

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Perceptions of Congregational Assistance Plan Counselors

Rick Csiernik, Kristi Darnell, & Mary Lynn Trotter

A Congregational Assistance Plan (CAP) using an affiliate counselor model to provide therapeutic care was established in 2006 in Ontario, Canada. In 2015, 145 members of the Ontario Association of Social Workers were surveyed regarding their experiences as third-party contractors providing clinical Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services. While there were positives arising from this role, there were also serious shortcomings, including a lack of training or support when first hired and afterwards, not being allowed to inform clients that there was a ceiling on sessions allowed, having to request permission to allow for proper case closure, not being able to continue to work with clients even if the client requested ongoing service, and inadequate remuneration. This led to the current parallel study involving a purposive sample of 25 (19.7%) CAP counsellors to ascertain if these issues also existed within the CAP model. Respondents indicated that the parameters of the counseling process were clear to the therapists who reported that, unlike working with some Canadian EAP vendors, the CAP program was more transparent. The best aspect of being a CAP counselor was the latitude to integrate one's faith into the therapeutic process to best serve the needs identified by clients. While there were some administrative and clinical concerns raised by respondents, the most prominent theme indicated no substantive clinical or ethical issues working as an affiliate counselor within the CAP model.

INITIATIVES TO FORMALLY ASSIST MEMBERS OF A CONGREGATION through third-party counselors were first discussed by Carlson and Cyper (1994). This model was based upon the principles of professional Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), but utilized a congregational setting in offering mental health services rather than the traditional workplace for service provision. While Carlson and Cyper's pilot entailed working with only one church, Kelly (1995) wrote about the development of a network of churches throughout Illinois providing counseling services so that congregations of various sizes could be assisted in both rural and urban settings.

However, nothing else appeared in the formal academic literature on this theme (Csiernik, 2011) for nearly two decades (Smit-Vandezande, Vander Vennen, Van Wyk, & Csiernik, 2013; Vander Vennen, Smit-Vandezande, Van Wyk & Csiernik, 2013), though the idea continued to be considered, if not implemented.

In 2005 Executive Directors of two Ontario Christian faith-based mental health organizations sought to increase access to counseling services to individuals served by their organizations. This was in response to several pastoral care leaders approaching these mental health organizations with their concerns. These concerns included increasing psychological and social issues among their parishioners which the pastoral care leaders felt were outside the scope of their ministry. This perception aligns with a 2012 study involving 215 Christian clergy from Michigan. More than one-half of the respondents indicated that they regularly interacted with parishioners who were experiencing either a substance abuse or mental health issue. Study participants also reported that the majority of these individuals were more comfortable receiving pastoral rather than professional counselling. Nevertheless, the majority of clergy reported that they would be likely to refer church members to a professional counselor if they had either a substance abuse or mental health issue (VanderWaal, Hernandez, & Sandman, 2012).

Other research has likewise indicated that ministers of various faiths did not feel that they possessed the knowledge and skills necessary to manage complicated personal and mental health issues of their parishioners (Anthony, Johnson, & Schafer, 2015; Beaumont, 2011; Bricker & Fleischer, 1993; Francis, Louden & Rutledge, 2004; Miner, 2007). As well, issues of stigma, combined with the feelings of shame in asking for financial support to pay for faith-based counseling support was an obstacle for some parishioners, preventing them from accessing these therapeutic services.

In 2006, the Shalem Mental Health Network established a Congregational Assistance Plan (CAP) in Ontario, Canada. Beginning with two churches, one in Hamilton, an urban center, and the other in Bowmanville, a smaller, more rural community, CAP grew to a network of 44 churches with 6,126 member households with an average utilization rate of 7.6% in ten years. Within the CAP model, a church purchases, for all of its congregants and staff, counseling sessions for a fixed annual fee based upon their current number of households and on their previous year's actual utilization rate. In order to support this network in a cost-effective manner, the EAP affiliate counselor model was adopted. The affiliate counseling model incorporates the delivery of brief solution-focused and problem-solving oriented counseling services to congregants through a network of contract counselors who work for a set fee on an as-needed basis. Those seeking assistance are eligible for up to six one-hour counseling sessions, with the provision for an additional six one-hour sessions if the program supervisor deems this clinically warranted based

on therapeutic and monetary needs. For circumstances in which a family has more than one presenting issue – for example, both an individual mental health issue and a marital issue – a new file would be opened and each file would be eligible for six counseling sessions, with the possibility of an extension if clinically warranted.

In the CAP model, therapy is provided by counselors generally within an hour driving radius of the church and coordinated through a central intake service. Parishioners call a toll-free number, reaching an intake worker to share the congregation of which they are a member, to describe their presenting issue and to indicate any preference for the gender of the therapist. An appropriate affiliate provider in the parishioner's community is assigned and the counselor directly contacts the client for an appointment. Each counselor in the network has a minimum training of a master's degree in a counseling-related field and agrees to continue to participate in regular professional development education. All counselors are required to be members in good standing within an approved regulatory college authorizing their practice of psychotherapy and maintain up-to-date professional liability and general liability insurance coverage in accordance with the amounts set by their professional regulatory college. Contracted therapists also need to be able to clearly articulate the integration of their Christian faith and how it shapes their clinical practices. Recent research that had examined more established EAP affiliate counselor models and required similar professional standards of their counselors indicated that there could be substantive clinical and ethical issues with using this approach. This included the inability to provide sufficient counselling hours to clients in need due to continuous pressure from their employers to spend less time with clients, along with a need to ask permission from less experienced clinical directors for extra counselling sessions. As well, a lack of training or support when first hired and afterwards, and not being allowed to inform clients that there was a ceiling on sessions allowed were frequently cited as issues, as was inadequate remuneration (Csiernik & Darnell, 2010; Csiernik, Darnell & Trotter, 2015).

The first documented private for-profit EAP consulting company was inaugurated by Donald Sandin in 1971 (ALMACA, 1983). By 1981, there were over two hundred private EAP consulting services, external to the workplace in the United States, selling employee counseling services to companies (Sonnenstuhl & Trice, 1986). This trend came to Canada in the late 1980s with a proliferation of private practitioners into the field of occupational assistance practice (Addiction Research Foundation, 1992; Gould & Csiernik, 1990). While there has been some examination of the differences between EAP delivery models provision (Brummett, 2000; Csiernik, 1999; Csiernik, Atkinson, Cooper, Devereux & Young, 2001; Leong & Every, 1997; Turner, Weiner & Keegan, 2005), and the nature of the work that affiliates perform (Attridge, Cahill, Granberry, & Herlihy,

2013; Hertz, 2009; Sharar, 2008), there has been very little written in the literature about the work experiences of those who have become primary providers of EAP services. Cunningham (1992) was the first to conduct a qualitative examination of the attitudes, knowledge and beliefs of EAP counselors, finding limited administrative and clinical support being provided to affiliate counselors by the organization from which they were hired. Sharar and Masi (2006) wrote of the crisis facing the EAP field because of the bundling of EAP services with other employee benefits and offering EAP as a loss leader or as a free service. After a formal examination of 42 distinct organizational clinical reviews, Masi, Jacobsen and Cooper (2000) concluded that quality of care was often overlooked or neglected by mental health companies providing EAP services. In an evaluation of a Canadian EAP serviced by an external provider, it was reported that while a majority of clients assisted over a four-year period were satisfied with the services they received, one in four indicated that the number of sessions they were allocated with their counselor was inadequate and that they felt their sessions had been prematurely terminated (Macdonald, Wells, Lothian & Shain, 2000). While EAP counselors have been reported to be highly committed to ethical practice, the Employee Assistance Certification Commission also raised concerns about the trend that indicated the EAP industry had moved away from professional therapeutic care with an increased focus on outsourcing clinical services to the lowest-cost counselor (Sharar & Menco, 2007).

In 2010, Csiernik and Darnell published an exploratory qualitative study of 16 EAP affiliate counselors. While the Csiernik & Darnell (2010) study was limited by its scope and the voluntary nature of the participants, several dominant themes did emerge. Information collected through a focus group and in-depth individual interviews found that affiliates in general enjoyed their work as EAP service providers, particularly the diversity of issues with which clients presented, and felt that providing counseling to this group was critical. However, the EAP affiliate counselors also reported that there were significant limits being placed upon their practices by the EAP companies with whom they contracted that led them to have ethical and clinical concerns. These included the inability to provide sufficient counseling hours to some clients in need due to continuous pressure by the EAP company to decrease client contact time. Another constraint included a regular requirement of seeking permission from the EAP company for extra counseling sessions to meet their clients' clinical needs. EAP affiliates who took part in the study also reported that individuals seeking EAP assistance received dissimilar messages regarding the level of service available from their employers versus what was being communicated to the affiliates by the EAP companies. EAP affiliates reported that the EAP companies who employed them did not routinely request the level of clinical experience

prior to becoming an affiliate, nor recognized experience in terms of financial compensation. Some affiliates reported they were asked to reduce their hourly rate, which was already lower than they normally received for individual counseling at the height of the Canadian economic downturn in 2008. In general, there was little to no training or support provided to affiliates beyond information regarding how to complete the required case recordings and administrative forms.

In response to the limitations of the Csiernik and Darnell (2010) study, a second larger study was conducted of 145 members of the Ontario Association of Social Workers (OASW) who had worked or were working as EAP affiliates. The average length of clinical experience of the participants was 23.5 years with an average of 11.5 years of working in an EAP environment. Themes that emerged in the 2010 study also were found in the follow-up study, including: a lack of training or support when first hired, limited to no ongoing professional training, not being allowed to inform clients that there was a ceiling on the number of counseling sessions the affiliate was allowed to provide, the need to request permission to allow for proper case closure, and the inability to continue to work with clients even if the client requested ongoing service. However, on a positive note, some affiliates reported they were provided with regular supervision, they received a range of interesting cases, often with motivated clients, and that being an affiliate offered them the ability to build or supplement other parts of their private practices. Affiliates also stated that EAP provided clinical services to a population that otherwise would not receive assistance in helping to address serious personal and family issues (Csiernik, Darnell, & Trotter, 2015; 2016). Thus, while there were distinct issues with provision of counseling services in the EAP model using an affiliate network, it did provide a needed service.

While the Shalem CAP is modeled on the EAP affiliate approach, it remains a unique enterprise in Canada and thus, like the general EAP field, is an unregulated counseling profession. Currently, there is no overarching government regulatory body in Canada that provides best practice guidelines for EAPs, nor is there a regulatory college or mandatory licensure required to offer either EAP or CAP services or be an EAP or CAP counselor. To further the knowledge of this unique enterprise, a qualitative exploratory study was undertaken with the support of Shalem to examine the practices of CAP counselors. The purpose was to ascertain if similar concerns existed within this group as had arisen among EAP affiliate counselors pertaining to the CAP affiliate model.

Methodology

At the time of the study, there were 44 churches participating in CAP served by 127 counsellors. A purposive sample of 25 (19.7%) members of the Shalem CAP affiliate network was used for this study. Participants

electronically completed a written open-ended survey instrument (Appendix A). The study was approved by the King's University College Research Ethics Review Committee. A grounded theory approach was utilized to analyze the data. The study's co-authors examined the data independently and developed their own thematic codes. Codes were compared and any differences discussed between the team until a consensus was reached. Themes emerged, and these were again compared. Concepts that the authors identified were then confirmed with specific exemplars. These were then compared to the themes that had emerged in the initial EAP affiliate studies (Csiernik & Darnell, 2010; Csiernik, Darnell & Trotter, 2015).

Sample

Of the 25 respondents in the study, 19 (76.0%) were female. Years of clinical experience ranged from two to 30 years with a mean of 14.2 years (s.d. = 9.2). Years of working as an affiliate counselor in CAP ranged from one to nine years with a mean of 5.0 years (s.d.= 2.5). Twenty-three (92.0%) study participants had earned a master's level degree while two had doctoral degrees. Ten (40.0%) had Master of Divinity degrees while seven (28.0%) had a Master of Social Work degree. All belonged to a regulatory professional college. Table 1, comparing CAP and EAP affiliate counselors sampled in the two studies, indicates that the CAP affiliates had less counseling experience and also fewer years of experience working in the field than had the EAP affiliate sample. There was a greater mix of education in the CAP sample though the male/female ratio in both was similar.

Table 1: Comparison of CAP and EAP affiliate samples

	CAP Affiliates (2016)	EAP Affiliates (2014)
Sample Size	25	145
% Female	76.0%	73.1%
Years of Clinical Experience	14.2	23.5
Years of CAP/EAP Experience	5.0	11.5
85+	49	12.6
Degree		
Master of Divinity	40.0%	0%
Master of Social Work	28.0%	95.9%
Other Masters Degree	24.0%	2.7%
Doctorate	8.0%	1.4%

Findings

There was no distinct path that introduced prospective counselors to become acquainted with CAP. Counselors often learned of CAP either through their own churches joining CAP, when working at other agencies that had a Christian counseling orientation and learning of the new initiative, or from colleagues who were already part of the CAP network. As with the traditional EAP model, there is no specific requirement needed to become a CAP counselor except for: appropriate academic credentials, a graduate counseling degree, direct practice counseling experience, typically five years (though three respondents reported less than that), membership in good standing with a recognized professional regulatory body that regulates the practice of psychotherapy, evidence of current, sufficient professional liability insurance, and an ability to integrate Christian faith-based understandings in their professional practice as guided by the client.

> *"I had heard about the network (from a colleague) and I called and inquired about it and signed up."*—Practitioner with eight years clinical experience, two years CAP experience.

After meeting the requirements to join the CAP affiliate network and signing an affiliate contract, all but one respondent indicated that they received an orientation to the CAP model and were informed of the administrative responsibilities.

> *"I had to sign a contract. I was to have a Master's level degree. We were given numerous e-mails with instructions regarding paperwork and how the system worked. We were encouraged/ invited to attend any of the professional development trainings they had that were open (though) for a fee."*—Practitioner with 17 years clinical experience, eight years CAP experience

One of the stated benefits of being a CAP counselor is the provision of professional development opportunities at a discounted rate. This is an important benefit in that all counselors are required to engage in ongoing professional development activities in order to maintain membership in their professional regulatory college, be it psychotherapy, social work, or psychology. One respondent provided a particularly insightful comment regarding professional training and support offered as being a CAP affiliate:

> "I wasn't given any clinical training when I was hired, as I believe I was hired with the understanding that my clinical skills were appropriate for the work. I was given direction and an overview of the program and its purpose so that I could

best serve CAP clients. It has been clear throughout my work with CAP that clinical support and professional development opportunities are readily available."—Practitioner with 14 years clinical experience, six years CAP experience

The majority of respondents indicated that assessment, developing a treatment plan, providing short-term counseling interventions to couples and individuals are their primary responsibilities as CAP counselors. One respondent shared the belief that vital to this role is the ability "to provide spiritually integrated counseling for those seeking support through CAP" (practitioner with 14 years clinical experience, six years CAP experience). It was also noted by a respondent that "providing referrals for longer term counseling as required" is also a stated expectation (practitioner with six years clinical experience, three years CAP experience) in the church contracts that indicate CAP is a time-limited counseling program.

Each respondent provided positive feedback about being a CAP affiliate counsellor. A major theme pertained to the actual practice of being a CAP counselor, the most prominent of these being the ability to bring faith and spirituality directly into the therapeutic practice. Included among study participants' statements were:

> *"I appreciate the opportunity to be intentional about integrating spirituality into the work and I appreciate the diversity of the clientele. I have found the CAP program to run in a highly professional and ethical manner and all staff interactions have been most pleasant."*
> 14 years clinical experience, six years CAP experience

> *"I really enjoy working for CAP. It gives congregations confidential professional counseling care if they so choose. It helps the pastor and pastoral staff feel that they have a place to refer people to. It gives clients the option to work with someone who shares their faith. To some, this is very important."*
> 17 years clinical experience, eight years CAP experience

> *"I like being able to incorporate faith issues as the client brings them into counselling. The fact they are accessing counselling through CAP generally opens that door."*
> Three years clinical experience, two years CAP experience

> *"I appreciate talking to people with a similar faith in God."*
> Eight years clinical experience, four years CAP experience

This form of integrated practice was also positively received by clients. One client shared the following:

"Several of them [clients], particularly appreciate the integra-
tion of spiritual concerns and express that in some other settings
they have felt it necessary to set aside the spiritual dimension
of their lives."
30 years clinical experience, six years CAP experience

However, as with any form of labor, there are constraints to CAP. As occurred in the external EAP affiliate study, the restricted number of counseling sessions was the most identified limitation of working within the CAP model. This limitation was identified as also being linked to the inability to adequately address the presenting issue with the client(s), the client not being able to receive support once the pre-paid counseling sessions were exhausted, and the necessity of having to refer clients to different non-profit agencies if the problem was too severe, which could result in a further wait for service by several respondents.

The following respondent shared this challenge regarding limited sessions:

"While short-term is sufficient for many, when dealing with
trauma, it feels somewhat unethical to open that up for a small
number of sessions and not be able to see it through with someone.
Even 12 sessions may not be enough given the trauma history
of a person. And often when someone is coming through CAP,
they can't afford to pay ongoing counseling rates (at least in my
city). This means that I am referring them for longer-term care
to a local non-profit agency with a sliding scale – which has a
6-month wait list. As well, that client has to transfer to a different
therapist, which can be difficult for them."
Three years clinical experience, two years CAP experience

Upon completion of the six sessions allocated under CAP, the CAP model provides an opportunity for clients to continue working with the same therapist on a fee-for-service basis, paying the therapist directly, unless, as noted earlier, there is sufficient therapeutic and financial evidence to extended counseling within the CAP. While this does result in a cost to the client, it also allows for continuity of therapeutic service. This is dissimilar to the EAP model as referral to the therapist's private practice is typically not encouraged by the EAP vendor and is prohibited by some EAP companies.

Another limitation reported by a minority of respondents was simply the lack of referrals:

"When I was practicing full-time in private practice, I would
have welcomed a larger volume of referrals, though I under-

> *stand this is not in the control of the CAP program."*
> 14 years clinical experience, six years CAP experience

When the CAP affiliates were asked about what could be done to enhance their practices, if any restrictions had ever been placed upon their practices, or if they had any concerns about fulfilling their therapeutic roles, there was no dominant theme in the CAP sample. In fact, the opposite was true as expressed by an affiliate.

> *"Shalem is the only company that I will provide EAP services*
> *to, because it is a company that has integrity."*
> 29 years clinical experience, nine years CAP experience

There were, however, some references to the issue of CAP having a ceiling to the number of counseling sessions:

> *"I have had to let go of clients prematurely because funding*
> *was not available."*
> 17 years clinical experience, eight years CAP experience

These results of the CAP affiliate study stood in stark contrast to the EAP affiliate study (Csiernik, et al, 2015) where there were many substantive concerns expressed about the EAP affiliate model and business practices.

Respondents also provided some negative critiques of the administrative aspects of the CAP, including the necessity to complete agency paperwork and not being paid quickly enough:

> *"Payment times are the longest of any third-party payer I have*
> *dealt with."*
> Six years clinical experience, three years CAP experience

Among the factors that make the Congregational Assistance Plan distinct is the location of referrals–churches. This has also produced some unexpected ethical issues. One counselor identified how, when CAP was in the pilot project stage, a pastor was aware that a counselor was providing counseling services to a specific parishioner and the pastor made several attempts to learn what the issue was from the therapist. While the pastor indicated he undertook this action out of concern for the parishioner in order to properly provide spiritual support to this parishioner, he did not fully appreciate CAP's rules surrounding client confidentiality. The issue was quickly resolved once the counselor explained the confidentiality parameters of counseling, in general and CAP, in particular. It does, however, raise an interesting quandary related to faith-based counseling in that a pastor's traditional role in addressing congregants' spiritual matters could be considered to be outsourced to faith-based counseling. Pastors may not be quite sure how to react or what their role is in relation to faith-based

counseling. This relationship may need to be further explored and discussed as the CAP program continues to grow.

> *"Early in the program, when the program was still young, I think pastors tried to get information, not realizing they were crossing boundaries. Clients had told their pastors or pastors had referred them to CAP… and then wanted follow up. Confidentiality needed to be explained."*
> 17 years clinical experience, eight years CAP experience

One of the reasons this study was undertaken was to compare the work experience of CAP affiliates with that of more traditional EAP affiliates. While no direct comparison question was asked of the CAP affiliates, the same instrument was used for both studies resulting in some respondents who had worked both as CAP and EAP counselors providing their own comparisons without being prompted. Two such respondents express their comparisons below:

> *"CAP has all the benefits of an EAP program without the negative pressures I associate with the profit-driven reality of EAP. When working for EAP firms, I have consistently been made responsible for managing the distance between what the EAP firm promises their corporate clients – as many sessions as you need – and what they expect from their contract counselors – as few sessions as possible. With CAP, there is full transparency about what the program entitlements (are) and no expectation gap to manage."*
> Six years clinical experience, three years CAP experience

> *"If consultation or supervision is needed, it is handled timely, and very tactfully, without giving a sense of shame. We are made to feel as part of a team in the client's life at this time. I also think CAP has built trust between church/pastor and the counseling field/therapists. It has taken away the stigma in our churches. Counseling is encouraged or normalized."*
> 17 years clinical experience, eight years CAP experience

Discussion

What makes a good service? How do we assess if clients are receiving optimal care? How much does the clinician's satisfaction of her or his working conditions matter to the therapeutic relationship? This study in part was a response to issues arising in the delivery of EAP services in Ontario, Canada but also in part examined that last question. This issue is

not typically raised when we conduct program evaluation, but nonetheless is important to the client-therapist relationship; what are the impressions of the actual provider of service, and how does that reflect the service provided to clients?

While the CAP affiliate sample was much smaller than the EAP affiliate sample (25 versus 145) and data from the CAP affiliates was collected two years after the EAP affiliate study was completed, the findings can be compared thematically. The CAP affiliate counselors who participated in the study had significantly less clinical experience (14.2 years versus 23.5 years) than the EAP affiliate sample and on average less than half the experience working within an affiliate model, though that is largely due to the fact that CAP itself is now only ten years old. The CAP affiliate network is also far smaller as the total number of counselors is less than the sample of EAP affiliates from the 2015 study. Thus, while the degree of concerns found among EAP affiliates in Ontario, Canada regarding working for external EAP companies was not found in the CAP affiliate counselor study from the same geographic location, there are distinct and substantive differences between the two samples.

A key finding in the original Csiernik and Darnell (2010) study was the frustration that experienced counsellors felt needing to obtain permission to continue counselling with in-need clients from clinical supervisors with much less clinical experience. That was not an issue presented by any of the CAP counsellors as the CAP model was initiated with a senior clinical supervisor in place whose function was to support a positive outcome within the contractual limits of the CAP model. Understanding that both the CAP and EAP models are based on a preset and limited number of sessions as part of the program design, this results in both types of counselors utilizing a short-term, solution-focused or problem- solving model within their respective practices. Nevertheless, this does lead to a degree of frustration when the clinical issue is not resolved at the expiration of the allotted counseling sessions. However, overall the respondents found that the CAP model allowed them greater flexibility to deliver the services their clients required in the majority of cases.

One of the major discrepancies between the two models with regard to the session limit was the degree of transparency between service provider, client and therapist. In the CAP model, the counselors identified that clients were well aware of the number of sessions available to them, which is six sessions per issue, with up to another six being available if clinically and financially appropriate. Within the EAP model however, the issue of a lack of transparency towards the client was brought forth by numerous respondents and was a prominent theme (Csiernik, et al, 2015). In the EAP model it was often left to the therapist to manage questions about numbers of sessions.

CAP was established to meet the needs of a Christian community using the church rather than the workplace as the source of referral. After nearly a decade of service provision, the study's respondents indicated that this mandate is being met. The theme of the importance of integrating counseling, faith and spirituality was a prominent response. Faith and spirituality, which is an important part of many people's lives, is offered a prominent space in the CAP counseling model. Guided by the client, therapists are able to share the client's sense of faith which can, in turn, enhance the therapeutic relationship. In clinical work, the more that a client feels understood, the greater the engagement process. This, in turn, allows the therapist to assist the client in moving forward to achieve their therapeutic goals within the counseling sessions. It also raises significant opportunities to explore the role of spiritual and faith-based counseling through which the whole spectrum of physical, emotional, spiritual and faith-based considerations can be used to achieve therapeutic goals. Study participants stated that being able to provide clinical support from a faith-based perspective was a strength of CAP. The faith component was an intersection that linked the counsellor and client and opened the door for some who might not otherwise seek counselling. The CAP counseling model also creates larger research questions as to the role of spiritual and faith-based counseling and the resulting successes and issues in undertaking the brief solution-focused therapy model.

As with any qualitative exploratory study with a limited sample size, the results cannot be transferred beyond the group who participated. The results are not necessarily the perceptions of all CAP affiliates but rather are restricted to a sub-group of approximately 20% of the CAP affiliates who voluntarily participated in this study. As well, using an on-line questionnaire as the data gathering instrument limited the depth of responses and did not allow follow up, probes, or any clarification between researchers and respondents. The CAP affiliate network is also much smaller that the EAP affiliate network in Ontario and, while comparisons were made, the samples had many substantive distinctions that do limit the transferability of the findings from one study to the other.

The responses of participants in this study were overall neutral to highly positive. While there were legitimate concerns that the CAP model should address, most were administrative in nature and did not affect the counselor-client relationship. Other concerns were situations outside of the program's scope or issues that arise with any type of counseling relationship. A key finding from this study is the lack of dominant themes among respondents when asked: 1) what could be done to enhance their practice within the CAP model; 2) if any restrictions had ever been placed upon their practices; and 3) if they had any concerns about fulfilling their roles. These findings bode well for those seeking counseling support through this CAP initiative.

All counsellors should be aware of the issues of vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue among helping professionals. When counsellors can have a work environment that is not filled with distractions, that produces minimal organizational stress, that they find supportive and aligns both with their professional and personal values, they are more likely to better serve the needs of their clients (Darnell & Csiernik, 2014; Hansung, K., & Lee, S. 2009; Pooler, 2008). As well, the importance of intentionality in counselling has been examined in the literature (Gubi, 2011; 2014). In the CAP model, counsellors had the opportunity not only to be intentional in their practice but to be matched to clients on the attribute of faith which is not typically a consideration in the counselling professions. The research also demonstrates that the affiliate counselor model can function well given appropriate structure, leadership, and support.

Future research needs in this growing practice area include conducting both client and church congregation satisfaction studies with CAP. As well, the extent to which and in which issues of faith were incorporated into counselling requires further exploration. An interesting question would be to examine differences on this dimension between those with social work and psychology degrees versus those with Masters in Divinity degrees. Lastly, a study currently underway is talking with church members and asking them why, given all the financial options congregations have with their limited economic resources, they would choose to fund a Congregational Assistance Plan. What is it that makes this a funding priority for churches? Why do they continue to support this initiative? It will be important to discover answers to these questions if this concept is to grow beyond one province and one faith group. ❖

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Leveraging Faith to Help End Domestic Violence: Perspectives from Five Traditions

Dheeshana S. Jayasundara, Randall C. Nedegaard, Kenneth Flanagan, Amy Phillips, & Allison Weeks

Religion and spirituality play a vital role in many peoples' lives. Where domestic violence (DV) is concerned, religion can be a source of comfort but can also pose a potential barrier to victim help-seeking behavior (Beaulaurier, Seff, Newman, & Dunlop, 2007). Religious concepts can be misinterpreted to support DV practices (Levitt & Ware, 2006). This is especially true when offenders misinterpret and manipulate religious edicts to justify abuse and to subdue and control their victims. This paper discusses five major religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism and discusses their main premises, how each is separately misused to justify abusive behavior, and common social work practice strategies that can be used in DV situations with all religions. The importance of utilizing appropriate faith-based strategies in conjunction with secular evidenced-based practices for social work and the DV field to effectively assist victims through their journeys of recovery is addressed.

Case Scenario

TWO MAJOR ORGANIZATIONS DESIGNED TO STRENGTHEN SOCIAL WORK as a profession, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) continue to address the importance of cultural competence in social work practice. Both organizations reference religion and spirituality as forms of cultural diversity. The need to properly assess the role of religion and spirituality in various practice settings has been explicitly included in the NASW's standards for social work practice with multiple populations (e.g., NASW, 2005; NASW, 2013a, NASW, 2013b). CSWE (2015), in its most recent educational standards, mandates engaging religious diversity in practice and understanding spiritual development as part of a social worker's theoretical framework for practice.

This paper attempts to further promote culturally competent social work practice in domestic violence situations by leveraging the perspectives of five religious traditions: Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. The paper first provides an overview of the literature on the potential role of religion in the lives of families affected by domestic violence. The next section offers a synopsis of each faith tradition, highlighting what is considered to be the major tenets of each. This is followed by a discussion of how the teachings of each religion may be misinterpreted to justify abusive behavior and how the religion's scriptures and traditions can counter these common misinterpretations. Finally, recommendations to social workers are offered based on the content of the paper.

The Role of Religion in Domestic Violence Situations

Religion plays an important role in the context of domestic violence (DV). Domestic violence touches families regardless of age, socioeconomic status, or religious background (NCADV, 2007). It impacts all aspects of affected peoples' lives including physical, psychological, economic, and spiritual dimensions (Danis & Bhandari, 2010; Fortune, Abugideiri, & Dratch, 2010; NCADV, 2007).

When working with families impacted by domestic violence, it is important to acknowledge and understand the interplay between DV and the role of religion in a client's life. Religion and spirituality can be a protective factor against DV. Some studies show that religious beliefs may influence an individual's self-reporting of domestic violence, whether that individual is an Iranian Muslim (Pournaghash-Tehrani, Ehsan, & Gholami, 2009) or a U.S. Christian (Ellison & Anderson, 2001; Ellison, Trinitapoli, Anderson, & Johnson, 2007). Additionally, trust in a higher power and the support received from other members of a faith community have shown to significantly contribute to the well-being and reduction in depression of many DV victims (Gillum, Sullivan & Bybee, 2006).

Religion, however, may not always be a protective factor (Anton, 2005; NRCDV, 2007). Abusers may use religion as another weapon of abuse and justify their abusive behavior by reference to religious scripture or tradition. As Marie Pournaghash-Tehrani (2009), one of the pioneering faith leaders acting against domestic violence, said:

> We continue to hear them [misinterpretations] from abusers who misuse and distort scripture to justify their choice to harm another person because they have power over that person. It is very easy to misuse and distort sacred texts. All you have to do is to lift something out of context with no understanding or appreciation of its history and meaning and use it to justify your personal beliefs. When you combine that

> with a blatant disregard for the fundamental teaching of the
> faith tradition, you end up with a perverse, dangerous distor-
> tion that can fuel hatred and violence in direct contradiction
> to the teaching of the faith (p 1).

Unfortunately, victims of domestic violence can be led by perpetra-
tors, family, friends, and even communities to adopt these same distorted
interpretations of religion, and can feel even more trapped in DV situations
by their own religious belief systems.

Religion remains a major cultural influence that can have both posi-
tive and negative consequences, shaping self-identity and outlook on life.
Sacred texts may be understood to define roles for males and females.
Interpretations of these prescriptions and values can be influenced by
multiple cultural factors, affecting self-image and behavior and providing
a basis for understanding our respective destinies. Complicating matters,
most holy texts were written long ago within unique cultural contexts
and often with languages that require translation. Literal interpretation
of texts can oversimplify understanding and application.

Religious views also affect help-seeking behavior since the resources
accessed are often determined by moral convictions as to what might be
acceptable (Knott, 1996). For example, in our practice experience, calling
the police may be an unacceptable form of help- seeking behavior based on
the victim's moral convictions, yet accepting abuse from a husband may be
acceptable as the duty of a moral wife. We have found these convictions to
have strong connections to cultural and religious backgrounds.

Many social workers serving families impacted by domestic violence
may overlook the religious and spiritual dimensions of their clients' lives.
This can happen because the worker does not see the importance of reli-
gion, lacks knowledge of the client's religious orientation, or thinks it is not
within the realm of social work practice. Any of these reasons can lead to
disregarding the important role of religion or spirituality in a client's life,
or can inhibit the worker's understanding of how clients' beliefs support
or prevent help-seeking (e.g., Allick, 2012; Fortune, Abugideiri, & Dratch,
2010; Zastrow, 2010).

For effective service delivery, cultural competence is crucial. Ignor-
ing religious issues based on a belief that addressing them is beyond our
competence only promotes cultural indifference and incompetence. It does
not create an environment for meeting clients where they are. Domestic
violence victims may simultaneously feel trapped by their religious tradition
while identifying it as a major source of healing. Religious social workers
of various faith traditions can learn to use their understandings in ethical
ways that do not stereotype other faith traditions or take advantage of client
vulnerability. This does not mean that social workers become experts on
every religion and culture, but it does mean that practitioners should have

sufficient knowledge to provide effective services. Religious convictions can play a direct role in the lives of both the victim and perpetrator of domestic violence. Given the ethical and practice standards of social work, it is not an option for social workers to ignore such convictions.

Five Faith Traditions and Domestic Violence

In this section, we provide brief summaries of five faith traditions, along with how these traditions may be used to justify or counter domestic violence. We emphasize that it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide detailed descriptions of each religion. We also acknowledge that domestic abuse takes many forms such as female-to-male or in gay and lesbian relationships, but given the scope of the paper, it is written from a male-to-female victimization perspective.

Hinduism

Hinduism is one of the world's oldest living religions. It is traditionally called *Sanatana Dharma,* meaning "eternal law" (Mamandram, 2008, p 1); or *verdict dharma*, meaning religion of the *vedas* (HCCI, 2013). For followers, the religion is an external search for union with the divine spirit *Brahman* to attain *Moksha* or salvation (Gandhi, 1996; Mamandram, 2008). Like any other religion, there are many variations. In fact, it can be said that there is no one Hinduism. However, unlike other main religions, no one person revealed the religion. It is not known exactly when Hinduism came about (Tomalin, 2009). Religious tolerance and pluralism are at the core of Hinduism. Therefore, all religions are accepted as true. Hindus do not believe in converting others to their religion (Bhatnagar, 2012; HAF, 2014).

Hindus worship many gods and symbols and some argue that god has no one form and can appear in many forms. God is reflected in everything and in all beings (Jayaram, 2015a; Narayan, 2009). In the Hindu trinity of main gods worshiped or *Trimurti, Brahma* is considered the creator and some argue that all other gods and creations originate from him. *Vishnu,* the Preserver, is supposed to balance the universe from the good and evil, and *Shiva* is the destroyer or purifier (Jayaram, 2015b; Takemori, 2013). Hinduism is revealed through sacred texts along with the practice and pursuit of *ahimsa,* or no-harm, and the belief in the oneness of all creations, and the belief in godhead as imminent, imperishable, and formless (Ghandi, 1996; Jayaram, 2015a; Subramuniyaswami, 2007).

Hindus generally accept divinity in all living beings, both humans and animals. Humans are considered the most spiritually evolved, with responsibilities and capacities to honor unity and equality of all beings (HAF, 2014). All Hindus, despite the variation, believe in *dharma* (duties

and obligations), *samsara* (reincarnation), *karma* (cause and effect), and *moksha* (personal salvation) (Walker, 1982). Hindus believe in reincarnation (*samsara*), which can only be ended through obtaining *Moksha,* or salvation. But the path to salvation can vary. Hindus believe the soul transmigrates through a cycle of birth and death until it attains *moksha. Moksha* is affected by *karma* (Walker, 1982). *Karma* is understood as actions having reactions or consequences. While in theory *karma* is considered preplanned and destiny, many in practice call upon gods for help, conduct religious rituals (such doing *puja, arati,* and chanting *sutta*), seek advice from horoscope readers, and engage in other activities (wearing amulets, fasting, and almsgiving) in times of crisis to change their fate (Knott, 1996).

Hinduism is more complicated to summarize than many other religions, since there is no one scripture. It is understood through many scriptures, Hindu epics, and divine compositions. The oldest scriptures are called *Vedas. Vedas* are Sanskrit texts containing spiritual knowledge, or eternal truths revealed to sages called *Rishis,* but not authored by any one person. The *Upanishads,* or commentaries on *Vedas,* discuss the philosophy of the cosmic life. A secondary source of knowledge is also gained from *Smriti,* or human compositions of divine inspirations, that include divine law, poetry, mythology, and epics (Mamandram, 2008). *Manusmriti* is a text containing the divine code of conduct for men and women, and has significant influence in shaping the lives of women (Knott, 1996). Additionally, epics of gods such as *Bagavath Githa, Ramayana, Mahabharatha, and puranas,* and other devotional poetry are stories of deities that fall under this category (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014). *Bagavath Githa* (Song of the Lord) is considered the most important religious script by many (Dasgupta, 2005; Huchzermeyer, & Zimmermann, 2002). The concept of marriage and the roles of wives and husbands are understood through the chronicles of epic stories and poems of gods and goddesses (Goldberg, 2002).

Misinterpretations or misuse of Hindu beliefs and traditions

One's actions from the past or present are believed to affect current well-being. *Karma* is believed to be absolute and unchangeable despite efforts to alter it (Kent, 2009). The idea that one is fated at birth suggests you must simply accept any situation, including domestic violence. It can also generate a fatalistic view about the point of doing anything if a situation is one's karma (Knott, 1996). According to the *Manusmriti,* where many believe *Stridharma* or Hindu guidelines for divine law for girls and women are found, *karma* is not only connected to one's own actions, but a wife shares a husband's karma and his destiny (Hinduism Beliefs, 2008).

This also implies that when a woman marries her husband, her union is for eternity. Divorce from this point of view is not accepted.

Marital happiness (*Saubhagya*), health, and long life of a husband are understood as interconnected to the wife's *moksha* and her *dharma* (religious code) is taking care of the well-being of her husband and family. A wife is expected to look up to her husband, and her main duty is to her husband (Hinduism Beliefs, 2008). Traditionally women conducted votive rites or votive *pujas* to the gods for the well-being of her husband or family (Knott, 1996). Understood this way, a wife is not only held responsible for the well-being of her family, but she is expected to put their needs first; her well-being depends on their well-being. *Manu* also states that

> For a woman there is no other sacrifice. She who serves her husband with intense devotion and faith is honoured even if the husband is not endowed with virtuous qualities, even if he is lustful, and even if he has no good conduct" (Understanding Hinduism, n.d., p. 1).

This Hindu teaching may lead to victims believing that it is their fate to be abused.

Additional aspects that may impact victims are highlighted in the legends of female goddesses who sacrificed themselves and carried the suffering of their male counterparts. For example, *satihood,* more generally known in the west as wife sacrifice at their husband's death, reflects the concept of female purity through self-sacrifice. The legend of the goddess *Sati* tells of her sacrifice by jumping into the fire of her husband's funeral pyre. The concept that a woman must bear suffering, especially from her husband, supports the misinterpretation that a pious woman will bear her husband's abuse as it is considered a sacrifice.

On a larger level, these legends naturalize and universalize an image of what a good woman ought to be. They also help construct the image of women as wives and mothers as economically dependent, passive, dutiful, willing to go through any *agnipariksha* (test), and self-sacrificing (Rayappan, 2013). When an archetype of a wife who endures anything for the sake of her husband is idealized, victims may be criticized for their self-protective efforts and be humiliated as a bad wife who does not measure up to Hindu standards. Thus, a woman taking action can be seen as defying *stridharma,* so leaving her husband or taking action to protect herself may pose a spiritual crisis (Knott, 1996).

Hindu perspectives that counter misinterpretations or misuse

The concept of *karma* may contribute to victims feeling immobilized, but they can be made aware that "just acts" taken by a victim to

end violence also ends the bad *karma* related to abuse (Dasgupta, 2005). For example, many Hindus believe that health-related struggles are their fate, yet many go to the doctor, petition deities, or hold other religious rituals, thereby implying that *karma* can be changed. Additionally, Hinduism stands on the norms of *ahimsa,* or non-violence. Domestic violence goes against the non-violent nature of Hindu *dharma,* and since *karma* is passed from one birth to another, abuse can bring bad *karma,* not only in this life, but in future lives of the perpetrator.

While *Manusmriti* provides guidelines for women, it also provides *purusha dharma* or guidelines for men. *Purusha dharma* states that wives should be treated like goddesses and that it is the duty of the husband to provide for the wife's security, protection, and social standing. P*urusha dharma* also states that happiness of the wife is the key to a happy family and *Manu* states that, "Where women are honored, there the gods are pleased. Where they are not honored, no sacred rite yields rewards" (Rambachan. 2001, pg. 19).

It is also important to note that Hinduism is one of the few world religions that idealizes female gods. For Hindus, reciting the names of *Panchya Kanya* (five daughters)—*Ahalya, Darupadi, Kunti, Tara,* and *Mandodari*—is believed to rid followers of their sins and a day is expected to start by reciting their names. Additionally, goddesses like *Durga, Chandi, Kali* are important role models for women, since they were important independent, and formidable goddesses (Dasgupta, 2005). The goddess *Durga* is a goddess who existed independently without the need of male protection and was feared and revered even by male gods (Kinsley, 1988). A study done with educated Indian women showed the majority cited *Durga* as their Hindu goddess role model (Hedman, 2007).

Additionally, it is important to look at the more complex nature of the roles played by goddesses. For example, goddess *Darupati* reached out for help when she was in crisis from god *Krishna,* encouraging women to reach out for help when in domestic violence situations. Additionally, while *Sita* was subjected to *agniparisha* and complied, she refused when it was demanded that she undergo a second *agniparisha.* While she was banished, she also refused to return back, and her sons supported her. It is also important to acknowledge that while *Sita* is elevated as an ideal and a pious woman, *Rama* (her husband) is often viewed as a bad husband (BBC interview with Sunita Taruk as cited in Rayappan, 2013). Finally, other role models can be highlighted such as Krishna's respect for his wife (Hedman, 2007; Rayappan, 2013).

Judaism

The origins of Judaism can be traced back more than three millennia. The primary Jewish holy texts are the Written Torah, containing the first

five books of the Old Testament, the *Nevi'im,* which are the books of the prophets, and the *Ketuvim,* which contain the remaining books of the Old Testament. The Talmud contains teachings and opinions of thousands of rabbis on a variety of subjects, including *Halakha* (law), Jewish ethics, customs, history, and many other topics. The Talmud is the basis for all codes of Jewish law and is often used as a resource when needing help interpreting Torah. Stories from the Written Torah and much of the Old Testament primarily focus on the Hebrew's relationship with the one true and unique G-d. G-d is incorporeal, eternal, and omnipotent. Judaism is a life-honoring religion where the central theme is relationship with G-d. The rules and commandments written in the Torah and Talmud lay the foundation of behavior for this relationship.

Judaism is based on 10 main commandments and 613 other commandments or *mitzvot.* These commandments reflect several overarching tenets. First, humans are *b'ztelem Elohim* or made in the image of G-d. Therefore, all people are believed to be equally important to G-d and all have the potential within themselves to do good. As *b'tzelem Elohim,* we are called to adhere to one of the most fundamental concepts in Judaism known as *G'milut Chasadim* meaning deeds of loving-kindness. One of the greatest rabbis named Hillel declared his famous dictum when asked to summarize Judaism. He stated "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the Torah" (Talmud Shabbat 31A). At its core Judaism is concerned with the well-being of humanity. Finally, it is generally believed that a messiah will come one day to bring unity and peace throughout the world (Pelaia, n.d.).

Misinterpretations or misuse of Hebrew scriptures and tradition

A key teaching in Judaism is *Shalom bayit,* meaning household harmony. It is generally thought that *Shalom bayit* is the primary responsibility of the woman, and traditionally the role of the woman was as wife and mother. This can be used against a woman when interpreted as meaning that her role is to keep the family together at any cost, or it can be used to blame a woman when the household is not harmonious. It can also be used as a means of keeping the family together even when domestic violence is present.

Another important teaching is refraining from *Hillul Hashem* (a desecration of G-d) and *lashon hara* (evil gossip). The Torah states (Leviticus 19:16): "You shall not walk around as a talebearer against your people; do not stand on the blood of your neighbor." This verse can be interpreted to mean that speaking negatively against a person is tantamount to murdering them. This leaves the battered spouse in a position of believing that reporting DV may damage her husband's reputation, or worse, damage the reputation of the Jewish people. As Jewish people are made in the image of G-d, desecration of

Jewish people can be seen as *Hillul Hashem*. Also, if reporting DV is viewed as having a potentially negative impact on the Jewish people as a whole, such talk may be seen as *lashon hara* (Myers, 2009).

It is believed that G-d knows everyone's thoughts and deeds and it is G-d's role to reward good and punish evil. Therefore, both Biblical and rabbinic sources support the idea that suffering is divine punishment for sin and that G-d will reward or punish everyone on his or her own merits based on the extent to which he or she obeys G-d's law. This reward or punishment takes place in this world, not in the afterlife, and this notion can be misinterpreted by DV victims and perpetrators alike, justifying the suffering experienced by victims as something that must be endured as a punishment from G-d for their poor choices.

Some misinterpretation is more subtle. For instance, the Bible implies both ownership and lordship in marriage (Exodus 21:22-28). Thus, the early roots of Judaism come from a male-dominated perspective. Wife-beating is not allowed or even suggested, yet later rabbinic texts have been repeatedly used as examples to justify violence towards one's wife as a means to an end in certain circumstances (Graetz, n.d.).

Perspectives from Judaism that counter misinterpretations and misuse

Despite references suggesting ownership and lordship of men over their wives, these passages dictate that men are responsible for properly caring for their wives by providing them with food, clothing, and sexual relations (Exodus 21:10) as well as anything else specified in the *ketubah* or marriage contract. When it comes to sexual relations in the marriage, they are the woman's right, and not necessarily the man's. "A man cannot force his wife to engage in sexual relations with him, nor is he permitted to abuse his wife in any way" (Rich, 2011).

Although early passages appear to be male-dominated, it is important to note that G-d is considered neither male nor female in Judaism (Berke, 1996). Judaism has always maintained that G-d has both masculine and feminine qualities. Thus, women should not be subjugated because of their gender, despite the cultural male bias prevalent when the Torah was written. In fact, women are called to *pikuach nefesh,* meaning to save a life (Fortune & Enger, 2011). This is believed to supersede all other Jewish obligations and applies to women saving their own lives in DV situations (Safe Havens, n.d.). Maimonides, a medieval Jewish philosopher, ruled that a woman who found her husband "repugnant" could compel a divorce, "because she is not like a captive, to be subjected to intercourse with one who is hateful to her" (Mishneh Torah).

Although Leviticus 19:16 can be used to support DV, it can also be used to rally the community against it. "Do not stand idly by while your

neighbor's blood is being spilled" invokes Jews and the Jewish community to help those in need. In addition, Judaism has a principle concept of *"tikkun olam"* (mending the world) that calls for social justice and suggests that all Jews have shared responsibility to transform the world through commandments or *mitzvot* (Dorff, n.d.).

Of the 613 *mitzvot* in the Torah listed by Rich (2011), several directly address the requirement to honor and care for others. For example:

- To love all human beings who are of the covenant (Leviticus 19:18)

- Not to wrong any one in speech (Leviticus 25:17)

- Not to cherish hatred in one's heart (Leviticus 19:17)

- Not to stand by idly when a human life is in danger (Leviticus 19:16)

- Not to take revenge (Leviticus 19:18)

- Not to withhold food, clothing or conjugal rights from a wife (Exodus 21:10)

- Not to leave something that might cause hurt (Deuteronomy 22:8)

- Not to spare the offender, in imposing the prescribed penalties on one who has caused damage (Deuteronomy 19:13)

One of the most fundamental concepts in Judaism, *G'milut Chasadim,* demands consistent deeds of loving-kindness. This is an important commandment within Judaism and there is much Jewish law that specifically addresses how to be kind to others. This kindness applies to people (both Jewish and non-Jewish) as well as to animals.

As is the case with any religion, the more conservative the belief system, the more likely it is to interfere with women's rights and well-being. Judaism is not an exception. Orthodox Jewish women may be more vulnerable to DV situations. They may be unable to obtain a divorce under Jewish law unless the abuser dies or is willing to grant a divorce, thus removing this option, despite the fact that they are being victimized (CBA, n.d.).

When intervening with Jewish families, social workers must realize that Judaism has a specific set of religious laws that dictate their lives and relationships. Marriage is arranged by G-d, and Orthodox Jewish women, in particular, may have a deep commitment to maintain the sanctity of marriage. Due to this belief, they may prefer to stay with their spouses and work out the issues rather than leave them. Secular interventions without consideration of these deeply- held beliefs are not likely to be successful.

When creating intervention plans for working with Jewish families, it is beneficial to reference Jewish law. This shows cultural competence and respect for their beliefs, which will support a successful outcome. Encouraging the woman to imagine and list what she needs be different

for *shalom bayit* to occur is the first step in identifying goals. Helping the abusive partner understand how his behavior is a violation of Jewish law, which demands treating each other with loving kindness and compassion, will establish insight.

The foundation for any intervention with a Jewish couple experiencing a domestic violence situation is to focus on the concept of sin. Judaism teaches that, regarding sins against another human being, it is necessary to earn the forgiveness of the person wronged. This repentance has three components: *t'filah, teshuvah, and tzedakah. T'filah* is the concept of prayer and reflection. *Teshuvah* means "return" in Hebrew and is used to describe repentance. The final component, *Tzedakah,* is our duty to take care of all living creatures, and to treat others how we ask G-d to treat us. Essentially, the sinner must recognize his sin (*t'filah*), feel sincere remorse, undo any damage he created (*teshuvah*), and resolve never to commit the sin again (*tzedakah*).

Buddhism

Buddhism is understood through the teachings of Siddhārtha Gautama (the Buddha), a human being who lived sometime during the 5th or 6th centuries BCE in the Indian subcontinent and who gained enlightenment (Noble Buddhist Beliefs, 2013). Like other religions, there are many sects within Buddhism, including Theravada, Mahayana, Zen, Vijayrayana, and Tibetan among others (Suthamwanthanee, 2005). Today, Buddhist teachings are mainly learned through *sutras* (prayers), *jathaka katha* (legends of Buddha's previous lives and Buddha incarnation), and through dharma teachings by *sangha* (Buddhist monks) (Noble Buddhist Beliefs, 2013; Suthamwanthanee, 2005). It is important to note that faith in Buddha or Buddhist teachings do not in themselves lead to self-enlightenment; rather, these guide one through a process of self-transformation (Bhikku Bodhi, 1988). The existence of god is neither accepted nor denied.

The main essence of Buddhism is about human suffering and how to end it. Buddha believed that to be born leads to suffering, suffering has a cause, suffering can be ended, and there is a path that leads to ending it (Basics of Buddhism, n.d.; Noble Buddhist Beliefs, 2013; Sumedho, 1992; Suthamwanthanee, 2005). Suffering is caused by human desire; yet, human desire for worldly things exists in everyone. We are born into this suffering through a cycle of life of being born, aging, getting sick, and ultimately dying. While this cycle of life is only temporary; human beings' desire to hold onto this impermanent life causes human suffering and unawareness. Buddhists believe that we continue to be born, or reincarnated, until we end human desire through attaining nirvana, or by following a middle path in life (Noble Buddhist Beliefs, 2013; Sumedho, 1992). In Buddhism, the concept

of causality is very important; everything is based on *karma,* or cause and effect (Noble Buddhist Beliefs, 2013; Suthamwanthanee, 2005). How we act results in a chain of reactions; however, only our intentional actions have karmic reactions. Therefore, unintentional actions have no reactions, such as mistakenly stepping on an ant and killing it (Adams, 2006).

Karma is believed to follow us through current and future births. Wrongful intentions or opinions are considered *akusal* or bad deeds (Venerable Nyanatiloka Mahathera, 1980). Hatred, anger, controlling behavior, and desire are all negative intentions (akusal). Buddhists believe that negative actions continue our karmic process. All Buddhists are asked to refrain from five basic abuses or *Pan Sil:* (1) Killing or harming any living thing; (2) stealing; (3) sexual misconduct; (4) telling lies; (5) and substance abuse (Preah Bhikkhu Vodano Sophan Seng, 2005; Venerable Nyanatiloka Mahathera, 1980).

Good deeds, or *kusal,* help stop bad *karma* and bring about good *karma.* Many followers of Buddhism therefore give *dana,* or alms, to the poor. Non-violence is encouraged, and concepts such as love, compassion towards all living beings, and gratitude are considered to bring good *karma.* Meditation and mindfulness are also considered essential since they help people see the correct path to salvation. Leading a balanced life or following the middle path are also considered critical fundamentals of Buddhism (Venerable Nyanatiloka Mahathera, 1980).

Each individual is responsible for his or her own actions and everyone is advised to live a peaceful life. Partners are to live in harmony, showing mutual respect and compassion for one another (Preah Bhikkhu Vodano Sophan Seng, 2005; Suthamwanthanee, 2005). Selflessness is promoted in all relationships. Non-violence is encouraged in all family-related matters through relevant scriptures or sutras of Buddhism (Preah Bhikkhu Vodano Sophan Seng, 2005).

It is important to note that many Buddhists in the U.S. may not go to the temple on a regular basis. This, however, does not necessarily mean the person is not religious or spiritual since many have adopted the religion through customs and practices in their daily lives. Individuals may pray to a Buddha statute at home, or practice their spirituality through meditation and by helping others (Suthamwanthanee, 2005). While many of the countries that practice Buddhism are patriarchal in nature, lay interpretations vary based on cultural infusions.

Misinterpretation and misuse of Buddhist teachings

Since life is considered suffering, domestic violence can be considered a part of the cycle of a life of suffering and be viewed as something that must be endured. Perpetrators may justify or excuse their abuse due to

this fundamental Buddhist belief (Suthamwanthanee, 2005). The concept of *karma* can also serve as a barrier to addressing DV. A client may believe that the abuse she is experiencing is due to *karma* from her past lives or from something she did earlier in her present life. She may be more likely to endure the domestic violence, thinking this is a manifestation of her fate and nothing can be done about it.

Another misinterpretation is the belief by some sects of Buddhism that to be born a woman is a lesser *karma* than to be born a man. An implication from this idea is that a client may believe she is less valuable than her husband and thus allow him to make all decisions and control her life. In addition, feeling less valuable may lead to having a belief that she is not worthy enough for other matters of importance (Suthamwanthanee, 2005).

The idea of deep compassion and forgiveness of everyone, even those who harm us, can be misinterpreted by victims. Victims may feel they must endure suffering and exercise compassion for the abusive partner no matter the cost (Suthamwanthanee, 2005). Additionally, the concept of gratitude may trap victims, with a victim believing that her partner has contributed to her family, or her well-being, despite the abuse she may experience. Thus, she is being ungrateful if she speaks of the abuse or contemplates leaving the relationship.

Buddhist concepts that counter misinterpretations and misuse

Many Buddhist beliefs can be used to negate concepts that the victim may have misinterpreted to make them feel religiously trapped in a cycle of domestic violence. Too often, victims believe the abuse is their fault. One Buddhist concept that is important for clients experiencing domestic violence is that individuals alone are the owners of their lives and creators of their future (Suthamwanthanee, 2005). The following quotation exhibits this idea: "Good deeds and bad are done by you alone, and no one forces you to do either" (Epstein, 2003, p. 117). This quotation can be used to help victims see that perpetrators are breaking the teachings of Buddha when they practice abuse (Suthamwanthanee, 2005). *Akusal,* or bad deeds, in Buddhism include emotional, sexual, and physical abuse (Preah Bhikkhu Vodano Sophan Seng, 2005).

Many abusers misuse religious teachings to justify or excuse abuse, yet Buddhist teachings require that any idea be questioned to see if it agrees with one's conscience. The following quotation exemplifies this requirement:

> Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing; nor upon tradition; nor upon rumor; nor upon what is in a scripture; nor upon surmise; nor upon an axiom; nor upon

specious reasoning; nor upon a bias towards a notion that
has been pondered over; nor upon another's seeming ability;
nor upon the consideration… when you yourselves know:
These things are good; these things are not blamable; these
things are praised by the wise; undertaken and observed,
these things lead to benefit and happiness, enter on and
abide in them (Kalama Sutta) (Thera, 1981, p 5).

Victims may feel trapped and forget the concept of *karma vipaka*
(consequences of deeds are changeable). Bad *karma* can be ended by doing
dana (giving alms), doing good deeds, and through practicing meditation
and mindfulness (Suthamwanthanee, 2005; Venerable Nyanatiloka Maha-
thera, 1980). Leaving domestic violence situations can end negative karma
(vipaka). Any actions taken for safety or ending violence towards self or
others (such as children) are considered good deeds, thereby breaking a
karmic cycle. It also may help the perpetrator end bad *karma* he is creating
for himself (Suthamwanthanee, 2005).

Acknowledging and working to end domestic violence consciously
means rightful actions (*samyak karmanta*) and rightful thinking (*samyak
smriti*). As a practitioner, it may be helpful to acknowledge the client's
suffering and explain that since she is making conscious efforts to end
it, the victim is engaging in an inner transformation process cited in the
four noble truths (Suthamwanthanee, 2005; Thera, 1981). In addition,
the practitioner can explain to the victim that exercising meditation and
mindfulness are important processes in Buddhist belief; however, one
cannot fully exercise mindfulness when they are in domestic violence
situations (Suthamwanthanee, 2005).

It is vital that practitioners keep in mind that victims who are Buddhist
believe they must exercise deep compassion, understanding, and forgive-
ness to everyone, including those who harm them. But in Buddhism, one
must also exercise rightful thinking and actions toward one's self as well as
toward others. Therefore, victims can be reminded that ending violence or
taking protection is considered both rightful action and mindful thinking.
Furthermore, mutual compassion and deep understanding in marriage is
promoted between partners, thus, each person takes responsibility for his
or her own actions.

Finally, it may be important to reinforce to a victim that seeking help
to end violence, and to enhance one's personal safety and/or the safety of
children, is not defying the concept of gratitude. On the contrary, ending
violence helps end the abuser's cycle of violence he is creating for himself.
Therefore, in accordance with the Buddhist faith, the ending of domestic
violence can be considered a gift to the perpetrator (Suthamwanthanee, 2005).

Christianity

Christianity is understood as a religion based on the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestantism are the three major branches that profess Christianity and these are further divided into several denominations. The Holy text of Christianity is the Bible, which contains two testaments. The Old Testament is taken from the Jewish/Hebrew scriptures and was written long before Jesus was born. The New Testament (Christian scriptures) was written after Jesus' death and focuses mainly on his teachings. Despite the existence of numerous Christian denominations and sects, Christians share a faith based in the concept and practice of loving and just relationships. The importance of relationship is revealed in Mark 12:28-31:

> One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with your entire mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these" (New Revised Standard Version).

These verses reveal not only the importance of relationship with God and others, but also emphasize that these relationships are motivated by love. This love is transformative and allows the Christian to experience personal and social relationships based on the values of peace, justice and mercy (Kunkle, n.d.).

Misinterpretations and misuse of Christian scriptures and tradition

Rather than basing relationships on love, peace, justice and mercy, domestic violence offenders commonly cite passages from the Christian scriptures out of context in order to justify their power base in the relationship (UMC, 2008; USCCB, 2002). Ephesians 5:22-23 is often taken out of context and is used in isolation from the larger text in order to focus on the submission of women to men (Williams, 2010). This scripture reads, "Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior." When this particular verse is viewed in the context of the entire chapter, it is clear that the passage emphasizes mutual submission in imitation of Christ (Pizzalato, n.d.).

Matthew 5:38-39 can also be misused to justify domestic violence: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also." Offenders may attempt to use this verse to justify their request for forgiveness by their victim (Zechmeister & Romero, 2002). This text can be misused to encourage a "forgetting" of the abuse and emphasize a new beginning in the relationship. However, Christian forgiveness must be preceded by an acknowledgement or confession by the perpetrator of the wrongdoing, exploration of its impact, and discernment of what is in the best interest of the victims so that healing can occur (Joseph, 2011).

An additional concept that is used by offenders to justify abusive power and control is the historical emphasis on male leadership in Christian communities. While there have been female leaders in Church history (and they are numerous today), church leadership has historically been male (Johnson, 1997) and offenders will sometimes use this history to suggest the superiority of males over females.

Christian perspectives that counter misinterpretations and misuse

Christian premises that can assist with reframing offenders' scriptural misinterpretations include emphasizing the notion of mutuality, the faith's core emphasis on love, and the need for relational accountability rooted in a healthy view of forgiveness and repentance. As written in I John 4:7-19 "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." Therefore, a couple is called to live in love with one another, as written in Colossians 3:12-16:

> As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God (New Revised Standard Version).

Abuse, power, and control violate the call to mutual kindness, harmony, and patience. A relationship informed by the qualities discussed in this scripture promotes interactions based in nonviolence.

The Christian view of relationship has numerous protective factors for domestic violence (Gillum, Sullivan, & Bybee, 2006). Growing in one's Christian faith can be viewed as countering damage to the relationship caused by power, control, and abuse. One's focus ideally moves towards compassion and love for the other rather self-centeredness and control. Although individual congregations may not be equipped to deal with domestic violence without professional help, they can often be the source of relational connection and support in the frequent cases where they are not reinforcing the misinterpretations and misuse of scripture.

Islam

People who follow the religion Islam are called Muslim. Muslim cultures are not synonymous with Islam itself; in fact, the "totality and reality of Muslim cultures can only be presented through the 'lived cultures' in which Muslims live, and not through 'Islamic ideals'" (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2003, p. 684). Consequently, like other world religions, it is far from being a singular ideology (Ammar, 2007). An individual's self-identity as a Muslim depends on the person's level of spirituality, the type of Islamic denomination one belongs to, the culture one comes from, and a myriad of other factors (Graham, et al., 2010).

In addition to various sects of the religion, such as *Sunni* and *Shia,* Muslims can also be classified based on religiosity, such as orthodoxists, inclusionists, reformists, and minimalists (as cited in Alkhateeb & Abugideiri, 2007). Country of origin is also an important influence in the lives of Muslims (Abugideiri, 2007; U.S. Department of Justice in partnership with Muslim Lawyers for Human Rights, 2008); however, it is important for social workers to know that many Muslims may first identify with their religion and then with other cultural factors such as country of origin (Abugideiri, 2007). This concept is vital to consider when attempting to understand why Muslim beliefs may trump Americanized views on family issues.

In spite of the variations, a belief in one higher power named *Allah* (God) and accepting the Prophet *Mohammed* as the most significant prophet are considered the two unifying factors of the Muslim faith (Ammar, 2007). The *Holy Qur'an* is the highest textual source of reference in Islam, followed by Prophet *Mohammed's hadith* (which consists of his sayings and teachings), *sunnah* (traditions and practices), and *shari'a* (divine law) (Alwani, 2007; Ammar, 2007).

The essence of Islam is belief in the *Tawhid,* (one true God), and Muslims believe God created humans to worship *Allah* and serve him as his "representatives, or vicegerents (khalifah)." Humans are given the necessary tools for guidance but have choices in their decision as to whether to

follow guidance (Alwani & Abugideiri, 2003, p. 30). According to Islam, each person is individually held accountable.

Muslims believe in eternal paradise (or heaven). Thus, at the end of their lives or on the Day of Judgment, humans will be either rewarded with heaven or punished with hell. In order to fulfill their role as vicegerents, each person must go through a process of self-purification (tazkiyah) which consists of sorting through internal crises and emotions. For divine will to be obtained, the *Qur'an* emphasizes certain values to use as moral bases. These include: god-consciousness (*taqwa*), doing good (*ihsan*), justice (*'adl*), and equality (*musawah*), among others (Alwani & Abugideiri, 2003).

Like most religions, Islam provides a moral basis for all aspects of life, including marriage and family life (Alwani & Abugideiri, 2003). The *Qur'an* (holy book) along with hadiths and fatwas (Islamic rulings) are used for reference to family matters (Ammar, 2007). Family, not the individual, is seen as the core unit of society (Alwani & Abugideiri, 2003; Faizi, 2001). Marriage between a man and a woman is considered one of "god's main commandments;" it is a "special treaty" with "spiritual value" (Umma. ws, 2011, p. 1). Marriage is seen as the foundation for human relations and reproduction (Alwani & Abugideiri, 2003; Faizi, 2001; Umma.ws, 2011). Therefore, children are viewed as God's gift for the marriage, and having children is strongly advocated (Umma.ws, 2011). Scholars argue that Islam promotes equality and mutual support between partners, and intimacy. From the religious perspective, when a man and a woman enter marriage, they enter into a *"solemn covenant"* with God in order to follow the religious path fulfilling the obligations of marriage. This path is guided by following the *Qur'an* as well as the sayings and traditions of Mohammad (Alwani & Abugideiri, 2003, p. 39).

For protection of both partners, it is required that several conditions be met. Both parties must enter marriage voluntarily. Religiously, this is a condition expected even in arranged marriages (where parents arrange the marriage for the children); however, culturally this is overlooked at times. In decision-making regarding family matters, partners are advised to consult each other and come to mutually agreed upon decisions. Islam promotes a divided but equal division of labor between genders, especially within the family (Alwani, 2007; Alwani & Abugideiri, 2003; Fortune, Abugideiri, & Dratch, 2010). Men are seen as primary financial providers while the women's role is mainly that of nurturer and caregiver (Alwani, 2007; Alwani & Abugideiri, 2003). This division of power does not imply that women are excluded from working outside the home or pursuing education (Faizi, 2001). Abugideiri (2007) argues traditional domestic roles can be viewed as women being freed from financial burdens. Thus, a Muslim victim who does not know about her husband's financial matters may not be a victim of financial abuse.

Misinterpretations and misuse of Islamic scriptures

In Islam, the biggest controversy related to domestic violence surrounds verse 34 of chapter (*sura*) 4 of the *Qur'an* (Alkhateeb, 1999; Alkhateeb & Abugideiri, 2007; Alwani, 2007; Ammar, 2000a, 2000b, 2007; Hajjar, 2004; Silvers, 2006). The standard English translation of the verse reads "As for those (women) from whom you fear disobedience (*nushuz*), admonish, then send them to beds apart and beat them..." (4:34). This quotation has been identified as the primary verse that discusses the principles of male guardianship (*qiwama*) over women and female obedience (*ta'a*). In addition, verse 34 is the most commonly cited verse used to justify physically disciplining one's wife (for disobedience) (Hajjar, 2004).

Another common verse that is cited out of context deals with men demanding sexual obedience from their wives: "...your wives are ploughing fields; go to your field when and as you like" (2:223). Hadiths such as the following are also used by perpetrators to not give divorce or to trap victims from leaving: "Allah did not make anything lawful more abominable to Him than divorce" (Sunan of Abu-Dawood Hadith 2172); "Of all the lawful acts, the most detestable to Allah is divorce." (Sunan of Abu-Dawood Hadith 2173).

Islamic perspectives that counter misinterpretations and misuse

Many progressive scholars have provided alternative interpretations of chapter 4 verse 34, such as "hit" not being the correct interpretation or translation of the word *'idribuhunna'* (Alkhateeb, 1999; Ammar, 2007; Faizi, 2001; Hajjar, 2004; Silvers, 2006). Alkhateeb and Abugideiri (2007) hypothesize that 1,400 years ago, when this verse was revealed, it was during a progressive movement for women's rights in an era where women were habitually beaten by their husbands. This verse limited wife beating at that time, but now must be revisited:

> In instances of marital discord, verse 4.34 required men to refrain from habitually beating their wives, and to instead engage in a multi-step process of communication, which included strategies of conflict resolution and mediation with authority figures. Today, however, outdated interpretations of the verse, some from over 1000 years ago, fail to honor Islam's egalitarian spirit towards women (Alkhateeb & Abugideiri, 2007, p. 18).

Other scholars direct readers to numerous verses and hadiths that explicitly promote treating women with respect and kindness and disapprove of the ill-treatment of wives. For example, the following sampling

of *Quranic* verses and sayings by prophets explicitly promote the posi-
tive treatment of wives by their husbands: (Alwani & Abugideiri, 2003;
Alkhateeb, 1999; Ammar, 2007):

- …either hold together in equitable terms or separate with kind-
  ness (2:229);

- …You are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor
  should you treat them with harshness…On the contrary, live with
  them on a footing of kindness and equity…. (4:19);

- …the believers, men and women are protectors, one of another
  (9:71);

- The strong man is not the one who can use the force of physical
  strength, but the one who controls his anger (Sahih al-Bukhari
  Hadith);

- I recommend that you treat women with goodness. The best of
  you are those who treat their wives the best (Sahih al-Bukhari
  Hadith);

- The most perfect Muslim in the matter of faith is one who has
  excellent behavior; and the best among you are those who behave
  best towards their wives (Al-Tirmidhi Hadith 278).

Scholars have also pointed to the life of Prophet *Mohammad,* who
never hit a woman or a child, as an example of his disapproval of spousal
abuse (Alkhateeb, 1999). This knowledge is important since a client may
believe her spouse has a right to hit her, or that he was only trying to
make her better.

Summary and Recommendations

To provide culturally competent services in domestic violence situa-
tions, it is vital that social workers have knowledge of clients' backgrounds,
including religious and spiritual orientations, and be able to effectively
assess the impact of spirituality and religion in these situations. It is also
important for social workers to have at least a basic understanding of how
misinterpretations of religious teachings may be used to justify domestic
violence, as well as some ability to help clients explore alternatives that
counter these misinterpretations.

A social worker can be a significant source of support for domestic
violence victims, assuming the worker has adequate knowledge of her
clients' religious/spiritual beliefs and can think outside her own religious
or spiritual framework (particularly if the client practices a religion or
belief different from the worker's). On the other hand, a practitioner's lack

of knowledge of a religion and/or faulty assertions about a faith tradition can create a missed opportunity for support. A client's attempt to share her complex belief system with a practitioner who is unfamiliar with the basic tenets of that faith could feel overwhelming to the client, resulting in a reluctance to discuss religious beliefs. This can be detrimental in a victim's path to recovery, for she may perceive that the practitioner does not understand and may fear reaching out for formal help again.

In the context of the information provided in the previous sections of this paper, we have the following recommendations for social work practitioners:

1. In times of crisis, religious adherents may turn to their religion, over professional outsiders, as the primary source of information for answers to questions such as "why me?" or "what does this mean for me?" (Fortune, Abugideiri & Dratch, 2010). It is very important that Christian practitioners do not conceptualize a client's religion as promoting abuse. Social workers who judge and blame religion for abusive behavior to any degree will likely alienate their clients and create circumstances that are detrimental to clients' well-being. Being mindful of our own beliefs and biases is key to working with faith-based clients.

2. As outlined in this paper, all religions are complex systems that have texts that can be disempowering to victims of domestic violence if misinterpreted. Ample evidence exists, however, to show that sacred texts do not justify abuse and that religious leaders do desire to protect women from abuse (Fortune, Abugideiri & Dratch, 2010; Levitt & Ware, 2006). While social workers are not in a position to argue religious philosophies with clients, it may be appropriate to challenge inappropriate and abusive behavior with the peaceful ideals set forth by all faith traditions and integrate them with secular social work approaches (e.g., Clarke, Giordano, Cashwell, & Lewis, 2013). This can be especially helpful for clients who prefer addressing their struggles on a spiritual rather than psychological level (Whitfield, 2003). Providing useful material on the dynamics of domestic violence and spiritual abuse will be very helpful for education purposes. Using spiritual wheels of abuse (in addition to the regular power and control wheel) to educate about how spirituality is often used across all religions may help clients understand their dilemma from a different perspective, especially using specific religious power and control wheels whenever available, such the Muslim power and control wheel (Alkahteeb, 2006).

3. Clients can also be taken on a therapeutic path of questioning their own inconsistencies in their spiritual beliefs that they deserve to be

abused, or that abuse is their fault. Through guided help or reflective questioning, social workers can help clients synthesize their beliefs about why events happened, help them see inconsistencies in their beliefs, and help them identify alternative spiritual interpretations that are more congruent to their healing process. For example, using the Socratic Method in CBT can be used to help them assess their own beliefs (Clark, & Egan, 2015). Narrative therapy that allows them to re-tell their story (Arulampalam, Perera, de Mel, White, & Denborough, 2005) is also useful in helping clients externalize what has happened to them as a sign of karma. A common effect of abuse is that victims feel they are at fault themselves. Mindfulness therapy that teaches loving kindness to self-first (Hutcherson, Seppala, & Gross, 2008) can be an important alternative to self-blame, and can counter beliefs that abuse is a result of karma.

4. For some clients, it may be important to meet with spiritual leaders. However, it is important to make sure clients are referred to religious leaders who are trained in the dynamics of domestic violence. If local spiritual leaders are not trained, it may be best to help facilitate trainings on the dynamics of DV before sending clients to them.

5. If there are local ethnic agencies that specialize in DV with particular religious communities, it may be beneficial to reach out, receive trainings, coordinate, or even refer out if necessary. The client's best interest should supercede all else.

This paper offered readers a brief overview of five major religions in the context of domestic violence. More in-depth discussions of each religion and additional teachings of each for assistance in domestic violence work should be discussed in future research. A paucity of professional, peer-reviewed literature exists on this topic, but much valuable information can be found in the professional and educational literature developed by groups such as the Faith Trust Institute (http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/). We are challenged as social workers, regardless of our own religious orientations, to use our social work skills to reduce domestic violence outside and within faith communities. In the end, social workers need to work with leaders and members of faith communities to take a stand against domestic violence in all its many forms, especially if it is masked in religious language (Fortune, 2013). ❖

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Who are Christian Foster Parents? Exploring the Motivations and Personality Characteristics Associated With Fostering Intentions

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An exploratory, cross-sectional study was conducted to examine the motivation of Christians to become foster parents and to better understand three personality characteristics (empathy, humor, and flexibility) that were associated with Christian foster parents' intentions to continue fostering. Data collected from this study were obtained from a survey provided to Christian foster parents contracted to a Midwestern, statewide, faith-based child and family welfare agency. Participants included 115 currently licensed foster parents. The study found that Christians were motivated to foster due to their desire to help others in need. The results of a multiple regression indicated that empathy and cognitive flexibility were significant predictors of Christian foster parents' desire to remain foster parents, but humor was not. Directions for further research are discussed.

"RELIGION THAT GOD OUR FATHER ACCEPTS AS PURE AND FAULTLESS is this: to look after orphans…in their distress" (James 1:27, New International Version). The word *foster child* is the loosely defined modern equivalent to the biblical *orphan*. At any time, there are approximately 400,000 modern orphans (i.e. children temporarily, or permanently, not residing in their homes of origin) in the United States (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau [USD-HHS ACYF CB], 2015). Approximately 47% of these children are placed in non-relative foster homes, making non-relative foster parents an essential component in the continued function of the child welfare system (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016).

Researchers, organizations, and public entities, however, acknowledge the long-standing concern of the public child welfare system to recruit and retain non-relative foster homes in sufficient numbers to meet the need (Blakey et al., 2012; Sullivan, Collins-Camargo, & Murphy, 2014; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). To help with retention and recruitment efforts, public child welfare agencies (PCWAs), for decades, have partnered with faith-based child and family welfare agencies (FBCFWAs) (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2010). In many cities and states, this partnership has made FBCFWAs a majority provider of child welfare services (Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004; Garland & Chamiec-Case, 2005; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, Children's Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, 2010).

Researchers have identified numerous attributes that predict success among PCWA foster parents (DeMaeyer, Vanderfaeillie, Vanschoolandt, Robberechts, & Van Holen, 2014; MacGregor, Rodger, Cummings, & Leschied, 2006; Marcenko, Brennan, & Lyons, 2009). Much of this research focuses on the motivation and personality characteristics of PCWA foster parents predictive of foster home retention; however, this motivation and personality research has not been replicated on FBCFWAs foster parents. The lack of information on the characteristics of FBCFWAs foster parents is noteworthy, especially considering that many of these Christian agencies have been providing services for over a century and some are older than their public counterparts.

To contribute to the understanding of FBCFWAs and the Christians they license to help "the children God has graciously given" (Genesis 33:5), this study focuses on two research questions: (a) what are the motivations among Christians to become foster parents for Christian FBCFWAs; and, (b) what personality characteristics are associated with a Christian foster parent's desire to remain a foster parent? Because there is little knowledge in the professional literature about Christian foster parents licensed through Christian FBCFWAs, this study focuses on the motivations and personality characteristics of this specific population. The results of this study can help to inform the child welfare research and practice community in engaging, recruiting, and retaining foster parents for Christian FBCFWAs.

Literature Review

FBCFWAs have a long history in the United States and have originated from all different types of faith communities (e.g. Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, etc.). Historically, FBCFWAs developed the first orphanages (Orr, Dyrness, & Spoto, 2004) and created the nation's first foster care system (Crosson-Tower, 2013; Freundlich, 2006). In addition to foster care, FBCFWAs provide an array of services, including: treatment foster care, transitional

living programs, human trafficking victim relief services, international and domestic adoption, protective services case management, residential treatment services, and homeless youth programs. These programs, and many more, illustrate the contributions that FBCFWAs make to the child welfare system.

Although FBCFWAs have been studied historically, contemporary research on these agencies has been limited (O'Neill, Gabel, Huckins, & Harder, 2010; Schreiber, 2011). Garland and Chamiec-Case (2005) first brought attention to the dearth of research by highlighting how little is known about the work FBCFWAs do, and the lack of research supporting these contributions. Over a decade later, Garland and Chamiec-Case's findings were confirmed through an exhaustive search in several premier databases (Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, and PsychINFO) that found only a few articles on FBCFWAs, none of which focused on their distinct impact on the public child welfare system. Key terms used for this search included "Christian foster parent," "faith-based child welfare agency," and "Christian and child welfare in United States."

The academic neglect of FBCFWAs can also be seen in the absence of literature on Christian foster parents in academic search databases. The limited studies on Christian foster parents have provided preliminary findings that indicate there may be differences between Christian and non-sectarian foster parents. Data from a National Survey of Current and Former Foster Parents found that foster parents who decided to foster due to their religious affiliation fostered for more years (Cox, Buehler, & Orme, 2002). More recently, Howell-Moroney (2013) compared two private Christian foster parent organizations' survey responses to a nationally representative sample obtained from the National Foster Care Adoptions Attitude Survey and found participants from these two FBCFWAs had higher levels of fostering satisfaction.

The lack of research on FBCFWAs, leaves open the possibility that the motivations of foster parents in non-sectarian public child welfare agencies might differ from those of FBCFWA foster parents. These differences could be due to the desire to be a "father to the fatherless" (Psalms 68:5), or other motivational or personality characteristic differences. However, understanding the nature and reasons for these differences would require more research on Christian FBCFWA foster parents, as suggested by Howell-Moroney (2014). Illuminating the motivation to foster and personality characteristics of Christian FBCFWA foster parents, and how these characteristics might differ from PCWAs, might begin with what is known about individuals who foster through PCWAs.

Fostering Motivations

Researchers have found PCWA foster parents have both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to begin fostering (MacGregor, Rodger, Cummings, & Leschied, 2006). Intrinsic motivations are altruistic in nature. In contrast,

extrinsic motivations often are monetary in nature (Rodger, Cummings, & Leschied, 2006). Most individuals give intrinsically motivated reasons for becoming foster parents (Baum, Crase, & Crase, 2001; Broady, Stoyles, McMullan, Caputi, & Crittenden, 2010; Rhodes, Cox, Orme, & Coakley, 2006; Rodger, Cummings, & Leschied, 2006). De Maeyer, Vanderfaeillie, Vanschoonlandt, Robberechts, and Van Holen (2014) divided intrinsic motivations to foster into (a) child-centered, (b) self-oriented, and (c) society-oriented catalysts.

Child-centered intrinsic motivations included wanting to love and provide a good home for a child (Denby, Rindlfeisch, & Bean, 1999; Rodger et al., 2006), rescuing children from harm (Cole, 2005; Rodger et al., 2006), and saving children from having to live in institutions (DeMaeyer et al., 2014; Rhodes et al., 2006). PCWA foster parents also reported wanting to help children with special needs, while others indicated they simply had enough time and space to be foster parents (DeMaeyer et al., 2014; Rhodes et al., 2006).

Self-oriented intrinsic motivations for fostering included providing a sibling for a child already in the home (Rhodes et al., 2006; Rodger et al., 2006; Denby et al., 1999), wanting to be loved by a child, wanting a larger family, and wanting companionship for the caregiver (Rhodes et al., 2006). Parents also fostered because they were considering adoption and thought that fostering provided a trial with less commitment than adoption (DeMaeyer et al., 2014). Some foster parents were motivated to foster because they were experiencing the empty-nest syndrome (Andersson, 2001; Rhodes et al., 2006; Rodger et al., 2006); or because they had biological children, and wanted to increase their family size (Cole, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2006). Caregivers who could not conceive a child of their own or could not conceive additional children cited infertility as a motivation to foster (Dando & Minty, 1987; Rhodes et al., 2006). Lastly, childhood maltreatment and/or experiences with the foster care system served as self-oriented intrinsic motivation for fostering (Baum, Crase, & Crase, 2001; Dando & Minty, 1987).

Society-oriented intrinsic motivation stems from a desire to fulfill one's obligation to society, to do the right thing, and to give back to the community (Cole, 2005; Denby, Rindfleisch, & Bean, 1999; DeMaeyer et al., 2014; Rhodes et al., 2006). Society-oriented intrinsic motivation is displayed when individuals view fostering as a religious calling, or as a way to fulfill their religious beliefs (DeMaeyer et al., 2014; Gillis-Arnold, Crase, Stockdale, & Shelley II, 1998; Rodger et al., 2006). Buehler, Cox, and Cuddeback (2003) completed semi-structured interviews to identify factors that promoted or inhibited successful foster parenting. A strong faith, support from the church, religious beliefs, and church involvement were found to be some of the motivating factors to becoming a foster parent (Buehler et al., 2003).

Fostering Characteristics

There have been several studies on what motivates PCWA foster parents to foster; however, less is known about the personality characteristics predictive of being an effective foster parent. Researchers have attempted to expound upon this deficiency by focusing on demographic variables of foster parents associated with long-term fostering. Research with PCWAs has found that foster parents are more likely to remain fostering if they are single, older, urban residing foster parents who are willing to take multiple placements that require higher levels of care (Gibbs & Wildfire, 2007; Marcenko, Brennan, & Lyons, 2009; Redding, Fried, & Britner, 2000). Antithetically, foster parents with higher levels of income, who reside in non-metropolitan areas, are more likely to quit foster parenting (Gibbs, 2005). These findings are important; however, it should be noted that there is a need for recent research on this topic due to ongoing changes in foster child demographics, foster parent training, and licensing policies that may have contributed to changes in the demographic characteristics of currently licensed foster parents.

Although demographic characteristics are helpful in understanding what types of people are more likely to remain foster parents, demographics need to be supplemented with individual personality characteristics that contribute to effective fostering. For decades child welfare agencies have used practice wisdom to identify key personality characteristics associated with effective, long-term fostering. These characteristics include openness, strong social support systems, stability, maturity, humor, flexibility, empathy, and a love of children (AdoptUSKids, n.d.; Bailey, 2015; Bethany Christian Services, n.d.; National Foster Parent Association [NFPA], n.d.). While practitioner wisdom is beneficial in identifying key personality characteristics, a few studies over the past three decades have tried to provide evidence-based support for these intuitive practice assertions.

Brown and Calder (2000) interviewed foster parents to identify the personality characteristics most important for foster parents to possess. Respondents credited a range of personality characteristics, including stress coping skills and empathetic qualities, to their success in foster parenting. In addition to empathy and coping skills, foster parents felt that flexibility was an essential personality characteristic (Buehler et al., 2003). These findings supported those of earlier studies that found that inflexible foster parents were less likely to succeed with foster placements (Doelling & Johnson, 1990; Green, Braley, & Kisor, 1996). In addition to flexibility, Brown (2008) found that a sense of humor was an important personality characteristic to success as a foster parent.

This examination of the literature about PCWAs, foster parents, and researchers provides a broad picture of the motivation and personality

characteristics that have been shown to be important for long-term foster-
ing effectiveness; however, it remains to be understood whether FBCFWA
Christian foster parents share these same characteristics. Since researchers
have found that people of faith foster longer (Cox, Buehler, & Orme, 2002)
and are more satisfied in their fostering role (Howell-Moroney, 2013), it
is important for researchers to understand FBCFWA foster parents. Our
research contributes to this understanding by focusing on Christian foster
parents who foster through a Christian agency.

Method

This research explored the motivation of Christians to become foster
parents and three personality characteristics (empathy, humor as a coping
skill, and flexibility) that were associated with a foster parent's intention to
remain fostering. The study employed a cross-sectional survey research de-
sign using non-probability purposive sampling. The university's Institutional
Review Board approved this study.

Christian foster parents were recruited from a statewide Christian
FBCFWA in the Midwest. The FBCFWA requires that all foster parents
who contract with their agency must be Christians and must attend
church regularly. Recruitment for the survey was conducted via an e-
mail request sent by the Family Resource Development Supervisor at
the faith-based agency. The agency requested that the recruitment email
be sent directly from their agency to assure foster parent confidential-
ity and blind the researchers to participants' email addresses. The email
contained a link to the informed consent document, which participants
acceded before beginning the survey. After the first round of responses,
the Family Resource Development Supervisor sent a follow-up email to
solicit additional responses. The participant foster parents were encour-
aged to participate by an incentive of being entered into a drawing for
$250. Two hundred and forty-five Christian foster parents were asked to
complete a self-administered questionnaire; 115 Christian foster parents
responded (47% response rate).

The FBCFWA defined traditional foster parents as those caring for
children who had age-appropriate social, emotional, and psychological
needs. Most of the participants were traditional foster parents (77%).
The majority of respondents were between the ages of 25 to 44 years
(73%) and Caucasian (95%). Most were married (85%), with a little over
half (54%) having biological children of their own. These demographic
characteristics were similar to other studies completed on foster parents
from PCWAs (Rhodes et al., 2006; Rodger et al., 2006).

Measurement

Christian foster parent motivation. Christian foster parent motivation was measured by a single item asking, "What was your primary motivation in becoming a foster parent?" Response categories were as follows: family member/friend experience as foster parent, church's influence, desire to help those in need, negative childhood and the desire to do better for future generations, infertility, community awareness of need, and "other" motivation. Participants were asked to select the single motivator that most profoundly influenced their decisions to become foster parents. These response categories were selected based upon previous research findings on PCWA foster parents' motivation (Andersson, 2001; Cole, 2005; DeMaeyer et al., 2014; Denby et al., 1999; MacGregor et al., 2006; Rhodes et al., 2006; Rodger et al., 2006). While not an exhaustive list, the researchers felt these motivational categories provided participants with a broad range of choices, allowing the "other" option to capture categories not provided.

Christian foster parent characteristics. Building from the research done on PCWA foster parent personality characteristics, three validated instruments were used to measure a Christian foster parent's level of empathy, humor as a coping skill, and flexibility. These three personality characteristics were chosen based upon the researchers' review of agencies' practice wisdom assertions (AdoptUSKids, n.d.; Bailey, 2015; Bethany Christian Services, n.d.; National Foster Parent Association [NFPA], n.d.), as well as, research findings on PCWA foster parents' personality characteristics (Brown, 2008, Brown & Calder, 2000; Buehler et al., 2003; Doelling & Johnson, 1990; Green, Braley, & Kisor, 1996).

The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ; Spreng, McKinnon, Mar, & Levine, 2009) measured empathy. The TEQ consisted of 16 items asking respondents to rate themselves regarding various empathic qualities. Example questions included, "I have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me," "I get a strong urge to help people when I see someone who is upset," and "It upsets me to see someone being treated disrespectfully." Foster parents were asked to rate each statement on a 5-point-Likert scale from 1 = never to 5 = always. This instrument had been validated on college students and was found to have high internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha = .85 (Spreng et al., 2009).

Humor in coping with stress was measured using The Coping Humor Scale (CHS; Martin & Lefcourt, 1983). The CHS consisted of 7 items, each used to describe how humor is used in coping with life stressors. Example questions from this self-rating scale included, "I can usually find something to laugh or joke about even in trying situations," and "I must admit my life would probably be a lot easier if I had more sense of humor." Foster parents were asked to rate themselves using a 4-point-Likert scale from 1 =

strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. The test has internal consistencies of Cronbach's alpha = .60 to .70 and has been used in over 25 empirical studies (Martin, 1996).

A foster parent's level of cognitive flexibility was measured using the Cognitive Flexibility Scale (CFS; Martin & Rubin, 1995). The self-rating scale contained 12 items, each used to describe an individual's beliefs and feelings about personal behavior. Questions included, "I avoid new and unusual situations," "I have many possible ways of behaving in a given situation," and "I am willing to consider alternatives for handling a problem." Foster parents were asked to circle the number that best represented them using a 6-point-Likert-scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree. The CFS instrument has been validated on college students and has a Cronbach's alpha = .83 (Martin & Rubin, 1995).

Christian foster parent fostering intentions. Christian foster parents' intentions to continue fostering were measured by a modified version of the Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ, Seashore, Lawler III, Mirvis, & Cammann, 1983). The TIQ was a subscale of the Michigan Organizational Questionnaire. The TIQ was originally designed to measure the intention to leave an organization (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1983). This instrument was modified by replacing the phrase "my job" with "my role as a foster parent." Three questions on the modified TIQ were: "In the last year, I have thought seriously about leaving my role as a foster parent," "I often think about leaving my role as a foster parent," and "I will probably look for a new agency to become a foster parent through in the next year." Foster parents were asked to identify the number that best represented them using a 7-point-Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. This instrument has been found to have high levels of internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha exceeding .83 (Cammann et al., 1983; Ali, 2008).

Data Analysis

The variables of interest in this analysis were foster parent motivation, personality characteristics (empathy, humor, flexibility), and fostering turn-over intentions. Data were collected electronically and downloaded as a file for IBM-SPSS. The variables were examined for missing data, outliers, and normality. One participant was deleted for excessive missing data. A Little's MCAR test was conducted on the remaining data (Little & Rubin, 2002). No variable had more than 10% missing values and the MCAR test indicated that the missing data were missing at random. Multiple imputation was conducted within the IBM-SPSS software to replace missing values. Following imputation, the variables were combined according to the scoring rubric of each scale to form the scale variables used in the analysis.

Before analysis, four scales (empathy, humor, flexibility, and fostering

turnover intentions) were collectively evaluated for multivariate outliers using a Mahalanobis distance test. Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) recommend identifying Mahalanobis distances greater than the critical value from a chi-square table using criterion of α = .001 "with degrees of freedom equal to the number of variables" (p. 99), rather than df = n - 1. No cases exceed the Mahalanobis value of 18.45, (df = 4, p = .001) and no additional cases were removed from analysis.

Following the advice of Kline (2005), a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality indicated empathy, humor, and flexibility were normally distributed, but fostering turnover intention was not. The skewness and kurtosis indices for fostering turnover intention did not exceed + 2.00, indicating that the departure from normality was not excessive, so no corrections or transformations were applied.

Results

What Motivates a Christian to Become a Foster Parent?

Among the seven options provided to the Christian foster parents to describe their primary motivation to foster, the most frequently reported statement was the "desire to help those in need" (57%). The second highest motivational factor was "infertility" (20%). These findings were consubstantial with research on PCWA foster parents who have reported intrinsic motivation as the most likely reason for fostering (Buehler et al., 2003; DeMaeyer et al., 2014; Denby et al., 1999; MacGregor et al., 2006; Rhodes et al., 2006; Rodger et al., 2006). Table 2 provides an overview of the responses provided.

Table 1: Responses to Survey Question
"What Was Your Primary Motivation in Becoming a Foster Parent?
(Choose One)" (n = 114)

Response	N	%
Desire to help those in need	66	57%
Infertility	23	20%
Community awareness of need	7	6%
"Other" motivation	6	5%
Family member/friend experience as a foster parent	5	4%
Church's influence	5	4%
Negative childhood and the desire to do better for future generations	5	4%

What Personality Characteristics are Associated with a Christian's Desire to Remain a Foster Parent?

A multiple regression was performed to evaluate the predictive ability of empathy, humor as a coping skill, and flexibility on a Christian foster parent's desire to remain a foster parent. The means, standard deviations, correlations, and Cronbach's alpha reliability for the four variables of interest are shown in Table 2. The internal consistency alphas for each of the variables of interest ranged from $\alpha = .70$ (humor) to $\alpha = .80$ (empathy). These values indicated adequate reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Table 3 provides the details of the multiple regression results for the four variables measured. These results indicated empathy and cognitive flexibility were significant predictors of a Christian's desire to remain a foster parent, but humor was not.

These findings were comparable to research on PCWA foster parents who identified empathy and flexibility as important characteristics for foster parents to possess (Brown and Calder, 2000; Buehler et al., 2003; Doelling & Johnson, 1990; Green, Braley, & Kisor, 1996). Humor not being a characteristic of Christian FBCFWA foster parents and their desire to remain fostering is antithetic to Brown's (2008) findings on PCWA foster parents that suggested a sense of humor was an important personality characteristic for fostering success.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (n = 114)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Fostering Intention (TIQ)	2.56	1.40	(.73)			
2. Humor (CHS)	4.07	.33	-.114	(.70)		
3. Cognitive Flexibility (CFS)	5.10	.42	-.30**	-.31**	(.79)	
4. Empathy (TEQ)	2.89	.47	-.24**	.22*	.37**	(.80)

Note: **Correlation is statistically significant at the .05 level. Items in parentheses on the diagonal represent Cronbach's alpha reliability values.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Results for Study Variables (n = 114)

Variable	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.
Step 1					
Empathy	-1.02	.39	-.24	-2.64	.01
Step 2					
Empathy	-.65	.41	-.16	-1.61	.11
Cognitive Flexibility	-.79	.32	-.24	-2.47	.02

Variable	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.
Step 3					
Empathy	-.65	.41	-.15	-1.58	.12
Cognitive Flexibility	-.78	.33	-.24	-2.36	.02
Humor	-.02	.29	-.01	-.06	.95

Note: R^2 for Step 1 = .06, for Step 2 = .11, for Step 3 = .11.

Discussion and Conclusions

The lack of research on Christian FBCFWAs (Garland & Chamiec-Case, 2005), and the differences found between public and faith-based foster parents (Howell-Moroney, 2013) support a need to further understand Christian FBCFWA foster parents. The current study contributed to this understanding by focusing on the motivation of a sample of Christians involved with one state-wide FBCFWA to foster and key personality characteristics (empathy, cognitive flexibility, and humor) associated with their desire to remain foster parents.

The study found that these Christian foster parents were primarily motivated to foster by their desire to help others in need. This child-centered, intrinsically motivated finding is a shared characteristic with PCWA foster parents. DeMaeyer and colleagues (2014) reported PCWA foster parents "want to provide a good home for a child" (p. 146). MacGregor and colleagues (2006) found PCWA foster parents' motivation was due to a desire to "make a difference in children's lives" (p. 363). Rhodes and colleagues (2006) found PCWA foster parents were motivated to foster because of their desire to provide children with a good home and love (Rodger et al., 2006). These altruistic motivations have shown to exert the strongest influence on fostering satisfaction (Denby et al., 1999).

The personality characteristics associated with these Christian foster parents' intentions to remain fostering were empathy and cognitive flexibility. PCWA foster parents share these personality characteristics. Buehler, Cox, and Cuddeback (2003) found that flexibility facilitated successful PCWA fostering and personal and interpersonal inflexibility inhibited successful fostering. Brown and Calder (2000) identified several empathetic characteristics of PCWA foster parents including patience, understanding, caring, love, thoughtfulness, calmness, kindness, and consideration that were needed to be a good foster parent.

The findings in this study diverged from a previous study on PCWA foster parents (Brown, 2008), in that the variable humor was not associated with fostering retention among Christian foster parents as it had been among PCWA foster parents, particularly in predicting the success of a foster placement. The dissimilarity may be explained by Brown's focus on

foster placement success and its relation to humor rather than the focus in this study on a foster parent's desire to remain fostering and his or her humor levels. Thus, a foster parent's humor could help make for an initial successful placement, but might not contribute to foster parents' overall desire to remain fostering.

Four limitations were noted in this study. The first limitation was due to the nature of data collection with married couples. The majority of foster parents who participated in this study were married (85%); thus, part of a dyad. The survey did not ask if the couple completed the survey together; therefore, the researchers cannot be confident that the responses provided to the survey equally reflected the opinions of both partners in the fostering couple.

The second limitation was the racial homogeneity of the sample (i.e. 95% of the participants were Caucasian). These findings may, or may not, generalize to Christian foster parents found in other Christian FBCFWA locations. The third limitation was that the survey instruments (TIQ, CHS, CFS, TEQ) were not originally tested on foster parents. This could influence the validity of the instruments. The final limitation was that the majority of participants were traditional foster parents caring for children without special needs (77%). These results may, or may not, be representative of Christian FBCFWA foster parents who provide care to children with specialized needs.

Because identifying fostering motivations and specific characteristics that affect a Christian's desire to remain fostering is important to developing and retaining FBCFWA Christian foster parents, future research should advance this line of research. One area of future research should focus on continuing to understand how personality characteristics affect fostering intentions. For example, how do coping skills impact a Christian's desire to remain fostering (Buehler et al., 2003)? Another research focus should be the differences between high self-esteem and low self-esteem personalities as a predictor of Christian fostering retention (Brown & Calder, 2000).

In addition to studying personality characteristics that improve fostering retention, it is important for future research to focus on how Christian FBCFWAs might influence fostering retention. Presently, both PCWAs and FBCFWAs have foster parents who identify themselves as Christians. Therefore, future research needs to focus on what, if any, differences between PCWAs and Christian FBCFWAs may actually be related to the agency (i.e. licensing requirements, support services, and caseload sizes), instead of solely focusing on whether the agency is Christian, or not.

Questions about how FBCFWAs support foster parents may provide clarity about the happiness and commitment levels of foster parents. Do FBCFWAs provide additional access to emotional (i.e. listening, praying, and encouragement) and physical/material support such as respite, food,

clothes), when compared to PCWAs, and do those spiritually-minded supports improve foster parents' retention levels?

Limited research has shown that FBCFWA foster parents are more satisfied with fostering (Howell-Moroney, 2013) and foster longer than their PCWA counterparts (Cox, Buehler, & Orme, 2002). This study expands the research on factors that contribute to foster parent satisfaction. The study found that, similar to their PCWA counterparts, these Christian FBCFWA foster parents were motivated to foster due to their desire to help others in need and empathy and cognitive flexibility were significant predictors of a Christian's desire to remain a foster parent. ❖

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Learned Optimism: A Balm for Social Worker Stress

Viviette L. Allen

Social workers provide vital services, often under adverse and stressful circumstances, to the hungry, thirsty, poorly clothed, imprisoned, and abandoned, "the least of these my brethren" (Matthew 25:40). By mission, principle, and ethical imperative, social workers seek to assuage the oppression, deprivation, injuries, and inequalities of society as well as the struggles of individuals and families. Learned optimism, as pioneered by Seligman (1991) and supported by empirical evidence, promotes the courage, mindfulness, resilience, well-being, productivity, and persistence necessary to sustain social work's vision and to face challenging and sometimes overwhelming tasks. Learned optimism is characterized by the cognitive duality of sustainable hope paired with a clear and realistic appraisal of obstacles. Through the use of pertinent existing literature and Biblical scripture, this article explores applications of learned optimism to address social work stress.

> *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves:*
> *Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*
> Matthew 10:16 (KJV)

CRIME-RIDDLED AND IMPOVERISHED COMMUNITIES, DETENTION AND correctional facilities, rehabilitation centers, institutions, courtrooms, shelters, clinics, protective services agencies, the streets, and hospitals… social workers can be found in environments that many others actively avoid. They bear first witness to the physical, psychological, and spiritual scars of abuse and neglect and to the dire aftermath of hardship, injustice, disaster, deprivation, and dysfunction while often being afforded less prestige, welcome, and compensation than comparably prepared professionals. Yet, social work persists in its mission to create a positive difference.

Although exposure to significantly stressful situations is an inherent feature of social work, learned optimism can create a means for stress to become tolerable and even empowering. In the literature, optimism has been linked with improved coping, persistence, motivation, employment success, and satisfaction, as well as personal mental, physical and spiritual health and resilience (Carver, Scheier, & Segerstrom, 2010; Goleman, 1995; Herrman et al., 2011; Khodarahimi, 2015; Koo, Algoes, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2008; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Schulman, 1999; Seligman, 1991,1995; Seligman & Csikszentmihaly, 2000; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005; Tenney, Logg, & Moore, 2015).

Social Work Specific Stress

Social work poses unique challenges and stress due in part to its bipolarity of mission that is at once broad and ambitious in societal and cultural scope, seeking social justice, while simultaneously focused on individual and smaller or micro-group level service (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2008). Social workers join and stand beside people as they face their worst and most vulnerable circumstances. As helpers, social workers may have direct exposure to the worst of human conduct and may experience levels of stress that can challenge or impair optimism and resiliency (Barnes, 2016; Bonoanno, Westphal, & Mancini, 2011). In addition, many problems are chronic and systemic; "for ye have the poor always with you" (Matthew 26:11).

Social workers frequently hold positions that are simultaneously high in responsibility and problem complexity, but low in control over pivotal variables and access to essential resources. Their work is often behind the scenes, trauma-linked, and can involve long hours and, at times, threats to personal safety. Progress can be uneven, delayed, and difficult to quantify. Sometimes the very people in need of help, resist or resent intervention. Additionally (due to confidentiality standards or fears of being judged incompetent), social workers can have limited outlets for detailed expression of concerns. To reduce the risk for pessimism, disengagement, and burnout, social workers need stress management tools, such as learned optimism, that are effective and compatible with their faith and values (Collins, 2005; Koh et al., 2015; NASW, 2008; Ryu, 2016).

Learned Optimism

Learned optimism involves an individual's explanation for outcomes and justification for actions, as well as anticipation of future events that promote a realistically positive outlook and sustained productive striving (Mukund & Singh, 2015; Seligman, 1991, 1995; Seligman et al., 2005; Tenney et al., 2015;

Tillich, 1952). It is a characteristic of personal strength and fortitude (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). "Optimistic expectations appear to be an important part of what it takes to succeed in high stress situations… [and are associated with] the ability to bounce back from frequent failures" (Schulman, 1999, p.34). For example, Warren, Van Eck, Townley, and Kloos (2015) determined that optimism acts as a mediating variable between positive religious coping practices and improved mental health and life satisfaction among a sample of adults with a mental illness diagnosis.

While some people are innately hopeful, optimism is not always an artifact of disposition or personality. Like helplessness and pessimism, optimism can be situation specific and learned or acquired through experience (Abela, Bronzina, & Seligman, 2004; Seligman, 1991, 1995; Seligman et al., 2005). Due to stressors intrinsic to the occupation, even social workers who enter and embrace the field with the laudable and hopeful wish to help others and who are generally optimistic in outlook develop a sense of powerlessness or become anxious, resentful, and discouraged. To prevent disengagement and the erosion of hope, it is productive to learn optimism. Optimism allows for the honest appraisal and acceptance of true limitations and demands while localizing problems to temporary or situational causes rather than personal flaws or projected permanence, thus reducing stress (Goodmon, Kelly, Maudlin, & Young, 2015; Ryu, 2016; Schulman, 1999; Van Hook & Rothenberg, 2009).

Learned Optimism Strategies to Manage Social Work Stress

The cultivation of learned optimism through spiritual practices, enlightened awareness, mindfulness, introspection, and continued education on the general and personal effects of occupation-related stress can be a vital component of effective management of stress, negative emotions, and pessimism (Goleman, 1995; McCollum, 2015). Adapted from empirical and conceptual literature on learned optimism, social work-specific stress, and spirituality as well as clinical experience, the following considerations are offered to enhance social work-related stress management.

1. Engage in spiritual and mindfulness practices such as worship, prayer, reflection, charity, and expression of gratitude as these can be a source of transformative solace and a renewal of spirit. To learn to be optimistic, time must be taken to reflect and to express awe and wonder for the amazing gifts of grace and mercy. A product of optimism is empowerment to fulfill duties and obligations with hope. Spiritual practices can serve as a buffer against pessimism as pessimism can cause stagnation, self-blame, resentment, and rumination about past disappointments and hard times. Optimism

creates a sense of hope (Collins, 2005; McCollum, 2015; Seligman, et al., 2005; Tillich, 1952; Wood, Joseph, & Linley, 2007).

2. Accept personal and professional limitations and acknowledgement that disparities, injustice, and inequities exist and do persist. Acceptance is an essential element of learned optimism because it permits a closer focus on the good that can be accomplished, rather than on that which cannot (Schulman, 1999; Seligman, 1991). Optimism grows from: (a) positive and healthy appraisals of one's personal strengths, efforts and limitations; (b) a view of problems as external to self and subject to change; and (c) an orientation toward future favorable possibilities (Carver et al., 2010; Schulman, 1999; Seligman, 1991, 1995).

3. Assume a developmental perspective as helper when facing challenging situations. Each person or circumstance is subject to change and potential growth, no matter how entrenched the problem. Learned optimism suggests that there is a future to consider and that tomorrow holds hope for transformation. To counter caustic cynicism, fatalism, burnout and compassion fatigue (Schulman, 1999; Van Hook & Rothenberg, 2009) and to maintain an optimistic and balanced view, it is important to interact regularly with typical-functioning members of our target population. For example, if one's position involves providing case management services to minors in the criminal justice system, to develop a broader perspective, it might be helpful to volunteer with a youth sports or community service group for a broader view.

4. Prioritize recreation, rest, and respite as they allow for a restoration of energy and a chance for a change of perspective. It is easy to allow the rigors of social work to exhaust the mental and physical reserves of even the most dedicated and determined, creating an implosion of pessimism and hopelessness. Regular fun activities and restorative sleep are essential to efficacy and health (Collins, 2005; White, Blackburn, & Plisco, 2015).

5. Seek the beauty of nature, art, music, laughter, and silence to elevate and expand a hopeful and intentional awareness of the possible. A joy for life and an appreciation for that which is lovely promote optimism (Seligman, 1991; Seligman et al., 2005; also see Philippians 4: 8-9).

6. Cultivate healthy and supportive relationships. Family, friends, and mentors can often recall strengths and triumphs and can provide help, comfort, and reassurance as they share in sorrow

and frustrations. An openness to the need for support, help, and guidance is a marker of optimism and healthy stress management (Khodarahimi, 2015; Seligman, 1991; Seligman et al., 2005).

7. Set realistic and attainable goals and observe small (or sub-goal) victories by charting them (Schulman, 1999) to support learned optimism. This can be accomplished with a pocket or electronic journal containing entries such as:

   • "I completed all of the paperwork that was due today."

   • "I made a mistake but acknowledged it and corrected it without beating myself up."

   • "Today I ate a healthy lunch, away from my desk, without answering any work-related calls or texts."

   • "In the staff meeting, I was purposefully calm, refusing to become overwhelmed or worried despite the reports on budget shortfalls and rising caseloads. I recalled that we have overcome similar problems in the past."

8. Engage in daily productive and positive self-talk to promote optimism. We are quite likely to believe what we say to ourselves. As difficult tasks are contemplated, it is important to speak in a solution-oriented manner. Complaining, blaming, and worst-case scenario rumination is discouraging and counterproductive. Be prepared to give yourself cognitive reinforcement for your earnest effort, even if that effort does not result in the realization of your ultimate goal. Give yourself persuasive debates against pessimism. Often it is not what happens but how we appraise or assess experiences that make the crucial difference between learning optimism or pessimism (Seligman, 1991; Seligman et al., 2005).

Biblically-Based Social Work Affirmations

According to Seligman (1991; 2005), an active practice to promote learned optimism is to purposefully engage in positive cognition and speech. Affirmations that can be readily brought to mind and said to self or others to counter pessimism when under stress can have a powerful effect on mood, behavior, and cognition. The following affirmations [with referent scripture] are applicable to social work and reflect an optimistic approach to challenges.Given the issues raised by previous research and the context provided by the theoretical concepts described above, the research question guiding the present study was formulated as follows:

1. I am not in this battle alone. (I Samuel 17:47)
2. I have a mission to feed and to tend to those in need. (John 21:15-19; Isaiah 61:1)
3. I may not be able to eradicate the entire problem but through my effort and limited means, I can make a profound contribution. (Luke 21:1-4)
4. I may not always see the ultimate outcome of this problem but I can sustain hope and optimism for progress and for eventual resolution. (Romans 8:28)
5. I am hopeful and motivated because a simple act of compassion or diligence can make a huge difference. (Matthew 13:31-33)
6. I refuse to be discouraged. (I Chronicles 28:20)
7. I can seek rest and restoration, safe in the assurance that eventually all will be well. (I Kings 5:4)
8. My underlying cause is love. (I Corinthians 13:13)
9. I face adversity but I remain hardy and optimistic. (Philippians 4:12-13)
10. I will never be forsaken. (Psalm 37)
11. I may never be powerful, famous, or wealthy, but my work is significant. (Proverbs 30:24-28)
12. With patience, perseverance, and optimism, those who work for the good will prevail. (Psalm 40: 1-3)

Limitations

While there exists an impressive body of evidence supportive of learned optimism and its beneficial effects, every approach has limitations. No one model is a panacea. Learned optimism has been criticized as being overly subjective and therefore difficult to quantify. Some findings have not withstood the scrutiny of retesting. According to Mongrain and Anselomo-Matthews (2012), some of the positive psychology techniques studied by Seligman and associates (2005) were no more effective than placebos. La Torre (2007) and Sujan (1999) argued that optimism as a value can be culturally bound and further observed that, in some circumstances, a less than optimistic view might be more adaptive and beneficial. Tenney and colleagues (2015), through a series of experiments, found that while optimism promotes perseverance, it does not optimize performance to the degree predicted by participants. Weinstein and Lyon (1999) observed that optimism, if exaggerated or unrealistic, is associated with inaccurate risk

assessment and inadequate problem prevention. To cultivate a broader base of evidence, to identify best practices, and to address the above-noted limitations, further scientific inquiry into learned optimism is needed.

Conclusion

Problems such as poverty, domestic and street violence, mental illness, and discrimination are immense. No one social worker can solve them all, but each person can contribute to solutions *"if we faint not"* (Galatians 6:9). Learned optimism is a conduit to sustain hope, faith, and striving in the face of incredibly stressful problems and tasks. Learned optimism allows us to make a realistic assessment of our influence and our limitations, and promotes the soothing effects of acceptance and appreciation for personal effort even when a complete resolution is not immediately evident or attainable. Learned optimism orients us toward the wonderful promise of the future, making today's stressors more tolerable. Although *"now we see through a glass darkly"* (I Corinthians 13:12), with optimism, we can sustain the hope that ultimately justice and healing can and will prevail. The Christian social worker has every reason to be optimistic because of God's enduring promise:
"I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of good courage." (Joshua 1:5-6) ❖

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REVIEWS

It's Dangerous to Believe: Religious Freedom and Its Enemies
Eberstadt, M. (2016). New York, NY: Harper.

What are we to make of the attack on traditional Christianity in the West? The speed and ferocity of the assault are suggestive of a new zealous religion sweeping in from the desert, brooking no dissent or even debate, utterly intolerant, giving no quarter.

In this new book by Mary Eberstadt, author of *Adam & Eve After the Pill* (2012) and *How the West Lost God* (2013), the phenomenon is thoroughly documented and carefully considered. The author provides numerous examples of Christians driven from their livelihoods, jobs, and professions (not least the health and helping professions), subjected to extreme abuse and threats on social media, their applications to academic and professional programs rejected because of their prior education in Christian schools or homeschooling or visible Christian service, denied public platforms, shut down, and silenced. The examples multiply daily, and Eberstadt provides enough to convince any fair-minded reader of the scale and severity of the problem.

Eberstadt uses two striking terms from the history of religion in society to describe what is under way: the witch hunt and the heresy hunt.

There is a kind of moral panic, an inquisitorial zeal to expose those who question the new secularist orthodoxy. The promise of live-and-let-live—the early assurances that those who continued to espouse traditional views of marriage and sex would be left alone once marriage was extended to couples of the same sex—was quickly abandoned. It was replaced by a hunt for those who failed to embrace the new orthodoxy. Even those with apparently unquestionable *bona fides* as champions of the sexual revolution (like Germaine Greer or Peter Tatchell) found themselves on trial before the social media. Evidence counts for little in these attacks and sinister but supernaturally strong powers are attributed to conservative Christians, who in reality became increasingly weak in the face of the secularist onslaught and lost every skirmish and battle in the culture war that secularists waged on them.

Of particular relevance for social workers is the chapter, "Inquisition vs. Good Works," which details the unremitting assault on the organized charitable activities of Christians. Doing good works, as enjoined on Christians by their faith, no longer provides protection from the heresy hunters. Indeed, enforcers of the new orthodoxy target Christian charities that have built networks of assistance to the poor in the U.S/ and internationally over many decades, even centuries, forcing them to close their doors or divert their resources from helping refugees, the poor and

persecuted to fighting legal battles. Secularists offer no alternative chari-
table efforts of their own.

There is in this heresy-hunting zeal the fervor of a new religion, one
that must be enforced by the state itself on every aspect of civil society. It
is a religion whose rituals, Eberstadt observes, involve a return to child
sacrifice. Abortion for any reason at any phase of the child's development
prior to birth becomes a sacrament, to be followed (already in Belgium,
with the Netherlands close behind) by child euthanasia; already in the U.S.,
chemical castration and mutilation of the reproductive systems of children
as young as eight or nine is being pushed. More generally, every aspect of
the sexual revolution sacrifices the needs of children to the desires of adults.

This is an important book, one that any Christian who doubts the
full horror of today's sexual progressivism or advises other Christians to
accommodate to or appease it, needs to read. But Eberstadt aims at a wider
audience, including moderate secularists who see themselves as tolerant,
fair-minded, and good. She aims to persuade liberals who do not wish to
shut down free speech on campuses or go after lawyers who represent un-
popular Christian causes or organizations. She appeals, that is, to universal
liberal principles as did John Stuart Mill. She appeals to the tolerance and
empathy of readers who might be unaware of the McCarthyite bullying,
intimidation, and bigotry of the new orthodoxy's enforcers and their singling
out of orthodox Christians for vilification in ways that would be unthink-
able if aimed at adherents of any other faith.

Witch hunts run their course and so, Eberstadt believes, will the cur-
rent hatred and bigotry against Christians. The hunt for imagined demons
will lose steam as people demand better evidence and see the damage done
by dehumanizing and vilifying those who dissent from the new orthodoxy.
Momentum for change has to come from the other side, as it did in the case
of Puritans who recoiled from the moral panic in their ranks or of conserva-
tives who denounced McCarthy and his tactics ("Have you no shame?").
In the present case, opposition to intolerance within the ranks of sexual
progressivism must come from those who are secular liberals themselves
but who deplore the shutting down of free speech, inquiry, and debate. Her
conclusion thus rests on an optimism and hope for a return to reason and
tolerance of which few signs are currently evident.

This is a wake-up call for Christians who may complacently under-
estimate the scale and intensity of the attack they are under in the West.
It equips such readers with the facts and arguments they need to defend
themselves in or retreat from a deeply hostile brave new world. But, as her
own conclusion implies, a book that will persuade a wider audience, in-
cluding secularists who have not fallen into the extremes of anti-Christian
illiberalism that she reports, will have to be written by one of that number. ❖

*Reviewed by **Paul Adams,** Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, University of Hawai'i.
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Overcoming Conflicting Loyalties: Intimate Partner
Violence, Community Resources, and Faith
Sevcik, I., Rothery, M., Nason-Clark, N. & Rynn, R. (2015). Edmonton, AB:
The University of Alberta Press.

In the first chapter of this book, the authors assert that when it comes to intimate partner violence (i.e., domestic abuse), secular and religious helpers do not trust each other. The chapter continues with outlining the various secular and religious philosophies and ideologies that provide an historical framework regarding the tension between these two supposedly polar opposites. The major focus of this chapter is centered on the concept of "patriarchy—the ideological treatment of gender relations that value male privilege"—and the authors seek to have "transdisciplinary discussions (that) tackle the patriarchy question" (p. 10). A discussion about the role of patriarchy and the role of religion in regard to intimate partner violence continues throughout the book's nine chapters.

Chapter two presents definitions and provides the context for intimate partner violence (IPV). The authors refer to an evangelical focus, but specifically direct their research to what they refer to as three "religious/ethno-cultural groups." These three groups include the Christian, Jewish, and Khmer Canadian (Buddhist) communities. The Khmer Canadian community is founded on the refugees from Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge genocide that occurred from 1975-1979.

Chapter three introduces FaithLink, a program that began in 2000 in Alberta, Canada. The goal of this program was to develop a community-wide response/model to IPV that would include the participation of the religious community along with the planning and work of the service sector (i.e., police, prosecutors and defense lawyers, victim services, probation officers, and treatment providers). This response included discussions, the provision of resources, and seminars in order to develop collaborative actions on the part of both religious and secular services groups. For example, educational and resource materials were made available that reflected the religious beliefs and cultural norms that the service providers could use when working with specific ethno-religious groups. For in-depth knowledge about IPV, Faith-Link wrote a comprehensive manual, *Hope and Healing: Domestic Violence Resources for the Church (2004-2007),* which was given to interested Christian congregations in Calgary. Because of these resources and the assistance given in dealing with IPV, FaithLink staff became more strongly connected to the community and served as a liaison between religious leaders and service providers that helped build more awareness of, and strategies to combat, IPV.

Chapters four, five, and six reported on the three qualitative research studies that FaithLink conducted in regard to IPV within the context of connecting spiritual and secular care. The first study focused on listening to

the voices of women from the three religious/ethno-cultural groups previously mentioned who had experienced IPV. The second study explored how service providers addressed the spiritual needs of their clients. In the third study, researchers examined meditation as a means for self-care for service providers who were helping the victims of IPV.

Chapters seven, eight, and nine are reflections and a final summary on the research studies and the themes of the book. These chapters include thoughts on the dialogue that was created between secular-based service providers and the religious/ethno-cultural communities regarding confronting IPV. The final reflection, chapter nine, reviews what the authors call the overarching theme of the book which is "on the role religion has in responding to social issues in a secular society" (p. 201).

A unique feature of this book is that, at the end of each chapter, the authors or various panel members who contributed to content in that specific chapter give their reflection on what was written, as well as including some additional insight regarding their experience with IPV. In addition, one of the authors submitted a poem at the end of each chapter that reflects on the theme of the past chapter.

This book would be of interest to readers who want to review qualitative research studies that ask questions about the role, importance, and barriers in regard to the religious sector's involvement and care for persons dealing with IPV. It also provides information about how one might provide a context for collaborative work with secular and religious care providers. For service providers working with refugee groups, the commentary about the Khmer Canadian (Buddhist) community could be helpful. Readers who are interested or who are involved in these religious groups that ascribe to the concept of patriarchy and of female submission might glean insights from this book.

 For persons who are searching for further treatment approaches in confronting IPV or who do not work with patriarchal-dominant religious groups, this book may not be as relevant. However, this book is a useful reminder to all service providers that in assisting in any of our societal social problems, the religious and spiritual dimensions cannot be dismissed. Additionally, the authors provide ideas on how we might seek out the other partners needed to provide holistic care in confronting the social ills and pain that victims of intimate partner violence face. ❖

*Reviewed by **Janice M. Staral**, MSW, LCSW, Ph.D., Emerita Professor and past Director of Social Work Department, Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, WI. Email: Janice.staral@cuw.edu.*

Hope, Help and Healing for the Depressed
Tossell, M. (2015). Australia: Ark House Press.

     Hope, Help and Healing for the Depressed, written by Mark Tossell, is cataloged as a Christian Living subject, implying the author's intention to present to the Christian audience. The book's cover reads, "A Pastor Tells of His 30-Year Battle with Depression," which further indicates the reading is directed to persons who are familiar with Christian living as well as those who may carry leadership roles in the church. The introduction directs its attention to the author's hope through his own bout with depression and then relates the experiences with familiar biblical characters who also exhibited characteristics that could be viewed as symptoms of depression. The first ten chapters carry a theme of validation of the trials and struggles one endures when depressed, which contributes to normalizing depression in the hopes of debunking the potential stigma persons in the church may hold regarding mental illness. The second half of the book provides anecdotal strategies, methods, and implications for those who suffer with depression and anxiety. The author utilizes scriptures throughout to impress biblical perspectives that will assist the reader in identifying with and incorporating faith-based truths while living with depression. The latter part of the book provides readers with indicators of how to ameliorate depression as well as how family members might cope with someone who is depressed.

     As an educator, mental health clinician, and Christian, I was highly interested in reading this book as it had particular relevance to faith and practice. The strongest aspect was the overall realization that Christian leaders can endure periods of depression and are not exempt from facing mental illness. In fact, the very nature of what pastoral staff engage in, as described by the author, with their congregations and communities can often lead to what helping professionals label as "caregiver fatigue" and "secondary trauma." This is enlightening to those who are faith leaders and lay staff in congregations. The hope found in this reading is for those struggling with ongoing depression and anxiety in identifying that they are not alone. The author addressed on several occasions the need for the church to embrace those who suffer with mental illness, which supports efforts in breaking down often held barriers and stigma in the church. Another aspect of the book found to be helpful was the chapter titled, "Help! I Live with a Depressed Person." This section was useful in acknowledging the impact depression has not only on the individual, but on the family system. In this chapter, practical insights were listed from the author's acquaintances who experience living with someone who is clinically depressed. This was a beneficial inclusion to the book as it considers the external impact mental illness can have on family functioning.

     From a clinical perspective, the book provides limited evidence-based strategies in addressing depression. As stated earlier, the author candidly

described his own experiences with depression and anxiety and most of the suggestions were based on his journey and interaction with the church and mental health professionals. There were few resources from professional journals or scholarly articles in supporting the author's methods in ameliorating depression. Inclusion of those perspectives would likely have strengthened the validity of his suggestions.

In addition, the book doesn't appear to move beyond the discussion of living with the realities of depression. Considering perhaps differing denominational views, faith cultures, and acknowledging diverse perspectives on scriptural readings in regard to healing may provide further hope to those with mental illness.

This book provides *Hope*, in the form of identifying with others who also struggle with depression; and more specifically those in the church. *Help* is brought in the form of a resource for those in Christian leadership and/or clinicians who may counsel pastoral staff. *Healing* is characterized by the avenues available, such as worship, counsel, the scriptures, and professional support which provide the dimensions of healing that people struggling with depression can access. *Hope, Help, Healing for the Depressed* is a book that can be used to reduce stigma in the church regarding mental illness, and provide resources for pastoral and/or Christian leader self-care and persons who identify with the struggles of depression within congregations. As a clinician who provides mental health services from a Christian perspective, I would utilize this as a resource for those who may need to identify with others who struggle with mental health illnesses. ❖

Reviewed by **Sonia Medina Pranger,** *LCSW, PPSC, Clinical Faculty/Field Coordinator, Fresno Pacific University. Email: sonia.pranger@fresno.edu*

The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can Be Made Right
Harper, L.S. (2016). Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press.

This is an interesting and a well-written book that would persuade Christians and Christians in social work to look at the gospel in a holistic way. As I was reading the book, I was reminded of the famous manifesto of Abraham Kuyper, a great Christian leader: "There is not one square inch of the entire creation about which Jesus Christ does not cry out, 'This is Mine! This belongs to me!'" (as cited in Mouw, 1992, p. 147). There is a tendency among some Christians to dichotomize the world into sacred and secular. However, Harper makes it abundantly clear there is no such dichotomy in God's creation. Whatever God created, He called "very good" (p. 31). Therefore, as Harper argues, a gospel that only focuses on personal

salvation (considered sacred) and not on restoration of shalom, meaning "peace and wholeness" (p. 12) for all of creation (considered secular) is not "the very good" gospel.

Every chapter is rich in content and expounds the idea of "shalom" very well. Chapter 1 sets the background for "the very good" gospel. Harper has made an interesting distinction between "thin faith" and "thick faith" (p. 10). While, according to Harper, thin faith "lacks roots in the scriptures" (p. 10), thick faith is deeply rooted in the scriptures. Chapter 2 contrasts the Babylonian creation story with that of the Biblical creation story by delineating how, in the latter story, God is "the context of all things… [and] there is only one God, Elohim" (pp. 18-19). Chapter 3 explains the impact of the fall of Adam and Eve on the "cornerstone [of shalom, which is] love" (p. 45). Chapter 4 illustrates "humanity's broken relationship with God [as] the ultimate cause of all other brokenness" (p. 60) from the story of the Samaritan woman. Chapter 5 presents a personal transformation of Harper from feeling "unwanted" due to bullying in school, to feeling "wanted" by Jesus. Chapter 6 refers to both men and women as image-bearers. In Harper's words, "God created humanity and declared that all humans, male and female, are created in God's image… [and] there is a deep sense of interdependence. There is shalom between them" (pp. 84-86). Chapter 7 highlights the mandate of human beings to be "protectors… and... not… exploiters [of God's creation]" (p. 111) lest the negative effects of climate change escalate. Chapter 8 focuses on how the fall has had deleterious effects on family structure but draws attention to how "God is committed to broken families" (p. 136). Chapter 9 analyzes ethnicity and race. While, according to Harper, ethnicity is God-made, race is man-made. Chapter 10 explains God's original intent to use "…Israel… as a beacon to surrounding nations with laws that demonstrated justice" and how Israel rebelled against God and failed to fulfill God's purpose for nations (p. 170). Chapter 11 demonstrates the need to be witnesses of Jesus Christ, not through mere talk but through a life-style and an active involvement in justice-related issues. Chapter 12 concludes on a note of hope that despite spiritual and physical death, which is the result of separation from God, we can enjoy life on earth and can be confident of eternal life because of the resurrection of Jesus.

Harper's views on Black Lives Matter might give readers the impression that *only* Black Lives Matter. Harper seems to suggest that although all lives matter to God, there are times when particular hardships faced by certain groups warrant special concern, since, as Gans (2010) asserts, "The only population whose racial features are not automatically perceived differently with upward mobility are African Americans... they still suffer from far harsher and more pervasive discrimination… than nonwhite immigrants" (p. 112). Otherwise, the book could very well be used as a supplement to a

textbook in some of the social work courses offered in Christian universities, especially those courses in which systems theory, shame resilience theory, sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, classism, marriage and divorce, climate change, poverty, and social work core values are addressed. The reflection exercises provided at the end of most of the chapters are thought-provoking and could be beneficial to students. Christian social work practitioners, whether working for faith-based organizations or for state agencies will find the book relevant in treating clients as "image-bearers" regardless of their issues, background, and values; the social work practitioners will also be persuaded to witness for Christ through their lives and not just by their words. The book will also be useful to those pursuing theological studies and pastoral ministry because it will shape their thinking as to what "the very good gospel" should look like. I believe that the book will make the faith of Christians and Christians in social work "thick" and consequently will make them agents of "shalom." ❖

Reviewed by **Packiaraj Arumugham,** *Associate Professor of Social Work, Midwestern State University, Wichita Falls, Texas. Email: packiaraj.arumugham@mwsu.edu.*

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Gans, H.J. (2010). *Race, Class, and Gender.* M.L. Anderson., & P.H. Collins (Eds.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

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Reconciliation Reconsidered: Advancing the National Conversation on Race in Churches of Christ
Tanya Brice (Ed.). (2016). Abilene, Texas: Abilene Christian University Press.

Tanya Smith Brice, Dean of the School of Health and Human Services at Benedict College, served as the editor for R*econciliation Reconsidered: Advancing the National Conversation on Race in Churches of Christ.* As a lifelong member of the Churches of Christ, as well as a seasoned Christian social work educator, Brice assembles a collection of essays, both academic as well as from some who serve within the Churches of Christ, to critically analyze the sin of racism within the Churches of Christ. Through uncompromising prose, each essayist decontextualizes racism in order to generate open and honest conversations of its impact on the lives of those existing at the margins (e.g., Blacks). Brice's ability to speak truth into power as it relates to racism among White Christians both historically and contemporarily is

evident throughout the book. Readers are provided discussion questions after each narrative to encourage reflection and conversations on racial reconciliation within their respective congregations.

In the introduction, Brice provides the reader with a brief background on the historical configuration of the Churches of Christ without disaggregating race from racism during the periods of African enslavement, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights movement. Brice continues to center the religious identity of Christianity as she guides the reader into understanding how the essays will be divided to elucidate the role racism played in perpetuating racial division within the Churches of Christ. Douglas Foster, Richard Hughes, and Mark Tucker spotlight the historical racial divide among Black and White members of the Churches of Christ during the era of the Civil Rights movement. Each essayist recounts documented events where White Christians missed opportunities to address the racial segregation in the Churches of Christ. Of equal importance, Brad McKinnon and Yukikazu Obatu examine how deeply entrenched racial prejudice was within the social ethics and missionary efforts of Church of Christ leaders.

It is because of these historical realities that the next sections of the anthology discuss contemporary issues as well as provide concrete examples for how repentance and racial unity among members of the Churches of Christ can be achieved through the art of truth telling. Stanley Tolbert, Lawrence Rodger, and Jerry Taylor introduce the reader to contemporary challenges experienced by Black bodies during the era of *#BlackLivesMatter.* I am a Black male tenure-track professor at a predominantly White institution and a doctoral student at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU), and these narratives particularly captured my interest. Each narrative introduces the reader to the harsh realities of racism's effect on Black lives while incorporating Judeo-Christian theology as a means of addressing racism through spiritual healing to achieve restoration.

This section of Brice's anthology depicts one of the most lucid, but honest, conversations about the struggles of engaging in the work of reconciliation among White members of the Churches of Christ. The narratives introduce the reader to why it is problematic to have a colorblind ideology when racism permeates the living world and the spiritual walls of God's church. These narrations purposively center the issues of police brutality, church-related shooting (e.g., Emmanuel Nine), and gun violence within the Black community in the hopes of making plain the problems of race and racism. One potential critique of this anthology is that, while the narratives are intentionally written toward a predominately White audience, little is shared on the psychological effects of loneliness and racial fatigue on ministers of color doing the social justice work in a White supremacist system.

With that said, while Brice focuses on the Churches of Christ, the unfiltered narratives can provide templates to address the sin of racism

across a broader spectrum of Christians. The narratives do a great job of revealing the issue of racism without isolating the targeted audience. As the narratives unfold, the reader is brought toward the realization that they play a pivotal role in shaping the future toward racial unification in the larger body of Christ.

In the final section of book, William Loftin Turner, David Fleer, Don McLaughlin, and Phyllis Hildreth offer the reader concrete examples of how church leaders can engage in the work toward racial reconciliation. Each narrative takes into account historical traumas, oppressive practices, White supremacy, and White privilege. One of the common themes made clear in each narrative is that confronting the truth of racism is necessary in order to achieve real reconciliation.

For this reason, I deeply appreciated the essayists' willingness to engage in critical dialogues, while utilizing research to inform the reader on the multiplicative ways racism exists in American society. Each narrative in this section was uncompromising in expressing how the road toward racial reconciliation will be difficult and won't be achieved through silence or willful ignorance of our current realities.

In summary, *Reconciliation Reconsidered* expressed many points of view that can offer those engaged in social work and ministry a lens through which to view the lives of those directly affected by the sin of racism. This anthology gives a great depiction of how religion and race intersect within a predominately White society. More importantly, it serves as a reminder that racism and religion are not mutually exclusive. Also, social work educators can take insights provided in this anthology to educate social work students on the doctrinal and traditional differences between Black and White congregations of Churches of Christ. Additionally, ministries interested in racial reconciliation are provided great templates in how to stimulate truthful and honest conversation on race and racism within the body of Christ. ❖

Reviewed by **Raymond D. Adams,** *MSW, Assistant Professor, Southern Arkansas University Department of Social Work.*
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Teachable Moments: Building Blocks of Christian Parenting
Robinson, J.C. (2016). New York, NY: Morgan James.

I have heard it said that the mark of a great teacher is when the student no longer needs them. How much more true is this in the ever challenging and rewarding job that is parenting? Dr. Jonathan C. Robinson is a clinical

psychologist with over 35 years of experience who sought to widen his audience to provide practical steps for parents of children of all ages in his 2016 book, *Teachable Moments: Building Blocks of Christian Parenting*. Robinson seeks to reinforce all the good things parents are already doing, and, "offer valuable perspective for enhancing the lives and experience of God's most precious gift and responsibility to us – our children" (p. x). Robinson uses the seemingly mundane daily tasks of parenting as an opening to teach godliness, accountability, character development and spiritual growth. He refers to these events as "teachable moments."

Whether your children are toddlers who delight in creating disaster after disaster, or a teenager who barely speaks five words in a week, Robinson offers hope despite current circumstances to parents. He draws on valuable insight from biblical passages, as well as other experts in the field like Charles Swindoll, James Dobson, Tim Kimmel, and Tedd Tripp. Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1963) are woven throughout the book to assist in understanding different life stages, what normal development is, and expectations for each stage, in order to better equip parents in their parenting.

Topics such as communication (between parents, from parent to child, and between siblings), boundary-setting and testing, spiritual development, and expectations of all members of the family are also discussed in detail. Intentional opportunities to put these teachable moments into practice come in the form of family meetings. Input from all family members and charts posted in a visible location allow each family member to be heard, grow spiritually, and develop in a safe and healthy environment.

Each chapter is broken down into learning, an interactive checklist, case scenario, summary and prayer, and follows the lives of a steadfast, Protestant, nuclear family. The Bowers are comprised of a working mother and father, a teenage daughter, teenage son and elementary school-aged daughter. As the book progresses, the principles are presented in an easy-to-understand and practical way. Robinson provides practical ways to introduce, cultivate, and maintain change through the checklist, which gives parents the opportunity to gauge where they currently are, and is extremely helpful in setting short-, mid-, and longer term family/behavioural goals. The chapters end with cumulative summaries and prayers.

While this book is practical for parents wanting to improve on time management, communication between siblings, and navigating the ever-daunting teenage years, pastors, counsellors, and frontline social workers and others who work directly with children and families can benefit from this book in understanding children's capabilities at different psychosocial life stages. An old African proverb states that it takes a village to raise a child. Reading this book can also equip helpers to assist families in making use of the checklists, family meeting structure, and posting family roles,

norms and expectations to increase communication, parent/child relationships and increase family dynamics.

While this book's premise is built on the nuclear family of the Bowers, it does not discuss other family models such as grandparents raising children, blended families, or single-parent led families. Although published recently, it also fails to adequately address situations that teens are currently facing such as peer pressure on various social media platforms, self-harm, cyber-bullying, sexting, and drug use (like using parental drugs or synthetic drugs), and media glorification/pressure to die by suicide.

While this book does touch on real issues such as navigating home and work-life balance, sibling rivalry, and more, each chapter gives parents affirmations, prayers, and hope. The daunting, challenging, depressing, angering and rewarding job that is parenting is discussed in great detail in Robinson's Teachable Moments. Anyone who seeks to meld faith, practicality and parenting together would benefit greatly from putting his principles into practice. ❖

*Reviewed by **Lana Burchell,** BA (Honours Social Work), Employment Supports Case Manager, The Salvation Army Lawson Ministries, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Email: lanaburchell@lawsonministries.org.*

Reference

Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and society.* New York: Norton.

SPECIAL ISSUE OF SOCIAL WORK & CHRISTIANITY

> *Addiction begins with the hope that something "out there" can instantly fill up the emptiness inside.* Jean Kilbourne

TOPIC: Addictions—An Epidemic of Pain

GUEST EDITORS: Katti Sneed, PhD, LCSW, MSW, LCAC; Denise Keane, LCSW; Jason Pittman, MSW, MDiv

PAPER SUBMISSION DEADLINE: March 30, 2018

Advances in neurobiology and genetics inform us of the biological realities of the disease of addiction. Personal stories, testimonies and obituaries inform us of the psychological and spiritual impact of addiction upon almost every person, family and organization with which we as social workers engage. As Christians engaged in social work, how do we understand, treat, engage with, create policy for, teach and work with people who live with one or more addictions? What are our own personal stories of addiction and how do they impact our work? Do we offer a Christian alternative to the behavior or substance that is being used to fill up the emptiness? How can we assist in alleviating the stigma that continues to persist, not only in society, but within our faith communities, regarding those with this disease?

For this special issue, the editors welcome a broad range of manuscripts, research articles, program evaluations and book reviews that address any aspect of addiction. The papers selected will be designed to benefit any social work professional or behavioral health provider that may be interested in the intersection of religion and spirituality and their work with addictions.

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

Instructions for Authors: Please submit abstracts as Microsoft Word email attachments to all three guest editors listed below by November 30, 2017. Abstracts should be no more than 150 words and should include a title page with author's name, address, phone number, and email address. The editors will review manuscript abstracts for suitability for inclusion in the special issue. Pending the outcome of the review, the editors will inform the author(s) of the status of their manuscript submission and all accepted manuscripts will receive a full review according to the manuscript

submission guidelines of SWC which can be found at: http://www.nacsw.org/publications/journal-swc/.

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SPECIAL ISSUE OF SOCIAL WORK & CHRISTIANITY

TOPIC: Social Work and Racial Reconciliation

GUEST EDITORS: Linda Darrell & Michael Kelly

DEADLINE: January 31, 2018 for Abstract Submissions

According to Dr. Eric Mason, Pastor of Epiphany Fellowship Church, a multi-ethnic church in Philadelphia reconciliation is defined as "the restoration of friendly relationships and of peace, where there had previously been hostility and alienation. Ordinarily, it also includes the removal of the offense that caused the disruption of peace and harmony (Rom. 5:10, 2 Cor. 5:19, Eph. 2:16)" (Mason, 2012). Numerous civil rights advocates, scholars, theologians and political leaders have begun to explore if it is finally time for the United States to engage in a process of racial reconciliation to address the legacy of slavery, racism, and white supremacy and its impact on African-Americans and white Americans. This special issue asks how social work, and specifically social workers operating within Christian contexts, might become part of the process of racial reconciliation.

Specific topics related to racial reconciliation will be explored in this issue, including:

1. Developing a rigorous and coherent definition of racial reconciliation

2. Assessing the potential for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in the U.S., based in part on the TRC model in South Africa after Apartheid

3. Analyzing the empirical, moral, political, and theological case for reparations in the U.S. related to racism against African-Americans

4. Evaluating the impact of anti-racist education as a strategy to increase racial reconciliation, particularly around developing awareness of the impacts of white privilege and white supremacist ideology on all Americans. Special emphasis here could be placed on anti-racist education that seeks to correct the exclusion

of the actual history of slavery in America and its continuing impact on institutional racism within the core institutions of American society.

This special issue of *Social Work & Christianity* will explore the issue of racial reconciliation in the United States, focusing on social work responses within a Christian context attempting to address the legacy of American slavery, racism, and white supremacy. Submissions in the following areas are particularly requested:

    I. **Conceptual Articles** providing definitional clarity and theoretical frameworks supporting the integration of key principles of racial reconciliation.

    II. **Empirical Articles** that apply ideas of racial reconciliation to social work **practice,** including articles addressing truth and reconciliation activities, reparations proposals, and anti-racist education and possibly including:

    III. Articles focused on **research methods** informed by or grounded in concepts of racial reconciliation
- Direct practice with individuals or families
- Group work (treatment or task group)
- Organizational practice
- Community Practice
- Policy practice
- Practice in rural or urban settings
- Church or congregational settings

    IV. Articles focused on the integration of racial reconciliation work in social work **education.**

Guidelines for submitting abstracts:

All authors are strongly encouraged to contact the special edition editors by email or phone (see contact information below) to discuss ideas for paper submissions. The deadline for all abstract submissions is January 31, 2018.

Abstracts submitted to SWC should begin with a title page, including the author's name, address, phone number, email address, abstract of no more than 500 words, a list of key words, and an indication of whether or not the author would like the manuscript to be peer-reviewed. Please use the American Psychological Association Style Manual format (6th edition) for in-text references and reference lists. Abstracts should be submitted electronically as email attachments, preferably in Microsoft Word.

Guest Editor contact information:
Linda Darrell, PhD, LCSW-C (linda.darrell@morgan.edu) or 443-885-4129
Michael S. Kelly PhD, LCSW (mkell17@luc.edu) or 708-204-0087

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL WORK: READINGS ON THE INTEGRATION OF CHRISTIAN FAITH & SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE (FIFTH EDITION)
*T. Laine Scales and Michael S. Kelly (Editors). (2016). Botsford, CT: NACSW. $55.00 U.S., $42.99 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies. For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.*
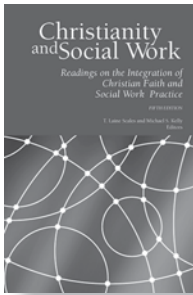
At over 400 pages and with 19 chapters, this extensively-revised fifth edition of Christianity and Social Work includes six new chapters and six significantly revised chapters in response to requests by readers of previous editions including chapters on evidence based practice (EBP), congregational Social Work, military social work, working with clients from the LGBT community, human trafficking – and much more! The fifth edition of Christianity and Social Work is written for social workers whose motivations to enter the profession are informed by their Christian faith, and who desire to develop faithfully Christian approaches to helping. It addresses a breadth of curriculum areas such as social welfare history, human behavior and the social environment, social policy, and practice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Christianity and Social Work is organized so that it can be used as a textbook or supplemental text in a social work class, or as a training or reference materials for practitioners and has an online companion volume of teaching tools entitled Instructor's Resources.

WHY I AM A SOCIAL WORKER: 25 CHRISTIANS TELL THEIR LIFE STORIES
Diana R. Garland. (2015). Botsford, CT: NACSW. $29.95 U.S., $23.95 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies. For price in Canadian dolloars, use current exchange rate.
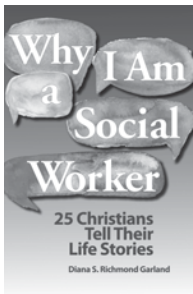
Why I Am a Social Worker describes the rich diversity and nature of the profession of social work through the 25 stories of daily lives and professional journeys chosen to represent the different people, groups and human situations where social workers serve.

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

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

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

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

- What is their daily work-life like, with its challenges, frustrations, joys and triumphs?

- What was their path into social work, and more particularly, the kind of social work they chose?

- What roles do their religious beliefs and spiritual practices have in sustaining them for the work, and how has their work, in turn, shaped their religious and spiritual life?

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

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

Virtue and Character in Social Work Practice

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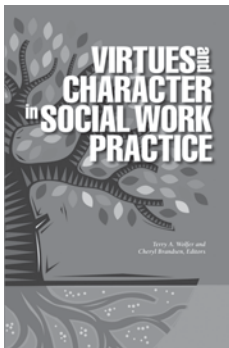

Virtues and Character in Social Work Practice offers a fresh contribution to the Christian social work literature with its emphasis on the key role of character traits and virtues in equipping Christians in social work to engage with and serve their clients and communities well.

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

CONGREGATIONAL SOCIAL WORK: CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES

*Diana Garland and Gaynor Yancey. (2014). Botsford, CT: NACSW.
$39.95 U.S., $31.95 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more
copies). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.*
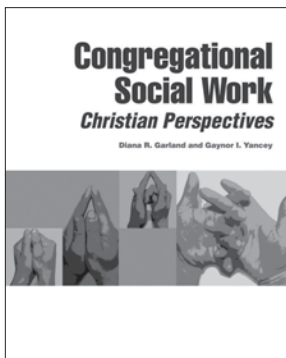
Congregational Social Work offers a compelling account of the many ways social workers serve the church as leaders of congregational life, of ministry to neighborhoods locally and globally, and of advocacy for social justice. Based on the most comprehensive study to date on social work with congregations, *Congregational Social Work* shares illuminating stories and experiences from social workers engaged in powerful and effective work within and in support of congregations throughout the US.

GRAPPLING WITH FAITH: DECISION CASES FOR CHRISTIANS IN SOCIAL WORK

*Terry A. Wolfer and Mackenzi Huyser. (2010). $23.75 ($18.99 for NAC-
SW members or for orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars,
use current exchange rate.*
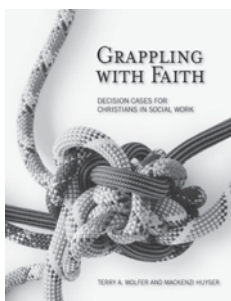
Grappling with Faith: Decision Cases for Christians in Social Work presents fifteen cases specifically designed to challenge and stretch Christian social work students and practitioners. Using the case method of teaching and learning, *Grappling with Faith* highlights the ambiguities and dilemmas found 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.

NACSW

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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.

NACSW

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