

2-4 November
Hyatt Regency Reston
Washington, DC

REA Annual Meeting 2018 Proceedings beyond white normativity

Creating Brave Spaces



<http://religiouseducation.net/rea2018>

The Religious Education Association (REA) is an Association of
Professors, Practitioners, and Researchers in Religious Education



Cover image is a U.S. Navy photo
by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Ian Kinhead
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/navalsurfaceforces/36348826111/>

REA Annual Meeting 2018 Proceedings

Beyond White Normativity: Creating Brave Spaces



**2-4 November 2018
Hyatt Regency Reston
Washington, DC**

<http://religiouseducation.net/rea2018>

The Religious Education Association (REA) is an
Association of Professors, Practitioners, and Researchers in Religious Education



The Religious Education Association
publishes these conference proceedings under the
Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 license
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>
in order to permit their wide dissemination and use.
However, copyright remains with the author, and authors
can make whatever further use of the material they wish.



By submitting their work to the REA,
all authors have accepted that it will be
published under the CC-BY 4.0 license
and have indicated that they understand
that once posted on the REA website,
their work will not be removed from
the these annual conference proceedings.

Table of Contents

1.01	Daniel Hauge	<i>The Power of a Comfortable White Body: Racism and Habitual Emotion</i>	1
	Mary Elizabeth Moore	<i>The Depths of White Privilege: Diving Beneath Shame and Guilt</i>	15
	Thomas Murphy	<i>Vulnerability and Community: Unprecedented Itineraries Beyond the Buffered Self</i>	25
1.02	André Mulder Bas van den Berg	<i>Learning for Life. An Imaginative Approach to Worldview Education</i>	43
	Karen-Marie Yust	<i>Reframing Religious Formation Developmentally</i>	61
1.03	Barbara Fears	<i>Controlling Black and Brown Bodies: Stopping the Normative Gaze</i>	69
	Gina Robinson	<i>"I Belong Here": A Theo-Sociopolitical Examination of Black Bodies in White Spaces</i>	77
	Arlean Wells	<i>Unearthing Jezebel: Reconstructing the Jezebel's and the Black Women's Narratives</i>	89
1.04	Mary Hess	<i>Creating Brave Spaces at the Intersection of Womanist Biblical Scholarship and the Pedagogy of Digital Storytelling</i>	105
	Kyle Oliver	<i>"Space to be Heard": Facilitating, Researching, and Documenting Digital Storytelling in a Church Summer Program</i>	119
	Mathew Scruggs	<i>Symbolic Performativity and Contesting Whiteness: A Latinx Perspective on Popular Religiosity and Religious Education</i>	147
1.05	Emily Jendzejec	<i>Confronting the Sin of White Supremacy: Dismantling Systemic Racism on Catholic College Campuses</i>	161
	Bethany Addington Mercy Langat	<i>Sacred Seclusion: Formation through Liminality and Hospitality in the Religious Education Classroom</i>	171
	Julia Yingnan Ji	<i>Creating Brave Space through Spiritual Critical Friendship in and Outside Classrooms</i>	185

1.06	Mualla Selçuk	<i>Teaching Beyond Normativity: What Opportunities Does Religious Education Have to Create Brave Spaces and Overcome Cultural Biases?</i>	201
	Natascha Kienstra Monique van Dijk Olav Boelens	<i>An Empirical Study of Interreligious Student Learning in Classroom Teaching</i>	213
1.07	Sang-Il Kim	<i>The Storied Power of Grace for Hillbillies: Teaching the Doctrine of Justification by Grace, Narratively</i>	227
	Moon Son	<i>US-North Korean Nuclear Tension and Its Application in the Context of Religious Education</i>	237
2.01	W.Y. Alice Chan Emile Lester	<i>Intersectionality and Identity Politics of Race, Religion, and Class in Georgia Public Schools</i>	251
	Monique Dijk-Groeneboer Ozlem Atay	<i>Turkish Pupils in Dutch Schools</i>	265
	Helena Stockinger	<i>"Why Have You Bought a Black Doll?" How Children Talk about Diversity</i>	277
2.02	John Falcone	<i>Outdoing Dewey: Wise Provincialism, Critical Race Pedagogy, and Pragmatist Theologies of Hope</i>	291
	Virginia Lee	<i>Something Inside So Strong: Learning from the Freedom Schools Movement</i>	315
2.03	HyeRan Kim-Cragg	<i>The Emperor Has No Clothes! Exposing Whiteness as Explicit, Implicit, and Null Curriculum</i>	325
	Sarah Reuter	<i>Between Utopia and Reality – Can We Make Inclusion in Society Happen?</i>	341
	Lindsay Radice	<i>Searching for Meaning in the Wake of Gun Violence in Schools: One Catholic High School's Response</i>	353
2.04	Dennis Gunn	<i>"Our Divided Society — A Challenge to Religious Education": REA's 1969 National Convention and the Opening-up of Brave Conversations about Race and Religion</i>	363
	Charles Chesnavage	<i>The White Supremacist Worldview of Horace Bushnell and the Null Curriculum in Religious Education</i>	373
	Janiqua Green	<i>We Will Never Be White as Snow: The Implicit Curriculum of White Normativity and Null Curriculum of Black Liberation Theology in the Hymnody of the Black Baptist Tradition</i>	393
2.05	Jong Soo Park	<i>Language Ideology and White Normativity in the Church: A Story of the Uniting Church in Australia</i>	401
	Moon Jung Choi	<i>Conscientization of Resilient/Transformative Agency: a Postcolonial Feminist Pedagogical Remedy to Women's Sin</i>	421

3.01	David Csinos	<i>From Pioneer to Partner: Dismantling White Normativity through Ethnographic Theology</i>	435
	Jos De Kock Ronelle Sonnenberg	<i>Normativity in Empirical Youth Ministry and Religious Education Research</i>	449
3.02	Karen Mosby	<i>A Visit to "The Clearing" and "Warrior Falls": In Search of "Brave and Beyond" Spaces for Religious Education</i>	469
	Tamara Henry	<i>"Don't Touch My Hair": Exploring a Womanist Pedagogy of Resistance for Young Black Women in the Art and Music of Beyonce and Solange Knowles.</i>	485
	Jana Howson	<i>To Boldly Go: Using Science Fiction to Open the Door to Brave Conversation in White Spaces</i>	497
3.03	Amanda Pittman John H. Boyles	<i>Challenging White Jesus: Addressing Effects of Race in the Undergraduate Bible Classroom</i>	507
	Mara Brecht	<i>Catholic Social Learning and Racial Injustice: See — Judge... Act?</i>	521
	Steffano Montano	<i>Addressing White Supremacy on Campus: Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Theological Education</i>	535
3.04	John Valk	<i>Beyond Religious Normativity: Creating Plural Worldview Spaces</i>	549
	Mariska Lauterboom	<i>Decolonizing Interreligious Education as a Resistance Against White Normativity</i>	561
	Bernhard Gruemme	<i>Power, Equality and Differency in Religious Pedagogy: The Underrated Relation</i>	573
3.05	Katherine Turpin	<i>The Ambivalent Legacy of Practice in Faith Formation Literature</i>	587
	Tracey Lamont	<i>Safe Spaces or Brave Spaces? Reflections on Practical Theology and Transformative Learning Theories</i>	603
	Soonjong Choi	<i>White America's Self-help Tradition as a Master Narrative</i>	619

3.07	Monique Dijk-Groeneboer Ozlem Atay	<i>Turkish Pupils in Dutch Schools</i>	265
	Michal Opatrny	<i>"White Normativity" and Eastern Europe: Old Victims or New Oppressors?</i>	623
	Ömer Faruk Gürlesin	<i>Multi-voiced-ness of Religious Identity</i>	633
	Duncan Wielzen Monique Dijk-Groeneboer	<i>'Black' and 'White Schools' in the Netherlands: Toward a Pedagogy of Belonging, Inclusivity and Normality</i>	641
	Ina Ter Avest (VU University & Inholland University, Amsterdam)	<i>Hannah Arendt's Concept of Natality – Inspiring to Go Beyond White Normativity</i>	651

Daniel Hauge
Boston University School of Theology
djhauge@bu.edu
REA Annual Meeting 2018

The Power of a Comfortable White Body: Race and Habitual Emotion

Abstract: This paper explores the role of white comfort in sustaining white hegemony in institutional culture and classroom dynamics. The presumption of comfort and security in established social norms enacts an embodied commitment to white supremacy that operates concurrently with conscious, articulated desires to pursue equity, as it delimits how white people imagine what authentically equitable institutions might look and feel like. The paper draws upon theological uses of phenomenology and developmental psychology to describe how the white self develops within a hegemonic social milieu, and how an embodied sense of agency and comfort within unjust social structures facilitates white normativity.

In an introductory feminist philosophy class at UNC Charlotte, the professor discusses racist stereotypes of black men as threatening and predatory, and the familiar of a white woman tensing up and clutching her purse if she encounters a black man on a dark street. One white female student raises her hand, stands up and insists, “But I *am* scared of black men! If I pass one on the street at night, I can’t help it. I tense up and get knots in my stomach.” When the TA for the class speaks up and chides the student for being racist, she responds, “Oh, so only PC things can be said in the class; I can’t say how I really feel!”¹

In another classroom, in which white privilege and microaggressions are the topic of discussion, a black student describes her painful experiences of being consistently marginalized and categorized as ‘the black girl.’ A white student quickly speaks up, “I know exactly what she means! I lived in a neighborhood and they referred to me as ‘the white girl!’” The professor facilitating the discussion describes this interjection as a “rush to identify with the black student’s experience,” a move that functions to diminish the distinctive nature of that experience. The white student’s impulse to identify “placed under erasure the reality and gravitas of the black student’s experience of whiteness as terror by shifting the black student’s experience to *her own* (white) situation.”²

An academic conference on sexuality held in the United Kingdom announces a meeting of a “black caucus,” making clear that the meeting is intended specifically for scholars of color. At the scheduled time, ten people arrive for the meeting, four of whom are white. The facilitator hands out a description clarifying that the time is intended for participants of color, but none of the white people excuse themselves, and the facilitator does not insist that they do. As the

¹ Shannon Sullivan, “The Heart and Guts of White People: Ethics, Ignorance, and the Physiology of White Racism,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 44, no. 4 (December 2014): 592.

² George Yancy, *Look, A White! Philosophical Essays on Whiteness* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2012), 160.

conversation begins, the white people justify their curiosity and desire to attend, while the people of color present try to explain the importance of having a space free of whiteness to process their experiences. After some discussion, one white person leaves the group, with the others gradually following.³

Efforts to dismantle white normativity⁴ through anti-racist education consistently encounter various forms of intractable resistance, even in the most progressive academic settings. White habitual practices, among students and also among educators and administrators committed to anti-racist pedagogy, often function to perpetuate white normativity rather than challenge it. Sara Ahmed, in her research on diversity practitioners in higher education, identifies a recurring theme: an “institution can be experienced by practitioners *as* resistance.... The feeling of doing diversity work is the feeling of coming up against something that does not move, something solid and tangible.”⁵ In this paper I propose that one dimension of institutional practice that accounts for such a tangible experience of resistance is the power of *white comfort* as a socially constructed emotion, one which generates reflexive, intuitive practices designed to preserve white normativity. The resistance of “well-meaning white people” to fundamental structural change in racially hierarchical institutions can be attributed, in part, to an accumulation of emotional habits formed through interaction with the social structures and patterns of white hegemony, habits and feelings which in turn shape white intuitions and behavioral patterns which perpetuate those same structures.

To develop my account of white comfort as an emotion that manifests social power I turn to theoretical categories drawn from phenomenology and developmental psychology, refined and redefined by scholars employing a critical, anti-oppression lens. I draw particularly from Mayra Rivera’s application of phenomenology to raced and gendered bodies and Phillis Sheppard’s self psychology centered on the experience of black women. While these theoretical frameworks utilize different disciplinary approaches, they each offer an account of how human beings are shaped in relationship with our social environments, and largely in terms of the different identity categories and power relationships inherent to those environments. Building upon these conceptual frameworks, I examine how the white body, including its physiological emotional responses, is co-constituted in relationship with the racialized world.

Because I am interested primarily in the more nuanced, pervasive ways that institutions avowedly committed to anti-racist work perpetuate systemic racism, I focus intentionally on the role of more subtle, satisfying emotions such as comfort, felt agency, and security in one’s social space. I examine how emotions of comfort are operative where more visceral, ‘negative’ emotions are not apparent. The three scenarios with which I opened the essay each involve white

³ Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 36-37.

⁴ Korie Edwards describes white normativity as “the normalization of whites’ cultural practices, ideologies, and location within the racial hierarchy such that how whites do things; their understandings about life, society, and the world; and their dominant social location over other racial groups are accepted as “just how things are.” *The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 10.

⁵ Ahmed, 26.

emotional dynamics—although it is only the first (the student declaring a visceral fear of black men) that might immediately be recognized as such. To be sure, intense emotions such as fear and anger, associated with stereotypes and ideologies of hatred, also play a large role in shaping institutional dynamics and racist social policies. Critical psychologist Derek Hook maintains that for a comprehensive analysis of racism, “we need to apprehend those habituated symptoms of avoidance, aversion, disgust or discomfort—bodily reactions, bodily symptoms of racism—exactly those evasive structures of oppression that lie beneath discursive consciousness.”⁶ However, I emphasize that less obvious, more pervasive ‘positive’ emotions also contribute to maintaining patterns of racial hierarchy precisely because they reinforce the normativity of experiences of relative power and efficacy to which white people are accustomed. These emotions incentivize the reproduction of the white hegemonic social world in which they are generated.

Analyzing the Role of Emotion in Structural Racism

In addressing systemic racism, it is fair to ask why focus on “white emotion” at all? The choice to focus on emotion when addressing racism or any systemic injustice lies open to charges of overemphasizing the personal over the structural and political—perhaps buttressing the widespread assumption that *racism* simply means conscious intentional animosity toward people of color rather than a wider hierarchical social system. But analysis of emotion when speaking about racism is not limited to individual animus. A multivalent perspective of the relationship between emotion and social structures takes into account how emotions imbue habitual actions and attitudes that enact structural injustice whether animus is consciously perceived or not.

A nuanced conception of the role of emotion in political systems helps account for how the personal and the political are always intertwined. Paula Ioanide describes how she came to focus on the central role of emotion in politics as a result of her activism in New York state to prevent the expansion of a county jail. Organizers amassed copious research on the disproportionately harmful effects of the criminal justice system upon people of color and presented them before legislators, only to be met with “embodied indifference and emotional intransigence.” Ioanide reflects, “We were battling emotionally entrenched structures that held intact ideologies, beliefs, and worldviews, not empirical evidence.”⁷ The ability of emotion to sediment ideologies and beliefs then results in repeated patterns of social action, or what Imani Perry calls “practices of inequality,” which are “influenced by visceral responses to assumptions that operate within the process of reason and analysis and that insidiously lead to inequitable and illegitimate discrimination.”⁸ Social structures operate through specific policies and power relations, but also through emotional commitments—often experienced as a resigned assumption

⁶ Derek Hook, “‘Pre-discursive’ Racism.” *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* 16 (2006): 208.

⁷ Paula Ioanide, *The Emotional Politics of Racism: How Feelings Trump Facts in an Era of Colorblindness* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 213.

⁸ Imani Perry, *More Beautiful and More Terrible: The Embrace and Transcendence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 42.

of the inevitability of the current system—that incentivize the maintenance of those structures alongside articulated commitments to dismantle them.

The field of education is increasingly addressing the role of emotional dynamics where power and privilege in the classroom are concerned. Writing from a perspective very critical of the entire concept of racial microaggressions, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt contends that experiences of marginalization reported by students of color on college campuses are attributable to “negative emotionality and the tendency to perceive oneself as a victim,” and that microaggression training serves only to “make the most fragile and anxious students quicker to take offense.”⁹ Conversely, Robin DiAngelo’s experience facilitating anti-racist trainings and discussions has led her to coin the term *white fragility* as a central concept, which she defines as “a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves.”¹⁰ DiAngelo’s research delineates a variety of visceral emotional responses exhibited by white people involved in anti-racist group dialogue. Because white people frequently grow up and live in largely segregated social environments, exposure to discourse about white hegemony, white privilege, and systemic racism can engender “anger, withdrawal, emotional incapacitation, guilt, argumentation, and cognitive dissonance (all of which reinforce the pressure on facilitators to avoid directly addressing racism).”¹¹

These emotional responses, and emotional performances, impact anti-racist pedagogy. In one example, DiAngelo and Sensoy describe a classroom scenario in which they proposed that racism be defined as *racial prejudice + social power = racism*. They note that the white students all joined in to protest and question this definition in a very emotionally charged manner, “the only time over the four sessions in which every White student voluntarily participates.”¹² For DiAngelo and Sensoy, it is important to understand such emotionally charged behaviors not simply as individual expressions, but also in terms of how such emotion *performs*: “In their questioning, the White participants hold the discussion at the intellectual level, control the intellectual space, enact their positions as legitimizers of knowledge, and avoid the self-reflection the facilitators want to guide them in.”¹³

These examples illustrate how emotions permeate the interactions between white people and a social world shaped by increasing racial diversity and renegotiations of power dynamics between racial groups. Whether it involves white people presuming to adjudicate whether experiences of racism among students of color are legitimate, or simply encountering difficult direct conversations about racism and power, these interactions exhibit “emotionally entrenched structures,” as Ioanide puts it. Hence, I argue there is value in theorizing the mechanisms by which white emotions are formed by, and in turn form, structures of white normativity. As Cheryl

⁹ Jonathan Haidt, “The Unwisest Idea on Campus: Commentary on Lilienfeld,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 12, no. 1 (2017): 176-177.

¹⁰ Robin DiAngelo, “White Fragility,” *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3, no. 3 (2011): 55.

¹¹ DiAngelo, 2011, 54.

¹² Robin DiAngelo and Özlem Sensoy, “Getting slammed: White depictions of race discussions as arenas of violence,” *Race Ethnicity and Education* 17, no 1 (2012): 14.

¹³ DiAngelo and Sensoy, 14.

Matias and colleagues state, “If emotions are not simply innate (Boler, 1999), and are, in fact, embedded within the power relations within which emotion is expressed, then entertaining how emotional expressions of Whiteness recycle White supremacist power relations becomes gravely important.”¹⁴ The nature of the relationship between emotion and power is crucial, as Michalinos Zembylas explains: because “the emotionality of whiteness should not be simply limited to the unconscious or innate feelings of white discomfort; rather, white emotionality needs to be also understood as socially and politically produced within the material, affective and discursive assemblages of whiteness and white supremacy.”¹⁵

In what follows, then, I propose an account of how white emotions—particularly those of comfort and confidence within a white supremacist social order—are generated through experiencing the positionality of whiteness from the earliest years of development. A focus on the individual experience of embodied, subtle white emotions is not meant to refute or replace social structural analysis, but adds an additional dimension of how social structures operate and remain entrenched even in light of concentrated efforts to change them. To address these questions I first turn to the analyses of Rivera and Sheppard, and their intricate accounts of how societies and selves constitute each other in a racialized world.

Our Bodies, Our Societies, Our Emotions: Phenomenological and Psychoanalytic Reflections

One primary commitment of critical perspectives such as postcolonial theory and womanist theology is to expose how Western philosophical and scientific discourses theorize from a particular location of social power—that of the white, European, cisgendered, straight man—while reflexively presenting themselves as objective, universal accounts of the human. By rendering invisible the lived experiences of those who do not fit the description of this “universal subject,” these intellectual practices reinforce social hierarchies by relegating those who are “othered” to the periphery. This state of affairs requires interventions of the kind Mayra Rivera performs in *Poetics of the Flesh*, in which she revises and extends the phenomenological work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and his concept of the *corporeal schema*. Merleau-Ponty’s account of the body as co-constituted in interaction with the world has great explanatory power, but takes for granted a body unencumbered by an oppressive discriminatory gaze—a limitation Rivera undertakes to correct.

As Rivera explains, Merleau-Ponty draws from psychology, psychoanalysis and neurology to develop his account of a body that is “tied to the things it perceives, the objects it uses, and to other human bodies.”¹⁶ Expressing this interrelation requires thinking about the body as something other than only a material object—so he develops his concept of the *corporeal schema*: “a functional model of the body—not necessarily the body seen by others, but that

¹⁴ Cheryl Matias, Roberto Montoya, and Naomi W. M. Nishi, “Blocking CRT: How the Emotionality of Whiteness Blocks CRT in Urban Teacher Education,” *Educational Studies: Journal of the American Educational Studies Association* 52, no. 1 (2016): 8.

¹⁵ Michalinos Zembylas, “Affect, Race, and White Discomfort in Schooling: Decolonial Strategies for ‘Pedagogies of Discomfort.’” *Ethics and Education* 13, no. 1 (2018): 91.

¹⁶ Mayra Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 67.

through which I act in the world.”¹⁷ The experience of one’s body in the world is differentiated from body as object. The most quotidian demonstration of how this functions is how labor shapes our bodies through the repetition of particular tasks, or through the development of skills and art forms like playing the piano. “A pianist moves his fingers, his whole body toward the piano to produce heartfelt music, without ever needing to picture the location of the keys in his mind. He expresses himself through the piano.”¹⁸

The corporeal schema is shaped not only in relationship with objects but through its more complex interrelationships with other human beings. Here Merleau-Ponty draws from child psychology and the infant-caregiver relationship, and maintains that we enter into intercorporeal relationships from our earliest formative years, as when a baby responds in kind to her father’s smile. “Because at this stage the child lacks a clear sense of the boundaries between her body and those of others—thus not having a sense of the body as *hers*—the response to the parent’s smile cannot be interpreted as an imitation of a visual image. Instead, the child adopts or appropriates another’s conduct in her own body.”¹⁹ Merleau-Ponty calls this process being “dilated-to-the-world,” and it continues throughout our lives, in and through our multiple relationships with other human beings and the rest of the physical world. “As it acts, the body is transplanted into things and incorporates them; it is impregnated by the gestures of other human beings; it borrows its images from others.”²⁰ Indeed, central to the corporeal schema is the importance of sight and perception, which Merleau-Ponty conceptualizes as a particular form of touch. “Seeing is enmeshed and affected by what it sees.... Seeing is situated, perspectival, in obscurity as much as in light.”²¹ Who we are is determined in part by what we see and touch, which in turn is determined by where we are located, what we have seen, and who we have been seen by.

For Merleau-Ponty, the corporeal schema represents a relationship between the body and world which is generally expansive, exploratory, and unencumbered. In response, Rivera emphasizes that the co-constitution of body and world is experienced quite differently depending on how the bodies in question are placed within hierarchical, discriminatory social orders, such as racism. While “race” is not an essential, biological category, it has nevertheless functioned powerfully as a social category to stratify power and wealth, and to target people for violence and oppression based upon appearance. Race therefore affects how people see the world and how we experience being seen. “Perceptual practices become habitual, shaping knowledge about self and the world in ways that appear neutral, self-evident. It is precisely the habitual character of these practices that makes them seemingly immune to intellectual challenges.”²² The “historical-

¹⁷ Rivera, 67.

¹⁸ Ibid., 68.

¹⁹ Ibid., 70.

²⁰ Ibid., 74.

²¹ Ibid., 77-78.

²² Ibid., 138.

racial schema”²³ through which knowledge is formed also shapes and forms socially racialized bodies through practices of perception and response.

The corporeal schema influences both how people perceive the world and how they behave within it, to very different effect depending upon one’s position within the social hierarchy. “Social norms limit the possibilities I can imagine and embody,” Rivera explains —“constraining the ways I engage the world, enticing me to act some ways and deterring me from others.”²⁴ Merleau-Ponty understood the role of social norms, but he envisioned them as generally interacting with the body in an encouraging and possibility-expanding mode relative to the social world. “But he did not comment,” Rivera reminds us, “on how social hierarchies operate through such conventions—eliciting words, attitudes, and gestures marked by social discrimination.”²⁵ We interact with hierarchical norms through images, architecture, or geography, but most often the “lures and prohibitions of society reach me through others—through the ways they see me or ignore me, welcome or are threatened by my presence... the demeaning gaze, interrogation, or violent strike shapes my own habits and reactions—the acts I undertake, the spaces I avoid, the possibilities I can envision.”²⁶

At this point, the reader may note that I have not spoken specifically about emotion. While Rivera does refer to feelings of empathy and threat,²⁷ she generally focuses on the role of habitual actions and perceptions in response to social norms, and how they constitute the body. I believe, however, that it is not stretching Rivera’s account too far to emphasize the physiological nature of emotion as a important way in which our bodies interact with and are changed by the messages we receive from the social and physical world. In the opening example of the white student who expressed fear of black men, the historical-racial schema—which includes destructive stereotypes and imagery intended to evoke fear—shaped the student’s physiology and her felt experience just as it shaped her behavior. Shannon Sullivan points out that “nothing is more real or irrefutable than felt physiological responses—unchosen and unwilled, after all.”²⁸ She further explains that “white racism is bodily constitutive of more than just white people’s physical comportment, gestures, and styles of interactions with others. White racism can also help shape white people’s biochemical make-up and activities.”²⁹

My central point here is that Rivera’s reading of Merleau-Ponty, particularly her concept of the racial-historical schema, can serve as a framework for thinking about the racialization process in a comprehensive way, as a process that shapes intuitions and reflexive responses as surely as it shapes ideological beliefs or political structures. Moreover, I hold that a thorough

²³ Ibid., 140.

²⁴ Ibid., 142.

²⁵ Ibid., 141.

²⁶ Ibid., 144.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Sullivan, 592.

²⁹ Ibid., 597.

understanding of embodiment includes neurotransmitter levels and other automatic nervous system patterns which we experience under the category of “emotion.” The racialized social order shapes intuitions, perceptions, habits, spontaneous reactions, and emotions—all of which constitute our bodies. And as Rivera’s detailed analysis demonstrates, corporeal schemas develop differently depending on where one’s body is located within our complex social hierarchies produced by centuries of racial oppression. As a white man, the “acts I undertake, the spaces I avoid [or access], the possibilities I can envision” develop quite differently for me than for people of color—they are shaped by the same historical racial *context*, but the *schema* develops in a markedly different direction.³⁰

While a phenomenological account of racialization emphasizes habitual behaviors and physiological responses to theorize how the body develops in relation with the world, another way to conceptualize that relation is through the categories of developmental psychology. One advantage of using this lens is that it enables us to talk about a felt sense of self, more subtle and pervasive than visceral physiological responses such as fear and rage. The possibilities and limitations afforded by the historical racial schema have the power to shape an internalized sense of value, agency, and capacity to navigate the social world—all of which, I believe, thoroughly imbue our ideologies and decision-making processes with regard to creating systems and structures.

Within the field of developmental psychology, Phillis Sheppard performs an intervention analogous to Rivera’s as she reframes Heinz Kohut’s self psychology of through the lens of black women’s experience in *Self, Culture, and Others in Womanist Practical Theology*. As a psychoanalyst, Sheppard speaks more in terms of the psyche than of habitual behaviors. But she is also interested fundamentally in “the way in which social contexts are deeply embedded in the psyche and the experiences of the body.”³¹ Sheppard’s theoretical framework for the role of culture and social context in the psychological development and healing of black women is developed in conversation with Kohut’s understanding of “innate developmental needs that we turn to others to meet.... where self-ness emerged out of the experience of satisfaction of crucial needs throughout life.”³²

Two concepts that Kohut uses to elaborate on his theory, which are integral to Sheppard’s interest, are *mirroring* and *selfobjects*. Here she explains how these two concepts interrelate:

Self psychology proposes a model of development for a cohesive self that depends on an appropriately mirroring environment where ‘throughout his life a person will experience himself as a cohesive harmonious firm unit in time ... as long as at each stage of his life, he experiences certain representatives of human surrounds responding to him.’ These

³⁰ My choice to use the generalization “people of color” admittedly erases and collapses many different responses and co-constitutions based on specific race, ethnicity, and gender expression. My focus in this paper is the contrast between white embodiment and that of racially marginalized people under white hegemony, which regrettably lends itself to some oversimplification.

³¹ Phillis Sheppard, *Self, Culture, and Others in Womanist Practical Theology* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 3.

³² *Ibid.*, 111.

experiences of those who provided ‘mirroring’ and other needed functions were conceptualized by Kohut as selfobjects.³³

Kohut envisioned selfobject experiences as related first and foremost to caregivers (in a way that echoes Merleau-Ponty’s account of the infant’s “appropriating” of her parent’s smile), but he extended the idea to the influence of culture—primarily in terms of prominent creative individuals who connect empathetically with the culture as a whole with their work and help point a way forward during times of “cultural malaise.”³⁴ As Sheppard points out, this conception of *cultural selfobjects* highlights the role of cultural production to “facilitate group cohesion by expressing the deepest longings, sufferings, and celebrations of the group.”³⁵ Therefore, receiving positive engagement and feedback from both individual caretakers and cultural figures is essential for the “formation of a cohesive, positive sense of self.”³⁶

But while Sheppard affirms the theoretical value in some of Kohut’s core concepts, she also critiques certain limitations of his theory that owe at least in part to his social locatedness. In the first place, Sheppard argues that cultural selfobjects “are not solely individuals. They are also the symbols, language, institutions, and cultural productions that meet those needs for individuals and groups that are sometimes embodied by individuals.”³⁷ Kohut himself, according to Sheppard, was limited in his ability to adequately understand the importance of broader social context in development, precisely because of the nature of the social context in which he was formed, one in which “the cultural myth of individualism, as the desired outcome of development, permeates the theoretical air.”³⁸ She therefore provides a corrective, arguing that “from a womanist perspective ... to theorize the self involves theorizing the relational and contextual.”³⁹

Sheppard also challenges Kohut’s evaluation of the generally positive role of cultural selfobjects in development, asking, “So what happens to this development of self when culture—a source for mirroring—offers a distorted and exploited reflection of the self?”⁴⁰ Here the erasure of experiences that are not white and male in the construction of psychoanalytic theory becomes particularly salient. The distinct experience of black women in the United States—characterized by devaluation and distorted mirroring—challenges the utility of the theory for black women as well as the generalizability of the theory itself. “The need to foster resistance because of negative

³³ Ibid., 117.

³⁴ Ibid., 114.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 11.

³⁷ Ibid., 115

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 11.

views of black femaleness was not on Kohut's mind,"⁴¹ Sheppard points out, and proceeds to explain the necessity of forming communities that provide "a sense of belonging that regards black women's individual and communal ways of being as normative."⁴² Sheppard's move, while essential for addressing the health of black women, also constitutes a challenge to psychoanalytic theory itself—she offers "a model of self psychology that takes seriously black women's experiences—embodied, cultural, gendered, and sexual experiences—and, in so doing, make a claim to redefine the most foundational of self psychological concepts, the selfobject."⁴³ In so doing, her theory has potential ramifications for people of many different social locations, including, I would suggest, those in more privileged, oppressor positions.

White Bodies Constructed in Comfort

The work of Rivera and Sheppard illustrates the vital importance of taking social context and social location into account when developing theories about the nature of human interactions with the world, and the development of the embodied self. The extended time I have spent on their descriptions of the experience of people constrained by racism—in an essay purportedly about white emotion—is, in a way, an effort to try in some small way to reverse the traditional hegemonic script. If those who have been othered by the historical racial schema have consistently been required to experience themselves through the gaze of the oppressor, what would it mean for white people to view themselves through the lens of the experience of people of color? Certainly centuries of sedimented white supremacy makes this extraordinarily difficult, but it is a direction toward which we need to push. For my part, the efforts of Rivera and Sheppard to trouble and expand the theories of Merleau-Ponty and Kohut lead me to return to those theories with a more critical eye—not only to doubt their universality, but to ask whether the processes they describe actually work *too well* in the case of white people—creating white people ill-equipped to share power and space with those whom we have oppressed and othered.

At one point in *Poetics of the Flesh*, Rivera directs attention to the positive, generative ways in which raced and gendered bodies can be constituted in the context of affirming communities. "The accumulating effects of meeting eyes that react with love and respect to my presence, hearing words of approval, being surrounded by images that represent my body as beautiful are also part of the materializations of flesh." For marginalized communities, these "[a]ffirmative practices do not necessarily transform the operating norms of the broader society," but they can offer sustenance for struggle against such dehumanizing norms.⁴⁴ For those in socially dominant positionalities, however, such accumulating effects of affirmation plausibly function to reinforce those very operating norms, through shaping white bodies that presume the acceptability of their appearance and a baseline capacity to access resources and social power. This does not mean, of course, that every white person is equally loved and appreciated, or has

⁴¹ Ibid., 119.

⁴² Ibid., 123.

⁴³ Ibid., 122-23

⁴⁴ Rivera, 147.

equal access to power. Nor is it to argue that love and affirmation are in themselves a toxic influence for those at the top of social hierarchies. What analyses of inter-corporeal processes and cultural selfobjects do suggest, each in their own distinct ways, is that a myriad of interactive experiences with the world teach white bodies to expect a certain level of affirmation, social capacity, and social comfort *relative to* bodies which society considers “not white.” As Sullivan says, “just as white racism often courses through the bodies of people of color, damaging their health, white privilege courses through the bodies of white people, furnishing a baseline of security and comfort that subtends their good health.”⁴⁵

This level of comfort is experienced in the body in ways that are not necessarily conscious, so that even as white people learn more about the evils of structural racism and resolve to dismantle it, our social instincts and habits operate to preserve the security and capacity experienced in the body’s felt sense within a particular social milieu. This results in a matrix of white habits which are more challenging to self-interrogate because they are not quite the same thing as biases (even implicit biases) *against* racialized groups, but biases *toward* a comfort that is taken for granted. One example of this is what Shannon Sullivan describes as white *ontological expansiveness*, in which “white people tend to act and think as if all spaces—whether geographical, psychical, linguistic, economic, spiritual, bodily, or otherwise—are or should be available for them to move in and out of as they wish.”⁴⁶ Such habits can be exposed and interrogated by observing their cumulative effects and taking political and institutional action toward more equitable outcomes. I also believe, however, that greater attention to how such habitual emotions result from structural inequities may assist in recognizing and changing behavioral patterns themselves.

I suggest two possible ways in which an understanding of white comfort and assumed social affirmation might inform our analysis of white behavioral patterns in institutional settings. First, the degree of comfort which the co-constituted white self takes for granted is so pervasive that it is easily threatened by any challenge. This can happen through even small increases of racial or cultural diversity into a geographic space, or through the introduction of perspectives that challenge white intuitions about the appropriate distribution of power. Ioanide shows how ideologies of “self-reliance” function to obscure the role that violence and inheritance play in securing white wealth, and create a sense of identity for white people that is nevertheless perceived as “color-blind.” When such ideologies are challenged, those “testimonies that threaten the stability of the configuration have the potential to create embodied responses that feel akin to dying.”⁴⁷ The patterns of white fragility documented by DiAngelo, or increasingly popular political claim that efforts to restrict immigration to preserve a more homogenous white U.S. society are “not racist,” can be attributed to the effects of such “threats” to white comfort. It is demonstrative of just how pervasive and thoroughly infused white comfort is in the social milieu that these reactions often coexist in white people who articulate anti-racist values. The corporeal

⁴⁵ Sullivan, 606.

⁴⁶ Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege*. (Indiana University Press, 2006), 10.

⁴⁷ Ioanide, 217.

schema that presumes white normativity exerts as much or more influence on behavior than purported values, so as to preserve a racialized status quo.

Second, it would be interesting to see more research on how white people imaginatively project their intuitive sense of comfort navigating institutional space onto people of color, so that testimonies of the psychic toll of structural racism are either dismissed or met with confusion in the absence of “obvious” cases of racial hatred or discrimination. Recent reactions against microaggression discourse such as Haidt’s are often characterized by evaluating the testimonies of students of color against white intuitions about how positive or harmful the social climate “really is” for them. Reports of the cumulative effects of structural racism and white habits of exclusion are evaluated against white comfort with the status quo, in which the simple presence of a small minority of nonwhite bodies *feels* “diverse” relative to the more homogeneous contexts in which white emotions and habits are co-constituted. The action of the white academics entering the black caucus space described at the beginning of this paper exemplifies both of the tendencies named here: First, an assumption on the part of white people that they ought to have access to all spaces and that their presence would be welcome as long as their intentions were noble, and second, a lack of perceptivity concerning the legitimate needs of people of color to rejuvenate and recuperate through shared time in social spaces not dominated by whiteness.

It is worth reiterating that such habits and practices are shaped through institutional policies and structures as well as implicit and overt ideologies that devalue people of color. Emotion is not the secret key to fighting racism that reduces the salience of these other factors. But white comfort, as it is constructed and layered through millions of everyday interactions with a racially structured world, is a distinct force that pushes forward of its own accord, even in tension with changing attitudes and efforts toward changing policies. Perhaps a better understanding of how social forces constrain the bodies of people of color might further explain how those same forces unleash the power embedded in comfortable white bodies. It is crucial for white people to interrogate not only what we cognitively assent to, but also how we perceive and feel our very relationship to the social world.

Bibliography

Ahmed, Sara. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012.

DiAngelo, Robin. "White Fragility." *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3, no. 3 (2011): 54-70.

Haidt, Jonathan. "The Unwisest Idea on Campus: Commentary on Lilienfeld." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 12, no. 1 (2017): 176-177.

Hook, Derek. "'Pre-discursive' Racism." *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* 16 (2006): 207-232.

Ioanide, Paula. *The Emotional Politics of Racism: How Feelings Trump Facts in an Era of Colorblindness*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015.

Matias, Cheryl E., Montoya, Roberto, & Nishi, Naomi W. M. "Blocking CRT: How the Emotionality of Whiteness Blocks CRT in Urban Teacher Education." *Educational Studies: Journal of the American Educational Studies Association* 52, no. 1 (2016): 1-19.

Perry, Imani. *More Beautiful and More Terrible: The Embrace and Transcendence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. New York: New York University Press, 2011.

Rivera, Mayra. *Poetics of the Flesh*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

Sheppard, Phillis. *Self, Culture, and Others in Womanist Practical Theology*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.

Sullivan, Shannon. *Revealing Whiteness : The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege*. American Philosophy. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.

_____. "The Heart and Guts of White People: Ethics, Ignorance, and the Physiology of White Racism." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 44, no. 4 (December 2014): 591-611.

Yancy, George. *Look, a White! Philosophical Essays on Whiteness*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012.

Zembylas, Michalinos. "Affect, Race, and White Discomfort in Schooling: Decolonial Strategies for 'Pedagogies of Discomfort.'" *Ethics and Education* 13, no. 1 (2018): 86-104.



Mary Elizabeth Moore
Boston University School of Theology
memoore@bu.edu
2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4

The Depths of White Privilege: Diving Beneath Shame and Guilt

Incomplete Draft: Please do not quote from this paper-in-progress. Both the paper and citations need to be completed before it is ready for sharing. Thank you.

Abstract

The persistence of white privilege and escalating racism in the U.S. challenge religious educators to analyze the roots and destructive potential of both. This paper draws on historical and contemporary analyses in dialogue with personal reflection and the oral histories of two leaders who seek to recognize and live beyond their own privilege. The purpose of the study is to describe the landscape of white privilege and analyze the interplay of public and personal dynamics. The analysis reveals the educational potential of personal narratives and structural analysis in understanding and transforming white privilege into humble work for justice.

The persistence of white privilege and escalating racism in the U.S. challenge religious educators to analyze the roots and destructive potential of both. This paper draws on historical and contemporary analyses in dialogue with self-reflections and the oral histories of two leaders who seek to recognize and live beyond their own privilege. [Note: The oral histories will be added to the next draft of the paper.] The purpose of the study is to describe the landscape of white privilege and analyze the interplay of public and personal dynamics. The analysis reveals the educational potential of personal narratives and structural analysis in understanding and transforming white privilege into humble work for justice.

The thesis of this paper is that white privilege is a persistent feature of the landscape of racial tensions in the United States, and that the personal and public work required to address the influence of such privilege requires deep understanding and transformative responses, reaching far beyond shame and guilt. To feel shame or guilt as a white person is inevitable and necessary, but it is not enough. It is only of value if it is a starting point for radical and continuing change. To make generalized claims regarding the pernicious guilt of white people is also inevitable and necessary, but only if it leads to more nuanced analyses of white privilege, white normativity, and internalized perspectives and attitudes that shape the lives of white people, young and old, rich and poor.

Wisdom in Personal Reflection

I begin with a personal reflection – a necessity in the work of white normativity and privilege and in the work of overcoming racism. As seen in the brief literature review below,

much writing on whiteness, privilege, race, and racism takes the form of memoirs. The human complexities tell stories that transcend platitudes, “oughts,” and simplistic analyses. The literary form of memoir is also critical for honest self-reflection, which is critical if people are to examine such powerful and often unseen forces as white normativity and privilege.

As a child who grew up in the white Southern middle class on the United States, I was not even aware of the privilege that I had, simply by being white. I did have some sense, however; my conscience was not fully dead. Why would African American and white people need separate drinking fountains, waiting rooms in the train station, schools, and restrooms? I asked myself these questions, but did not question them deeply until I was in high school. What I did question deeply was hateful language. Nothing in my socialization made me immune to the vitriol of derogatory terms used against African American people in my native Louisiana or against Latino/a people in my father’s native Texas. I did not hear such terms in my home, but I did hear them occasionally in my extended family and I cringed. I hated those words and those sentiments, and yet I did not become a staunch protestor until I was in college and beyond. I began to grow my conscience slowly, and also to grow in my awareness of the complicity with which white people (me included), at least in the United States, engage in racist structures, policies, and practices, often without conscious awareness. Indeed my change was slow in part because, as a white person, that was a luxury that I could afford. I was not forced by my life experience to face the deepest ruptures of racism.

As I became more astutely aware of my white complicity, I also felt more hopeless about myself as a white person. One such moment was years ago when I was teaching a class as a very young professor. An African American man in the course frequently argued with what I presented, protested the syllabus, and resisted participation with others in a listening or interactive way. He often dominated class discussions with his protests, and I sought mostly to accept his interventions and weave them back into the class or simply acknowledge that he had a good point (he often did). He was a force in the class, and I was intimidated. I reached out to him, but none of my efforts succeeded. As a white woman, I felt terrible shame in my whiteness and was quite sure that anything I did to quell his protests would be perceived as a racist act, and could well *be* a racist act. Thus, I muddled through, thinking throughout the semester that I was not teaching the course well due to my own hopeless racism. Many years later, another African American man who had been in the class said to me as we were reminiscing about our pasts: “You know we were really frustrated with you in that class. We asked ourselves, ‘When is she going to put this student in his place so he will stop disrupting the class and interrupting our learning?’ ” I was shocked. I suddenly realized that my own shame in being white had led to self-doubt that had quelled my ability to act wisely as a teacher. I continue to have such experiences, often in my educational leadership role. I have not completed my quest to live honestly with my whiteness and be a humble partner with others in the work of transformation. I keep trying, but my debilitating shame and guilt can still at times overtake my wiser self.

How can I be more fully aware of my own attitudes, actions, and values exercised in the world? I can trace some of the more profound moments of discovery but, in this paper, I will pose a newer challenge. I have long been active in multi-, inter-, and many-cultured work, almost always working with a team or another person of an ethnicity different from mine. I have engaged in deep conversations; worked in shared projects; read much of the literature; attended lectures and conferences; conducted ethnographic, interview, and oral history studies across

cultures; helped establish a multicultural research and resource center at a time when that was more relevant than today; partnered with persons of color to support their work behind the scenes; and worked intensively (and hopefully with some modicum of wisdom) to support increased diversity and equity in my home institutions. One would think that I would have learned a thing or two, and I have; however, the major thing I have learned is that I know little and what I know can easily be distorted by my not knowing, or by my witting and unwitting misuse of white privilege and power.

In sum, I have now been engaged in intentional work on multi- and many-cultured understanding and relationship-building for some 40 years, and was engaged in more general, less focused efforts before that. I continue to learn how much I do not know, how much my humility is tinged with shame and guilt that undermine my ability to act more wisely than I do. I am also struck by the degree to which the world has changed, sometimes in slowly building more just structures, values, attitudes, public declarations, and rights protection. Yet even the most significant and effective changes have severe limits, and the most positive aspects of the justice movements can too easily deceive people into thinking that we have reached a new and better place. I awake every morning to signs of persisting, growing discrimination, injustice, and oppressive, life-destroying values and attitudes. The pernicious, hate-filled attitudes and actions in U.S. white cultures are often covered with a thin veneer to hide or disguise them, even from the white persons and communities that perpetuate them. Such changing contexts pose new challenges for white folks in the U.S. who seek to live beyond their own white-privileged assumptions and actions.

For me personally, I have made new discoveries after my long years of working to build relationships and just systems in my personal life and in the ways I described above. I have discovered that my voice and actions are often misguided and unwelcome, and that self-examination and self-transformation are needed. I have discovered that, in the present moment, my voice needs to be muted or silent much of the time in order not to mute others' voices; yet, I also need to speak boldly in words and actions and to discern when, why, and how to speak out. These are my responsibilities as a human being, a Christian, and an educational leader, namely to be humbly bold in words and actions. I need to contribute whatever I can to building healthy communities grounded in dignity, and to reshape social structures within my context and in the larger public sphere. What I need to live into that vocation is vision based on honesty, self-awareness, perpetual learning, and discernment of the complex and ever-changing realities of the communities in which I live, teach, and lead.

Wisdom in the Human Community

An increasing range of voices address white normativity and privilege directly and indirectly. This paper does not offer a thorough literature review, but it engages with diverse approaches and perspectives, revealing nuances and complexities in the words of public commentators, historians, biographers, and social analysts.

What is the nature of racial classifications and prejudice in the United States?

The public commentators are multiple, and I will offer only a sample. One of the classic narratives of the historical and social-psychological dynamics of white normativity is Thandeka's *Learning to Be White: Money, Race, and God in America* (2000). In this careful analysis, she reveals the interplay of religion, race, and class (money) and the many social and psychological factors that contribute to a sense of whiteness and to the dynamics of self-contempt. She opens with narratives of white Americans and their memories of small defeats, which create "the disconcerting feeling that something about one's own white identity is not quite right" (2000, 1). She elaborates on the effects, "This misalignment with one's own identity could serve as a definition of shame" (ibid.).

Curiously Zeus Leonardo (2009, 1-3) also begins with a narrative, his own childhood story of an encounter that awakened him to racial difference and a lifelong quest to make sense of that experience and those of countless others in schools and beyond. His quest led him to use the tools of critical social theory to analyze race and whiteness; to analyze the complex interactions of race, class, and education in order to pose a more honest and real multiculturalism; and to explore such topics as "the myth of white ignorance" (107-126). For both Thandeka and Leonardo, the interacting historical, social, and interpersonal forces form the complex phenomenon of whiteness, and what I am addressing in this paper as white normativity and privilege. Others describe these dynamics through memoirs (Irving 2014; Vance 2016), always revealing the complex interplay of diverse factors of race, social class, region, and life experience.

These several analyses reveal the internal and external complexities of whiteness, which Cheryl Matias (2016) analyzes complexly. She argues that whiteness evokes strong emotions of shame, denial, disgust, grief, abuse of colonial power (as in surveillance of brown bodies), and narcissism, all playing roles in educational structures and pedagogy. She thus encourages deep probing and critical analysis of emotions for the sake of transforming white teachers, their approaches to teaching, and the educational structures. She describes this work as "a project to reaffirm our humanity by recognizing the racialized state of our emotionalities, its association with the permanence of whiteness, and how education can be one avenue that can lead us down a path that liberates our communal heart" (6). These analyses have been expanded historically by others (Bonilla-Silva 2001; Billings 2016), and they have been expanded through socio-political analyses of race in the United States (Hill 2017) and the global dynamics of violence (Le Tran 2017). The work to date points to the complexities, interactions, consequences, and resistances built into ideologies of whiteness and their influences on the life practices of white people.

The analyses continue in the work of social activists and public commentators as they evaluate what is needed to restore the promises of democracy and social justice. One leading contemporary analyst and spokesperson is Rev. William Barber, who leads the Moral Mondays movement. Barber (2016)'s analysis focuses on the present and future, though he analyzes history to inform the present. He is convinced that the urgent work for this moment is to build coalitions across race, social class, and social issues in order to work together for political and social change. He narrates his own story of leading what he calls a "Third Reconstruction" in the U.S. According to Barber, the first reconstruction followed the first (and partial) Emancipation Proclamation, which declared the emancipation of slaves in ten states, ushering in the

Reconstruction era and lasting until 1877. The second reconstruction was the Civil Rights movement. Both of these movements had positive effects; yet both evoked counter-reactions, resistances, and efforts to tear down and retreat from advances that had been made.

Rev. Barber draw on historical analysis and memoir to make his case for “fusion movements,” bringing people together in the work of justice, healing, and reshaping social, economic, and political structures. Such fusion movements have counterparts elsewhere. For example, Thandeka addressed the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in 1999 with “Why Anti-Racism Will Fail.” She argued that race cannot be understood as a phenomenon separate from social class, and she protested over-simplified claims that all whites are racists and need to be taught about their racism so they can confess. Her argument was not a naïve excuse for whites, but a call for whites to take responsibility for being more than a category. The category of whiteness should not be used as an excuse to oversimplify realities of race and isolate those realities from economics or from the social-psychological hurts, angers, and prejudices that fuel social destruction. More important, whiteness should not be used as an excuse to avoid the harder task of taking responsibility for social change, nor for patronizing actions. Thandeka urged people to learn, to develop empathy for others, and to organize communities and coalitions that reflect and enact a larger social vision. To place Barber and Thandeka together as fusion- or coalition-builders is not to argue that they are the same, but to emphasize the stark destructiveness of racial prejudice, discrimination, and violence, at the same time emphasizing that the analysis should not be the dead-end of the story; it should be the motivator to join with others in effecting deep cultural change and, in the case of Barber, immediate political effects.

What does it mean to be white?

The complexity of this question is great, especially given issues of social class, regionalism, and cultural histories. I will focus here on social class since that has been identified as a major force in white rage (in the case of economic struggle) and the multiplication of white privilege (in the case of wealth and other forms of privilege). A white woman from Appalachia asks why she is not included in the analysis of racial oppression, given her experience of stark poverty and debilitating social forces within her family, community, and larger society. A young white man growing up in an impoverished section of a large U.S. city asks why he is identified with white privilege when his experience is anything but privileged. Some recent authors have analyzed the experience of growing up poor and white within families and communities that are poor and white, carrying generations of trauma as the legacy of social oppression. Nancy Isenberg (2016) tracks the history of class in the U.S. over a period of 400 years in a book with the compelling title *White Trash*. J.D. Vance (2016) approaches the subject in the form of a family memoir in his *Hillbilly Elegy*. His memoir chronicles the generations of suffering in a family that, even when parts of it became economically middle class, suffered from the neglect, rejection, and oppression of their poor white culture, deeply embedded in their lives and harshly judged by the larger society.

The issues raised in these historical and memoir accounts are intensified in the social structures that ignore and oppress all persons in the working class. Tex Sample (2018) speaks to this concern in *Working Class Rage*, arguing that the working class (of all racial and ethnic backgrounds) has been neglected in the U.S. and is enraged. He analyzes political and legal history, social studies of the working class, and stories of individuals and communities,

uncovering the complicated realities of working class life and the systems that oppress working people. He points to the failings of the political systems and citizenry to attend to the concerns of working people for just wages, secure patterns of life, and political voice. The oppressive forces on the working class, and the policies that favor the wealthy are strangling working people, at the same time that they are labeled as white and often grouped with people who have far more security, wealth, and power than they. Sample concludes his analysis with proposals for a vision of the common good, combined with practical action.

Of course, whiteness includes people born into privilege as well as those who are born into poverty or economic struggle. John Wise (2011) and Debby Irving (2014) reveal some of the formative intersections in their lives between whiteness and other forms of privilege, and some of the internal and external barriers they faced as they sought to build racial justice in their own contexts. Their efforts were often thwarted by their own hidden (and racist) assumptions and values. In fact, Wise attributes his writing of *White Like Me*

... to an admonition by people of color I knew in New Orleans to ‘take inventory’ of my life, to get clear on why I cared so much about racism, to understand my own motivation for challenging it. Until I did this, they insisted, my own work would be unfocused, my contributions minimal, my willingness to stay in the struggle transitory at best (Wise 2011, viii).

Irving (2014), similar to Wise, woke up to her own racial assumptions and deeply buried prejudices through a series of “wake-up” encounters over time, some that she sought and some not. In her efforts to build cross-racial relationships and her efforts to build racial justice, she had failed to see her own fears and dramatic mistakes. Facing herself was critical and, in that deeply personal work, she was helped by hard experiences that woke her up to her own racism. She was also helped by studying the history of people of color, and by interacting with people she knew who shared their own raw stories of injustice and oppression. Irving increasingly developed the courage to look inside herself (the inner work), and then to rebuild her outer work.

The stories of Wise and Irving can be seen in contrast with other white people of privilege who never questioned their privilege, their superiority, nor their dehumanization of others. One stark example is the story of two powerful, religious men, John Evans and John Chivington, who, without any provocation, led the Sand Creek Massacre on November 29, 1864, killing 230 people, mostly women, children, and elderly persons of the Cheyenne and Arapaho people. Gary Roberts (2016) chronicles the story, opening with an introduction to the two white-privileged men:

The two men most responsible were two powerful, respected leaders in the Methodist Episcopal Church: Territorial Governor John Evans and Colonel John Chivington. The Church never condemned the massacre and never held these two men responsible (vii).

This is one story among many in the history of the United States in which two men of white privilege, combined with political, military, and ecclesiastical power, acted without concern for people who were non-white and, in that moment, completely without power. Such is the saga of white privilege. It haunts people like Tim Wise and Debby Irving who want to build racial

justice, and it feeds the power of those like Evans and Chiverington who blatantly disregarded the lives of people they deemed of little value.

What can we learn from human life stories?

I have already noted that much of the writing about race and white privilege is in the form of memoirs, which is itself revealing. Life stories have power to reveal complexities that are often hidden by statistics and historical dates. Metrics and information do reveal in other ways, but complex human dynamics are easily lost. Thus far, I have focused primarily on the narratives of white people as they probe their whiteness and life stories (Vance 2016; Wise 2011; Irving 2014). I have also attended to historical accounts, another form of narrative (Hill 2017; Billings 2016; Isenberg 2016; Roberts 2016; Bonilla Silva 2001). These personal and historical narratives stand alongside other research that features critical social analysis (Sample 2018), and alongside landmark works that analyze educational structures and practices (Leonardo 2009; Matias 2016). Interestingly, even the social analyses contain elements of personal narrative and analyses of personal formation.

To these works, I have added the social analyses of two African American leaders – Reverend William Barber (2016), whose book is itself a memoir of his leadership in a movement toward justice, and Thandeka (2000), who narrates individuals’ lives to interpret the dynamics of race-consciousness and racism. The richness of these life stories, together with the authors’ penetrating analyses of the narratives, uncover the potential of narrative to reveal and interpret complicated realities. Thus, narratives are rich sources for discovering and analyzing white normativity and privilege. They reveal the dynamics of persons’ lives as they interact internally and externally with cultural values, social class, race, ethnicity, and interpersonal relationships.

One other set of literature is very important to add here, and that is the life narratives of people of color, such as Barber, Thandeka, and Leonardo shared above. Some of these are narratives of the past, such as Zora Neale Hurston’s (2018) newly discovered manuscript, *Barracoon: The Story of the Last ‘Black Cargo’*. *Barracoon* is the story of Kossola, known as Cudjo Lewis, a survivor of the last ship known to have crossed the Atlantic bringing slaves to the U.S. The book is based on interviews conducted by Hurston with Cudjo in 1927, and it chronicles his life and his dreams for repatriation in Africa. His dreams were finally redirected into the founding of Africatown, a town for Africans, which was “a haven from white supremacy and the ostracism of black Americans” (135-136). Blackness and whiteness were intertwined in this slavery and post-slavery narrative, as they were in earlier decades and in decades since.

Contemporary story-tellers also share their distinctive journeys and struggles, and the journeys and struggles of their people. Ta-Nehesi Coates (2015) shares his life story and personal reflections in direct conversation with race. Michael Dyson (2017) preaches a sermon to white America. Both men mix personal narratives with cultural analysis and imagination. Dyson includes two major sections, “Repenting of Whiteness,” (43-124) and “Being Black in America” (125-194), revealing yet again the intricate relationship between white normativity and privilege with the experiences of being black in this country. Again, life stories are the teacher – the intersecting life stories that evoke emotions and invite people into honest reflections on themselves, their cultures, and social systems, alongside the complex economic, political, and religious forces that shape their lives.

Toward the Future: Promising Insights for Education

The limitation of an incomplete paper is the inability to weave all of the threads together. On the other hand, a dialogue between my personal reflections and the literature suggest at least six major insights for educational structures and pedagogy. I name these briefly now, and look forward to REA discussions that will help to nuance and expand upon them.

- (1) **Racial consciousness and the work of racial justice are never complete.** The more you know and the more you accomplish, the more you discover that you do not yet know and the larger are the gaps where dreams are not yet realities. Education is a work of cultivating hope, perseverance, and courage.
- (2) **Narratives are a major source of learning,** both for self-knowing and for cultural consciousness, for building relationships and for building justice. Educationally, we have many opportunities to shape story-rich environments for students and our own learning.
- (3) **The arc of history bends toward justice (King citation), but some efforts are seriously misguided and even demeaning and destructive of human lives.** The journey of reflective and effective work toward justice is a long one, but giving up is not an option.
- (4) **Encounter education creates opportunities to face hard questions and realities, to learn from others, and to take courage to learn and grow.** Encounters can be encouraged through human and ecological relationships, reading, film, and many other means.
- (5) **Empathy and compassion are critical goals of education (Moore and Kim, in press), and they can be cultivated** in the process of daily human interactions and through narratives, conversations, meditative practices.
- (6) **Liturgies and rituals are important contributors to acts of repentance, healing, and inspiration toward courage and strength.** This last point is less directly stated in the literature, but it is a powerful force in religious education. The deep emotions discussed in this paper, the hard grip of shame and guilt, and the realities of destructive forces in our inner selves and our outer work suggests the significance of appropriate liturgies and rituals in diverse human communities and educational settings.

These insights are threads for further study and discussion, but even in their nascent form, they offer promise in a world torn apart by racial hatred. The next steps will be critical if the promise is to become reality.

References:

Barber, William J. *The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear* (Boston: Beacon, 2016).

Billings, David. *Deep Denial: The Persistence of White Supremacy in United States History and Life* (Center for the Study of White American Culture, 2016).

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo, *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001).

Coates, Ta-Nehesi. *Between the World and Me* (New York: Random House, 2015).

Dyson, Michael Eric. *Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America* (New York: St. Martin's, 2017).

Hill, Mark Lamont. *Nobody: Casualties of America's War on the Vulnerable, from Ferguson to Flint and Beyond* (Atria Books, 2017).

Hurston, Zora Neale, ed., Deborah G. Plant. *Barracoon: The Story of the Last 'Black Cargo'* (New York: Amistad, HarperCollins, 2018).

Irving, Debby, *Waking Up White, and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* (Elephant Room Press, 2014).

Le Tran, Mai-Anh. 2017. *Reset the Heart: Unlearning Violence, Relearning Hope*. Nashville: Abingdon.

Leonardo, Zeus. *Race, Whiteness, and Education* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

Matias, Cheryl E. *Feeling White: Whiteness, Emotionality, and Education*, Vol. 2 of Series Cultural Pluralism, Democracy, Socio-environmental Justice and Education (Sense Publishers, 2016).

Moore, Mary Elizabeth and Shin Myoung Kim, "Encountering Dignity: Building Human Community," *Religious Education*, in press.

Noorani, Ali. *There Goes the Neighborhood: How Communities Overcome Prejudice and Overcome the Challenge of American Immigration* (New York: Prometheus, 2017).

Roberts, Gary L. *Massacre at Sand Creek: How Methodist Were Involved in an American Tragedy* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2016).

Thandeka, *Learning to Be White: Money, Race, and God in America* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

Thandeka, "Why Anti-Racism Will Fail," address to Unitarian Universalist General Assembly, 1999, http://revthandeka.org/assets/why_anti-racism_will_fail.pdf (accessed August 15, 2018).

Vance, J.D. *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* (New York: Harper, 2016).

Wise, Tim. *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son*, Revised and Updated Edition (Berkeley: Counter Point, Soft Skull Press, 2011).



Thomas N. Murphy
Boston College School of Theology and Ministry
murpaai@bc.edu
REA Annual Meeting: November 2018

Vulnerability and Community: Unprecedented Itineraries Beyond the Buffered Self

Abstract

In this essay I suggest the “buffered self,” as construed by Charles Taylor, as an important source of contemporary social constructions of difference. In particular, I demonstrate how the buffered self contributes to the rise of able-bodied and able-minded identities as hegemonic norms. I then consider anthropological and communal alternatives to these limiting norms, drawn from the work of Julia Kristeva, Jean Vanier, and Hans Reinders. I argue that these alternatives suggest that welcoming human vulnerability is essential for an inclusive and authentically human Christian faith formation.

Introduction

At a minimum, reading Charles Taylor's magisterial *A Secular Age* with a hermeneutic informed by disabilities studies is helpful for recognizing the opportunities and pitfalls in this secular age for people with disabilities. Far beyond this, however, and careful not to isolate and objectify those who identify or have been labeled as disabled, the particular lens of disabilities can also be utilized to garner a more generalizable grasp on the conditions of secularization, helping to nuance and elaborate the experience for all. Important questions arise around how we construct postmodern personal identities in which we can embrace the human condition of vulnerability in our sense of self. Relatedly, questions arise about how the embrace of vulnerability enhances our capacity to form authentically human community. In this essay, I argue that the manner in which we approach people with disabilities, and their experience of being excluded and made vulnerable in the late modern secular context, can illuminate answers to such questions and point the way to more inclusive and genuinely human Christian faith formation.

While the primary emphases of this essay remain the experience of physical or intellectual difference in the face of postmodern identity norms, and the manner in which religious education might fruitfully take up the issue of human vulnerability vis-à-vis this experience, a broader scope to the argument is also helpful. The potential of the experiences of disability and vulnerability to address more expansive questions about our shared humanity come about as they are drawn into dialogue with other aspects of human identity. Toward that end, this essay begins with a brief dialectic between disabilities studies and critical race theory. While this disabilities/race conversation is not the primary focus of this essay, it provides an important jumping-off point for the essay to link the disabilities perspective to a broader vision of human experience.

As a white, able-minded, able-bodied, male, I recognize that my position does not afford an insiders view or a true experiential grasp of the issues I address in this essay, especially so as they pertain to the social and institutional oppression faced by people because of their skin color or physical or intellectual capacities. By no means do I intend to equate the evil of racism with that of ableism in a manner that does not honor the immense complexity of each issue on its own, the particularity of the personal experience of each, or the intersectional forces that are brought to bear on anyone who identifies as both non-white and differently-abled. As a religious educator concerned with educating towards a celebration of human diversity and an embrace of human vulnerability, I find such issues extremely pressing. Indeed, some of the most urgent questions posed by such complex issues are likely outside the purview of the merely social or political and squarely within the spiritual or religious. It is towards these deeper waters that this essay attempts to navigate.

This essay will proceed towards such questions in four parts. The first portion offers a brief exploration of the social construction of normed identities of race and ability. In this opening portion of the essay, I seek the resonance between questions of whiteness and those of disabilities studies. In the second portion of the essay, I set the norming of abled identities within the overarching construction of a "buffered self," drawn from the work of Charles Taylor (Taylor 2007). In particular, I explore the manner in which the buffered, or more firm inner/outer boundary, leads to the privileging of self-sufficiency and a general stance over-against the other. In a third portion of the essay, I draw out alternative anthropological considerations to the buffered self from the work of Julia Kristeva, Jean Vanier, and Hans Reinders. From these three

thinkers, a more relational, inclusive, and communal anthropology begins to emerge. The final portion of this essay examines some ways that Christian religious education can take up the alternatives to the buffered self offered by Kristeva, Vanier, and Reinders in service to more inclusive pedagogical commitments. Particularly, taking up Vanier's way of the heart provides those concerned with faith formation with tools for a constructive critique and an alternative to the rise of the buffered self. Focusing on the universal anthropological reality of vulnerability affords a more robust welcome of people with disabilities, including a general welcome of human diversity, leading to a more open and fecund climate for authentically human religious education.

Part I: Normate Identities

There are indeed some striking parallels in the manner in which social and institutional oppression of people based on their skin color and social and institutional oppression of people based on their physical and intellectual capacities unfolds in the context of North American society. This must be said, however, with a clear awareness that it is an exceedingly complex web of issues that allows for such suppressive marginalization to take root and expand. It is not helpful to offer an overly generalized link between the constructs of race or ability/disability or to make a facile conflation of racism and ableism. Both racism and ableism function in society, however, as similarly "normalizing processes that are interconnected and collusive."¹ The interconnection and collusion around these two identity markers warrants a closer look.

One important place to look for racist/ableist collusion is in the manner in which both racial and ability/disability identities are socially constructed. For instance, in naming the socially constructed identity of *white America*, philosopher George Yancy notes that it plays a major (indeed, perhaps the primary) role in perpetuating racism through the "dimensions of its oppressive rule, its deep historic racist white imaginary, and its normative structure."² Yancy provides an important contemporary viewpoint about racial norms in twenty-first century North America. As he notes, however, the *white imaginary* has deep historic roots. These roots are intimately bound with European cultural and religious imperialism that was imposed upon people of color and "forced them to think that the only way to be human and civilized was to be white and Christian."³ Even in such a brief treatment of the issue of racism, one begins to sense the complex social, cultural, and even theological/religious threads that entangle racial identities.

¹ Subini A. Annamma, David J. Connor, and Beth A. Ferri, "Touchstone Text: Dis/ability Critical Race Studies (DisCrit): Theorizing at the Intersections of Race and Dis/ability," in *DisCrit: Disabilities Studies and Critical Race Theory in Education*, edited by Subini A. Annamma, David J. Connor, and Beth A. Ferri (New York: Teachers College Press, 2016), 14.

² George Yancy, *Backlash: What Happens When We Talk Honestly About Racism in America* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 26.

³ James H. Cone, "Theology's Great Sin: Silence in the Face of White Supremacy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology*, edited by Dwight N. Hopkins and Edward P. Antonio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 144.

Rosemarie Garland Thomson discusses a similarly tangled construction of the identity of *abled* over against *disabled*. She describes abled identity with the term *normate*, to designate “the social figure through which people can represent themselves as definitive human beings [...] who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them.”⁴ Anyone not readily identifiable as this normate is cast as an outsider, sub-human even. In this equation, the person identifying as or being identified as disabled “operates as a code for insufficiency, contingency, and abjection [...] thus establishing the contours of a canonical body.”⁵ This issue, taken up in greater detail below, is a primary catalyst for the development of falsely “simplistic binaries like disabled/nondisabled and sick/healthy.”⁶ Such binaries leave aside the complex social patterns that assign a negative charge to certain physical or intellectual difference and portray the difference as purely biological or entirely centered within the person who holds the difference. Such binaries effectively uphold an “ideological screen of normality.”⁷

The oppressive mechanism of both racism and ableism is tied up with the very identity of the oppressive group and operates on a systemic level. The striking resemblance in the power dynamics that uphold privilege through the construct of the norms described by Yancy (racist) and Thomson (normate) evinces the interconnection and collusion of the two. Tying both cases together, one comes to recognize that “normative cultural standards such as Whiteness and ability lead to viewing differences among certain individuals as deficits.”⁸

Religious education can provide powerful alternatives to such a devaluing of difference and diversity, especially as it asks deep questions about human identity. It is to such questions and alternatives that we will turn below. Prior to this turn, however, I invite you into a brief thought experiment that I think particularly illustrates the fact that racism and ableism are indeed cut of much the same cloth. Robin DiAngelo has written extensively on the subject of what she terms “white fragility.”⁹ This thought experiment takes some liberty with her keen insights and invites you to substitute ability/disability language in place of her race language. Take a close read of the beginning of her definition of white fragility and see if the resemblance rings true:

⁴ Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 8.

⁵ Ibid, 136.

⁶ Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 13.

⁷ Lennard J. Davis, “Introduction: Normality, Power, and Culture,” in *The Disabilities Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2013), 12.

⁸ Annamma, Connor, and Ferri, “Touchstone Text,” 20.

⁹ Robin DiAngelo, “White Fragility,” *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* Vol 3 (3) (2011): 54-70.

Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s so Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018).

White [able bodied/able minded] people in North America live in a society that is deeply separate and unequal by race [physical and intellectual capacity], and white [able bodied/able minded] people are the beneficiaries of that separation and inequality. As a result, we are insulated from racial [disability] stress, at the same time that we come to feel entitled to and deserving of our advantage. Given how seldom we experience racial [disability] discomfort in a society we dominate, we haven't had to build our racial [disability] stamina. Socialized into a deeply internalized sense of superiority that we either are unaware of or can never admit to ourselves, we become highly fragile in conversations about race [ability/disability].¹⁰

Could there exist a sense of “ability fragility”? When confronted by someone who does not meet our normate standards of physical or intellectual capacity, is it possible that we lapse into a similar pattern as that named by DiAngelo in the race dynamic? There is a deep-seated vulnerability awakened through such encounters across race or ability boundaries. As religious educators take up alternative anthropologies to Taylor’s “buffered self” that foreground the importance of embracing our human vulnerability, a counter-narrative to racism and ableism can emerge. Such a counter-narrative can prompt us to “break with the conditioning of whiteness [ability]-the conditioning that makes us apathetic about racism [ableism] and prevents us from developing the skills we need to interrupt it.”¹¹ I propose that a key skill for such interruptions is learning to welcome our vulnerability, whether around race, ability/disability, or any other identity markers that afford us undue power.

Part II: Disabled and Buffered Identities

Underneath the socially constructed identities that lead to racism or ableism lies a much more expansive dynamic. One manner in which this can be grasped is through a close examination of Taylor’s grand review of the process of secularization. Taylor endeavors to uncover the “different kinds of lived experience involved in [...] what it’s like to live as a believer or an unbeliever.”¹² For Taylor, it’s not so much that unbelief has simply replaced belief via a “subtraction story,” in which belief has been “sloughed off” and humans “liberated” from naive belief by more mature unbelief.¹³ He finds a far more complex story, one in which human societies (at least in the Western North-Atlantic context) have transformed from “a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others.”¹⁴ While this complex story is important in and of itself, even more so is what difference it makes to how we live life as a

¹⁰ DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 1-2.

¹¹ Ibid, 144.

¹² Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2007), 5.

¹³ Ibid, 22.

¹⁴ Ibid, 3.

believer or an unbeliever. Taylor is after this lived experience and the “social imaginaries” it both fosters and thrives within, the complex “common understanding which makes possible common practices, and a widely shared sense of legitimacy.”¹⁵

Taylor recognizes that the lived experience and social imaginaries of unbelief that are possible in our secular age are ones wherein “there are mingled together both authentic developments of the gospel (affirmation of human rights and ordinary life)[...] and also a closing off to God that negates the gospel.”¹⁶ This closing off to God is in tandem with the construction of a social space that Taylor names the “immanent frame” wherein a “natural order” contrasts a “supernatural order”, “an immanent world over against a possible transcendent one.”¹⁷ It is what develops as a result of the negation of the gospel that forms an important background to the status (or, lack thereof) that people with disabilities have within late modern, secular societies. While people with disabilities most certainly enjoy more universal access to the good things of life through the emphasis within late modern secular culture on human rights, they still face an uphill battle in the face of the negating of authentic gospel values, values that hold a far more liberative potential for them.

For instance, secular rights discourse has a hard time emulating the depth and motivation of gospel values that flow from the goodness of creation affirmed in Genesis. For all of its good intention and effectiveness, which is certainly well and rightfully attested to, secular rights discourse can never claim such a thorough and grand affirmation of the goodness of creation and the goodness of our creaturely relationship to God, and one another, that a faith perspective provides. Nor can a purely immanent frame lend comparable motivation for living such a social ethic.¹⁸ The World Council of Churches (WCC) captures the important nuance offered by beginning with the Christian affirmation of the goodness of creation. In its statement on the place of people with disabilities in the Christian community: “The Gift of Being: Called to Be a Church of All and for All,” we read that “in reflecting on disability, this affirmation lays the ground for anything else that can be said [about disabilities].”¹⁹

¹⁵ Ibid, 172.

¹⁶ Charles Taylor, “A Catholic Modernity?” in *A Catholic Modernity? Charles Taylor’s Marianist Award Lecture*, ed. James L. Heft, S.M. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 16.

¹⁷ Taylor, *Secular Age*, 542.

¹⁸ For a more in-depth treatment of this notion see: Jürgen Habermas, et al. *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2010). In particular, Habermas’ own essay in the collection takes up how the “strict rational morality” of “enlightened reason” can provide good motives, but can not inspire or compel one to moral action in the face of threat, and cannot “keep awake, in the minds of secular subjects, an awareness of the violations of solidarity throughout the world, an awareness of what is missing, of what cries out to heaven” (18-19).

¹⁹ World Council of Churches, “The Gift of Being: Called to Be a Church of All and for All,” *The Ecumenical Review* 68, no. 2-3 (2016): 323, accessed September 15, 2018, [http:// DOI: 10.1111/erev.12236](http://DOI:10.1111/erev.12236).

Closing off gospel values also makes it difficult for the secular affirmation of human rights to enact solidarity of the same depth as that of the Christian community, which affirms that people with disabilities have a central place in that community, and that “humanity, in all its frailty has both a value and a creative role to play in cosmic transformation.”²⁰ Space here does not permit a full survey of the gospel values that might prove liberative for people with disabilities, and it is not the intention to hold them over/against secular rights discourse in an over- simplified binary. However, as we will explore below, the rise of the secular has a long way to travel yet towards liberation and full inclusion of people with disabilities, and Christian values in this regard could help it along the way.

Late modern secular human identity coalesces around the notion that “human life is better off without transcendental vision altogether.”²¹ This understanding of human life leads to a disenchanted modern buffered self, for whom “disengaging from everything outside the mind is a real possibility.”²² It is a sense of self that is radically different from the pre-modern and more porous self. A firm boundary between the inner self and outer world has been set. This modern buffered self has no need for the transcendent, as this person sees him/herself as “invulnerable” and as a “master” for whom “ultimate purposes are those which arise within me, the crucial meaning of things are those defined in my responses to them.”²³ The buffered self is seen as the path to authenticity as an individual, towards the “understanding [...] that each of us has his/her own way of realizing our humanity, and that it is important to find and live out one’s own, as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from the outside.”²⁴

Taylor contends that the buffered self arises from a close relationship between the disenchantment that marks our late modern secular age, wherein “demons, spirits, magic forces [...] no longer impinge,” and no longer pose a threat, and the instrumental rational agency that now “carries out an analogous operation on desire.”²⁵ This rational buffered self rejects as illusion and fantasy all such enchanted spiritual imaginaries of old. The experience of being a buffered self is one of “self-reliance, self-sufficiency, autarky, autonomy”; we live within “Freud’s sense of the proud loneliness of the ego,” taking little regard of “the interspaces between human beings.”²⁶ A particularly dangerous aspect of this rise of the buffered self is how

²⁰ Arthur J Dewey and Anna C. Miller, “Paul,” in *The Bible And Disability: A Commentary*, eds. Sarah J. Melcher, Mikeal C. Parsons, and Amos Yong (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 382.

²¹ Taylor, *A Catholic Modernity?*, 19.

²² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 38.

²³ Ibid, 38.

²⁴ Ibid, 475.

²⁵ Ibid, 135.

²⁶ Ibid, 138.

it sets us against one another. As Taylor writes, the buffering is not only “against a zone of bodily life,” the firm inner/outer boundary, but also “to some degree against the other.”²⁷ As our inner/outer boundaries became more firm, and as we came to privilege our inner self-sufficiency, we came to have less perceived need for anything-or *anyone*-outside of our inner self.

Dangers of the Buffered Self for People with Disabilities

The rise of the disenchanted late modern milieu and its buffered sense of self give rise to a self-sufficing and an “exclusive (of God) humanism,” “accepting no final goals beyond human flourishing, nor any allegiance to anything else beyond this flourishing.”²⁸ With no room for the Transcendent, or for that which goes beyond this earthly life, we also lose our capacity “to give any human meaning to suffering and death, other than as dangers and enemies to be avoided or combated.”²⁹ When this happens, there is a risk that flourishing becomes a totalizing paradigm by which to measure any and all human thought and activity. The Transcendent can stake no claim in this mindset because flourishing in this life is the end game. Where, then, does this leave people with disabilities who are quite often deemed by rational, able-bodied people to be suffering to such an extent that the collective imagination cannot conceive of any sort of flourishing in a non-rational or disabled life? Such a limited concept of flourishing leads, inevitably, to the suggestion that “disability prohibits a full life,” or, the even more pernicious mindset that “disability is a fate worse than death.”³⁰

Confrontation with Mortality

Philosopher Julia Kristeva contends that people with developmental disabilities become fragile and vulnerable in a very unique manner in such an exclusive humanism. In an essay in which she formulates a philosophical and ethical response to people with disabilities, Kristeva notes that disability confront us with a *difference* that is not the same as other perceived differences such as race, ethnicity, or sexuality. The *difference* in disability, according to Kristeva, is as it “confronts us with mortality.”³¹ Disability is seen “as a deficit, which [...] lets me die if I am alone [...] without human help,” and therefore finds no place within an exclusive humanism that seeks to avoid suffering and death at all cost.³² In such a milieu, the social imaginary cannot conceive of any sense of flourishing in the lives of people with disabilities, and people with disabilities become objects of avoidance as they confront others with their mortality. A deep-seated and unconscious fear of death is provoked and confronted by the non-disabled in

²⁷ Ibid, 142.

²⁸ Ibid, 18.

²⁹ Taylor, *A Catholic Modernity?*, 24.

³⁰ Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 2.

³¹ Julia Kristeva, “A Tragedy and a Dream: Disability Revisited,” in *Carnal Hermeneutics*, ed. Richard Kearney and Brian Treanor (New York: Fordham University, 2015), 122.

³² Ibid, 122.

their encounters with people with disabilities. Kristeva describes this as an abyss between “two merciless worlds: one of disability, with its suffering and its protective but also aggravating isolation; the other, a society of performance, success, competition, pleasure, and spectacle that doesn’t want to know.”³³

Kristeva’s psychoanalytically grounded reading of the situation helps us to understand how a dynamism of hostility is set up: the confrontation with the person with disabilities is a reminder of mortality – and our own often unrecognized or denied disabilities. The reminder of mortality is projected onto the person who prompts this reminder. This, in turn, leads to the rejection of the person upon whom the “dangerous or unpleasant” reminder is projected.³⁴ The unconscious fear of mortality becomes reified in exclusionary stereotypes and practices, to the disastrous detriment of people with disabilities. Perhaps the most concise way to summarize the bleakness wrought by exclusive humanism in the lives of people with disabilities is what Hans Reinders notes: “disabled people are rarely chosen as friends, except by other disabled people; people without a disability [...] remain ignorant of what it is to live with a disability,” and, echoing Kristeva’s contention above, “many apparently want to keep it that way.”³⁵ It is a sentiment not dissimilar from DiAngelo’s notion of white fragility, noted above. In both instances the *stamina* required to meet as equals across identity differences is lacking.

Part III: Alternatives to the Buffered Self

The WCC document on people with disabilities cited above, “The Gift of Being: Called to Be a Church of All for All,” notes how the goodness of creation, and particularly of the human person as “very good” (Gn 1:31), is the ground for any statement we might make about disability. The goodness of creation, in all its rich variety, is an immensely helpful way to begin to imagine our general human condition beyond the late modern secular buffered self. Grounding our humanity in the goodness of creation is a wise start, and further enhanced when we think about how we each reflect the *imago Dei*, being an image of the divine in our own personhood.

The WCC statement goes on to remind us that our creaturely relationship with our maker, and the affirmation of the value of human life, is offered “regardless of the state or condition of our bodies and minds [for] in God there is diversity, but no division.”³⁶ Grounding the *imago Dei* in the goodness of creation and in God’s restorative grace through Christ Jesus’ saving and uniting act, is both theologically sound and essential to a more inclusive anthropological consideration of physical or intellectual diversity, and, indeed, any number of the richly diverse identities we hold as humans. Further, God’s grace in and through Christ Jesus must be realized

³³ Julia Kristeva, “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and...Vulnerability,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 1-2 (2010): 261.

³⁴ Julia Kristeva. *Strangers to Ourselves*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 183.

³⁵ Hans S. Reinders, *Receiving the Gift of Friendship: Profound Disability, Theological Anthropology, and Ethics*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 5.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 320.

in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, giving us a Trinitarian and, thus, highly relational possibility for understanding the *imago Dei*. In other words, we are made in the image and likeness of our God who is a Triune loving relationship, and every human being reflects and is made for such loving relationships, and never for anything less – regardless of ability or disability.

As we open up an account of our divinely imaged and highly relational creatureliness that is inclusive of the diversity of abilities, we also begin to sense how this offers an alternative to the over-rational self-sufficient buffered self that exists over against other buffered selves. To explore and nuance some aspects of an inclusive *imago Dei* -based anthropology, we will turn now to the work of Jean Vanier, the founder of the communities of L’Arche, as well as return to Kristeva and Reinders, who have both been influenced by Vanier. All three of these thinkers are engaged in holding up the importance of welcoming vulnerability into discourse on the *imago Dei* and anthropology. Within the work of Vanier, Kristeva, and Reinders, a more relational, inclusive, and communal anthropology emerges.

Inclusive Anthropologies

Jean Vanier’s Communities of Vulnerability

Since 1964, Vanier’s L’Arche communities have spread around the world in a witness to the power of humanizing and mutual relationships between people with and without disabilities. L’Arche summarizes the inclusive nature of its communities as places where “mutual relationships and trust in God are at the heart of our journey together. We celebrate the unique value of every person and recognize our need of one another.”³⁷ This mission is lived in family-like homes and animated by a spirituality which Vanier attributes to the Holy Spirit, whom he says “created L’Arche [...] to reveal to an age obsessed with achievement that the essential value of each person lies not in the intelligence, but in the wisdom of the heart.”³⁸

L’Arche takes up two important and related counterpoints to the buffered self and its corollary fracturing of human community. First, it recognizes that “weakness and vulnerability in a person, far from being an obstacle to union with God, can foster it. It is often through weakness, recognized and accepted, that the liberating love of God is revealed.”³⁹ Second, and flowing immediately from this first point about vulnerability, L’Arche is founded on the belief that “since the deepest need of a human being is to love and to be loved, each person has a right to friendship, to communion and to a spiritual life.”⁴⁰ Welcoming vulnerability, and then building community precisely from within that radical welcome, is the very core of the way of life of L’Arche. Importantly, it is a way of life that brings people with disabilities from the margins of society to the center of its communities, while also recognizing that vulnerability and

³⁷ “Identity and Mission,” L’Arche USA, accessed September 15, 2018, <https://www.larcheusa.org/who-we-are/charter/>

³⁸ Jean Vanier, *The Heart of L’Arche: A Spirituality for Everyday* (Toronto: Novalis, 2012), 12.

³⁹ “Charter of the Communities of L’Arche,” L’Arche USA, accessed September 15, 2018, <https://www.larcheusa.org/who-we-are/charter/>

⁴⁰ Ibid.

the need for community are facets of life that cut across any of the typical exclusionary disabled-abled binaries; these are our shared realities.

The over-rational self-sufficiency of the buffered self, and its stance against the other, stand little chance within the communities of L'Arche. Vanier writes that living in community "means letting down the barriers which protect our vulnerability and recognizing and welcoming our weakness."⁴¹ When we live in this manner, and when we form human community around this value, we are walking along what Vanier calls *the way of the heart*. Along this way, "sharing weaknesses and needs calls us together into oneness [...] we welcome those who love us into our heart."⁴² Ultimately, from these loving relationships, which begin in vulnerability, "new life flows [...] we no longer have to prove our worth; we are free to be ourselves."⁴³

It is Vanier's conviction that the members of the L'Arche communities with disabilities "reveal to us our own brokenness [...] our difficulties in loving, our barriers and hardness of heart."⁴⁴ But, the other side of this coin, inseparable from the experience of vulnerability, is that if those with disabilities are "so broken and so hurt and yet still such a source of life, then I too am allowed to look at my brokenness and to trust that I too can give life to others."⁴⁵ The lived experience of community among people with disabilities in L'Arche revealed this way of the heart to Vanier, and it stands as a highly appealing alternative witness to the buffered self.

Julia Kristeva's Irreducible Singularity

Kristeva, whose dire warning about the uniquely exclusionary manner in which people with disabilities are perceived in our late modern western societies was described above, articulates an ethic of inclusion that resonates with the embrace of vulnerability by Vanier and L'Arche. Kristeva advocates for a "radical change in mentality" regarding our approach to people with disabilities, one that includes a recognition that the "consciousness of our finitude and its accompaniment are in effect fully a part of human singularity."⁴⁶ For Kristeva, honoring the "irreducible singularity" of each person with a disability (indeed each person regardless of physical or intellectual capacity) is a key element of countering the systemic societal exclusion, noted above, which function in an overly "integrative, collective, and standardized" manner.⁴⁷

The welcoming of vulnerability, so central to L'Arche, finds expression in Kristeva's ethic when she notes that "the singularity of being - which goes as far as including the deficit

⁴¹ Jean Vanier, *Community and Growth* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 48.

⁴² Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 89.

⁴³ Ibid, 90.

⁴⁴ Jean Vanier, *From Brokenness to Community* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992), 28.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 28.

⁴⁶ Kristeva, "A Tragedy and a Dream," 123.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 115 & 121.

itself, in as much as it is revelatory of the finiteness and the boundaries of living being - is not a privation, a failure, or a sin.”⁴⁸ The particular and personal vulnerabilities of people with disabilities find a much more positive place in their overall identity when included within their unique singularity of being in such a manner. We must be careful, however, in attending to the unique vulnerabilities of people with disabilities that we do not allow the deficit or finiteness revealed therein to become the defining quality of their being. It must be included, as Kristeva notes, but we must also recognize that “disability can imply community and sharing” as well.⁴⁹ This is the important stream that flows from the confluence of thought of Kristeva and Vanier.

Hans Reinders’ Anthropology of Friendship

The work of theologian Hans Reinders also helps to articulate aspects of an alternative to the overly-rational self-sufficient buffered self. Reinders situates human value in a communal anthropology informed by the notion of friendship as it flows from God’s extension in love of the offer of friendship to humans. He surveys the relational landscape of people with disabilities and finds that there are very few freely chosen friendships between people with and without disabilities. For Reinders, this is evidence of an important theological imperative inherent in the question of “why?” that people pose to God when confronted by disability.⁵⁰ This question of the purpose of disabilities far too readily arises in “notions of our humanity that put selfhood and purposive agency at center stage,” and leave people with disabilities on the periphery of our human community.⁵¹ The able-bodied and able-minded seem to have a limited imagination regarding the value of a diversity of abilities. For Reinders, one essential piece of the answer to the *why* question, and thus of theological inquiry about disabilities, is friendship.

Reinders is concerned with acknowledging God’s providence at work in the experience of disability. This providence is evidenced, especially so for Reinders, as people with disabilities teach us about friendship. In an examination of Vanier’s L’Arche communities, Reinders finds that the members of those communities with disabilities teach the members without disabilities how to see that “there is no refuge in the illusion of strength [but, rather] being with persons with intellectual disabilities enables them to enjoy God’s friendship.”⁵² The gift of people with disabilities to counteract the dangers of an overly-rational self-sufficient buffered self is precisely in this gift of friendship.

To this notion of friendship, Reinders adds a pneumatological reading of God’s providence. He writes that providence is “the active presence of God, mediated by the Spirit, to

⁴⁸ Ibid, 125.

⁴⁹ Jan Grue. “Rhetorics of Difference: Julia Kristeva and Disability,” *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research* 15, no. 1 (2013): 51.

⁵⁰ Hans S. Reinders, *Disability, Providence, and Ethics: Bridging Gaps, Transforming Lives* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 5.

⁵¹ Reinders, *Receiving the Gift of Friendship*, 27.

⁵² Ibid, 348.

guide us in learning to see the new life that is around us, and is there to be seen.”⁵³ Seeing this new life in regards to the friendships between people with and without disabilities is essential. For Reinders, the new vision brought on by the Holy Spirit is a vision that changes us “from hopelessness,” in the face of disability to “trusting the reality of friendship and love.”⁵⁴ Centering our anthropological and communal considerations on friendship across perceived identity differences will necessitate that we find ways to navigate and embrace our vulnerability. Staying enclosed in our buffered selves is not an option in this regard.

Part IV: Religious Education Towards an Embrace of Vulnerability

The anthropological and communal considerations of Vanier, Kristeva, and Reinders provide helpful tools for religious educators to craft a constructive critique and alternative to the rise of the buffered self. Focusing on the universal anthropological reality of vulnerability not only affords a more robust welcome of people with disabilities, and human diversity in general, but also provides an open and fecund climate for authentic human connection. Uncovering the gifts that people with disabilities offer the human family in the area of identity formation and community building, and what benefit such consciousness has in this particular secular time, is a fruitful task. Aspects of such a task fall squarely within the purview of faith education, and could promote a particularly inclusive character within that endeavor.

New Itineraries

In the concluding chapter of *A Secular Age*, titled “Conversions,” Taylor names a number of “new and unprecedented itineraries” that show us how to live the Christian life in the late modern secular age in such a manner as to chart “a way through the particular labyrinthine landscape we live in, its thickets and trackless wastes, to God.”⁵⁵ Such new and unprecedented itineraries take up the Christian message and witness and carry it forth in expressions wherein “the paradigm itineraries that [the church] gathers can’t be identified with those of any other age.”⁵⁶ These represent some of the opportunities that have arisen for a Transcendent perspective and communal self in the postmodern context – over against the perils of the buffered self. These represent, too, important touchstones for religious education in the secular age.

Taylor contends that the church and the Christian faith can still articulate possibilities and speak authentically to late modern secular lives. In Taylor’s language, such new and unprecedented itineraries point towards the experience of “fullness” that a life of faith might offer. The lived experience of fullness, as Taylor puts it, is the belief that “in some activity, or condition, lies a fullness, a richness; that is, in that place (activity or condition), life is fuller, richer, deeper, more worthwhile, more admirable, more what it should be.”⁵⁷ From a faith

⁵³ Reinders, *Disability, Providence, and Ethics*, 190.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 189.

⁵⁵ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 755.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 766.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 5.

perspective, of course, “God is the ultimate hunger of our hearts, the source and satisfaction of the fullness we desire.”⁵⁸ It is this awareness that lies at the heart of Christian religious education.

Amongst those new and unprecedented itineraries to God, Taylor names Vanier and the communities of L’Arche. It is precisely in the way that L’Arche reveals the wisdom of the heart that it may have caught Taylor’s eye as an *unprecedented itinerary* through the *trackless wastes* of late modern secularity towards God, or at least towards partial fullness. It is in Vanier’s *way of the heart*, wherein we find our most authentic selves and community with one another. Here, too, lie key pedagogical considerations for faith formation in and for the conative wisdom of Christian faith. It is *only* through becoming vulnerable that fullness of life is truly found.

Taylor names one of the greatest “malaises” of the postmodern buffered self as the loss of meaning and our “fractured culture,” characterized by the “galloping pluralism on the spiritual plane” that arose within secular postmodernity.⁵⁹ The malaise of this fractured multiplicity and loss of meaning can be alleviated, to a good degree, when the walls of the buffered self are let down in a milieu that welcomes vulnerability. An important task of religious education in the face of this postmodern malaise and fracturing is to foster the welcome of vulnerability. Religious education that helps buffered postmodern selves become less buffered and more other-oriented can’t help but lead to more cohesive and inclusive spiritual communities. Religious education that can re-imagine human vulnerability as Vanier, Kristeva, and Reinders do, as a possibility rather than a problem, will be a great antidote to the secular age’s loss of meaning.

Pope Francis offers some clues as to how important such an approach to faith formation is for the life of the church. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis utilizes the geometric metaphor of a polyhedron (a figure with typically more than six plane faces) as a model to discuss the ecclesial tension of the global and local church. In order that the global “not stifle,” nor the local “prove barren,” Francis offers the balance afforded by a polyhedron, “which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness.”⁶⁰ It is a metaphor that aligns well with Francis’ general efforts to make the church a more inclusive and synodal church. It is also reminiscent of Paul’s ecclesial metaphor of the body in which “there are many members, yet one body” (1 Cor 12:12-31).

An important consideration for religious education is how it moves us towards the unity-in-diversity suggested in the metaphors of both Paul and Francis. How much more inclusive would our faith formation become were such a model of church the goal? And, conversely, how much more likely would such a church become were we to take the welcome of vulnerability seriously? Our approach to faith formation would do well to take up the wise counsel of Paul and Francis (along with Vanier, Kristeva, and Reinders). If we do take their lead, then we need to consider both how best to foster an inclusive and highly relational community in the church and,

⁵⁸ Thomas H. Groome, *Faith for the Heart: A “Catholic” Spirituality* (Forthcoming, 2018), 17.

⁵⁹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 299-300.

⁶⁰ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, On the Joy of the Gospel, *Evangelii Gaudium*, (November 24, 2013), 235 & 236. Accessed on September 15, 2018, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html

crucially, how we might broaden that sense of community to include and learn from those who might be most vulnerable in today's societies.

For Christian faith to truly take up its potential as a strong antidote to the buffered self, to embody the rich diversity of identities of humanity, and to sound the clarion call for the full dignity of all people, the welcome of vulnerability must be foregrounded. Education from and for a faith that reflects this communal welcome of vulnerability is rooted in God's call to the church to be the embodiment of this community of vulnerability. Our very faith depends upon this, for, as Francis writes, "in every one of our brothers and sisters, especially the least, the most vulnerable, the defenseless and those in need, God's very image is found."⁶¹

⁶¹ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, On the Call to Holiness in Today's World, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, (March 19, 2018), 61. Accessed on September 15, 2018, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html

Bibliography

- Annamma Subini A., David J. Connor, and Beth A. Ferri, "Touchstone Text: Dis/ability Critical Race Studies (DisCrit): Theorizing at the Intersections of Race and Dis/ability," in *DisCrit: Disabilities Studies and Critical Race Theory in Education*, edited by Subini A. Annamma, David J. Connor, and Beth A. Ferri, 9-34. New York: Teachers College Press, 2016.
- Cone, James H., "Theology's Great Sin: Silence in the Face of White Supremacy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology*, edited by Dwight N. Hopkins and Edward P. Antonio, 143-155. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Davis, Lennard J., "Introduction: Normality, Power, and Culture," in *The Disabilities Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard J. Davis, 1-14. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Dewey, Arthur J. and Anna C. Miller, "Paul," in *The Bible And Disability: A Commentary*, eds. Sarah J. Melcher, Mikeal C. Parsons, and Amos Yong, 379-426. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017.
- DiAngelo, Robin. "White Fragility." *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* Vol 3 no. 3 (2011): 54-70.
- _____. *White Fragility: Why It's so Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2018.
- Groome, Thomas H. *Faith for the Heart: A "Catholic" Spirituality*. Forthcoming, 2018.
- Grue, Jan. "Rhetorics of Difference: Julia Kristeva and Disability." *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research* 15, no. 1 (2013): 45-57.
- Habermas, Jürgen et al. *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*. Malden, MA: Polity, 2010.
- International Federation of L'Arche Communities. "Charter of the Communities of L'Arche." Quebec (1993). Accessed September 15, 2018.
<https://www.larcheusa.org/who-we-are/charter/>
- _____. "Identity and Mission." Accessed September 15, 2018.
<https://www.larcheusa.org/who-we-are/charter/>
- Kafer, Alison. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Strangers to Ourselves*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.
- _____. "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and...Vulnerability," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 1-2 (2010): 251-268.
- _____. "A Tragedy and a Dream: Disability Revisited," in *Carnal Hermeneutics*, ed. Richard Kearney and Brian Treanor, 115-127. New York: Fordham University, 2015.
- Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, On the Joy of the Gospel, *Evangelii Gaudium*, (November 24, 2013). Accessed on September 15, 2018,
https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html
- _____. Apostolic Exhortation, On the Call to Holiness in Today's World, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, (March 19, 2018). Accessed on September 15, 2018,
http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html

- Reinders, Hans S. *Receiving the Gift of Friendship: Profound Disability, Theological Anthropology, and Ethics*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008.
- _____. *Disability, Providence, and Ethics: Bridging Gaps, Transforming Lives*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014.
- Taylor, Charles. "A Catholic Modernity?" In *A Catholic Modernity? Charles Taylor's Marianist Award Lecture*, ed. James L. Heft, S.M., 13-37. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- _____. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Thomson, Rosemarie Garland. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.
- Vanier, Jean. *Community and Growth*. New York: Paulist Press, 1989.
- _____. *From Brokenness to Community*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992.
- _____. *Becoming Human*. New York: Paulist Press, 1998.
- _____. *The Heart of L'Arche: A Spirituality for Every Day*. Toronto: Novalis, 2012.
- World Council of Churches, "The Gift of Being: Called to Be a Church of All and for All," *The Ecumenical Review* 68, no. 2-3 (2016): 316-343. Accessed September 15, 2018, <http://doi.org/10.1111/erev.12236>.
- Yancy, George. *Backlash: What Happens When We Talk Honestly About Racism in America*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.



Dr. André Mulder

Windesheim University of Applied Sciences, Zwolle, The Netherlands

a.mulder@windesheim.nl

Dr. Bas van den Berg,

Marnix Academie University of Applied Sciences for Teacher Training, Utrecht, The Netherlands

b.vdberg@hsmarnix.nl

2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4

Learning for life. An imaginative approach to worldview education

Abstract

In the project *Learning for life* we developed a hermeneutical-communicative model for worldview education that answers the European challenges of religious diversity and illiteracy. We implemented the model in a participatory action research project at nine schools for primary education in the Netherlands and monitored the outcomes. A meta-analysis shows that the model can be fruitfully applied in confessional and public schools, as well as in cooperation schools, which are a merger of confessional and public schools. The model is demanding with regard to the skills and attitude of worldview teachers. In a final paragraph we discuss two aspects of the model from the perspective of white normativity.

1. Hermeneutical approach in Europe and the challenge of diversity

The situation of religious diversity in Europe and the ongoing secularization and individualization of religion challenge worldview educators, school boards and educational policy-makers to find new ways to provide worldview education, serving the development of pupils and honoring human rights. Pupils are on the one hand more and more religiously illiterate and on the other hand active learning subjects, constructing their own worldview identity in dialogue with peers, parents and teachers with religious and non-religious worldviews, using sources of meaning taken from media and culture. Worldview educators have to adapt their aims and didactics to these facts when they want to help pupils to develop a worldview identity of their own, not necessarily the same as the identity of the teacher, the school or the church providing the education. Moreover, they want to prepare their pupils to live in a religiously diverse and complex society with a well-rooted identity of their own, but also with a capacity to understand and converse respectfully with people that have other identities to be able to build a peaceful community together.

One of the new ways that surfaces is a hermeneutical-communicative approach to worldview education. This approach recognizes that diversity is not something out there, but like the *Reference Book*, published by the Council of Europe (2006, p. 15) concludes:

- “Whether schools are secular, denominational or faith based, they all share certain features:*
- there is no real homogenous group of students, even within the same religious tradition, since religious practices and beliefs differ from one family to another and from one individual to another;*
 - in modern society there are different ways of conceiving what constitutes a "good" life, and these conceptions arise from various religious and non-religious views;*
 - children do not leave their values and deeply felt convictions outside when they enter the*

classroom. Neither children nor adults can be asked to abandon a large part of their dynamic identity in order to form a relationship with others.”

Pollefeyt (2008a, 2008b, 2011) formulated an answer to the ongoing secularization, detraditionalization and deinstitutionalization in Belgian society, which had major influence in the Netherlands.¹ His approach is a response to the question how the school can teach worldview education in a religiously and culturally diverse society without losing its own denominational identity. Although he developed his approach in a Roman-Catholic context, it can easily be adopted in countries where other religions are culturally dominant or even in totally secular contexts, because of its openness to denominations and religions. Far from seeing the Christian religion as an objective source of meaning, he advocates an intersubjective approach of making sense out of the differences in opinion in oneself, the classroom, the school, the church and society when it comes to interpreting values and beliefs. Pollefeyt sees worldview education as a search for meaning. Students are guided in formulating life questions and are confronted with wisdom from religious and non-religious traditions in order to write and rewrite their own life philosophy and to support their life stories. Truth is deconstructed and worldview is reconstructed with building blocks from tradition and experience and in confrontation with the teacher's synthesis of his tradition. Within a Roman-Catholic educational context, Pollefeyt refers most of the time to the Christian – Catholic – tradition and to the teacher as firmly rooted in that tradition. However, in the context of other European countries such as the Netherlands, teachers prefer to use a multiplicity of traditions as sources for constructing a life philosophy. Depending on National laws and traditions, the identity of the school, the role of possible churches involved, and the personal convictions of the teacher, one or more religious or philosophical sources are offered as a mirror or as a stumbling block, fostering a process of dialogue and personal reflection. Where Protestant-Christian schools may choose the Bible stories or Christian feasts as the main sources for connecting experiences and convictions of pupils to the wisdom of traditions, the public schools will probably draw from socialistic, humanistic or liberal sources, or choose always to offer more than one religious source. Hermeneutical intersections are the keys to the learning process, according to Pollefeyt. Conflicting frames of reference from the pupils in the classroom and tensions in interpretation of a certain theme or subject bring the multiplicity of possible viewpoints and the underlying traditions to the fore. Through dialogical communication, these viewpoints and sources are exposed and critically deconstructed.

“The purpose of such a form of hermeneutical worldview education is to allow students to discover their own and others’ religious/ideological presuppositions and to heighten such awareness. In this way students can become receptive to the wonderment and multifaceted interpretable character of reality. As a result, they obtain building blocks hewn from a multiplicity of religious or ideological traditions and the particular perspectives of meaning connected thereto. They learn to deal with the freedom of choice generated by this plural supply of meaning. Some religious/ideological perspectives and traditions need to be deconstructed, yet there must also be room for the (re)construction of one’s life story with the newly added building materials from traditions and experiences. Ultimately, students must be able to communicate their choices to themselves and to others in words, deeds, signs and symbols.” (Pollefeyt, 2011, pp. 11-12)

The Netherlands is one of the most secularized and diverse countries in Europe. The challenge

of addressing diversity, secularization, pluralization and individualization is felt in both public and private schools. Our project *Learning for Life* (L4L) tried to meet this challenge in appropriating our model of hermeneutical-communicative learning via a participatory action research project in public and confessional schools, as well in cooperation schools in primary education in the Netherlands.²

2. The Hermeneutical-Communicative model (HC-model)

Let us first explain the two parts of the compound hermeneutical-communicative.

Hermeneutical means that the teacher aims at the interpretation of sources of meaning in worldview education in connection to the lives of the pupils. The teacher is always focused on what presents itself as meaningful in the stories of pupils, in the perceived experiences of the pupils, and in the traditions or sources they know and live by. We use sources and traditions in plural because the pluralistic society implies that the worldview educator cannot depart from only one meaningful source in order to correlate with the questions and life stories of pupils. We concur with Pollefeyt that people are hermeneutical creatures, looking for meaning and open to wisdom conveyed by traditions. The hermeneutical condition implies that life is open to multiple interpretations, and so are the sources of meaning people use for guidance in their lives. There is no such a thing as 'the' Christian tradition or 'the' Islamic tradition. Traditions are pluralistic by their nature. An exchange is therefore always necessary. Here we come to the second word in the hermeneutical-communicative compound.

Communicative means that the teacher aims at dialogical exchange of views and experiences in the encounter with pupils about what is meaningful to them. This exchange starts with an open attitude from the teacher, with a real interest in the stories of the pupils. The teacher recognizes his own reactions and reflects on them to the pupils in a respectful way. The teacher is willing to share his views and experiences in order to reach mutual understanding. By eliciting the opinions and stories and moderating discussions and conversations between pupils, a dialogue can take place. Differences of opinion between pupils come to light, and they are used as a starting point for a deep learning process. Conflicting interpretations of reality and of sources of meaning are laid bare and traced back to suppositions about reality, world, God and so on. In these conversations, pupils and teacher may change their views or attitude with regard to the subject at hand. Worldview education never is a one-way street. Worldview education is, in our view, not only and not foremost the transmission of meaningful information, but particularly the construction of meaning in interaction.

HC-teaching is a dynamic interplay between 4 aspects: the aims of HC-learning; the learning faculties of the pupils; the dimensions of worldview; and the didactical roles involved. We present these aspects briefly.

² Parts 2-4 of this article are a very short introduction into our book *Learning for life. An imaginative approach to worldview education in a plural context* (submitted for publishing 2018). This book provides an overview of the challenges for worldview education, the answer to these challenges we proposed in our project L4L, the hermeneutical and pedagogical backgrounds, the results, the 9 case-studies, the cross-case analysis, requirements for teachers and schools and a general evaluation. For the Dutch phenomenon of cooperation schools see Renkema, Mulder & Barnard (2016) and Renkema (2018, in press).

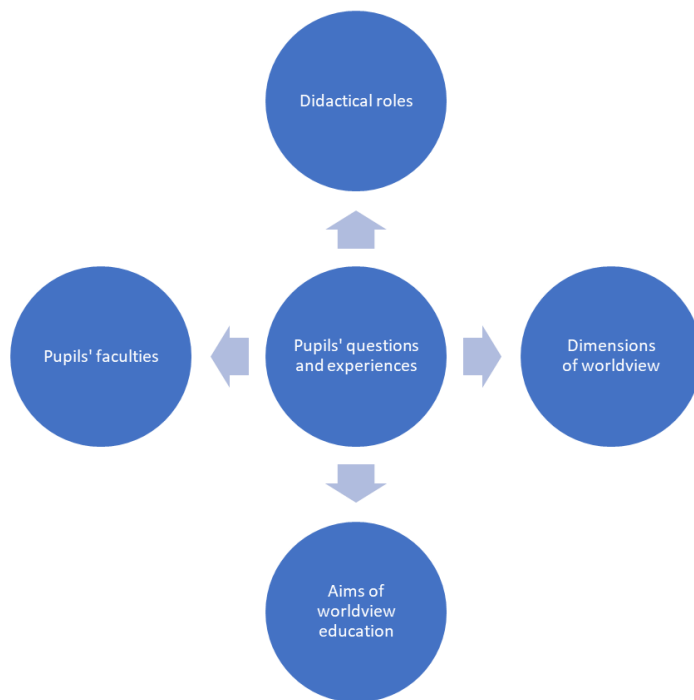


Figure 1 The aspects of the HC-model

Aims of hermeneutical-communicative worldview education

We formulate three aims of our model which are closely connected, fostering worldview competency:

1. *Personal clarification of existence:* Pupils learn to articulate their questions and to formulate their view on living in this world, to develop an own way of life, to explore existential questions and life issues. They reflect on them and explore sources of meaning in dialogue with others to construct and reconstruct their own personal religious presence in the world.
2. *Dialogical responding to plurality:* Pupils develop a receptive and critical attitude in order to manage differences in how people see their lives, in interpretation of religious sources, and in the choices people make related to their worldview. Pupils have the ability to converse about these differences in a respectful way in order to be prepared to contribute constructively and peacefully to debates in a plural and diverse society.
3. *Worldview literacy:* Pupils gain valuable insights and wisdom from the confrontation with worldview traditions as expressed and conveyed in stories, rituals, symbols, views, laws, architecture, music, art, from history as well as from today. They acquire basic knowledge about religious traditions and know how to relate to the information in a critical way, and to formulate their own reaction to solutions to life issues offered in that information.³

Worldview faculties of pupils

³ These three aims comply with Biesta's general purposes of good education (subjectification, socialization and qualification) (Biesta, 2010, pp. 20-21).

Teaching can simply be described as stimulating faculties of pupils to let them grow. What faculties can be stimulated? We take eight as the most essential (see De Schepper, 2015; Van den Berg, Kopmels & Ter Avest, 2013)

- Observing (looking, listening, feeling, smelling, touching).
- Wondering (being open, being curious).
- Imagining (empathizing, creating pictures, expressing, connecting to form and color).
- Telling (arranging experience in language, attributing meaning, narrating)
- Valuing (handling dilemmas, ethics, recognizing good and bad, judging, choosing).
- Reflecting (philosophizing, debating, reasoning).
- Performing a dialogue (changing perspective, listening, reacting authentically, ask questions).
- Acting (initiating or partaking in rituals, community programs, social action).

Teachers constructing single lessons and programs will consciously stimulate a combination of faculties in their didactics by choosing different assignments and working methods. We find it important to consider all faculties and not to act one-sidedly. There is a multiplicity of intelligence to be addressed in worldview formation. Worldview education is a holistic activity which touches upon head, heart and hands. Discovering and attribution of meaning takes place by all these faculties. Meaning can be found in an impressive thought or line of reasoning, in participating in the Eucharist, but just as well in the experience of dark and light in Chartres Cathedral or a walk through the Rocky Mountains. Self-awareness takes place in imagining and expressing what lives within pupils and in the conversation about this expressions with fellow pupils.

Dimensions of worldviews

By posing questions a pupil learns to understand himself and the world in which she lives with the aid of all kinds of sources from worldviews. There is a plurality in forms of appearance as it comes to religious and non-religious worldviews. In addition to doctrines and philosophies, multi-colored and multi-faceted practices comes to the fore. To structure this complex learning material, we use the grouping of dimensions of religion presented by Smart (1998). We have experienced that this grouping also suits non-religious worldviews very well. The seven dimensions (or aspects) are:

- The doctrinal and philosophical dimension (formulated ideas and concepts about man, gods, the world, creation, liberation).
- The narrative and mythic dimension (narratives, parables and legends about gods, saints, prophets, priests and sages, saviors, heroes, good and bad spirits, key moments in history).
- The ethical and legal dimension (universal principles about living a good life, laws, regulations, prescriptions, norms, values).

- The experiential and emotional dimension (emotions like awe and wonder, guilt, shame, visions, conversion, delight, ecstasy, music).
- The practical and ritual dimension (forms of expression in behavior, rituals and ceremonies, role regulation, contemplation, discipline, practice, dance).
- The social and institutional dimension (forms of organization, communities, groups, movements, institutions, leadership).
- The material dimension (architecture, art, movies, ritual objects, clothing, jewelry, holy places).

Four didactical roles of the teacher

We define a didactical role as a coherent set of actions which contributes to a specific educational purpose. Pollefeyt (2010) is very brief about this subject.⁴ We elaborated on his description and discern four roles: the role model, the guide, the coach and the imaginator.

As a *role model* the teacher demonstrates her involvement with a religious tradition or worldview. Teaching religion within a hermeneutical framework is not a neutral activity in which objective information is passed on. On the contrary, it is preferred that a teacher shares her views in an engaged manner, in critical dialogue with other perspectives. In this way, a teacher can function as a role model demonstrating how inhabiting a worldview identity is done. Witnessing to the religious or non-religious worldview in which she is rooted or to the worldview she has adopted later on in life, she mirrors a constructive way of life, leaving room for other choices and options.

The *coach* initiates and coaches the dialogical conversations about the relationships between pupils' experiences and opinions and the colorful world of sources of wisdom. In this collective search for meaning, she respectfully leaves room for all kinds of identifications. The pupils are encouraged to construct their own religious identity and communicate that to fellow pupils in an open manner. The coach moderator offers an adequate presentation of several worldviews and religions in an open 'practice room' for ideological searching, philosophizing, theologizing. she teaches the skills to handle differences respectfully.

The *guide*. While pupils search for meaning hermeneutically relating to sources and in a communicative way, the specialist assures that the discussed information about the different religions and worldviews is correct in view of up-to-date scientific knowledge. A lot of imaging and framing is going on in newspapers and television shows, and the teacher corrects false images and provides full and proper information. As an expert, she can not only help pupils to debate with proper arguments, but she can also critically evaluate truth claims of the religious traditions and other worldviews at hand. she shows them the way in the colorful world of worldviews.

The imaginator. In our view, experiencing imagination and exercising imagination are preconditions for religious learning. First of all, this is obviously due to the nature of the subject itself. Religions are systems of an imaginative approach to reality using narratives,

⁴ He named three didactical roles: the witness, the moderator and the specialist (Pollefeyt, 2010).

mythic language, symbols and rituals. Pupils have to learn to understand this material in which all sort of peculiarities, impossibilities, metaphorical expressions and symbols are present. Imagination can be seen as the power to turn absence into presence; to turn the actuality into the possible; to convert what-is into something-other-than-what is (Kearney, 1998, p.4 ff). Imagination is abundantly available in religious sources. And secondly: in the learning process, imagination plays in a different register than cognition. It serves a different type of rationality. Roebben (2015, p. 44) asserts that imagination deepens the cognitive process of seeking sense in life by penetrating spiritually into the soul of the pupil. To understand religion, pupils need to develop metaphoric sensitivity, inventive imagination and creative interpretation (Van den Berg, 2014, pp. 77-118).

The imaginator stimulates religious imagination and critical thinking by inviting pupils to respond creatively, reflexively and interactively to symbolic/metaphorical language in stories, rituals, objects of art, architecture and practices from religious traditions.

A diagram of the hermeneutic-communicative model

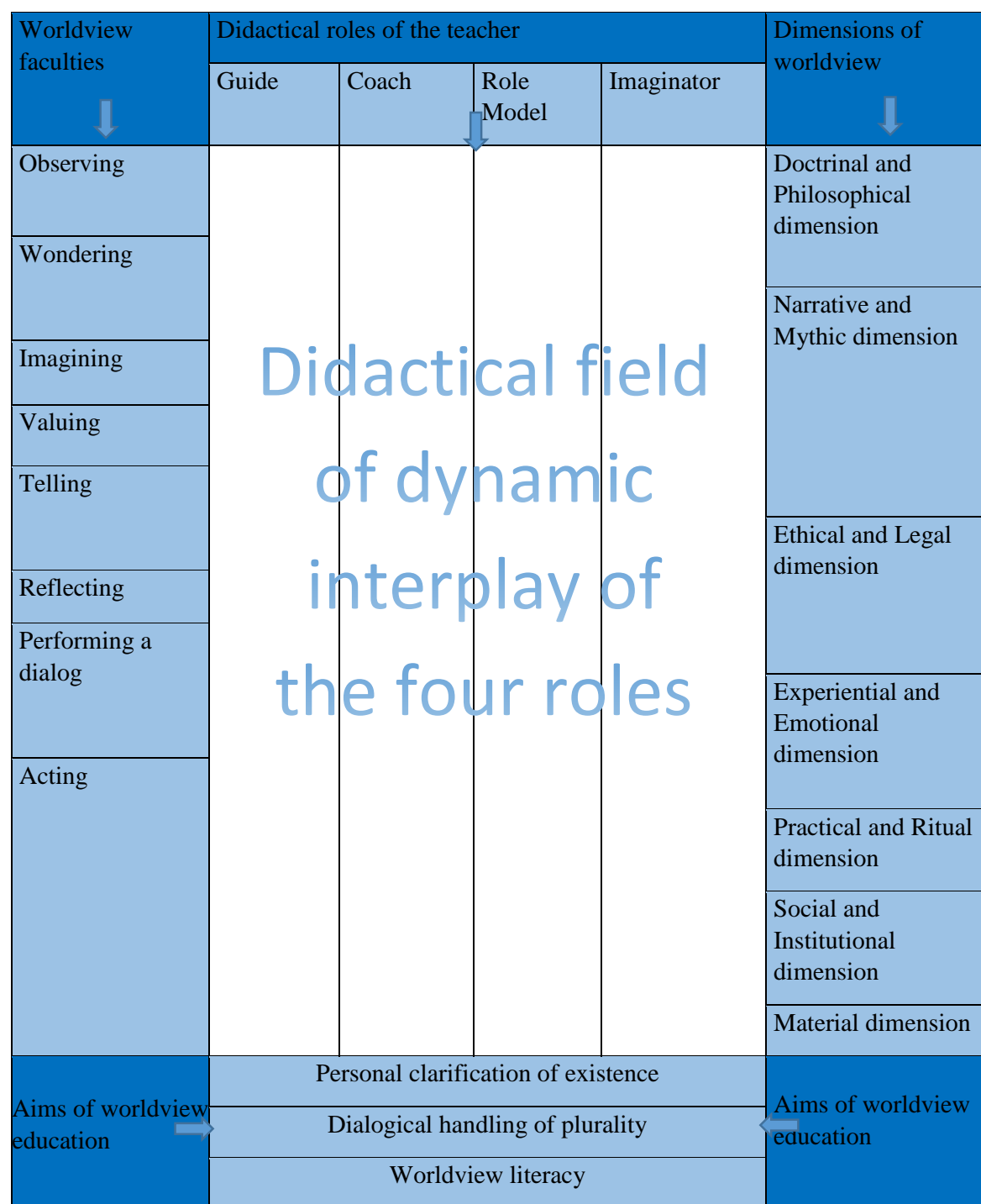


Figure 2 | The HC-model in detail

The basis of our model is formed by the aims. For every learning moment, lesson or series of lessons, the worldview educator chooses which generic purpose is pursued, which question is addressed, which faculties can be stimulated, which didactical role is appropriate and which dimension of worldview can be used as source. Unlimited possibilities in combining the four aspects of the model make it flexible in usage.

3. Nine schools improve their practices

In a two year government funded research process nine schools (two public schools, three Protestant-Christian schools, one Roman-Catholic school and three cooperation schools), located in different parts of the Netherlands (North/Middle/South) and different areas (urban/rural) innovated their practices of worldview education. Using Professional Learning Communities (PLC) consisting of teachers and researchers, as a research method (Lomos, Hofman and Bosker, 2011), we implemented the HC-model in the specific contexts of the nine schools. Each school reflected on the pedagogical, philosophical, theological and didactical principles of the model and created new practices in accordance with the school identity and answering their specific actual and urgent questions.⁵ We gathered data of different kinds: case studies written by the teachers, self-reports about their learning process of the teachers, and structured observations of the PLC-meetings from researchers. We wrote nine portraits of new practices of the schools and we also performed a cross-case analysis per region and a nationwide meta-analysis.

The results of L4L were inspiring. We can only present one of the nine cases about a Protestant-Christian school, and add a few highlights of the meta-analysis.

Primary school De Es in Hellendoorn

The Protestant-Christian primary school De Es is situated in Hellendoorn. Its principal, R., participated in the project, as did teachers H. and M. and teacher-in-training N.. Their worldview lessons consist primarily of reading a biblical narrative to the pupils and asking them to reproduce what occurred in the narrative afterwards.

The participants have been searching for a new method for worldview education in which they can centralize religious holidays from various traditions, biblical narratives and the pupils' worldview questions.

The meaning of Pentecost to children

"Almost no one knows what Pentecost means, even though the story is read to the class every year." Quote by K., a sixth-year old pupil.

Teacher-in-training N. has conducted a survey regarding the pupils' satisfaction, which showed that most pupils did not find the worldview education lessons interesting and that they felt they learned only little. To N., it was clear: "Children cannot find meaning in the reading of biblical narratives to the class and the subsequent demand of reproducing what had happened in the narrative." She decided to introduce change: to let the lessons revolve around the pupils' own experiences. For L4L R., H. and N. herself developed a teaching format that addresses holidays from various religious traditions, biblical narratives and worldview questions raised by the pupils.

During the last PLC meeting, N. shows how a set of lessons revolving around Pentecost was made meaningful for sixth-year pupils. Two of these pupils are present as well. They say: "The worldview education lessons were boring. You couldn't do anything on your own and you forgot what the story was about." As a result, the goal for the new set of lesson plans is as follows: "Pentecost has to become meaningful for *all* children." N. emphasizes the diversity in the groups: "The days off on Pentecost Holidays are spent in various ways: one child attends church, while another goes to the mall."

⁵ For more details from the PLC method, see Mulder & Van den Berg (2018), Ch. 4.1.

The Pentecost tradition is a narrative of hope, passion, fire and enthusiasm. These themes are close to the pupils' own realities. Through the use of such phrases, the teachers hope to entice the pupils to think about the themes of the holiday. N., R. and H. subsequently decide to introduce several new didactic formats in which they appeal to the worldview faculties of the pupils. Furthermore, they consciously employ varying teaching roles. The aim is to spark the pupils' curiosities for the tradition of Pentecost and to get them to think about it, to imagine it, for themselves.

Pentecost lessons

N. starts the first lesson by having the group study an image of the biblical narrative of Pentecost. She asks the pupils what they see and which thoughts and feelings the image provokes. One child sees a man who prays, while another sees a man who consoles another person. The pupils' thoughts revolve around love, warmth, hope and 'healing hands'. During the second lesson, a teacher-in-training tells the narrative. The children listen breathlessly. Afterwards, the teacher-in-training shows the pupils a video clip in which the Pentecost narrative is told humorously in a minute and a half. This sparks a discussion. Some children believe the story is too straightforward or too funny. N. says: "Some pupils suddenly wanted to show that they think the Pentecost narrative is important." During the third lesson, the teacher-in-training has the class discuss the Holy Spirit. She conducts a worldview dialogue with the pupils. She asks them about their fires, their passions, about what drives them and about their hopes for themselves, their families, their friends and the world as a whole. Then, she asks them to describe what their own Holy Spirit looks like and what it means to them. In small groups, the pupils draw pictures of their own Holy Spirits in a variety of creative ways. What follows are presentations of these drawings. Gusts of wind, fires, queens, hands and rainbows all come into play. Meaningful words such as 'protection', 'colorful', 'inspiration', 'untouchable' and 'healing hands' are mentioned.

Goal achieved

After these lessons, all sixth-year pupils have attributed a personal meaning to Pentecost, as well as a meaning they themselves found in the tradition. N., R. and H. have achieved their goal and the children responded positively. K., the boy whose quote is shown above, says: "The Pentecost lessons are fun now, because we have to think for ourselves, we can express our opinions, and we do not have to agree with one another. I know what Pentecost is now."

Results of L4L

The result of L4L at De Es was the evolution from a teaching method in which a biblical narrative was read to the pupils, after which they were asked to reproduce what had taken place, to a school-wide project regarding worldview education in which hermeneutical communication was the central focus. The school chooses to do so by using the holidays of various religions, biblical narratives and the pupils' own worldview questions.

Below, we show two further results of the project conducted at De Es.

The first is a table showing a framework for worldview education when it comes to children's competences. Then there is a concrete delineation of the curriculum for March 2017, in which the relation to the pupils' social and emotional development is outlined. The pupils' worldview questions in this learning process are connected to the religious holidays

throughout.⁶

Framework De Es

Groups 1-2; age 4-5	Groups 3-4; age 6-7	Groups 5-6; age 8-9	Groups 7-8; 10-11
Emphasis on familiarization (Perception, experiencing, familiarizing)	Emphasis on familiarization (Perception, experiencing, familiarizing, meeting)	Emphasis on learning how it works, recognizing cohesion and insight (applying insights)	Emphasis on correlations, interpretation, dilemmas (attitudes, applying insights)
Hears biblical narratives and learns to respond to them	Hears biblical narratives and learns to respond to them		
	Encounters worldview questions and learns to ask them	Knows how to ask worldview questions, how to talk about them and how to explore them	Knows worldview questions, is able to identify dilemmas
Encounters holidays and experiences them	Encounters holidays and experiences them	Is able to identify the connection between worldview questions, holidays and religions	Is able to identify several dilemmas surrounding holidays and religions and can provide arguments and perspectives

Table 1 Matrix of development and content

Teaching plan March 2017

Celebration	Worldview question	Social development	Worldview	Group
Day of Prayer	What is space?	Where do you live? What aspects of nature do you enjoy? Are you happy where you live? Where would you like to go?	Do you feel responsible for the Earth? What do you to make the space around you comfortable? Did God create the Earth consciously or	1-8

⁶ For the other 8 case studies see Mulder & Van den Berg, 2018, Ch. 4.2.

Celebration	Worldview question	Social development	Worldview	Group
			was its creation a coincidence?	
Easter	What are the meanings of happiness and life, but also of suffering and death?	When are you happy and when are you sad? Who do you go to when you are happy and when you are sad? Who are your real friends, who you can go to with both happiness and sadness? Are you part of the group or are you an outsider? Do you feel like you belong/can be yourself?	What are the meanings of happiness and life? What are the meanings of suffering and death? Why do people die? Can God console you at certain times? Do you prefer talking about happiness and life over talking about suffering and death? What do you think you could change about this? What would you want to change?	5-8

Table 2 Teaching plan March 2017 De Es

Meta-analysis

In a protocolled cross-case analysis we searched for the educational challenges formulated by the teachers willing to learn within the HC-model, the interventions chosen within the HC-model, the motives for these interventions and the results.

The openness of the HC-model raises similar questions at all school types: a tension is felt between the conscious insertion of religious content in education and the assumed identity of the school. The tension can be formulated as follows: the identity of the school requires a degree of neutrality (public school/cooperation school) or showing one's colors (Protestant-Christian/Roman-Catholic) that does not seem to fit in with the use of content from multiple religious traditions. Public schools and cooperation schools wonder to what extent their neutrality is preserved, while Protestant-Christian schools may wonder to what extent the Christian character of the school remains assured. Each school could manage this tension in his own way and context.

With regard to the interventions we could conclude that a colorful palette of interventions is carried out using many methods through which pupils could respond to worldview content. Much attention has been paid to the practicing of dialogue in the classroom (posing questions, learning to listen, expressing yourself), in which the questions, views and experiences of the children were central. Also lessons have been designed and tested in which the creative

processing of content and the creative responses to content are major changes. These are lessons in which, in particular, the didactical role of the imaginator is used. At the school level, new rituals are designed after an intensive dialogue between the school and parents. For these innovations teacher provide the following motives: First, the key word in most of the answers is involvement: teachers want to increase the involvement of pupils, teachers and parents all together with regard to worldview education. The second motive is the aim of putting the existential questions of children related to their worldview development up front. The third motive is socialization: teachers find it important for children to acquire the faculty to dialogue in view to the diversity in society. Fourth: Worldview education should also become more meaningful to pupils. Fifth: the interconnectedness of teachers, parents and children on the theme of worldview should be increased by means of group rituals. Evaluating the interventions three main conclusions are: 1. The teachers are enthusiastic about the ways in which children respond to the new interventions: they discover the many possible thoughts of children, their skills to express themselves creatively, the links between phenomena they now describe, and the originality they show. 2. Teachers are enthusiastic about the increased involvement of pupils with the theme, which is caused by the hermeneutical-communicative approach. 3. Teachers appreciate the greater commitment of colleagues and parents to the joint brainstorming and organizing of religious celebrations.

Looking back we can say that the model serves all school types in creating meaningful practices for worldview education staging the existential questions of children and confronting them with sources from various traditions in a critical and dialogical way. The model appears to be flexible because it can be appropriated in various confessional and non-confessional contexts. Schools handle the structural aspects of the HC-model in their own way, in line with their school identity and pedagogical goals. We also noticed that working with the HC-model requires specific skills and knowledge from the teachers and also a structural embedding in the school. And we experienced that schools needed an extra year in the transition from a transfer-oriented approach to a pupil-oriented approach, wherein they could elaborate more on the different didactical roles and on the general aims.⁷

5. The HC-model and white normativity

The HC-model is constructed by white scholars and grounded on theological and pedagogical literature stemming from white and mostly European and American authors. Therefore we are obliged to reflect on the question how the model contributes to a praxis beyond white normativity. Despite the fact that HC-learning centers dialog in the classroom as an inter-personal learning strategy, it is not self-evident that hegemony of some kind is prevented. Despite the fact that the personal narratives of students are the anchor point of learning processes within the HC-model we are not sure that teachers are able to address them in a non-oppressive way. Although the HC-model honors different religious and non-religious worldview sources, we are not sure how these richness in sources is handled. We must realize that occurrence of white normativity in classrooms or elsewhere is not easily avoided. Literature shows that in those contexts where one might expect a heightened sensitivity for equality and domination, good practices, nevertheless, are not guaranteed.

⁷ For all the outcomes see Mulder & Van den Berg, 2018, Ch. 4.3 and 4.4. and for the school and teacher requirements see Ch. 5

There are examples of practices of same sex marriages (Kimport, 2012), intercultural churches (Jenkins, 2014), an LGBT organization (Ward, 2008), a 50/50 white/latino populated school (Hurd, 2008) or a film about a lesbian couple (Kennedy, 2014), that indicate that good intentions are not enough. Even in these contexts, where diversity is unavoidably and prominently present, white normativity crept in or surfaced as a structural condition. Also, reports from European countries on religious education, f.i. from Norway, show how hard it is to handle plurality in an impartial way, due to national or regional traditions, politics and personal convictions and training of teachers (Skeie, 2017). Therefore, a constant, enduring awareness of the own positioning in gender, race, economy, educational level, politics and neighborhood, paired to a reflective attitude concerning perspective, goals and methods of worldview education are required to decrease the risk of subtle white hegemonic interventions, remarks and judgements, which are so often automatically given in the course of teaching.

The reflection on the HC-model with regard to white normativity can be stretched to all the aspects of the model (aims, didactical roles, worldview faculties, dimensions of worldview). We limit ourselves to two aspects: the general aims of the model and the didactical role of guide.

The HC-model in itself is not a neutral model: it advocates a dialogical form of worldview education that accepts the peaceful co-existence of different worldviews and that aims at student's personal growth in worldview literacy, dialogical responding to plurality and the clarification of existence. There is room for different pathways to discover truth about the world, society and personal life. Worldviews are seen as possible narratives and practices about existence that are valuable as sources to live from, apparently equally valuable, although all treated critically. These aims can be put under criticism from a white normativity perspective: why should we not formulate aims that are less individualistic, or subject oriented? Is the goal of personal growth not a white prerogative in the eyes of many people having only few opportunities? The starting points for educational trajectories within the HC-model are the existential questions of students. We see this as an optimal way of handling plurality (cf. Skeie, 2002). This might be experienced as a white liberal and individualistic point of departure. Shouldn't we reconsider the formulation of the aims of worldview education in a more community oriented terms, for instance that it must contribute to community life, welfare or interconnectedness? Of course, these and comparable aims can be reached within our model, when the themes addressed by students and the didactical assignments that accompany them lead in these directions. And also the aim of dialogical handling of plurality has its effect on democratic citizenship. But the question remains whether the wording of the aims within the HC-model is not all too white, liberal, upper class. The second aspect we want to discuss with regard to white normativity is the didactical role of the guide. The guide is a specialist in knowledge of worldviews: this specialist assures that the discussed information about the different religions and worldviews is correct in view of up-to-date scientific knowledge. A lot of imaging and framing is going on in newspapers and television shows, and the teacher corrects false images and provides full and proper information. The teacher shows students the way in the colorful world of worldviews in all their dimensions. So far so good, but what is 'proper information' and who decides whether images are 'false images'? The worldview teacher needs to reflect on the concept of worldview and of religion which is used in providing information about worldviews. What is essential to whom in the presentation of information? What is meant by up-to-date scientific information, and what concept of knowledge is appropriate? Is worldview a subject that you

can speak about from a distance, searching for objective facts? Is it possible to search for essences of religion leaving the stories of believers and the historical and social situatedness of language aside? Flood (1999) argues that all explanation of religion is historically situated, and that scholarly language itself is part of a specific Western Enlightenment narrative, which touches in our view upon white normativity. The only ways to go beyond it, are thorough self-reflection about the language and terminology used, the charts en models presented, the structures en key elements explained to students, and also the construction of a narrative dialogical view on religious and non-religious worldview. In this view multiple voices about the meaning and experiencing of the dimensions of worldview have to be heard and critically evaluated in dialogue. When f.e. the theme of ‘community’ is addressed, what model of living together is used as normative? Is it a white, well-to-do Western model of the family, is it a model of a multi-generation household or is the point of reference an ubuntu model, stemming from Africa? Truth about the meaning of worldview is highly contextual and a matter of community, intersubjectivity an debate. In a narrative-hermeneutical approach several models should be discussed.

The worldview teacher as a guide is aware of the positioning of scholars and teachers regarding the subject and will therefore be cautious in providing ultimate meanings. Many textbooks are based on a phenomenological perspective on religion. Flood (1999) argues convincingly that a phenomenological approach to religion cannot be the dominant approach anymore. Because of the situatedness of knowledge and language a detached observer cannot by intuition provide universal explanations of religious phenomena. Therefore, worldview teachers should take a critical stance towards phenomenology. For our HC-model this means that our application of the seven dimensions of worldview, provided by Ninian Smart should be critically evaluated. Smart provides formal categories which can easily be read as ‘essentials’ of worldview. To prevent this emic narratives must correct the guide in what is essential in the human experience of the transcendent realm and what is not. This is in line with the interpretive approach of Jackson (2002) who pleads for the use of ‘insiders’ in religious education.

Our reflection on two aspects of our model from the perspective of white normativity leads to the conclusion that the HC-model has many qualities to create a safe learning environment in which equality and subjectivity are secured in a dialogical process. Nevertheless the model needs critical evaluation and further elaboration as it comes to the wording of the aims, the implementation of the role of the guide and the appropriation of the Smart categories. An adaptation in the light of white normativity may improve the HC-model as an instrument for learning for life.

Bibliography

Berg, B. van den. *Speelruimte voor Dialoog en Verbeelding. Basisschoolleerlingen Maken Kennis met Religieuze Verhalen. Een Narratief Ontwikkelingsgericht Onderzoek*. Gorinchem: Narratio, 2014.

Berg, B. van den, T. Kopmels & I. ter Avest, *Geloof Je het Zelf?! Levensbeschouwelijk Leren in het Primair Onderwijs*. Utrecht: Marnix Academie, 2013.

- Biesta, G. *Good Education in an Age of Measurement. Ethics, Politics, Democracy*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2010.
- Council of Europe, *Religious Diversity and Intercultural Education. A Reference Book*, edited by J. Keast, 2006 (provisional edition); final edition 2007: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Flood, G. *Beyond Phenomenology. Rethinking the Study of Religion*. 1991. London & New York: Cassell,
- Hurd, C.A. Cinco de Mayo, Normative Whiteness, and the Marginalization of Mexican-Descent Students. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, Vol. 39, Issue 3, pp.293–313. DOI:10.1111/j.1548-1492.2008.00023.x.
- Jenkins, J.J. A “Community” of Discipline: The Paradox of Diversity Within an Intercultural Church. *Western Journal of Communication* Vol. 78, No. 2, March–April 2014, pp. 134–154. DOI: 10.1080/10570314.2013.845793.
- Kearney, R. *Poetics of Imagining. Modern to Post-modern*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1998.
- Kennedy, T.M. (2014) Sustaining White Homonormativity: *The Kids Are All Right* as Public Pedagogy, *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 18:2, 2014, 118-132, DOI:10.1080/10894160.2014.849162
- Kimport, K. Remaking the White Wedding? Same-Sex Wedding Photographs’ Challenge to Symbolic Heteronormativity. *Gender & Society*, Vol. 26 No. 6, December 2012 874-899 DOI: 10.1177/0891243212449902
- Lomos, C., R.H. Hofman and R.J. Bosker, “Professional Communities and Student Achievement – A Meta-analysis”. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 22.2 (2011), 121-148.
- Mulder, A. & B. van den Berg, *Learning for Life. An Imaginative Approach to Worldview Education in a Plural Context* (submitted 2018).
- Pollefeyt, D. “Difference Matters. A Hermeneutic-Communicative Concept of Didactics of Religion in a European Multi-Religious Context.” *Journal of Worldview Education* 56.1 (2008a), 9-17.
- Pollefeyt, D. “The Difference of Alterity. A Religious Pedagogy for an Interreligious and Interideological World.” In *Responsibility, God and Society. Theological Ethics in Dialogue*, edited by J. de Tavenier, J. Selling, J. Verstraeten and P. Schotsmans, 305-330. Leuven/Paris/Dudley: Peeters, 2008b.
- Pollefeyt, D. Reader Course Didactics (A0950), Religious Education, 2011. Retrieved April 26th, 2017 from <http://www.kuleuven.be/thomas/uploads/image/prvftp/A0950Reader.pdf>.
- Renkema, E. *Two Of A Kind. The Identity Of Cooperation Schools In The Netherlands And The Correlation With Religious Education*. 2018 (Ph. D. thesis, in press).
- Renkema, E. A. Mulder & Barnard, M. Merging Identities: Experiments in Dutch Primary Education. *Religious Education: The Official Journal of the Religious Education Association*, 111(1), 2016, 75-94. London: Routledge.

Roebben, B. *Inclusieve godsdienstpiedagogiek. Grondlijnen voor Levensbeschouwelijke Vorming*. Leuven/Den Haag: Acco, 2015.

Schepper, J. de. *Levensbeschouwing Ontwikkelen. Didactiek voor Levensbeschouwing in het Primair Onderwijs*. Amersfoort: Kwintessens, 2015.

Skeie, G. The Concept of Plurality and its Meaning for Religious Education. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 25:1, 2002, 47-59. DOI: 10.1080/0141620020250105.

-----Impartial Teachers in Religious Education – A Perspective from a Norwegian Context. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 2017 Vol. 39, No. 1, 25–39, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2016.1149047>

Smart, N. *The World's Religions*. Cambridge/New York/Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Ward, J. White Normativity: The Cultural Dimensions Of Whiteness In A Racially Diverse LGBT Organization. *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 51, Issue 3, pp. 563–586. DOI: 10.1525/sop.2008.51.3.563.



Karen-Marie Yust
Union Presbyterian Seminary
kmyust@upsem.edu
2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov. 2-4

Reframing Religious Formation Developmentally

Abstract

Developmental psychology has significant research implications for religious education. New findings can challenge long-standing assumptions about identity formation, relational interactions, and ethical decision-making, requiring religious practitioners to reimagine faith formation across the lifespan. This paper explores three horizons in developmental psychology research – selective social learning, narcissism/self-esteem, and future self connectivity – and suggests how current findings might reshape religious teaching and learning. It also offers a framework that practitioners might use to transpose other research findings into religious education contexts.

Introduction

For decades, many religious leaders have relied primarily on the work of a small set of social scientists (e.g. Erikson, Piaget, Kohlberg, Gilligan, Fowler) to guide developmental ideas about teaching and learning within religious education. These stage theories permeate much of the Christian denominational curricula generated in the last 30 years, with the addition of more specialized frameworks such as Gardner's multiple intelligences theory. More recent research in the field of developmental psychology, however, has moved well beyond these straightforward, universalizing, linear, and inherently progressive views of human growth. While still developmental in the sense that these theories are concerned with psychological change over time, they now focus more on micro-models that are socially influenced as well as biologically and neurologically driven. If religious educators want to work knowledgeably with persons across the lifespan, we need to recognize the significance of newer findings, translate these findings into effective educational practices, and learn ways of monitoring and transposing emerging research into theories of religious education.

Toward that end, this paper explores three new horizons in developmental psychology research – selective social learning, narcissism versus self-esteem, and future self connectivity – and suggests how current findings on these topics might reshape teaching and learning in congregations. It also offers a simple framework that practitioners might use to transpose other research findings into religious education practices in their ministry settings, encouraging them to imitate psychological behavior analysts who “engage in the specific and comprehensive use of principles of learning...in order to address behavioral needs of widely varying individuals in diverse settings...building the skills and achievements of children [and teens]...and augmenting the performance and satisfaction of” adults (Cherry 2017).

Methodology

The paper is primarily constructed as a constructive (speculative) literature review, in which articles exploring selected themes in developmental psychology are considered in relation

to how contemporary research findings might challenge current religious education approaches and suggest more effective faith formation practices. Some of these ideas were identified and discussed during a scholar and practitioner working group session held February 1, 2018 during the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators Annual Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky. I also use a conceptual analysis of behavior framework (characterized as applied behavior analysis by the American Psychological Association, 2017), in which I take social science ideas about behavior and imagine how they might be applied in religious communities as particular sociocultural contexts. This framework is widely used in health psychology programs; since spiritual and religious formation can be viewed as aspects of psychological health and well-being, importing this approach seems defensible as a way of tying developmental theories and religious formation together.

Selective Social Learning

Social learning is an umbrella term used to describe “learning that is influenced by observation of or interaction with another individual” (Poulin-Dubois & Proseau-Liard, 2016, p. 60). While persons of all ages engage in social learning, it is a particularly powerful influence on young children’s development as they look to peers, older siblings and adult caregivers to demonstrate how to think and act in the world. Much of what they observe proves helpful, but social cues can also provide misinformation, which means children need to cultivate an “ability to detect ignorance, inaccuracy, incompetence, deception, and distortion” (Mills, 2013, p. 404). Recent studies (Mills, 2013; Over & Carpenter, 2013; Harris & Lane, 2014; Poulin-Dubois & Proseau-Liard, 2016) show that children figure out in infancy that they cannot trust everything they see or hear. They learn quite early in life to “make rational inferences about the reliability of testimony based on their prior knowledge plus new evidence about the informants they interact with” (Poulin-Dubois & Proseau-Liard, 2016, p. 62), thus employing *selective social learning* rather than an uncritical acceptance of social input.

Children’s burgeoning theory of mind (i.e. their ability to take another’s perspective and imagine her or his internal notions and motivations) contributes to this critical approach, which involves “weigh[ing] multiple pieces of information in order to determine the truth value of encountered claims” (Mills, 2013, p. 404). Studies with children as young as 8 months suggest that even infants practice forms of selective skepticism. Very young children pay attention to emotional signals and the reliability of their interactions with the people around them. Toddlers note competence and consensus among the adults they observe. Poulin-Dubois and Brosseau-Liard note, “[C]hildren gradually integrate their initial ability for selective trust with their richer understanding of mental states and their increasing comprehension of pragmatics and communication...[which] accounts for more sophisticated and nuanced selectivity in the later preschool years” (2016, p. 62). They learn to be selectively skeptical, to consider new information cautiously and recognize situations where doubt is more appropriate than trust. From infancy to middle childhood, children “shift from making binary decisions regarding whom to doubt based on whether or not a sign of incompetency is present to recognizing that some incompetent informants are more problematic than others before finally understanding how intentions and motivations can influence someone’s trustworthiness” (Mills, 2013, p. 421).

Children use a variety of cues to decide from whom to learn and who to discount as an untrustworthy teacher. *Familiarity* is a primary factor (Mills, 2013; Over & Carpenter, 2013; Harris & Lane, 2014). Children give the benefit of the doubt to those with whom they have

existing relationships. This finding reinforces a longstanding belief among religious educators that teacher continuity in religious programming benefits children, despite the challenges many communities face regarding teacher recruitment and retention. Children also prefer to learn from those whom they perceive as part of the same sociocultural group as themselves. This latter bias can have negative implications for intercultural interactions if a child's in-group is not racially and ethnically diverse (as many religious congregations are not). Imitative behavior is frequently motivated by the social pressure to belong to one's perceived group. Over and Carpenter (2013) found "that young children imitatively learn actions in such a deeply social way that when someone later performs the learned action differently, children go so far as to protest against the use of the different action and insist on the proper way of doing it (p. 8). One potential guard against this narrow norming of 'correct' religious behavior is the use of diverse forms of religious practice (e.g. varieties of prayer forms and holy meal formats) in communal devotional spaces.

Even young children are more inclined to trust informants who have been correct in the past (i.e. have a record of *Accuracy*), demonstrate *Expertise*, and offer *Reliability* as an informant over time (Harris & Lane, 2014, p. 455). By eighteen months, toddlers "are less willing to imitate a novel action or learn new labels from inaccurate than accurate speakers" and, from eight months, infants have some ability to track reliable informants versus unreliable ones (Poulin-Dubois & Brosseau-Liard, 2016, p. 61). Determining expertise is trickier for children; however, four-year-olds are able to "use their understanding of different domains of knowledge and expertise to determine which speaker will be more likely to provide an accurate answer to a question" (Mills, 2013, p. 413). Taken together, children's use of these cues strongly suggests that faith teachers need a basic level of faith knowledge and experience if children are to accept their words and actions as trustworthy. Religious educators will need to find ways to overcome volunteer resistance to teaching preparation curricula and design such curricula to emphasize knowledge about scriptures, devotional practices, and communal rituals so that children have less reason to doubt the faith education they receive.

An informant's *episodic knowledge* or awareness of children's sociocultural experiences and symbolic worlds, also communicates trustworthiness to a child (Mills, 2013). Such knowledge suggests to young children that the informant's input is more likely to be relevant to their lives. Thus, it is not enough for faith teachers to know scripture, doctrine, ritual, and faith practices; they need to be able to teach religious stories, spiritual concepts, and faith symbols using links to common and contextually relevant childhood experiences. *Age* matters, too, but perhaps not in the way we would assume. Young children prefer to follow the lead of adults for novel actions (e.g. using hands or bodies in ritualized rather than day-to-day ways) but look to their peers to reinforce repertoire (i.e. every day routine) actions (Poulin-Dubois & Brosseau-Liard, 2016, p. 61). This suggests that adult modeling of faith practices is quite significant in the beginning of religious socialization, but peer practice is a better reinforcement tool if prayer practices, for instance, are to become routine.

Another cluster of cues that children use is social *competency* (the use of speech and actions that match social expectations), *emotional signals* (particularly the congruence or incongruence of emotions with a context or action), *confidence* (especially in relation to demonstrated actions), and *language* (e.g. using the words "I know" over "I think" or "I guess"). Emotional signals are used the earliest, by infants as young as eight months, whereas children are almost two years old before they can readily discern confidence (Poulin-Dubois & Brosseau-Liard, 2016, p. 61). Faith teachers who are invested in their own faith formation and have a wide

range of religious knowledge and experience are best able to provide most of these cues. Perhaps most difficult to communicate are reliable emotional signals, as religious experiences generate a wide range of emotions that may or may not be acknowledged as congruent in a particular community. However, religious educators can communicate the value of authenticity in religious expression, which children may recognize as congruent at a more intuitive level. They might also focus on how teachers might present stories of faith and theological ideas in ways that effectively cue trust rather than doubt. For instance, exploring how children's preference for "I know" rather than "I think/guess" language challenges the popularity of wondering questions as a primary teaching tool in the Godly Play approach and other children's curricula. Teachers might need to couple more authoritative language with wondering questions in their lesson plans to reinforce their trustworthiness as religious informants.

Three negative cues influence children's level of doubt as well. An informant who is perceived as 'mean' (*negativity* cue) is assumed to be less trustworthy than a 'nice' person. Informants who practice *deception* are doubted by four and five-year-olds, who base their assessment primarily on a person's disposition rather than her or his intentions (Mills, 2013, p. 408). Children in middle childhood (six to eleven years olds) also consider potential *distortion* of an informant's input because of reporting that is self-serving, demonstrates partiality (i.e., predictable bias), or is designed to persuade through advertising-like influence rather than demonstrable facts or experiences (Mills, 2013, p. 410). Religious educators need to impress on volunteers that respect for children is a factor in teacher trustworthiness, and perceptions of betrayal or bias undermine trust.

There are several caveats to keep in mind when translating selective social learning research into religious education practice. First is an awareness that children may copy others' behaviors not because they consider those persons trustworthy informants about religious life but because imitation is also tied to children's strong desire for affiliation and belonging (Over & Carpenter, 2013, p. 6). Second, both children and adults have a strong bias toward trusting new information if they have no clear reason to doubt that information, particularly when what they are told is about general knowledge that is difficult to acquire on one's own rather than episodic knowledge that one can acquire through first-hand experience (Mills, 2013, p. 411). Third, personal relevance affects how carefully children (and adults) process implicit and explicit truth claims (Mills, 2013, p. 420). Fourth, in-group bias, or tending to trust in-group members over those outside the group, is not a reliable cue for trust and may contribute to racial-ethnic mistrust and sociocultural tensions. Fifth, selective social learning is not the only educational influence on religious learning. Scientific reasoning ability, optimism, caregiver-child attachment style, and working memory capacity also affect the acquisition of social (religious) knowledge and identity (faith) formation. Particularly with young children, religious educators may be tempted to play on these developmental biases in ways that create future problems. However, children who are encouraged to engage in a spiritual practice primarily to 'fit in' to a group may grow to resent the practice and those who taught it. By emphasizing choice and personal agency instead, teachers help children cultivate a more "critical stance" that allows them "to determine the truth value of encountered claims, [and be] prepared to doubt if necessary" (Mills, 2013, p. 404). Similarly, knowledge based on in-group bias can fuel 'us-them' negativity toward other spiritual or religious traditions. Religious education needs to offer children reasons that spiritual practices and ideas are personally relevant without reinforcing in-group biases by attaching relevance to group identity. Educators can also shift as much spiritual exploration as possible into first-hand

(episodic) experience so that less of children's religious understanding depends on general knowledge that hasn't been tested via experience.

Narcissism versus Self-Esteem

Narcissism is commonly misidentified as a form of excessive self-esteem, but contemporary social learning research strongly suggests that the two are distinct personality traits. Whereas persons with high self-esteem feel good about who they are as people without feeling superior, narcissists are rarely happy with themselves but still "feel superior to others, believe they are entitled to privileges, and crave respect and admiration from others" (Brummelman, Thomaes & Sedikides, 2016, p. 8). Thus, narcissists have a vertical, hierarchical view of themselves in relation to others; high self-esteemers have a more horizontal, egalitarian view. They "desire to establish deep, intimate bonds with other...to get along rather than to get ahead," in contrast with narcissists, who "strive to surpass others, to dominate others, and to use others to attain social status...to get ahead rather than to get along" (Ibid., p. 9). Although both narcissism and self-esteem can first be measured in middle childhood, narcissism tends to increase until adolescence and then decrease during adulthood. Self-esteem follows a reverse trajectory: lowest in adolescence and gradually higher in adulthood (Ibid.), although with a decline again after age sixty (Orth & Robins, 2014, p. 382).

Individuals largely derive narcissism and self-esteem from their perceptions of others' regard for them (Brummelman, Thomaes, Nelemans, Orobio de Castro, Overbeek & Bushman, 2015, p. 3660). Narcissism seems to be encouraged by regular acts of *parental overvaluation*, in which parents overestimate and overpraise children intelligence and skill (Brummelman, Thomaes & Sedikides, 2016, p. 9) and describe them "as more special and more entitled than other children" (Brummelman et al., 2015, p. 3659). The effects of this parental overvaluation, coupled with the shame narcissistic children feel when they publicly fail to live up to this hype, can lead to greater aggression toward others (Thomaes, Bushman, Stegge & Olthof, 2008, p. 1793). Self-esteem, on the other hand, is cultivated by acts of *parental warmth*, in which parents show affectionate appreciation for children and encourage them to feel as if they matter (Brummelman, Thomaes & Sedikides, 2016, pp. 9-10). Substituting words of appreciation for hyperbolic praise generates "feelings of self-acceptance and self-respect, in contrast to the excessive self-regard and self-aggrandizement that characterizes narcissistic individuals" (Orth & Robins, 2014, p. 381).

Religious education has fallen prey to the same well-meaning but problematic form of child and adolescent nurture that plagues families in Western societies: encouraging children to see themselves as "special and extraordinary" in comparison to others rather than as "worthy individuals" among other worthy people (Brummelman, Thomaes & Sedikides, 2016, p. 10). By teaching parents and ministry volunteers to express affection and appreciation for children and youth without praising them for being superior to others, religious educators can foster a more appropriate approach to fostering high self-esteem. Faith stories involving heroes and divinities can be told using messages of appreciative warmth rather than overvaluation and can attend to the 'whys' of various actors' actions (e.g. why does Jesus choose certain actions over others?) Educators can also nudge individuals away from a narcissistic belief in their own superiority by inviting them to think about what makes them similar to others, particularly from a transcendent perspective. Helping people internalize others' appreciation by having them describe the

meaning and significance of others' kind words about them is a potentially effective approach for reducing narcissism at all ages.

Future Selves

How much do people weigh future consequences when making decisions? Recent research suggests that the answer to this question depends on how much of a connection people see between who they are in this moment (present self) and who they expect to be later (future self) (Urminsky, 2017; Bartels & Urminsky, 2011; Urminsky & Zauberman, 2016). Such connections depend on a perceived overlap in "memories, intentions, beliefs, and desires...between one's present and future self" (Urminsky, 2017, p. 34). If people imagine few overlaps because they assume personal identity shifts over time – think of the Taylor Swift lyric: "I'm sorry, the old Taylor can't come to the phone right now. Why? Because she's dead!" (Swift, 2017) – then they are said to have low psychological connectedness to their future self. They are typically "less willing to sacrifice their own resources to benefit more socially distant other people," including their future, presumably distant, self, versus making decisions that benefit their present self (Urminsky, 2017, p. 35). Developmental psychologists call this disinterest in one's future self *intertemporal selfishness*, and it can lead to higher levels of present material consumption (Urminsky & Zauberman, 2016, p. 156). High psychological connectedness to the future self is associated with a stable sense of identity over time and a greater willingness to defer gratification for one's longer-term good.

While high future self connectedness is generally considered a positive aspect in terms of helping people make good farsighted choices, studies show a mixed set of consequences for religious education. For example, persons who view their identity as stable over time tend to have lower levels of charitable giving, choosing instead to save more money for the future (Urminsky, 2017, p. 36). This perspective may cut against religious teachings about tithing (Christian giving), *tzedakah* (Jewish philanthropy or charity), or *zakat* (Muslim almsgiving). At the same time, high future self connection means that organizations with whom people expect to have long term relationships benefit from those persons' more positive views of the institution and its contributions to their lives (Ibid.). Membership retention and regular attendance may thus be byproducts of high future self connection, which means religious educators can build relationships and plan sequenced programming over time with higher expectations of participation. This may also translate to concerns about legacy, in which people are "willing to invest not only in their own future self but also in the people (e.g. their children) and institutions that their perceived future self is connected to" (Ibid., pp. 37-38). High future self connection also prompts more ethical choices in the present, higher faithfulness to future commitments, and an increased sense that people should be punished for past unethical behavior (Ibid., p. 36). While these first two consequences may resonate well with many religious beliefs, the latter may produce higher levels of judgmentalism and lower people's willingness to extend grace and forgiveness to themselves or others.

Researchers found that low future self connection, which seems to be a common state in contemporary Western individuals, is reinforced by several factors (Bartels & Urminsky, 2011). Two such factors are hearing statements or reading materials that suggest one will undergo major versus trivial changes in identity during life transitions (e.g. "once you have a baby, you'll never be the same"). Religious traditions that use language of transformation to mark movement from being 'lost' to 'saved' or from status as a dependent child to that of an adult adherent in faith

may be unwittingly reinforcing low future self connection. Such speech may need to be tempered by other language that emphasizes what remains the same, e.g. being a ‘child of God’, a ‘*bar/bat mitzvah*’, or one of ‘G-d’s chosen people’. A third factor is being pressed to name many versus just a few stable aspects of one’s identity. Since the future self is best understood “as a continuation of the current self, to varying degrees” (Ibid., p. 184), focusing on just a few core elements of identity that persist makes it easier to see connections between who one is now and who one will become.

There are several ways to help people pay attention to their connectedness with their future self. These studies show that simply engendering or maintaining a basic sense of connectedness to the future self may help resolve self-control dilemmas, yielding more farsighted choices by people. Providing opportunities to vividly visualize the future self and then appealing to a “person’s responsibility to their own future self increased savings” and reduced unethical intentions and behaviors (Urminsky & Zauberman, 2016, p. 166). A similar appeal to religious imagination and the requirements of faithful living as a present and future disciple of a religious tradition could have the same effect. Prompting people to consider opportunity-cost trade-offs can reinforce decisions that would benefit a connected future self, which echoes religious talk about counting the cost of faithfulness in order to achieve a future goal. Rather than employing guilt or complex incentive schemes pitting the interests of the future and current selves against each other, religious educators might foster the sense that what matters most in defining us from a religious perspective persists over time and thus requires a commitment to care for the future self through present-self-control.

While future self connectedness is a significant factor in regulating people’s decision making, other factors also play important roles. People’s perceived and actual social power, their inclination to think emotionally versus abstractly about the future, their beliefs about the scarcity of time and money in the future, their anticipation of positive or negative changes in their lives or society, and even temporal markers (e.g. the start of a new month or year) can affect decision making too. Inviting individuals to embrace their future self may be part of educating people to be ethical decision-makers; it is not the whole of an effective curriculum.

Future Directions

Translating current trends in developmental research into religious education practices takes attention and commitment, yet it is not an impossible task for lay educators if scholars model the process and provide a simple framework for reflection. Working with a diverse group of Christian educators at a professional conference, I piloted an approach that involves sharing overviews of journal articles (as well as full texts) and reflecting on key concepts in those articles using three questions: 1) What findings challenge your usual beliefs and practices about people and teaching? 2) What faith stories or themes seem related to this area of research? 3) How could you emphasize pertinent stories/themes and alter practices to better conform to the research? The above analysis of contemporary research on selective social learning, narcissism versus self-esteem, and future selves and its implications for religious education includes insights gleaned from that workshop discussion. This paper (and the workshop) sampled topics from across the lifespan to demonstrate the validity of integrating developmental and religious education discourses. More work is needed to identify other research topics for investigation into how the ongoing work of those in developmental psychology (and other social sciences) might challenge and reshape religious education theory and practice.

Bibliography

- American Psychological Association. (2017). *APA Policy: Applied Behavior Analysis*. Retrieved July 16, 2018 from: <http://www.apa.org/about/policy/applied-behavior-analysis.aspx>.
- Bartels, D. and Urminsky, O. (2011). "On Intertemporal Selfishness: How the Perceived Instability of Identity Underlies Impatient Consumption" in *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 38 (June), 182-198.
- Brummelman, E., Thomaes, S. and Sedikides, C. (2016). "Separating Narcissism from Self-Esteem" in *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 25(1), 8-13.
- Brummelman, E., Thomaes, S., Nelemans, S., Orobio de Castro, B., Overbeek, G., and Bushman, B. (2015). "Origins of narcissism in children" in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112(12), 3659-3662.
- Cherry, K. (2017). "Behavior Analysis in Psychology" at <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-behavior-analysis-2794865>. Accessed May 4, 2018.
- Harris, P. and Lane, J. (2014). "Infants Understand How Testimony Works" in *Topoi* 33(2), 443-458.
- Mills, C. (2013). "Knowing When to Doubt: Developing a Critical Stance When Learning from Others" in *Developmental Psychology*, 49(3), 404-418.
- Orth, U. and Robins, R. (2014). "The Development of Self-Esteem" in *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 23(5), 381-387.
- Over, H. and Carpenter, M. (2013). "The Social Side of Imitation" in *Child Development Perspectives* 7(1), 6-11.
- Poulin-Dubois, D. and Brousseau-Liard, P. (2016). "The Developmental Origins of Selective Social Learning" in *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 25(1), 60-64.
- Swift, T. (2017). *Look What You Made Me Do*. Nashville: Big Machine Records.
- Thomaes, S., Bushman, B., Stegge, H., and Olthof, T. (2008). "Trumping Shame by Blasts of Noise: Narcissism, Self-Esteem, Shame, and Aggression in Young Adolescents" in *Child Development*, 79(6), 1792-1801.
- Urminsky, O. (2017). "The Role of Psychological Connectedness to the Future Self in Decisions Over Time" in *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 26(1), 34-39.
- Urminsky, O. and Zauberman, G. (2016). "The psychology of intertemporal preferences" in G. Wu and G. Keren, eds., *Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Judgment and Decision Making*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 141-181.

Barbara A. Fears, PhD
Howard University
School of Divinity
barbara.fears@howard.edu
2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4

Controlling Black and Brown Bodies: Stopping the Normative Gaze

Abstract

Europeans theologically redefined non-white humanity as “other” and proclaimed a divine right to dictate the placement and behavior of these “othered” beings. This act of racial supremacy established whites as the norm, the standard bearer against which the other is judged, is expected to emulate, but never achieves. This paper traces the development of white as normative, examines the benefits and consequences of this racial gaze, then offers a critical pedagogy to deconstruct this phenomenon in spiritual formation and praxis that is a matter of life and death in this former British colony for people of color.

Introduction

Since arriving on these shores as a colonizing force, whites theologically redefined non-white humanity as “other” and proclaimed a divine right to dictate the placement and behavior of these “othered” bodies. According to Kelly Brown Douglas, Christianity conspired with white supremacy to provide theological legitimation for the overall dehumanizing denigration of black bodies.¹ For J. Deotis Roberts, it was Christian European missionaries who carried the pride of race and culture and cooperated with colonial administrators in raping lands of their resources and of raping people of their humanity who became the Christian colonizers of the non-Western world.² Native Americans were called “savages” and placed on reservations to provide the land granted to these European invaders, whereas Africans were called “heathen” and placed on auction blocks, in the house and in the field to provide wealth in trade and in slave labor for these new nation builders. This redefinition of sun kissed humanity created the normative white gaze where people of color were viewed through the assumed “superior” white cultural lens and where whites were theologically privileged to dictate the placement and behavior of these dehumanized, othered beings.

Lawmakers further disenfranchised these newly redefined beings by denying people of color rights, privileges, access and opportunities otherwise guaranteed by law to persons of European descent whose theological anthropology remained intact as genuine reflectors of the *Imago Dei*. Whereas blacks by law were chattel, enslaved with no civil rights in this developing nation, whites were human beings, free from perpetual servitude with certain rights and privileges protected by the law of the land. This legislated distinction between black and white flesh created a racial divide that exists to this day between whites and othered people of color despite the passage of time and the passage of civil rights legislation to amend the overt white supremacy of the past. This racial distinction from a bygone era is evidenced today nevertheless by statistical disparities between whites and non-whites in employment, education, life expectancy, etc. and also by overt and covert acts of racism – institutional (e.g. racial profiling,

¹ Kelly Brown Douglas, *What's Faith God to Do with It? Black Bodies/Christian Souls* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005), xiii.

² J. Deotis Roberts, *Black Theology in Dialogue* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987), 29.

voting rights, prison sentencing) and individual (the calling of police on people of color in public spaces for doing ordinary things). In fact, the frequent news reporting and cell phone videos of whites calling police on blacks for sleeping in a university common room,³ sitting in a coffee shop,⁴ barbecuing in a public park,⁵ moving into their own apartment⁶ and mowing a neighbor's lawn,⁷ just to name a few examples, reinforce the legitimacy of the normative white gaze established at the "founding" of the nation. These incidents, moreover, demonstrate the continued white disrespect and disregard for black and brown personhood and exemplify white entitlement to once again dictate the placement and behavior of black and brown bodies. This entitled behavior, however, must be seen as an expression of white supremacy, more generously referred to as white privilege, and must be challenged and ultimately dismantled if America is to be the exceptional, Christian, colorblind and post-racial nation it professes itself to be. In fact, religious educators/practical theologians must deconstruct this troublesome gaze as a matter of spiritual formation and faith-based praxis and as a matter of life and death for people of color.

The normative white gaze is rooted in the theological dehumanization of people of color as other than human and is legitimized by a legal system that sanctions the privileging of white humanity and the disenfranchising of black and brown bodies. This paper traces the development of white normativity as a coordinated theo-political act (i.e. theological and legal) and demonstrates the economic and social benefits to white identity formation. The intent of this historical review as an educational process is twofold: to illustrate the historical impact upon contemporary beliefs and practices and to demonstrate the alleged threatening black presence is a mythical creation of the white imagination that provides financial benefits to white elites and psychological benefits to poor whites to the collective hurt of poor black, brown and white people. The paper will also offer questions for self-reflection. It is my hope that this critical discussion about race relations might yield less defensiveness or what sociologist Robin DiAngelo calls white fragility, which is little more than a morphing manifestation of white supremacy intended to maintain hegemonic dominance. It is also my hope that an honest discussion will stop the normative downward white gaze upon black and brown flesh that gets people killed and finally enable the recognition of racial/ethnic minorities as human beings who reflect the *Imago Dei* and possess a divine right simply to be.

Establishing the Normative Gaze

The first observation of note when the English met the African was, of course, his darker hue. In fact, according to historian Winthrop Jordan, "For Englishmen, the most arresting characteristic of the newly discovered African was his skin color."⁸ From the start, Englishmen not only set themselves *apart* from the African, but also set himself *above* the African by stressing what was perceived to be radically different ways of life. By comparison to English life

³ <https://thinkprogress.org/white-woman-calls-cops-on-black-yale-grad-student-for-crime-of-napping-in-a-common-room-10826f736ce3/>

⁴ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/starbucks-philadelphia-black-men-arrests_us_5ad22073e4b077c89ce91c74

⁵ <https://www.snopes.com/news/2018/05/11/oakland-woman-calls-police-black-people-grilling-illegally-public-park/>

⁶ <https://patch.com/new-york/upper-west-side-nyc/cops-called-black-man-moving-uws-apartment-report>

⁷ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/black-kid-has-police-called-on-him-for-mowing-a-lawn_us_5b37b791e4b0f3c221a15bf5

⁸ Winthrop D. Jordan, *The White Man's Burden. Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 4.

and culture these Africans seemed the very picture of perverse negation.⁹ In fact, Africans simply became the polar opposites of the English – black, heathenistic, uncivilized, inhuman, animalistic, without law and without sexual restraint.¹⁰ Therefore, the English immediately dehumanized the Africans by comparing them to apes, claiming them to be more beast-like than human even suggesting that Africans, now renamed Negroes, “had sprung from the generation of ape-kind or that apes were themselves the offspring of Negroes.”¹¹ In other words, the English gave no thought to the differing weather conditions between the two continents as a contributing factor in their different in attire for example. Nor did the English grant the African a divine right to have a cultural identity *equal to* just *different from* the English. Rather the English was presumed superior, the African inferior. The result of this English/African comparison was a downward gaze upon an “inferior” black being and the elevation of white/whiteness as normative to be admired and emulated. As a result, the African people who had a culture, human identity, religion, government, etc. in their native land were stripped of the same, renamed George, Mary or Elizabeth in the image of their English captors and treated as animals bred, bought and sold for capitalist gain of their English-American owners.

Pro-slavery advocates then justified this redefining and renaming of African humanity by claiming Africans were the descendant of Ham who had been cursed by his drunken father Noah to serve to his brothers Shem and Japheth after the flood as recorded in Genesis 9:20-27. Whites were, of course, made the descendants of Shem and ordained of god to rule of the established order. Enslaved Blacks, in fact, were taught that service to whites was mandated by God and that God and the white man were the same.¹² A biblical authority was necessary as Franz Fanon asserts, “All forms of exploitation seek the source of their necessity in some edict of a Biblical nature.”¹³ This gross misinterpretation of the biblical text not only theologically redefined black flesh from the *Imago Dei* of Genesis 1:27 granted to all humankind, but suggested also that God had ordained the white man ruler over the social order. This theological reordering was then written into the state and federal laws of this new nation over many years further solidifying the dehumanization of people of color thereby legally enslaving, denying citizenship, limiting immigration, etc.

White by Law

White racial identification in this country was reserved initially for rich, Christian, free Englishmen, and even then, only to Protestant Englishmen,¹⁴ according to Rosemary Ruether. However, in 1676 there was a unified uprising of exploited blacks and whites in Virginia known as *Bacon's Rebellion* that threatened to usurp hegemonic authority. Elite planters were torn between needing to secure their unstable labor force and needing to appease non-land owning, non-colored men with guns upon whom they depended for military strength, tax revenues and

⁹ Jordan, 7.

¹⁰ Barbara A. Fears, *A Liberatory Pedagogy: The Underground Railroad as a Model for Christian Education*. Dissertation (Evanston: Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary Dissertation, 2015), 38.

¹¹ Jordan, 16.

¹² Jacquelyn Grant, “The Sin of Servanthood.” In *A Troubling in My Soul. Womanist Perspectives On Evil and Suffering* ed. Emilie M. Townes (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), 211.

¹³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 88.

¹⁴ Rosemary R. Ruether (Ed). *Gender, Ethnicity and Religion. Views from the Other Side* (Minneapolis: Fortress, Press, 2002), xi.

maintenance of social order.¹⁵ Weighing the risk of a unified alliance, British elites decided to extend the white racial identification to poor, landless people of European descent.

At that time, having a white racial identification was materially and psychologically beneficial to whites. For example, being racially identified as white became the birthright of Anglos and set them apart from African bond laborers as well as enlisted Europeans across class lines as active or passive supporters of capitalist agriculture based on chattel bond labor.¹⁶ The “white” racial designation, moreover, became the attribute of freedom, a shield from the exclusion of civil liberties, and a rallying point for solidarity against anything black. Whereas having a black racial identity marked who was subject to enslavement and designated as property, white racial identity marked who was free. Whiteness then became the quintessential property of personhood.¹⁷ Of course, this new racial designation did not change the financial status of the poor, rebelling white. It did, however, provide psychological benefits via a false sense of comradery with white elites and mutual white authority with elite whites over black bodies. In other words, elite whites and poor whites now shared a manufactured concern over black and brown presence in the land and the normative downward white gaze upon these dark dehumanized othered bodies. In the absence of any other material possession the new designation “white” became a property right especially for the poor that, according to Cheryl Harris, conferred tangible and economically valuable benefits to those who met the strict standard of proof.¹⁸ This designation became especially meaningful for poor whites because it meant being able to say “at least I’m not black, or at least I’m not a slave.”

This shift in socio-political identification for poor whites also provided a buffer group that continues to protect the socio-political and economic interests of the wealthy white elites even today. In fact, poor whites often sacrifice their own best interests, and certainly sacrifice the best interest of poor black and brown people as legal scholar Derrick Bell has noted. Conservative politicians have long been able to hold even the highest office in the land by relying on the time-tested formula of getting needy whites to identify on the basis of their shared skin color by suggesting that white people must stand together against the Willie Hortons, or against racial quotas, or against affirmative action.¹⁹

Yet by every social indicator, racism continues to blight the lives of people of color, including holders of high-echelon jobs.²⁰ Racism, in fact, continues to pervade both society and religion including Christian churches.²¹ However, according to sociologist Robin DiAngelo, some white people see themselves as the new oppressed group²² even though whites fair better than people of color across a range of access and opportunities in this country. In fact, Charles Gallagher reported that a majority of his white students felt that contemporary affirmative action

¹⁵ Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs. Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Williamsburg: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 185.

¹⁶ Jacqueline Battalora, *Birth of a White Nation The Invention of White People and Its Relevance Today* (Houston: Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co., 2013), 20.

¹⁷ Cheryl I. Harris, “Whiteness as Property.” In *Critical Race Theory. The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* ed. Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller and Kendall Thomas (New York: The New Press, 1995), 281.

¹⁸ Harris, 280.

¹⁹ Derrick Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well The Permanence of Racism* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 9

²⁰ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. Second Edition (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 11.

²¹ Karen Teel, *Racism and the Image of God* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 2.

²² Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility. Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 3

measures were unfair because issues of overt racism, discrimination, and equal opportunity had been addressed by their parents' generation in the 1960s.²³ The 2018 median income for whites was \$907, for blacks \$683 and for Latinos \$674.²⁴ Therefore, any self-perception as oppressed by virtue of white racial identity and/or belief in the legislative correction of anti-discrimination policies reflect a lack of critical consciousness or willful ignorance about race/power dynamics operative in church and in society and about the role theology and the law has played in dehumanizing and disenfranchising people of color. This lack of historical awareness and the implications of racist U.S. history upon contemporary relationships are to our collective hurt as a nation and as a people of faith, and must be corrected via comprehensive education.

Color Struck

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire is credited with introducing critical pedagogy as a teaching methodology with his landmark text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. This pedagogy makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed themselves.²⁵ The outcome of that reflection encourages and empowers the oppressed to struggle for liberation for themselves and for their oppressors. According to Freire hegemonic dehumanization requires a revolution that only the dehumanized themselves can and must lead for the sake of both the oppressed and of the oppressor. Dehumanized and disenfranchised black and brown people have attempted to lead such a revolution, but racial attitudes toward people of color have hindered these movements. Ricky Lee Allen, Assistant Professor of Educational Thought and Sociocultural Studies highlights barriers to the humanizing efforts led by oppressed people:

- whites defend the myth that they are the model humans;
- whites blame people-of-color for their own victimization under white supremacy;
- whites project all sorts of negative attributes onto people-of-color and all sorts of unfounded positive attributes onto themselves as a way of diverting attention from white culpability and white terrorism;
- whites depict people-of-color as non-human, savage, child-like, dangerous, genetically inferior, ugly, stupid, lazy, depraved, deprived, merely different, angry, outsiders, violators of the social contract, inept; and
- Whites reject people-of-color who openly question white privilege.²⁶

A cursory glance of the white response to advances in civil rights for people of color buttress Allen's claims of the unwillingness of whites to listen to people of color. Rather, whites enact policies and/or manipulate the discourse in order to maintain hegemonic interest and domination. For example, white hegemonic elites instituted Jim/Jane Crow segregation in response to the civil war, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, the Bracero Program after the Mexican American war, the Chinese Exclusion Act and other anti-Asian immigration policies merely to reduce the number of immigrants from the continent, the colorblind rhetoric after the passage of civil rights legislation, the post-racial rhetoric after the

²³ Charles A. Gallagher, "White Racial Formation: Into the Twenty-First Century" in *Critical White Studies Looking Behind the Mirror*, Ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia: Temple University 1997), 10.

²⁴ <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/wkyeng.pdf>

²⁵ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 48.

²⁶ Ricky Lee Allen, "Whiteness and Critical Pedagogy," in *Critical Pedagogy and Race* ed. Zeus Leonardo (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 57-60.

election of the first black president, all lives matter in response to black lives matter, and stand for the flag in response to NFL players kneeling in protest against police brutality. All of these legislative, rhetorical and political moves serve to counter the narratives and perceived advances of people of color and also to ensure the continued socio-political and economic dominance of whites as normative, right, standard, normative, not to be usurped, surpassed or equaled.

If whites want to deconstruct this harmful normative gaze, they will have to abandon self-protective habits and learn to listen to those non-white persons they have long considered non-humans. For example, they would have to drop the defensiveness of white fragility and pretense of colorblind, which are but morphing manifestations of the white supremacy that dehumanized and disenfranchised people of color at the founding of the nation. According to Allen, for whites to be truly in solidarity with race-radical people of color it is essential that whites unlearn the marks of their origins, which include a belief in the myths of colorblindness, racial meritocracy and white supremacy.²⁷ The colorblind rhetoric is the new racism of the post-civil rights era that has captured the hearts and minds of most whites and blurred and confused the hearts and minds of many blacks.²⁸ Abandoning a long-held politically correct and protective stance as “colorblindness” is to betray the implied Social Contract that Charles Mills says is by/between/for/about whites only. To be racially colorblind is to pretend to ignore what one has already observed and also to pretend to make no socio-political associations/connections with that skin-color observation. To be colorblind, moreover, is to pretend that the color of one’s skin does not carry the marks of U.S. racial history, the legacy of which still manifests today as either white as human, non-white is non-human, white has right, non-white does not have rights, white is normative, non-white is disposable or any number of other positive associations to whiteness and pejorative associations to people of color created by mythical media representation. According to black feminist scholar and cultural critic, bell hooks, there is a direct and abiding connection between the maintenance of white supremacist patriarchy in this society and the institutionalization via mass media of specific images.²⁹ In fact, she says that white supremacists, from slavery on, have recognized that control over images is central to the maintenance of any system of racial domination.³⁰ Deconstructing the normative white gaze demands a closer examinations of the imaging of whiteness as normative, as all things great and wonderful and by comparison the imaging of blacks as criminals, welfare queens, thugs, n-word and the imaging of brown people as rapists, terrorists, and drug dealers. It also requires employing a pedagogy that foregrounds race such as Critical Race Theory (CRT) and/or Critical White Studies (CRT) as explanatory for the persistence of racial inequities. Both methodologies acknowledge the racism embedded within U.S. society that favors whites and disfavors people of color. Employing methodologies that specifically foreground race enables a more direct, honest discussion on the subject of whiteness, white normative and the deleterious effect upon all people rather than talking gingerly around the subject so as not offend and/or repeatedly generating words and phrasing that preserve white hegemonic domination over people of color and changing nothing in the real world.

²⁷ Allen, 62.

²⁸ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva 2001. *White Supremacy & Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 195.

²⁹ bell hooks, *Black Looks. Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 2.

³⁰ hooks, *Black Looks*, 2.

Conclusion

Educators, particularly educators-of-color and white educators committed to the cause of liberation from oppressive ideology, must unlearn and un-do the mis-education that mis-informs peers, parishioners, and students about race and other –isms plaguing the nation. In particular, religious educators must be more direct in deconstructing the normative gaze. For example, educators must stop soft-peddalling white supremacy and racism by using what is believed to be less offensive terms to describe the behavior of the hegemonic elite. White fragility, like colorblind, post-racial or even Jim Crow segregation, is but another morphing manifestation of white supremacy that serves to preserve the white hegemonic status quo and that continues the white-over-all-others social ordering that empowers whites to see themselves as the normative standard bearer entitled to dictate the placement and behavior of black and brown bodies. This attitude has proven to be dangerous, even deadly to people of color.

In fact, too many people of color lay dead and/or find themselves in handcuffs, placed at risk to be shot or to have a criminal record and thereby future employability and housing jeopardized because some white person saw him/herself as the standard bearer, preserver of the normative, right way. Derald Wing Sue, Robin DiAngelo and others offer whites several tips for overcoming racism. Let me suggest several questions whites might pause to ask themselves before calling the police on a black or brown person doing absolutely nothing: what is the perceived threat, why do I believe it to be so, what informs said belief, what divine or American right am I exercising, who am I protecting, what rights does this person of color have, do I see this person as human or as a threatening presence who does not belong in this space, do I see this person as human who is not doing what I would do or doing it the way I would do it, what do I actually see, why am I upset by this sight and/or this person's presence in this space, would I feel the same way if the person looked like me?

The normative white gaze can be deadly – both physically and spiritually – it kills the body and the soul. Police and stand your ground encounters with people of color have resulted in countless black and brown bodies lying dead for merely being in their own home, driving, walking, running and breathing/not breathing while black. By comparison white males who have actually killed people (i.e. George Zimmerman, Parkland, FL high school and S.C. Mother Emmanuel AME church shooters) have been taken into custody without incident. In addition the seasoning process and politics of respectability that expected even demanded that people of color embrace white culture as their own in order to assimilate in to the wider American culture and/or at the very least to appear less threatening in public spaces is an emotional and spiritual drain upon the soul of black and brown people. Why must African and/or Latin American cultural identity be denied in favor of the colonizing Euro-American people? Moreover, these many and varied scenarios beg the question what about faith, faith-based practices and the spiritual formation process enable anyone to see people of color not reflecting the *Imago Dei* of the God they claim for themselves, except the racism and white supremacy that is embedded in the very fabric of this nation that changed black and brown people from humans to savages, heathens, slaves, rapists, terrorists, drug dealers, welfare queens, and n-words and elevated white colonizers to the standard bearer, judge, and official cultural critic gazing downward through a lens of normativity upon people of color. Religious educators must bring the historical racial formation to bear upon contemporary race relations to dismantle this normative, but unhealthy gaze.

Bibliography

- Battalora, Jacqueline 2013. *Birth of a White Nation. The Invention of White People and Its Relevance Today*. Houston: Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2001. *White Supremacy & Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Brown, Kathleen. 1996. *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs. Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia*. Williamsburg: University of North Carolina Press.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller and Kendall Thomas. (Ed) 1995. *Critical Race Theory. The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*. New York: The New Press.
- Delgado, Richard and Jean Stefancic (Ed). 1997. *Critical White Studies Looking Behind the Mirror*. Philadelphia: Temple University.
- DiAngelo, Robin. 2018. *White Fragility. Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Douglas, Kelly Brown. 2005. *What's Faith Got To Do With It?* Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Fanon, Franz. 1967. *Black Skin White Masks*. New York: Grove Press.
- Fears, Barbara A. 2015. *Dissertation. A Liberatory Pedagogy: The Underground Railroad as a Model for Christian Education*. Evanston: Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.
- hooks, bell. 1992. *Black Looks. Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press.
- <https://patch.com/new-york/upper-west-side-nyc/cops-called-black-man-moving-uws-apartment-report>
- <https://thinkprogress.org/white-woman-calls-cops-on-black-yale-grad-student-for-crime-of-napping-in-a-common-room-10826f736ce3/>
- https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/black-kid-has-police-called-on-him-for-mowing-a-lawn_us_5b37b791e4b0f3c221a15bf5
- https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/starbucks-philadelphia-black-men-arrests_us_5ad22073e4b077c89ce91c74
- <https://www.snopes.com/news/2018/05/11/oakland-woman-calls-police-black-people-grilling-illegally-public-park/>
- Jordan, Winthrop D. 1974. *The White Man's Burden. Historical Origins of Racism in the United States*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Leonardo, Zeus. 2005. *Critical Pedagogy and Race*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- Paulo Freire. 2006. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Roberts, J. Deotis. 1987. *Black Theology in Dialogue*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.
- Ruether, Rosemary R. (Ed). 2002. *Gender, Ethnicity and Religion. Views from the Other Side*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Teel, Karen. 2010. *Racism and the Image of God*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Townes, Emilie M. 1997. *A Troubling in My soul. Womanist Perspectives On Evil and Suffering*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

By Gina A. S. Robinson
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
gina.robinson@garrett.edu
2018 REA Annual Meeting Nov 2-4
Beyond White Normativity: Creating Brave Spaces
November 2-4, 2018

“I Belong Here: A Theo-Sociopolitical Examination of Black Bodies in White Spaces

One of the many strands that has gone into giving power to white normativity is the construction of what sociologist, Dr. Elijah Anderson calls, “white space.” This concept of white space and black space conceived in the white imagination, permeates American culture in systematized ways with the turn of each century. Laws, imbued with racial bias, were put in place by the government and enforced by police officers and white nationalist groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan. Laws that were supposedly designed to protect American citizens from hurt, harm and danger solely offered a hedge of protection around the white space, putting the being of innocent black people at risk while relegating their existence to where it belongs, in the black space. What ought to seem arbitrary and trivial in the land of the free is indeed a contemporary issue that is up for debate daily on a micro-level as black and white Americans negotiate the contours of space, being and belonging in this country. This paper seeks to construct a theo-sociopolitical framework for examining the existence of black bodies in white spaces through the lenses of black and womanist theology and sociology to prove that black bodies, indeed belong in all spaces. The negotiation of black existence in white spaces as a de-colonial, political act is a salient issue for religious educators, because the classroom is a white space in which these moves of resistance must occur.

Introduction:

“You can’t be black and comfortable...”¹ stated CNN commentator Bakari Sellers as he responded to the influx of recorded encounters between police officers and people of color, more specifically black people as a result of the beckoning calls of concerned white citizens. Meeting at Starbucks, staying at an Airbnb with friends, playing golf, asking for cutlery from Waffle House, visiting a college with your brother on a college tour, and grilling with charcoal in a public park are apparently suspicious actions that warrant a call to the local police department from concerned white citizens, predominately scared white women. While the actions listed above might be understood by most as commonplace activities for many Americans, recent history proves that engagement in these past times by black people creates incidents worthy of calling the police.

Even though, I would argue that these are prime examples of white imagination running wild with perceived threats, a sense of entitled innocence and white superiority, this would only

¹ “Commentator: You Can’t be Black and Comfortable,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nO2Y-gpM7A>. published May 10, 2018; accessed on May 12, 2018.

serve as a rather shallow critique of this visceral reaction, white people calling the police on black folks when they believe there has been a violation. In fact, calling the police is merely one example of how a larger historical phenomenon is at play through a specific systematized network. The historical phenomenon in question is white people policing black bodies and staking claim on space(s). While there are many factors that play into this phenomenon, it is clear that space, belonging and being are at the heart of this matter. This two-sided debate is simple. Many white people and institutions wrought with racial bias against people of color operate under the assumption that black people must prove their right to be in white spaces whereas people of color, particularly black people, stand firmly in their being by asserting, “I belong here.”

As previously stated, white people calling the police on black folks when they feel threatened or violated has been occurring in the American context since the “boys in blue” started patrolling the streets to protect the rights of all citizens. What police have really been patrolling and in many ways controlling is human existence in particular spaces. Even when the cops are not a fitting resource to police spaces, such as boardrooms, football fields and classrooms, black existence and humanity is still policed by white people, when they feel the boundaries of the white space have been transgressed. Since the inception of the institutionalization of slavery, there has been designated spaces for whites and non-whites on American soil.

For example, white slave owners lived in the “big house,” while enslaved Africans lived down in “the quarters.” Slave owners made it clear where black people were allowed to engage in fundamental, everyday life activities, such as sleeping, eating, working and worshipping. This concept of white space and black space conceived in the white imagination, permeated American culture in systematized ways with the turn of each century. Laws, imbued with racial bias, were put in place by the government and enforced by police officers and white gangs, such as the Ku Klux Klan. Laws that were supposedly designed to protect American citizens from hurt, harm and danger offered a hedge of protection around the white space, putting the being of innocent black people at risk while relegating their existence to where it belongs, in the black space.

What ought to seem arbitrary and trivial in the land of the free is indeed a contemporary issue that is up for debate daily on a micro-level as black and white Americans negotiate the contours of space, being and belonging in this country. This paper seeks to construct a theo-sociopolitical framework for examining the existence of black bodies in white spaces through the lenses of black and womanist theology and sociology to prove that black bodies, indeed belong in all spaces. The negotiation of black existence in white spaces as a de-colonial, political act is a salient issue for religious educators, because the classroom is a white space in which these moves of resistance must occur.

Using the unfortunate incident, which took place at Yale University in the Hall of Graduate Studies between Lolade Siyonbola, a black graduate student and Sarah Baarsh, a white graduate student as a case study to localize the negotiation of black bodies in white space within the ivory tower, I will craft a theo-sociopolitical framework through which one can see how space construction becomes a strand that gives power to white normativity. Placing the work of Dr. Emilie Townes, Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas and Dr. Elijah Anderson in conversation to show how the fantastic hegemonic imagination perceives black bodies when they transgress the boundaries of white space. The act of transgression functions as a violation of the line of whiteness in America’s exceptionalism narrative, which in turn gives white people license to stand their ground.

Therefore, the maintenance of white space gives power to white normativity. Once this framework is set, I will analyze the “napping while black” incident to draw out important points for a broader discussion on the negotiation of black existence as a de-colonial, political act across the landscape of predominately white institutions, particularly in the classroom. Based on my analysis, I will offer some points for consideration suggesting what resistance might look like for black people in white space, and how people can participate in the de-colonial project of dismantling white normativity. This is an especially important conversation for religious educators, because our methods of resistance against white normativity in white spaces can be taught to and duplicated by students, who will reach people beyond the university and seminary setting.

I. Napping While Black at Yale- A Case Study

On May 8, 2018 around 1:00 in the morning, Lolade Siyonbola, an African Studies graduate student at Yale University was sound asleep in the common room on the twelfth floor of her residence, the Hall of Graduate Studies, when Sarah Baraash, a doctoral student, walked into the room, turned the lights on and told Lolade she was calling the police.² Astonished, Lolade engaged in conversation with Sarah about why she felt the need to call the police. Captured in a fifty-eight second video live streamed through Lolade’s personal Facebook page, was a short, yet telling account of the harrowing words spoken and negative disposition displayed by Sarah. At 1:50 am, Lolade simply wanted to know why her neighbor and fellow student called the police on her for sleeping in that unrestricted public space. Standing in the doorway of her room, Sarah said, “I have every right to call the police,” after taking a picture of Siyonbola. “You cannot sleep in that room.”³ As Baraash took the picture, Siyonbola suggested she continue by taking another and she should get her good side this time. Baraash closed her dorm room door and both students waited for the police to arrive.

Around 1:56 am, four police officers employed by Yale Police Department arrived on the twelfth floor of the Hall of Graduate Studies to investigate the reported situation. Lolade began recording a second video, which lasted close to seventeen minutes. She told the officers that she needed to return to the common room to finish her paper. A white male officer asked Lolade to present her identification. After asking him why, non-black woman of color police officer retorted, “...because this is a Yale building and we need to make sure you belong here.”⁴ So Lolade

² Wootson Jr., Cleve, R. “A black Yale student fell asleep in her dorm’s common room. A white student called police.” In *Washington Post*. May 11, 2018. Accessed May 13, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2018/05/10/a-black-yale-student-fell-asleep-in-her-dorms-common-room-a-white-student-called-police/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.d8250e4b70f0

³ Wootson, Jr., “A black Yale student fell asleep in her dorm’s common room. A white student called police.” Ibid.

⁴ “Lolade was live” <https://www.facebook.com/reneson.jeanlouis>. Lolade’s original live stream video was reposted by Reneson Jean-Louis on his personal page on during the afternoon on May 8th. Jean-Louis is the the friend Lolade references in this video, whom on which Sarah called the police a few months prior. This video has been posted on other news media outlets; however, I was first made aware of this incident at Yale through Jean-Louis’s page. Therefore, this was my original source for research.

proceeded to use her keys to open the door to her dorm room, while stating, “okay. let me open my apartment for you, so that you can see that I belong here. I don’t think there’s a need for you to be here.”⁵ After opening the door in front of the officers and Sarah, the white male cop insisted Lolade present her identification card to him. Lolade asked why she needed to present the card after proving that she lived there, which was what the police officers said they needed. The disgruntled black student was reluctant about giving the officers her identification. She continued to ask them why this was necessary. The officer attempted to explain himself by stating, “I have never met you before and I have never met her before. She called us and said there was someone who appeared to be some place they weren’t supposed to be...”⁶ Laughing under her breath, Lolade provides the officer with her identification card. He steps away and called police headquarters to have her name run through the database.

Another white male officer begins to ask Lolade questions about her interaction with Sarah. She told them what happened and added that Sarah called the police on her friend (Reneson Jean-Louis) a few months ago for being in the building as well. Close to ten minutes goes by as the police officer with her ID card has to re-spell her name multiple times for the officers at headquarters. The white male attempted to engage Lolade in small talk about the paper she was writing. She responded, “I deserve to be here. I pay tuition like everyone else. I’m not going to justify my existence here.”⁷

By this time, a black male officer emerges from the elevator with the woman cop (now totaling four police officers) and engages Lolade in conversation. He walks up to her, shakes her hand, introduces himself and asks, “are you are Yale student?” She quickly responds, “of course I am a Yale student. How else would I be in here?”⁸ The black police officer attempts to reassure her that everything is going to be okay, but Lolade expresses that she is being harassed. He discounted her understanding of her experience multiple times by telling her that she was not being harassed and that the police only wanted to get to the bottom of the situation.

The officers were having a difficult time finding Lolade’s name in the database, because her preferred name was printed on the ID card opposed to her government name. In Siyonbola’s defense, the woman officer told her supervisor, the black cop, that Lolade had already used keys to open her dorm room and her ID card to gain access into the common room. While writing notes on the incident, the woman officer asked Lolade if there was a common room on this floor. Out of frustration, Lolade told her there was not and responded, “it doesn’t matter why I chose to go up there, because I am a free citizen in this building and I do what the hell I want.”⁹ The supervisor interrupted their verbal exchange and stated, “well this is private property and we are police officers here, so we are allowed to do our jobs...we determine who is allowed to be here

⁵ “Lolade was live,” Ibid.

⁶ “Lolade was live,” Ibid.

⁷ “Lolade was live,” Ibid.

⁸ “Lolade was live,” Ibid.

⁹ Lolade was live,” Ibid.

and who is not allowed to be here regardless of whether you feel you are allowed to be here or not, okay?”¹⁰ Again, Lolade laughs and says, “I hope that makes you feel powerful.”¹¹ The supervisor responds, “it’s not about feeling powerful. We are going to get to the bottom of this and that is the bottom line.”¹² After refuting Lolade’s claims of harassment from Sarah and from the police, the supervisor was alerted by the white male, who had her identification card that she was in fact in the Yale system. Finally, Lolade’s card was returned and she was released to continue with the rest of her night.

What took place in this case study is not an isolated incident. Precarious situations for black people have historically been constructed by their white counterparts as a reaction to the perceived threat of black bodies in white space, conjured up in the white imagination. Collectively the work of Dr. Emilie Townes, Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas and Dr. Elijah Anderson show how the fantastic hegemonic imagination perceives black bodies when they transgress the boundaries of white space. The act of transgression functions as a violation of the line of whiteness in America’s exceptionalism narrative, which in turn gives white people license to stand their ground. Their work grounds my understanding of a theo-sociopolitical framework for examining the negotiation of black bodies in white space.

II. Black Bodies in White Space

In order to think critically about the negotiation of black bodies in white spaces through a theo-sociopolitical framework, we must first define and describe what typically happens in white space. Sociologist, Dr. Elijah Anderson notes, “white spaces vary in kind, but their most visible and distinctive feature is their overwhelming presence of white people and their absence of black people.”¹³ Anderson describes a black person’s experience in the white space as one marked by social distance at first, because white people are concerned about a black person being in their space without their permission. When a black person is occupying white space without this imagined permission, then white people may feel as if their right to that particular space is threatened. If the black person can prove he or she has business in the white space, then white people will cautiously give them a provisional pass to remain and socialize. The social atmosphere of the white space is tense, but tolerable until the black person says or does something white people feel is out of line. In that moment of acute disrespect, Anderson argues, “insecure whites often become the major actors in constructing the ‘nigger moment.’”¹⁴ The attempt to put black folks back in their place draws the color line between black and white people, which ultimately reminds black folks that their bodies are negotiating white space.

¹⁰ Lolade was live,” Ibid.

¹¹ Lolade was live,” Ibid.

¹² Lolade was live,” Ibid.

¹³ Anderson, Elijah. “The White Space,” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 2015, Vol. 1(1) 13

¹⁴ Anderson, Elijah. “The Nigger Moment” In *The Cosmopolitan Canopy* (New York: Norton & Company, 2011) 263.

One might wonder why and how some white people, particularly Christians, actively and complicitly perpetuate white normativity through the white space. One way to approach this query is take on the daunting task of attempting to get inside the minds of white people. The work of Dr. Emilie Townes will help us approximate toward this task. In *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, Townes amalgamates Foucault's understanding of fantasy and imagination with Gramsci's utility of hegemony to generate a new concept, the fantastic hegemonic imagination. The imaginary and fantastic are a part of living in the quotidian.

The fantastic is comprised of different structures including domination and subordination in which people, who comfortably exist in what seems to be a sinister supernatural realm, do not find these forces unusual. On the other hand, those of us outside the fantastic are keenly aware of the sinister activity, because our everyday realities are constantly confronted by it.¹⁵ Even our awareness does not protect us from the coercive power of hegemony[the set of ideas that dominant groups employ in a society], which secures our consent as participants in the fantastic hegemonic imagination. The author notes, "the notion of consent is key, because hegemony is created through coercion that is gained by using the church, family, media, political parties, schools, unions, and other voluntary association—the civil society and all its organizations."¹⁶

Townes further posits,

the imagination that creates the fantastic can control the world in its own image. This imagination conjures up worlds and their social structures that are not based on supernatural events and phantasms, but on the ordinaries of evil. It is the imagination, I argue, that helps to hold systematic, structural evil in place.¹⁷

Images such as sapphire, tragic mulatta, welfare queen, brute and pickaninny, which are used in the cultural production of evil have become harmful stereotypes for black people. Stereotypes are harmful for black people, because these imagined caricatures influence and at times dictate how white folks systematically weave white normativity into the construction of white space in society.

The fantastic hegemonic imagination is where the coercive conceptions about black bodies and the thought to manipulatively misuse space are both conjured. Without hesitation, Townes directly links this mentality to evil. However, history reveals that many white Americans have justified their violent actions with and rooted their prejudiced ideologies in their theological interpretation of God's divine promise and plan to settle in the new world. The initial encounters of Anglo-saxons with native and African peoples on what will become United States soil is a point in history in which we can locate the practice of policing of black bodies and the construction of white space. During this time, many Anglo-saxons used Christianity to justify stealing native land and commodifying black bodies. They believed these terrible actions were in accordance to the rights God granted them, which were interpreted as the rights of whiteness.

¹⁵ Ibid, 19.

¹⁶ Ibid, 21.

¹⁷ Ibid, 21.

Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas argues, “the rights of whiteness as cherished property are the unspoken but understood privileges bestowed by America’s narrative of Anglo-saxon exceptionalism.”¹⁸ America’s grand narrative of exceptionalism is rooted in the myth of racial superiority, which suggests all white people, even immigrants are members of a race of people chosen by God.¹⁹ So when racial superiority is challenged or threatened by non-white people, white folks use their privileges to re-establish hierarchical order in *their* space. Therefore, they exercise the right to either stand their ground or elicit the assistance of police to reinforce their exceptional identity as occupants of white space. Rooted in distorted, divisive theology, the structural establishment of white space has sociopolitical implications on how black bodies negotiate transgressing into this exclusive terrain.

Some social and political implications stem from white people weaponizing stereotypes to define *black space*. Again, Anderson offers an entry point through which we can understand white people’s conception of “the iconic ghetto,” which is one of the spaces black people are believed to occupy. Anderson coined the term, “iconic ghetto” to directly refer to the idea prejudiced white people have in mind when they encounter black folks. Anderson posits:

For both blacks and whites, the term ghetto is almost always pejorative.

Outsiders typically have little direct experience with the ghetto; they gain their perspective from the media, from tales shared by friends, from fleeting glimpses of the ghetto’s inhabitants downtown, or, in some cases, from having been threatened by residential racial succession themselves, with their own neighborhoods moving toward becoming ghettos. Accordingly, they imagine the ghetto as impoverished, chaotic, lawless, drug-infested, and ruled by violence. Like most stereotypes, this image contains elements of truth, but it is for the most part false.²⁰

Anderson illuminates the reality that the ideas people have about black people living in the ghetto are not based on individual encounters with actual people, but from distant observations or presumptions. The negative stereotype that is constructed about the ghetto affects the conclusions drawn about the people living in these communities. The difference between the conclusions made by black people, who do not live in the ghetto and white people is that white people associate the negative stereotypes with all black people. Therefore, ghetto becomes synonymous with black no matter the social status of the person.

Middle to upper class black people have a peculiar experience when they are in white spaces. Regardless of the black person’s credentials, the white person typically associates said black person with a stereotype, such as sapphire.²¹ This is the fantastic hegemonic imagination at work

¹⁸ Douglas, Kelly Brown. “America’s Exceptionalism.” *Stand Your Grown: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*. (Orbis Books, Markknoll, NY: 2015) 41.

¹⁹ Ibid, 4.

²⁰ Anderson, Elijah. “The Iconic Ghetto,” In *The Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Vol 642, Issue 1, 2012. 9.

²¹ Ibid, 14.

even when a black person has “proven” his or her expertise and credentials warrant their existence in the white space. Black professionals and students are always on defense when they come into contact with white people, because there is an increased possibility that the white person automatically associates them with the iconic ghetto. Anderson writes, “when whites encounter a black stranger in public, the iconic ghetto almost invariably serves as a reference point to interpret his or her identity and the import of his or her presence, and this is especially true when the ghetto community is located nearby.”²² Given the urban locale of many institutions of higher learning, communities labeled “the ghetto” are often within close proximity. According to Anderson’s theory, this geographical reality increases the chance a black student, faculty or staff member will experience a nigger moment.

Unfortunately, nigger moments are experiences that have defined the white space over-time. The rights of whiteness are exercised to protect the imagined exceptional identity of white people as well as maintain the boundaries of the white space. The essence and worth of a black person’s being is questioned each time they transgress these boundaries and enter this domain. Our bodies are policed as our belonging is placed under scrutiny. Policing black bodies is a phenomenon that has theological, social and political implications on the lives of black people. Lolade was faced with these implications as she was napping while black at an educational institution.

III. Case Study Analysis

Through this case study, we chronicle an example of the many micro-aggressions black people endure on a daily basis as our presence in white spaces is interrogated. Nigger moments happen more than you might think. Ironically, this situation took place in one of America’s most esteemed *ivory* towers, Yale University. Historically, most black people at Yale were relegated the position of cook, custodian, or bus driver until the university decided to begin admitting students in substantial numbers during the mid-1960’s.²³ Many of the black people who work at Yale are residents of a community located less than a block away from the Hall of Graduate Studies. Their community is often described pejoratively as “the hood.” Therefore, there is an increased possibility that black students’ belonging in this historically white space will be questioned and challenged. As evidenced in this case study, Sarah saw a black woman sleeping in the common room of their community residence. Sarah stood tall in her imagined exceptional identity, looked beyond the books and laptop, saw black skin and concluded Lolade did not belong in this white space. Thusly, the police were called to question Lolade’s being and prove she did not belong in the Hall of Graduate Studies.

²² Ibid, 17.

²³ Schiff, Judith Ann. “Pioneers.” in Yale Alumni Magazine. (January/February 2006: Yale Alumni Publications, Inc., New Haven, CT) http://archives.yalealumnimagazine.com/issues/2006_01/old_yale.html. accessed. 5.12. 18. James Pembroke Pennington was the first African American to take classes at Yale through Yale Divinity School from 1834-1849, but he was never awarded a degree during his lifetime. After Pennington, other African American students were admitted and received their degree; however, the most black students to graduate at once was the fourteen students in the 1969 class. Today, Black/African American students make up close to 7.6% of the university.

What is most intriguing about this video, particularly the beginning of the second one was the police officers never questioned whether or not Sarah was student, yet demanded to see Lolade's identification even after she opened the door to her dorm room with a key. Even though the officers claimed they were following protocol to get to the bottom of Sarah's complaint, which was a perceived threat of someone being in the building who did not appear like she should be there, the burden of proof completely fell on Lolade. Once proof was provided that Lolade *belonged* there, more questions ensued and additional evidence was requested.

The majority of the second video, Sarah was absent. We can only wonder where she went and what type of conversation the police had with her, if one took place at all. I would argue, based on the footage and the response of the police, it was solely Sarah's rights of whiteness and being that was protected in this situation. She was presumed to be a law-abiding citizen, who had no prior history of placing calls to the police for similar reasons. If the police had conducted a fair and more thorough investigation, then they would have seen in their records that she called Yale Police Department a few months ago on Reneson Jean-Louis, a Haitian-American student at Yale, for simply *being* in the hallway as he was waiting for Lolade.

Since Baarsh believed Siyonbola was not allowed to sleep in the common room, Sarah felt she had the right to call the police for a non-violent offense. Was Baarsh offended by Lolade's black body intruding into imagined white space? Was Sarah threatened by Siyonbola's presence? Applying basic knowledge about the security measures for getting into residential property would have helped her conclude the following: all Hall of Graduate Studies residents must use their student identification card to get into the gate, because they are the only students on campus with access to this building; all students living in the tower must use the same card to use the elevator; and all students must use their card to get into the common room.²⁴ However, Sarah's first inclination was not to think about what was (or was not) happening. It was to react to who she saw. Clearly, the Yale Police Department did not employ this knowledge during the time of interrogation either. Each person in the position of power was preoccupied with policing Lolade's body and ensuring Sarah was safe.

Yale University succeeded in making sure both students could move through the security channels of the building with individually issued cards and keys; however, the Yale police department did not protect the supposed equal rights of both students involved. The police proceeded with what they called "protocol" when questioning Lolade. They even told her they had the right (and power as demonstrated through their actions) to determine who was supposed to be in that dormitory. As each of the police officers verbally interacted with Siyonbola, she maintained composure and stood sure-footed in the space that she knew to be her home away from home. Her response in that moment and thereafter via various news outlets was an act of resistance that affirmed her black body belonged in that white space. Even though Lolade's experience took place outside of the classroom, there are a lot of dynamics for religious educators to consider as we think of what resistance might look like for black people in white spaces, and ways people can participate in the de-colonial project of dismantling white normativity.

IV. "I Belong Here"-resisting white normativity in Religious Education

²⁴ Two years, while attending Yale Divinity School, I lived in the Hall of Graduate studies. I am aware of these security measures from firsthand experience.

One method of resistance for black people, particularly students is to continue transgressing the boundaries that protect white space. We must enter into these spaces and stand our ground by asserting our voices, dynamic presence, and intelligence. Unfortunately, the classroom is a white space that is often policed by professors before the semester begins through the development of a reading list, course objectives, and assignments. The boundaries are set and often communicate, “you do not belong here, but a provisional pass will be given for this semester.” When this is the case, black students should not feel as if the burden of proof to show we are worthy of the opportunity to study in these educational settings falls squarely on our shoulders. Instead, we resist that oppressive force by standing tall in our God-given worth each time the rights of whiteness are weaponized against us and nigger moments occur. Every time a black student stands their ground, the white space becomes less normative. Religious educators can also assist in dismantling white normativity in our classrooms by employing reflexivity as a pedagogical technique and personal practice.

Religious educators must exemplify the practice of and teach their students to engage in self-reflexivity and communal-reflexivity as ecclesial and public leaders. Reflexivity is a skill academics in our field as well as religious education practitioners in other arenas can practice to decolonialize the explicit and implicit white spaces surrounding them. The practice of reflexivity will reveal blindspots, biases and other factors that contribute to the perpetuation of white normativity in classrooms, syllabi, assignments, denominational doctrines, sermons, and small group curricula. It is especially important to teach students, especially white students, how to reflexively think about their theology around the doctrine of humanity and how it shapes their ecclesiology.

The conceptions of racial bias in the fantastic hegemonic imagination and the employment of this bias through stand your ground culture is exactly what Townes suggests, evil. God has not created a hierarchy in humanity. People who live into this exceptional identity of whiteness, cannot espouse to belief in a God who has created everyone equally in the same image. Their interpretation is based on a false hierarchy created by white supremacists to establish a social order within colonized contexts. The hierarchy of humanity that continues to exist in the American context, particularly in our educational institutions is rooted in the Anglo-saxon myth and the exceptionalist identity. This is not of God’s doing, but is an example of humankind’s sweet embrace of a doctrine of humanity that makes ontological claims, which perpetuate oppression.

This skewed vision of the doctrine of humanity and interpretation ontology influences our ecclesiology. With the Church universal in mind, it appears that we must continue to teach and demonstrate the importance of loving our neighbor as ourselves. The Church must demonstrate these Christian values in the public square so that the moral ethos of our communities can be positively influenced. The Church must exist beyond the four walls; however, there is work that must take place inside the walls of the church as well. Hate speech is preached every Sunday in a space that should be liberative for all who worship. Specifically, predominately white churches must face the fact that racism was imagined in the minds of their ancestors and maintained in society through social, political and economic structures all in the name of Jesus. Essentially, a church that worships a white racist God is a threat to the flourishing of humanity, particularly to the existence of black beings in white spaces.

In conclusion, I stand with Lolade as she resisted the oppressive forces, which interrogated her being and belonging in white space. Her resilience in the midst of a nigger moment is what black people must do if we want to survive. Religious educators must become more reflexive as they construct courses and engage in pedagogical practices if they want to participate in the decolonial project of dismantling white normativity. Although immediate change is not guaranteed, our fight is not in vain as it contributes to dismantling evil. While oppressive forces might continue to question the being of black people in white spaces, black folk's acts of resilience and resistance screamed back, "I belong here."

Bibliography

Anderson, Elijah. *The Cosmopolitan Canopy* (New York: Norton & Company, 2011).

_____. "The Iconic Ghetto," In *The Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Vol 642, Issue 1, 2012.

_____. "The White Space," *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 2015, Vol. 1(1).

Commentator: You Can't be Black and Comfortable," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nO2Y-gp-M7A>. published May 10, 2018; accessed on May 12, 2018.

Douglas, Kelly Brown. *Stand Your Grown: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*. (Orbis Books, Markknoll, NY: 2015).

"Lolade was live" <https://www.facebook.com/reneson.jeanlouis>.

Schiff, Judith Ann. "Pioneers." in *Yale Alumni Magazine*. (January/February 2006: Yale Alumni Publications, Inc., New Haven, CT) http://archives.yalealumnimagazine.com/issues/2006_01/old_yale.html. accessed. 5.12. 18.

Wootson, Jr., "A black Yale student fell asleep in her dorm's common room. A white student called police." *Ibid*.



Arlean Wells,
Aw2941@utsnyc.edu,
2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4

Unearthing Jezebel: Reconstructing the Jezebel's and the Black Women's Narratives

Abstract:

Jezebel was a powerful, faithful, and proud Phoenician princess. She represented beauty and hope, though she was restrained in a biblical narrative that was written from the perspective of her enemy. Jezebel's narrative was orchestrated within the walls of the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH). Jezebel was an answer to the ideological, political, social, and theological questions and concerns that motivated the study of the Israelites history. She was depicted as erotic, seductive and conniving. Jezebel's biblical narrative became the fabricated narrative for the Israelites' account of their destruction. Jezebel was a caricature who served only to bear the castigation and ridicule of the biblical text and its interpreters.¹ This caricature image of Jezebel, through the narrative of white America, became the fabricated marker of Black women in America. The historical image of Black Jezebel—a hypersexual, seductive and manipulative slave woman—has been one of the most pervasive and evolving images influencing the sexual socialization and perceptions of African American women today. The historical Black Jezebel, the criminalization of Black female bodies, and Jezebel's biblical narrative will be drawn together to address the connection between Jezebel's confined narrative in the Deuteronomist History and the Black female narrative that is restrained in American colonized history. The interlocking of both narratives gave birth to the victimization and criminalization of Black female bodies.

Paper:

Jezebel, a woman whose storyline is much lengthier than any other woman in the Bible, was a foreign princess who became the Queen of Israel. She may be considered one of the most hated figures in the Bible. Phyllis Tribble notes, "No woman (or man) in the Scripture endures a more hostile press than Jezebel."² Jezebel was labeled an adulteress, fornicator, an unclean, lascivious murderer (Galatian 5:19-21). However, the Bible never provided examples of adulterous behavior. Jezebel's promiscuity accusation was a result of the biblical authors connecting Jezebel's worshipping her gods with chasing false lovers. A relationship with a foreign deity is similar to an extramarital affair.³ Jezebel is known in the Bible as the main source for turning God's people towards idol gods (Revelation 2:20). Jezebel's biblical narrative became the fabricated narrative for the Israelites' account of their destruction. With any fabricated story it is important to approach the account from different hermeneutic lenses instead of recognizing the intended purpose of a narrative as the ultimate truth.

The twisted image of Jezebel is still prevalent today and is embedded in how society characterizes Black girls. "The historical image of Black Jezebel—a hypersexual, seductive and

¹Melissa Jackson, "Reading Jezebel from the 'other' side: Feminist Critique; Postcolonialism, and Comedy, Review and Expositor, Vol. 112(2). (2015) 242.

²Phyllis Tribble, "Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114, no. 1 (1995): 3-19.

³Janet Howe Gaines, *Music in the Old Bones: Jezebel through the Ages* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), xv

manipulative slave woman—has been one of the most pervasive and evolving images influencing the sexual socialization and perceptions of African American women today.”⁴ The historical Black Jezebel arose during slavery as an explanation for slave owners’ sexual attraction to and sexual abuse of African American women. Jezebel was depicted as a Black woman with an insatiable appetite for sex and was not satisfied with Black men.⁵ Andrea Williams explains, “The slavery-era Jezebel, it was claimed, desired sexual relations with white men; therefore, white men did not have to rape black women.”⁶

Throughout history Jezebel’s name has carried sexual implications, has been linked with prostitution, and has become a term of contempt and abuse. Deborah Gray White states, “Unfortunately for black women, Emancipation and Reconstruction did not stop their sexual victimization. From the end of the Civil War to the mid-1960s, no Southern white male was convicted of raping or attempting to rape a black woman; yet, the crime was common.”⁷

The constructed Black Jezebel lives today. It is an entity of America’s racial DNA and is vested in its institutionalized systematic structures of oppression. Black girls are regarded as less innocent and more adult-like than their white peers.⁸ They are not offered the same protection as their white peers, resulting in harsher treatment by law enforcement and the juvenile justice system. Epstein, Blake, and Gonzalez explain;

Given established discrepancies in law enforcement and juvenile court practices that disproportionately affect Black girls, the perception of Black girls as less innocent and more adult-like may contribute to more punitive exercise of discretion by those in positions of authority, greater use of force, and harsher penalties.⁹

From the time of slavery Black girls were not considered children and so worthy of safety. They were chattels and by the age of two or three they were put to work and subjected to the same dehumanization suffered by Black adults.¹⁰ The perception of the Black Jezebel took away the innocence and security of Black girls and women. The removal of innocence makes Black females more susceptible to be violated, shot down in the streets and treated inaptly by law enforcement.

The conceptualization of Black Jezebel has a direct impact on how Black women and girls are treated in the criminal injustice system. In 2014, the imprisonment rate for Black women (109 per 100,000) was more than twice the rate of imprisonment for white women (53

⁴ Danice L. Brown; Rhonda L. White-Johnson. and Felicia D. Griffin-Fennell. “Breaking the Chains: Examining the Endorsement of Modern Jezebel Images and Racial-Ethnic Esteem among African American Women” (Culture, Health & Sexuality, Vol. 15, No. 5, (2013), 525

⁵ Andrea Williams, “The Jezebel Stereotype,” Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, <https://ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/jezebel/>.

⁶ Andrea Williams, “The Jezebel Stereotype,” Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, <https://ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/jezebel/>.

⁷ Andrea Williams, “The Jezebel Stereotype,” Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, <https://ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/jezebel/>.

⁸ Rebecca Epstein, Jamilia Blake, and Thalia Gonzzlez, “Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls Childhood,” SSRN Electronic Journal (undefined), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3000695>.

⁹ Rebecca Epstein, Jamilia Blake, and Thalia Gonzzlez, “Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls Childhood,” SSRN Electronic Journal (undefined), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3000695>.

¹⁰ Michael J. Dumas and Joseph Derrick Nelson, “(Re)Imagining Black Boyhood: Toward a Critical Framework for Educational Research,” *Harvard Educational Review*, 86 /1 (2016.): 27-47

per 100, 000).¹¹ Black girls are viewed as more adult than their white peers and, therefore, are more likely to be disciplined for their actions. Yet they are also more vulnerable to the discretionary authority of teachers and law enforcement than their adult counterparts.¹² The adult personification of Black girls is called adultification. Epstein, Blake, and Gonzalez in their study, *Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood*, define adultification as “a form of dehumanization, robbing black children of the very essence of what makes childhood distinct from all other developmental periods: innocence.”¹³ The authors wrote, “Adultification contributes to a false narrative that black youths’ transgressions are intentional and malicious, instead of the result of immature decision-making—a key characteristic of childhood.”¹⁴ Viewing Black girls as adult reinforces the Jezebel stereotype of Black females as hypersexualized and combative, thereby, robbing young Black females the protections other females enjoy. Thus, Black girls are five times more likely than white girls to be suspended from school and 20 percent more likely to be charged with a crime.¹⁵

It is important to read the biblical narrative of Jezebel with the ultimate goal of rescuing her hidden story. Jezebel’s true story was never told. Her story is confined in the Israelites’ history, between the lines of the biblical account, and beyond the Deuteronomists’ documentation of her existence. Jezebel’s palms, never buried,¹⁶ are reaching out from beneath the repository of the Deuteronomistic History for someone to grab hold and pull her up from underneath. She yearns to be rescued so her story can be exposed.

The Black female palms are also reaching out from underneath the colonized history that scripted their story, the story of Black female bodies living in postcolonialism and imprisoned in a system that sees them as property. It is important that Black females grab hold to Jezebel’s palms and together erase Jezebel’s defamatory image and rescue the Black female’s narratives from the clutches of the authors of colonial history. Jezebel’s biblical narrative is the Black females’ colonized narrative, which was also written by their enemy. Until Jezebel’s concealed narrative is released from the clutches of the authors of the Deuteronomistic History, the narrative of the Black female Bodies will not be free from the clutches of the authors of American History.

By offering a different lens for reading Jezebel’s narrative with the anticipation that this new way of seeing Jezebel will provide a fresh and positive way of conceptualizing and treating Black Female’s bodies in America. Providing a new alternative that is biblically based, of reading Jezebel’s narrative for the sake of emancipating Black females’ bodies from the grip of

¹¹“Fact Sheet: Incarcerated Women and Girls,” The Sentencing Project, November, 2015, <http://www.sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Incarcerated-Women-and-Girls.pdf>.

¹²Rebecca Epstein, Jamilia Blake, and Thalia Gonzzlez, “Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls’ Childhood,” *SSRN Electronic Journal* (undefined), accessed March 28, 2018, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3000695>.

¹³Rebecca Epstein, Jamilia Blake, and Thalia Gonzzlez, “Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls’ Childhood,” *SSRN Electronic Journal* (undefined), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3000695>.

¹⁴Rebecca Epstein, Jamilia Blake, and Thalia Gonzzlez, “Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls’ Childhood,” *SSRN Electronic Journal* (undefined), accessed March 28, 2018, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3000695>.

¹⁵Rebecca Epstein, Jamilia Blake, and Thalia Gonzzlez, “Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls’ Childhood,” *SSRN Electronic Journal* (undefined), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3000695>.

¹⁶When Jezebel’s was thrown from her window her body splashed to the ground and she was eaten by dogs. Jezebel’s skull, feet, and her palms were the only body parts that the dogs left behind. See 2 Kings 9:30-35 for more detail.

American colonized history, and also from postcolonialism, is a new framework that will enhance the current literature concerning the historical Black Jezebel and biblical studies. It is not enough to know that the Black female body has been perceived and treated as a representation of the biblical Jezebel. It is also imperative to recognize that the Black woman narrative, similar to Jezebel's narrative, is told from the perspective of her enemy.

Unearthing Jezebel: Jezebel and the Deuteronomist Authors.

Jezebel is first introduced in 1 Kgs 16:31. However, her presence is not for her own sake, but for the sake of Ahab, her Israelite husband. Following Jezebel's introduction, her narrative is divided into three stories in the books of Kings. In the first story (1 Kings 18-19), Jezebel is indirectly in a contest between Elijah and the prophets of her god Baal, in which Elijah eventually murders four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. In the second story, Jezebel plots to seize the vineyard of Naboth, a Jezeelite, for her husband King Ahab (1 Kgs 21: 1-16). In the third story Jezebel finds herself in a confrontation with the newly-anointed King Jehu (2 Kgs 9:30-37). Each of these four stories is oppositional in nature, as each time Jezebel is pitted against a male.¹⁷ Jezebel represents the opposite, and her opposition is seen as a weapon against God.

As a result of Jezebel's oppositional status she was labeled an adulterer, fornicator, and an unclean, lascivious murderer (Galatian 5:19-21). She is known throughout the Bible as the main source for turning God's people towards idol gods. Would Jezebel portray herself the same way the Bible depicted her? Would she have seen herself as a threat to God? Jackson says no: "By placing Jezebel so plainly in the role of foreign wife and faithful Baal-worshipper, the Bible flattens Jezebel out, and she becomes little more than a trope—a caricature who serves only to bear the castigation and ridicule of the biblical text and its interpreters."¹⁸ Jezebel's biblical narrative was not written from her perspective. Her enemies told her story, and therefore her voice was shattered, and her truth was repudiated. Lesley Hazleton explains:

When your story is written by those in passionate opposition to everything you believe in, it will be, to put it mildly, warped. Everything becomes twisted; every action, every gesture, becomes not only suspect but turned on its head. The wildest rumors are passed off as fact. Inconvenient facts are ignored or edited out, relegated to oblivion, until all we are left with is not a real person but an image, a morality-tale character.¹⁹

The Deuteronomistic History encompasses the biblical books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, and 1 & 2 Kings.²⁰ The books of Deuteronomy through Kings constitute a continuous history characterized by a basic homogeneity in language, style, and content. Freedman, Myers, and Beck explain:

The Deuteronomist(s) ordered and shaped these sources, introduced his [there] own distinctive chronology, and inserted his own comments and speeches (often in the mouths

¹⁷Melissa Jackson. *Reading Jezebel from the "other" side: Feminist Critique, Postcolonialism, and Comedy, Review and Expositor* Vol. 112(2), (2015): 242.

¹⁸Ibid, 242

¹⁹Lesley Hazleton. *Jezebel: The Untold Story of the Bible's Harlot Queen* (New York: Doubleday, an imprint of the Doubleday Publishing Group, a division of Random House, Inc. 2009), 6.

²⁰David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000).

of major characters) at critical junctures in his [there] history. Because the Deuteronomist's compositional technique included selection, editing, and creation of new material, the resulting work was not merely a compilation of tales, annals, and sagas, but a unified work manifesting a deliberate design and a uniformity of purpose.²¹

The Deuteronomistic History is not merely an unfolding of what occurred in the past, but an account to “address the needs of the present and future by studying and learning from the past experience to aid in charting a course for present and future action.”²² The theology of the Deuteronomistic History was a pattern of apostasy, punishment, repentance, and deliverance. Freedman indicated that the Deuteronomists intend “...was to show the exiles that they were in the second stage of that cycle and therefore needed to cry out to Yahweh in repentance.”²³ Nevertheless, one has to be selective and strategic on how to present the past. In the cast of YHWH's people—people that were governed by a patriarchal structure, who worshipped a patriarchal God—had to retell or reconstruct a history that supported an ideology of a superior male dominated regime. Thus, placing the blame for their downfall on an entity that is oppositional would seem more fitting than to blame someone within their own regime.

What better person to target than Jezebel, a foreigner, a woman, and a polytheist. Gaines explains, “The compilers of existing biblical records have total contempt for Jezebel; she is a representative of all that threatens their patriarchal authority and cherished monotheistic.”²⁴ Jezebel was an answer to the ideological, political, social, and theological questions and concerns that underpinned the study of the Israelites history. Her narrative became the construed narrative for the Israelites' account of their destruction. As a result, Jezebel's true narrative was never told. It is still hidden behind the biblical story, between the lines of the biblical account, and beyond the Deuteronomists documentation of her existence.

Story One: 1st Kings 16: 30-33

From a political and economic standpoint, Ahab's marriage to Jezebel makes perfect sense. Jezebel is a princess. She is the daughter of King Ethbaal, ruler of Phoenicia from 887-856 B.C.E.²⁵ From Israel's prospective, alliance with the Phoenicians through the marriage of Jezebel to Ahab, Israel's King, would enhance trade. Such practice of marriage between families of kings was a normal practice in the ancient Near East. “It ensured stability, trade relations, peace, and other collaborative endeavors, such as defense and construction.”²⁶ However, for the Deuteronomistic Historians envisioning Israel's monarchic past, Ahab's marriage to Jezebel became immoral. Hence, Ahab marriage to a foreign woman who worshiped a foreign god was

²¹David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000).

²²Marvin A. Sweeney. *I & II Kings, The Old Testament Library* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 1

²³Steven L. McKenzie, “Deuteronomistic History,” David Noel Freedman ed. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 6 volumes (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2: 161-162

²⁴Janet Howe Gaines. *Music in the Old bones: Jezebel Through the Ages* (Southern Illinois University, 1999)xiv.

²⁵Marvin A. Sweeney. *I & II Kings, The Old Testament Library* (Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 2007), 1.

²⁶Carey Walsh. “Why Remember Jezebel?” in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination* Ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi; (University Press Scholarship Online, 2013), 3

apostasy, which onset the cycle of the theology that undergirds the Deuteronomistic history. Jezebel, therefore, is the focal point for narrative disgust in the story of 1 Kings 16: 31-33.

Verses 30-33 evaluate Ahab's reign, which "serves the theological interests of the DtrH insofar as it emphasizes that he committed more evil than all who were before him."²⁷ However, vs. 31 pinpoints what he did that gave him the status of the supreme evildoer: "he took as his wife Jezebel, daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians" (1st Kings 16: 31b). The Deuteronomists do not tell us much about Jezebel's Phoenician life, beside that she is the daughter of King Ethbaal. We do not know if she has a mother or siblings; how old she is when she married Ahab, or if she had a choice in the marriage arrangement. She is a pawn positioned between two kings, her father and husband. Phyllis Trible indicated that "Jezebel enters Israel in an arrangement between males. Husband and father define her."²⁸

Although she has no voice in the opening story of her narrative, Jezebel is blamed for Ahab's actions. "Entrapped by hostile editors and male lords, Jezebel appears as an evil object, neither speaking nor acting."²⁹ When we read the text carefully, we see that all of the verbs are connected to Ahab and not Jezebel. Thus, Ahab did evil, took Jezebel as his wife, went and served Baal, worshiped Baal, erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, built in Samaria, made a sacred pole, and provoke the anger of the Lord. Jezebel played a passive role in the story, but her existence bears the affliction of her husband's wrongdoing. At this point begins Jezebel's biblical story in her larger narrative.

Story Two: 1st Kings 19:1-3,

In this story, Jezebel speaks for the first time. Chapter 19 begins with Ahab reporting to Jezebel events that had taken place on Mount Carmel. Again, Ahab is doing the action and Jezebel is the receiver. There are four characters in this episode: Jezebel, Ahab, the prophet Elijah, and the servant. Only two voices are heard—Jezebel and the narrator. Furthermore, the less significant character, Jezebel, the foreign woman, is portrayed as the all-powerful one. Elijah flees from the fear of Jezebel's threat. Nevertheless, Jezebel causing a prophet of God to flee for his life would only result in a negative rendering on Jezebel, an image that supports the Deuteronomists agenda.

The Deuteronomists tried to recall a history that entrapped Jezebel as a villain. "She functioned as a scapegoat of collective guilt for Israel's religious infidelities, past and present."³⁰ Right before the second story of Jezebel's narrative, Elijah challenges Baal, Jezebel's god, to a showdown on Mount Carmel. Jezebel was not present for this event, but she was blamed for it, which resulted in the death of four hundred and fifty of her prophets. Jezebel's reaction to the murder of her prophets was not to surrender to Yahwism but instead to speak words of vengeance to Elijah for killing her prophets. One can question if Jezebel intended to fulfill her threat. If she really wanted to murder Elijah, she would have sent a killer and not a messenger.

²⁷Marvin A. Sweeney. *I & II Kings, The Old Testament Library* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press. 2007), 1206.

²⁸Phyllis Trible. *Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers, Journal of Biblical Literature*, 114/1. (1995) 4.

²⁹ Ibid, 4.

³⁰Carey Walsh. *Why Remember Jezebel?* In *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination*, Ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi. (University Press Scholarship Online, 2013)

The central element in this story is Jezebel's oath. Jezebel sends a messenger to warn Elijah. Here, for the first time, Jezebel is doing the action, and the Deuteronomists portray Ahab as passive. However, Jezebel's first instance is to send a death threat instead of a sword. "She warned Elijah, thus making it possible for him to escape from the country."³¹ By giving the specific time and date of his execution, Jezebel allows Elijah unauthorized consent to escape. Elijah understands Jezebel's oath, and thus fears for his life. Nevertheless, the Deuteronomists decided that they did not want Jezebel to kill Elijah. I would argue that such a decision was not for Jezebel's sake, but to preserve the reputation of Elijah. How would it look for a foreign woman to kill a prophet of God, the same prophet who just killed four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal—YHWH's nemesis? For the Deuteronomists, the name of Jezebel is condemned, while Elijah's name is applauded.³² However, the Deuteronomist authors could not end the story with Jezebel, a foreigner and polytheist, outwitting a prophet of God. Like any other story, the protagonist must be destroyed. Jezebel, the protagonist in the narrative of the Israelites constructed history, eventually faced a brutal death. But what led to Jezebel's murder? In the next story of Jezebel's narrative, she is portrayed orchestrating the death of Naboth, an innocent man of God. This orchestrated death allegedly became the impetus for the assassination of Jezebel.

Story Three: 1st Kings 21: 5-16:

Chapter 21 begins with Ahab, Jezebel's husband, asking Naboth, a Jezreelite, for his vineyard. Ahab desired Naboth's vineyard because it was close to his palace in Samaria, and he wanted to turn the vineyard into a vegetable garden. Ahab offered to give Naboth a better vineyard or pay Naboth for the value of the vineyard. However, Naboth refused to sell his vineyard because it was a violation against Yahweh rules to give away his ancestral land. Denied by Naboth, Ahab returned home resentful and sullen.

Israelite law was on Naboth's side. The "Levirate Law" indicates that it was critically important for inherited land to remain in the patriarchal family. But if there was no possibility for such a sale, why would King Ahab ask Naboth for his property, and why would Ahab react the way he did when Naboth refused to depart with his ancestral land? Why did not Ahab just take the land? Before the above story, chapter 20 details how Ahab defeated Ben-hadad, the King of Aram, and killed one hundred thousand Aramean foot soldiers in one day.³³ Chapter 20 also portrays Ahab as a mighty warrior. But, in Chapter 21, Ahab is depicted as a petulant child: "Ahab went home resentful and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him; for he had said, 'I will not give you my ancestral inheritance.' He lay down on his bed, turned away his face, and would not eat."³⁴ But why is Ahab portrayed this way? Is the reason to link Ahab's behavior to Elijah's behavior when he ran for his life (1 Kings 19)—defeated and helpless—in order for the Deuteronomist authors to reenact the scene with Jezebel and Elijah? Unlike 1 Kings 19, Jezebel kills Naboth in the story of 1 Kings 21.

³¹Robert J. Merez: *Jezebel's Oath, 1 Kgs 19, 2* (United Kingdom: Edinburgh, EHP IRS.), 259.

³²Phyllis Trible. "Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers," 4.

³³"They encamped opposite one another seven days. Then on the seventh day the battle began; the Israelites killed one hundred thousand Aramean foot soldiers in one day" (1 Kings 20: 29).

³⁴"Ahab went home resentful and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him; for he had said, 'I will not give you my ancestral inheritance.' He lay down on his bed, turned away his face, and would not eat" (1 Kings 21: 4).

1 Kings 21: 5-16, Jezebel is shown exercising power of authority instead of her husband the King. In verses 5-7, Jezebel and Ahab are in dialogue: Jezebel inquires about Ahab's behavior, Ahab explains why he is resentful and not eating, Jezebel questions Ahab's position as King of Israel "...do you now govern Israel?"³⁵ And, finally, Jezebel indicates that she will give Ahab the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. In verse 16, Jezebel follows through and Ahab obtains Naboth's vineyard.

Although vv. 1-16 do not explicitly mention Jezebel as a foreigner, but the repetition of the relationship of Jezebel to Ahab in this story (where she is referred to as Ahab's wife a total of three times in the story of Naboth's vineyard) links back to the first mention of Jezebel in story 1 Kings 16: 29-34. As Cronauer explains, "This theme of Jezebel as Ahab's wife is tightly linked to the introduction of Jezebel in the proleptic summary of Ahab's reign found in 1 Kgs 16: 29-34...this summary...strongly highlights the negative effects of Jezebel becoming Ahab's wife."³⁶ The link between Jezebel as Ahab's wife in verses 1-16 to 1 Kings 16: 31 implies that Jezebel is not only Ahab's wife, but more specifically, Jezebel is Ahab's "Sidonian" foreign wife.³⁷

The Deuteronomists agenda is to present Jezebel's character and actions in such a way as to highlight that both she and her actions are foreign in comparison to those of a faithful Israelite. Therefore, manipulating Israelite's laws to get what she wants enriches Jezebel's Deuteronomic character. "She is characterized as being cunning (it is her plan), ruthless (she had Naboth put to death), unethical (she used false witnesses), and domineering (she was the one who commands Ahab, the king)."³⁸ Jezebel is a murderer, and more so, a foreigner. She must be destroyed.

Story Four: 2nd Kings 9:30-35

Jehu, former commander in the army of Ahab, is introduced in Jezebel's biblical narrative right before her death. His introduction into the storyline was centered on his ordination as the next King over Israel.³⁹ Jehu's installation came with a directive from Yahweh, to obliterate the house of Ahab along with the worship of Baal, which includes Jezebel. Jehu immediately took steps to secure the throne and went after the house of Ahab. After killing two of Ahab and Jezebel's sons—Joram, king of northern Israel, and Ahaziah, king of Judah (2 Kings 9:14–29)—Jehu proceeded to Jezebel's palace in Jezreel, where the queen stood waiting for him at her window. With the help of two eunuchs Jehu assassinated Jezebel. Jehu's murder of Jezebel was not solely to avenge Naboth's death, but to destroy the Baal worshipping foreigner who supposedly turned Ahab and the people of Israel towards idol gods. After having Jezebel killed, Jehu slaughtered all the priests of Baal and destroyed the temple and its sacred stone. Jehu wiped out Baalism from Israel. The purpose of Jezebel's death is revealed right after the third story (1 Kings 21: 5-16) in Jezebel's narrative.

³⁵"His wife Jezebel said to him, "Do you now govern Israel? Get up, eat some food, and be cheerful;" (1 Kings 21: 7a)

³⁶ Gale A. Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve: Woman as Evil in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003) 174.

³⁷ Ibid, 174.

³⁸ Ibid: 174.

³⁹"Then the prophet Elisha called a member of the company of prophets[a] and said to him, "Gird up your loins; take this flask of oil in your hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead. When you arrive, look there for Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi; go in and get him to leave his companions, and take him into an inner chamber. Then take the flask of oil, pour it on his head, and say, 'Thus says the Lord: I anoint you king over Israel.' Then open the door and flee; do not linger" (1 Kings 9: 1-3).

The prediction of Jezebel's death occurred in 1 Kings 21:17-29. 1 Kings 21: 1-16, Jezebel is in charged. But in 1 Kings 21: 17-2, Elijah is back on the scene and seems to be in control. Elijah not only predicts the death of Ahab, he also, with a revenge agenda, predicts the horrific death of Jezebel, "Also concerning Jezebel the Lord said, 'the dogs shall eat Jezebel within the bounds of Jezreel,'" (1 Kings 21:23). Was Elijah commissioned by Yahweh to prophesy Jezebel's death or was it the narrator, the Deuteronomist authors' who cast the final judgment on Jezebel? A close reading of 1 Kings 21: 17-26, exposes the Deuteronomist authors as the culprits behind the death of Jezebel.

Verses 20-22 speak of the crime of Naboth in general terms and refer to the characters in the second person, ("you have sold yourself to do evil..."); as they do of the punishment ("I will bring evil upon you..."). Next, the text moves smoothly from v. 22 to v. 23 without any indication that Elijah's speech may have ended.⁴⁰ Verse 23 shifts from Ahab's punishment to Jezebel's. The shift is expected: Jezebel was portrayed as playing a central role in the murder of Naboth and therefore should be punished. But in verse 23-26 the characters are referred to in the third person and Jezebel is introduced in the verses. This change in style of writing could imply that there was also a shift between Elijah and the narrator from v. 22 to v. 23? Walsh explains:

In the absence of any textual indicator of the shift from Elijah's speech to the narrator's, the reader looks back to vv. 23-24 and sees that those verses too can be construed as the narrator's words. In fact, several elements points in this direction: both units (vv. 23-24 and 25-26) begin with disjunctive x ... qatal constructions; both refer to Ahab and Yahweh in the third person; and both introduce the figure of Jezebel, who is otherwise unmentioned vv. 17-29. Reconstrued this way, the descriptions in vv. 23-24 are not a prophetic announcement of Yahweh's response to the judicial murder of a single Israelite landowner but the narrator's explanation of how Jezebel's evil influence on Ahab resulted in her doom."⁴¹

Elijah's words merge into Yahweh's at verse 21 and then into the narrator's in verse 23. The punishment from Ahab to Jezebel also moved within these verses, but the reason for the punishment does not moved. Ahab was punished for Naboth's death, but it is questionable if Jezebel's death was a result of Naboth's death or because she supposedly urged Ahab to turn against Yahweh and worship idol gods, "Indeed, there was no one like Ahab, who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the Lord, urged on by his wife Jezebel. He acted most abominably in going after idols, as the Amorites had done, whom the Lord drove out before the Israelites." (1 Kings 21: 25-26). Nelson indicates that, "The prophet, God, and the narrator all agree in a single Deuteronomistic chorus. The offense of the royal couple is not presented as a crime against Naboth or the ideal of justice so much as an offense against God."⁴² Could verses 23-26 link back to 1 Kings 18-19; the battle on Mount Carmel, the killing of Baal's prophets and the fleeing of Elijah or even earlier to story 1 Kings 16: 30-33, when Jezebel is first introduced as Ahab, foreign wife, "Ahab, son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him. And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, he took as his wife Jezebel daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and went and

⁴⁰Jerome T. Walsh. "Methods and Meanings: Multiple Studies of 1 Kings 21." *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 111/ 2, (1992), 200

⁴¹ Ibid, 200-2001.

⁴²Richard D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), 203.

served Baal, and worshiped him” (1 Kings 16:30-31). 1 Kings 16: 30-31 and 1 Kings 21: 25-26 reference Ahab doing “evil in the sight of the Lord.”

Jezebel was slaughtered because of her Deuteronomistic fabricated persona—as an adulterer, fornicator, and lascivious murderer. Up until her death, Jezebel’s narrative was hijacked by the patriarchal Deuteronomist authors. But at the end of her life she took control over the demeanor of how she would die—as a powerful, faithful, proud Phoenician princess. By putting on eye makeup, arranging her hair and looking out of her window, Jezebel dignified herself for her ultimate fate. Parker explains, “Jezebel meets the moment of her death with the confidence that pervades her character. Jezebel is a woman who is also a warrior. She wants to be ready for the impending threat and presents her strongest self.”⁴³ Nevertheless, Jezebel’s preparation for death was also warped by the Deuteronomist authors to support their agenda.

In 2 Kgs 9:22 Jehu accuses Jezebel of whoring, which is the first time Jezebel is reference as a whore in the Bible.⁴⁴ The singular reference to Jezebel as a whore was linked to Jezebel’s appearance at the window before her death and therefore, the act of putting on makeup and arranging her hair was construed as being a sexual act to seduce Jehu. The distorted interpretation of Jezebel’s last days continues to haunt the bodies of Black women and girls in post-colonialism.

Jezebel’s bravery and self-dignity that governed her death were overshadowed by the Deuteronomist authors’ tactic of typifying her as the bad evil and malicious foreigner. Jezebel’s narrative became the construed narrative for the Israelites’ account of their destruction. At the hands of the Deuteronomist authors, Jezebel was stripped of her identity and culture. She was falsely labelled and stigmatized as other. When she was no longer of use, Jezebel was hurled, splattered, crushed, dismembered, devoured, and turned not into dust but to dung. Lying in pieces on the ground, Jezebel’s remaining body parts – her skull, her feet, and the palms of her hands – provide a haunting colophon to her story.⁴⁵ But that image will no longer be the trademark of Jezebel’s story. Jezebel’s disentombed palms have reached out from beneath the files of the Deuteronomistic History and have grabbed on to the palms of Black women. Together they will erase Jezebel’s defamatory image, provide a new theological and hermeneutic alternative of reading Jezebel’s narrative, and free Black female bodies from the clutches of the authors of America History.

Black Women’s Narratives and the Colonist Authors:

The Book of Kings does not reveal what happened to Jezebel’s remaining body parts, if they were left to rot, gathered up to be buried, or were tossed outside the city walls as trash. What is evident is that although Jezebel’s corpse was devoured by dogs, the spirit of her body survived and lives in her skull, feet, and palms. They live to tell her story, both stories—the hidden account of the Phoenician princess and the tale of the biblical Jezebel. The remaining body parts of Jezebel function as a link between the Deuteronomistic world and her hidden

⁴³Julie faith Parker, “Re-memembering the dismembered: piecing together meaning from stories of women and body parts in ancient Near Eastern literatur,” *Biblical Interpretation*, 23/2 (2015), 174.

⁴⁴Before Jehu kills Jezebel’s son Joram, Jehu called his mother a whore “When Joram saw Jehu, he said, “Is it peace, Jehu?” He answered, “What peace can there be, so long as the many whoredoms and sorceries of your mother Jezebel continue?” (2 Kings 9:22).

⁴⁵Julie faith Parker, “Re-memembering the dismembered: 174.

Phoenician world. Similar to Jezebel's body parts, the Black female body serves as a passage between humanity and non-humanity as well as the articulation of that passage.⁴⁶

The Black female body has been physically defamed, marked by slavery, tortured, sexually abused, and used. When their bodies became of no use, they were thrown out like garbage to waste away in prison. But similar to Jezebel, the Black female body, with all its cuts and bruises survived. It survived to tell her story. The story of how she survived in the midst of oppression. The Black female body remained constant as it moved from slavery, emancipation and Civil Rights.⁴⁷ Black bodies, although controlled by others, were still connected to their souls. Through their souls, the Black female body spoke when their mouths were forced shut. Their bodies bared the autobiographies, the personal narratives of a worldview that was previously lost or concealed by the colonist authors. The autobiography of Black females, Emilie M. Townes explains, "...asserts that human life has or can have meaning. It provides evidence that our actions are worth being remembered. We are agents of time and circumstances. We are not only determined by the flow of events, but we can affect that same flow through our act of being."⁴⁸ Black women wrote to proclaim that they were not mere passive features in history but individuals who helped move and shape history—their own history. Black women's autobiographies reposition themselves in history; they provide a helpful entrance into a period and a people who have not been examined closely.⁴⁹ Black female existence has been examined and scrutinized through the eyes of white America. Their stories have been fabricated to support the ideology of American's inhumane system. However, through Black women's personal narratives, an accurate account of what it is like to live in a body that is both Black and female, in a system of oppression, is presented. Townes expounds:

Through autobiography, the Black writer demands that the white social and cultural structure reckon with the reality of black life rather than the image white society holds of Black life. The search for identity ends with the Black autobiographer discarding the mask he or she wore to survive in the midst of oppression. The act of revealing who he or she is demonstrates selfhood and freedom."⁵⁰

Freedom for Black women is founded in the unearthing of their hidden stories. Jezebel's freedom is also located in the resurrection of her concealed narrative. Both narratives reveal a need to sift through their lives for explanation and understanding: to reveal to the reader their self-worth and to develop an authentic self-image.⁵¹ Black women write for the purpose of redefining and claiming their identity. They are proud of their blackness, but continue to struggle with the image of how they are portrayed by white America—as Black Jezebel. Jezebel cannot write her narrative, but because she continues to live in the bodies of Black female, Black female personal narratives become Jezebel's resurrected narrative and Jezebel's resurrected narrative becomes Black female personal narrative. Black Jezebel is reevaluated and set free in Black women's

⁴⁶Sharon Patricia Holland, *Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity*, New Americanists (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 43.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 43.

⁴⁸Emilie Maureen Townes, "Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope" *American Academy of Religion Academy Series*, vol. 79, Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, (1993): 18

⁴⁹ Ibid, 18

⁵⁰ Ibid, 28

⁵¹ Ibid, 33

literature. She is no longer seen as detrimental to the Black female body but as an essential component of their history. Jezebel is a proclamation for Black women instead of an icon of deviant sexuality.

Conclusion

Racism fueled with religion manufactured the inhumane system of slavery in America and became the catalyst for the creation of the Black female narrative in American History—The Black Jezebel narrative. Such narrative gave birth to the criminalized Black body, the systems of mass incarceration, capitalism, and oppression. The Black Jezebel account has been embedded in the fabric of American culture and into its institutions. Religion and how it has been used in the manufacturing of American History has to be reexamined and repositioned outside the rims of American History. Religion has to be extracted from the clutch of American History and used to dismantle the systems of oppression. Repositioning religion as a tool for justice would release Black female bodies from the hold of imperialism. Similar to the Deuteronomist authors, Black females wrote to understand their past, present and future experiences. They wrote “...as a process of reconstructing the past out of the psychological needs of the present.”⁵² However, unlike the Deuteronomist authors, Black females did not fabricate a history or demoralized a people or person in order to make sense of their inhumane treatment by others. Instead Black females wrote to reconstruct a history that was lost, obscured and ignored.⁵³ Black women wrote to reposition themselves outside of American History and into their own history. They wrote to claim their voices and to shed light on the Black community:

Black women writers function as continuing symbolic conveyors and transformers of the values acknowledged by the female members of the Black community. In the quest for appreciating Black women’s experience, nothing surpasses that Black women’s literary tradition. It cryptically records the specificity of the Afro-American life.⁵⁴

The history of the Black women experiences is found in their stories. From slavery to present-day incarceration, Black women wrote narratives that interact with American history in order to establish their identity.⁵⁵ They wrote to ... “destroy pervasive, negative orientations imposed by the mores of the larger society.”⁵⁶ These stories provided an account of what life was like for Black females living in America. They gave a voice to an experience that was otherwise hidden or distorted in American colonized history. Black Women autobiography mirrored Black reality:

Their writings are chronicles of Black survival. In their plots, actions, and depictions of characters, Black women writers flesh out the positive attributes of Black folks who are hidden beneath the ordinariness of everyday life. They also plumb their own imaginations in order to crack the invidiousness of worn-out stereotypes. Their ideas, themes, and

⁵²C W E. Bigsby, *Contributions in Afro-American and African Studies*, vol. 50, *The Second Black Renaissance: Essays in Black Literature* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), 183.

⁵³ Townes, “Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope:” 22

⁵⁴Katie G. Cannon, *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 60.

⁵⁵ Townes, “Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope:” 22

⁵⁶ Cannon, *Katie's Canon*: 62

situations provide truthful interpretations of every possible shade and nuance of Black life.⁵⁷

With hope and faith as the blood and oxygen oozing through the veins of Black female bodies and escaping through their narratives, they rescue God from the grip of racism and reposition God standing with them. This God is a God who sees Black women as Jezebel, not the biblical Jezebel but the bold, courageous, proud, Phoenician princess—a God separated from racism, pushing with Black women against the wall of oppression, preventing it from collapsing on their bodies. Faith merged with hope enables Black females to return to the Bible to reclaim their history, to rewrite their past, edit their present, and compose their future.

⁵⁷Katie G. Cannon, *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 68

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bigsby, C W E. *Contributions in Afro-American and African Studies. The Second Black Renaissance: Essays in Black Literature*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980.
- Brown, Danice L. White, Johnson, and Griffin-Fennell, Felicia. "Breaking the Chains: Examining the Endorsement of Modern Jezebel Images and Racial-Ethnic Esteem among African American Women." (*Culture, Health & Sexuality*, Vol. 15, No. 5.2013), 525-539.
- Cannon, Katie G. *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community*. New York: Continuum, 1995.
- Dumas, Michael J. and Nelson, Joseph Derrick "(Re) Imagining Black Boyhood: Toward a Critical Framework for Education Research," *Harvard Education Review*, 27/33 (2016): 27-47.
- Epstein, Rebecca and Blake, Jamilia and González, "Thalia, Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood" (June 27, 2017). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3000695> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3000695>
- Freedman, David Noel, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck. *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000.
- Gaines, Janet Howe. *Music in the Old bones: Jezebel Through the Ages*. Illinois: Southern Illinois University, 1999.
- Hazleton, Lesley. *Jezebel: The Untold Story of the Bible's Harlot Queen*. New York: Random House, Inc. 2009.
- Holland, Sharon Patricia. *Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity*. New Americanists. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.
- Jackson, Melissa Jackson. "Reading Jezebel from the "other" side: Feminist Critique, Postcolonialism, and Comedy." *In Review and Expositor*, 112(2), (2015): 239-255.
- Merecz, Robert J. "Jezebel's Oath: 1 Kgs 19, 2." *Biblical Studies on the Web*. Vol. 90., (2009): 257-259.
- Nelson, Richard D. *First and Second Kings. Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987.
- Parker, Julie faith. "Re-membering the Dismembered: Piecing together Meaning from Stories of Women and Body Parts in Ancient Near Eastern Literature." *In Biblical Interpretation*, 23/2, (2015): 174 – 190.

- Sweeney, Marvin. *1 & 2 Kings, A Commentary*. Louisville London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.
- Townes, Emilie M. "Womanist Theology." *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 57 (2003): 159-176.
- Trible, Phyllis. "Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers." *In Journal of Biblical Literature*, 114/1, (1995): 3-19.
- Walsh, Carey. "Why Remember Jezebel?" *In Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory, Edited by Memory and Imagination*. Edelman, Diana V. and Zvi, Ehud Ben. University Press Scholarship Online, 2013
- Walsh, Jerome. "Methods and Meanings: Multiple Studies of 1 Kings 21." *In Journal of Biblical Literature*, 111/2, (1992): 193-211.
- Williams, Andrea. "The Jezebel Stereotype." Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia. <https://ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/jezebel/>.
- Yee, Gale A. *Poor Banished Children of Eve: Woman as Evil in the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003.



Mary E. Hess
Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN USA
mhess@religioused.org
REA Annual Meeting 2018

Creating brave spaces at the intersection of womanist biblical scholarship and the pedagogy of digital storytelling

Author's note/Abstract: This paper is my attempt to stretch beyond white normativity – but I write it conscious of the perils of trying to do so when I am fully situated in the midst of that discourse. I am a middle class white, cisgender, straight, Roman Catholic, tenured professor – and each of these labels signals elements of the intersecting systems of oppression in which I am implicated. I am also a woman, and perhaps because of that situatedness have long been compelled by the writings of womanist scholars, whom I experienced as writing about intersectionality long before Kimberly Crenshaw used that term.

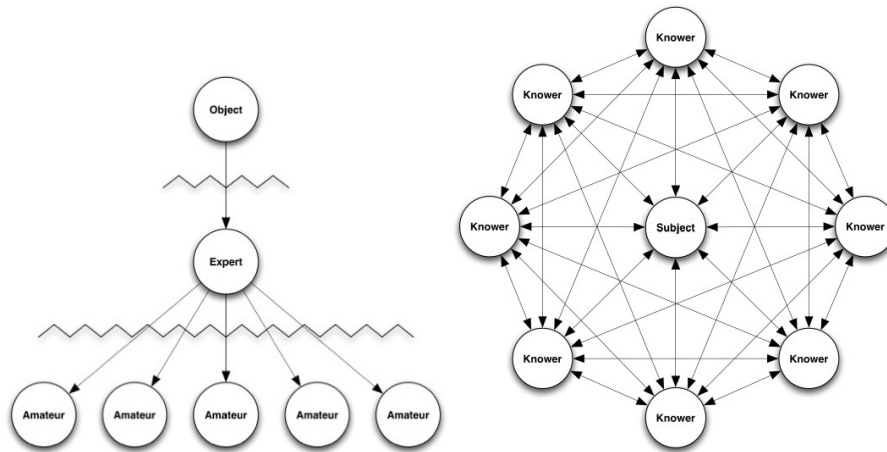
In this paper I argue that reading the bible¹ with womanist lenses in the midst of a world dominated by digital media requires at least two kinds of learning stances: strong anchoring in the various traditions which hold these texts as sacred, and flexible “sticky” ways of finding meaning that are life-giving. Womanist approaches to biblical texts can provide both: anchors into the deep wells of meaning Christians find in the bible, as well as flexible frames for sense-making with its texts. I believe that digital storytelling offers a pedagogical approach particularly well suited to inviting this kind of multilayered and agile pivoting of standpoints, and it holds potential for helping even scholars such as myself stretch beyond white normativity. I hope you will read this paper generously, taking in my argument as a possible example, not as a definitive prescription.

A new culture of learning

In order to describe how digital storytelling can be an effective pedagogical process to support learning that seeks to move beyond white normativity, I need to make clear what I take to be the heart of this underlying challenge: crafting an epistemological stance open to such learning.

P. Palmer has offered two contrasting models of thinking about knowing that are relevant here (2007, 100-106, figures 4.1 and 4.2).

¹ For the sake of clarity, I will not be capitalizing the word “bible” but instead ask readers to approach this essay from whatever religious tradition they are rooted in, and try to imagine their own sacred texts when I say “bible.”



The first he labels “the objectivist myth of knowing,” and the second he calls a “community of truth.” In the former model, knowing is mapped as a linear process which proceeds from a static “object” about which information is gathered by experts to be passed along to the amateurs who receive that information passively. Knowing is understood as linear and uni-directional, proceeding only from the object to a knower, and only then through an expert gatekeeper.

By contrast, in the “community of truth” model the center of knowing is a subject – in the multi-layered sense both of the “topic” being studied, but also an entity which has its own agency. With this metaphor for knowing there are multiple knowers, and what constitutes expertise is both more nuanced and more complex. The assertion of the “community of truth” is that the more diverse the knowers, the more robust the knowing. Each knower has a direct experience of a given subject, for instance, but also has to understand that her knowing will be complicated by that of other knowers. P. Hill-Collins makes this point well:

Eventually this approach may get us to a point at which, claims Elsa Barkley Brown, “all people can learn to center in another experience, validate it, and judge it by its own standards without need of comparison or need to adopt that framework as their own” (1989, 922). In such politics, “one has no need to ‘decenter’ anyone in order to center someone else; one has only to constantly, appropriately, ‘pivot the center’” (270)

Using this model for knowing as a base for considering learning design requires teachers to design spaces of study and exploration that hold together diverse perspectives, creating rich, complex engagement with the subject at hand. Palmer may offer the most vivid visual description of these contrasting models, but womanist scholars have long resisted the instrumental, linear model of knowing and sought to embody the relational, communal model.

Too much biblical scholarship, however, continues to lean towards the former model – with experts holding tight reins on the information gathered about the bible as an “object” of study, and controlling how that knowledge is transferred to amateur knowers. It is as if the only knowledge worthy of discovery must be perceived as such by experts. As postmodern scholarship has demonstrated conclusively, however, all forms of knowing come permeated with power, and any epistemological stance which posits exclusive access to – let alone control of — knowing, is dangerous. The community of truth model has its own challenges, not the least of

which is finding ways to design such focused yet open spaces for learning, but this model remains one which requires us to find ways to pivot stances and create more complex embodiments in our teaching and learning spaces.

The advent of digital media has made this latter model much more visible and tangible. Indeed there are now scholars who are describing a “new culture of learning” which is arising in response to the rapidly decentralizing, remarkably participatory, and inherently flexible architectures of digital media (Hess, 2014). D. Thomas (on the faculty at the University of Southern California) and J. SeelyBrown (of Xerox PARC fame) highlight the potentially limitless nature of the current information environment (2011),² and argue that in order to support learning in such a space educators must design spaces that are open, while at the same time being appropriately bounded. They stress that this culture is not about:

unchecked access to information and unbridled passion... Left to their own devices, there is no telling what students will do. If you give them a resource like the Internet and ask them to follow their passion, they will probably meander around finding bits and pieces of information that move them from topic to topic – and produce a very haphazard result (81).

Most scholars who are attentive to the challenges of teaching and learning with digital tools argue that we cannot work effectively in digital spaces if our approaches are teaching-centered, instead they must be learning-centered. This distinction is increasingly common not only in the world of digital technologies, but also within a variety of accrediting organizations and other institutions dedicated to assessing and supporting learning. A teaching-centered approach assumes a stable base of information to be shared *about* the world, whereas a learning-centered approach is focused on learning *through* engagement with the world (Hess, 2015, 141).

Much recent research has observed how learning is taking place in game structures, particularly those with social and participatory elements to their design. In online multi-user game environments, for instance, people do not learn in order to belong but rather participate in order to learn (Hess, 2013, 176). This is a mode quite unlike the most common trajectories of university and church institutional structures.

As people “learn how to learn” in ways that stress their own passion, interest, and agency, tacit knowing comes more to the fore.³ Whereas explicit knowing tends to be that which has become stable and fixed over time, tacit forms of knowing are more embodied, contingent and improvisational. To return to my opening metaphor, explicit knowing forms the strong anchoring threads of a web of knowledge, while tacit knowing forms the “sticky threads” which filter meaning. From the perspective of explicit knowledge, for instance, the Hebrew bible is generally considered to consist of a distinct number of specific texts, and these texts are held sacred in both Jewish and Christian traditions. Further, these texts are generally composed in biblical Hebrew, with some in biblical Aramaic. One can learn “about” this canon, but doing so in ways which

² See, for example, *Hanging Out, Messing Around and Geeking Out*, edited by Mizuko Ito (MIT Press, 2009); *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture*, by Henry Jenkins, et. al. (2009, <http://tinyurl.com/2uztw4>); and the MacArthur programs: <http://www.macfound.org/programs/learning/>.

³ find direct citation for Polanyi

invite biblical texts to shape one's life in community is a much more difficult and fraught process requiring tacit forms of knowledge.

Shifts in meaning-making brought about by the advent of digital technologies have caused religious communities to struggle with this shift from “teaching about” the bible, to finding ways to ignite curiosity about it. We now have to find ways in which biblical texts can be bound up with living in the world, learning not so much by collecting information about the texts (although that might be a place from which to begin), but through engagement with hearing, watching, and experiencing them.

Thinking through others

Womanist biblical scholars have been leading the way in this work, even before the shifts in learning culture that became so apparent with digital tools. These scholars assert that the study of biblical texts is crucial – they argue for strong “anchoring threads,” if you will – and yet they also pay careful attention to the diverse ways in which these texts are heard, embodied, lived through: a sticky set of filtering strands.

Womanists recognize that much biblical scholarship in the last millennia has been performed from the dominant perspective of men and white women. They begin, instead, from a strong stance of “otherness” – that is, their scholarship centers on the perspectives of women of color who have been held as “other” by the primary tradition. As R. Weems notes, “reading the bible for liberation is grounded in the acknowledgement and respect for otherness of those whose otherness is silenced and marginalized by those in power” (Weems, 2015, 45).

Thinking through others

How does one come to “think through others”? Here R. Shweder's heuristic is useful, offering a framework for noticing specific ways in which this combination of “anchoring” and “sticky filtering” threads can function. Shweder works from within the fields of cultural anthropology and cultural psychology, a grounding which resonates with womanist and feminist engagement with biblical texts because it asserts the value of studying that which is perceived as “other” while yet positing at least the possibility of shared meaning. Womanist biblical scholars recognize that biblical canons exist, for example, but are not bound *a priori* by the established boundaries of those canons. These scholars choose instead to explore the margins as well as the interstitial spaces the articulation of a canon creates.

Shweder's heuristic suggests that we “think through others” in at least four ways.

First we “recognize the other as a specialist or expert on some aspect of human experience, whose reflective consciousness and system of representations and discourse can be used to reveal hidden dimensions of ourselves” (108-109). This most basic engagement with an “other” of some sort acknowledges that there is value in learning from the other, that there are captured in the stories of the “other,” valuable insights into human being. The opportunity here is one of expressing, lifting to consciousness and the light, elements of experience which might otherwise be inaccessible, or at least hidden and difficult to voice. When we “think through others” in this

way we are essentially looking for ourselves in the text, but inviting the text to help us articulate something we might not otherwise be able to voice. We see ourselves in a new light by looking at the text. As M. Smith notes, “womanist biblical hermeneutics prioritizes the communal and particular lived experiences of women of color as a point of departure, a focal point, and an overarching interpretative lens for critical analysis of the bible” (Smith, 2015, 8).

A second way of “thinking through others” Shweder has labelled “getting the other straight.” That is, “providing a systematic account of the internal logic, of the intentional world constructed by the other... . The process of ‘thinking through others’ in [this] second sense is a process of representing (and defending) the other’s evaluations of and involvements with the world – such as a taboo against eating meat or a prohibition against remarriage – by tracing those evaluations and modes of involvement to some plausible alternative intentional world and conception of reality...” (109). When womanist biblical scholars discuss texts which have been used in our current contexts to oppress and silence women, they often detail at length what is being discovered about the specific cultural modalities present at times when these texts were canonized. K. D. Russaw, for instance, interrogates the “wise individuals” found in literature of the ancient Near East to offer a different perspective on the woman of Genesis 3 (2015, 222-234).

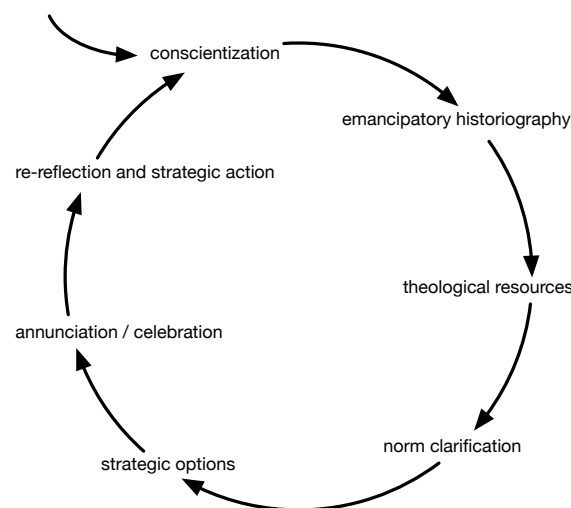
Womanist scholars use some of the tools of historical critical biblical scholarship in this second mode, because it provides a way for them to continue to assert that there is meaning worth engaging within these texts, even if their “plain” or “literal” meaning contradicts current understandings. Such a stance reconciles the damage done by people using these texts against women, with a strong desire to continue to find them authoritative. These scholars are creating ways to anchor the larger commitment to finding biblical texts revelatory and compelling by helping to situate them contextually.

A third way to “think through others” Shweder labels “thinking one’s way out of or beyond the other.” This stance is a very situated form of interpretation which may in some cases even lead to particular biblical texts being removed from consideration all together, as being too oppressive to be revelatory. Shweder cautions that this stance “properly comes ... after we have already appreciated what the intentional world of the other powerfully reveals and illuminates, from its special point of view. ‘Thinking through others’ is, in its totality, an act of criticism and liberation, as well as of discovery” (109-110). That is, this modality of moving beyond requires, first, a deep engagement with a text and its thought-world. As Weems notes:

Part of rereading androcentric texts can entail choosing not to read them at all. Breaking the hold these texts have involves breaking the cycle of uncritically retelling and passing down from one generation to the next violent, androcentric, culturally chauvinistic texts and resisting where necessary the moral vision of such texts... the bible can and has been used to promote a vision of the world that silences and further overlooks the oppressed. Its multiple ideological layers and the multiple roles it has played in both silencing and liberating generations of readers forces readers to read the bible with different eyes, from multiple positions, and with a multi-layered approach. (51)

Finally Shweder describes a fourth way in which we “think through others” as “the process of representing the other ... hand in hand with a process of portraying one’s own self as part of the process of representing the other, thereby encouraging an open-ended self-reflexive dialogic turn of mind” (110). This fourth sense has been at the heart of much recent biblical study, and it holds tremendous power within womanist frames. But it is also a very difficult move to support pedagogically. How can we invite this more nuanced and complex interpretive stance into our pedagogies? Womanist scholars have been pointing the way for some time.

K. Cannon’s “dance of redemption,” for instance (which was built upon Beverly Harrison’s earlier work), describes a circle of learning that moves through conscientization, emancipatory historiography, theological resources, norm clarification, strategic options, annunciation / celebration, and then a return through reflection and strategic action to conscientization (Cannon, 1995, 130 and Townes 2006, 1171). Each step in that circle dance moves in collaborative and shared ways. You cannot do conscientization alone or in isolation, for instance, and emancipatory historiography by definition builds the counter memory and counter narratives of which E. Townes writes.



Digital storytelling in four modes

Digital storytelling enters into these challenges of thinking through others with distinctive affordances for supporting learning based within a community of truth epistemological model. Here I am writing about digital storytelling when that term is understood as a “workshop-based participatory media practice focused on self-representation” (Vivienne, 2016, 1). While there are many ways to engage digital media – consider just a few of the recent plethora of studies doing theological work with popular culture – in this chapter I am specifically exploring a form of learning which is shaped by particular practices that grow out of work originally pioneered by the Center for Digital Storytelling. Their work, in turn, was born out of improvisationally structured community theater that was focused on helping communities to voice and share their

self-understandings. Such work is intentionally transformative and resonates deeply with the pedagogical imagination of womanist scholars.

At its most basic, this kind of digital storytelling begins with intensive collaborative storytelling exercises which help a person to come to a sense of the story they want to tell, by working through various elements of it in story circles. Story circles, in turn, composed of 4 to 6 people, use specific practices to attune listeners to nuances of a story, and help them to lift such nuances into the awareness of the storyteller, deepening and enriching a narrative. Once a storyteller has their narrative, they audio record it. That recording in turn becomes the narration to which a storyteller adds images and music layers, combining it all into a short – generally 2- 4 minutes long – mp4 or mov file. That file is then shared out via a distribution tool such as vimeo, youtube, or other such video sharing services. The final element of the process is for the gathered storytellers to share their videos in a “theater-style” event, in which a group of people see and hear each other’s stories, and engage them. Key to this pedagogical process is the *story*, with the “digital” elements coming in as factors only once the story is available.

It is at this point that I can highlight the ways in which digital storytelling can illuminate each of the four modes of “thinking through others” I have identified in womanist scholarship.

(1) Thinking by means of the other

Remember that the first way of thinking through others I called attention to is that which “recognize[s] the other as a specialist or expert on some aspect of human experience, whose reflective consciousness and system of representations and discourse can be used to reveal hidden dimensions of ourselves” (108-109).

For many students and teachers who are living in dominant spaces – people with the conferred dominance that comes with white skin in the United States, for instance – womanist scholarship offers an invitation into different way of seeing biblical texts, it offers different lenses for reading texts, and in doing so lifts up elements which can “reveal hidden dimensions” of such texts to readers, and even in some cases, can reveal God in new ways.

For many students beginning their study of the bible, the psalms can function in this way. A teacher using digital storytelling in this mode might invite students into a story circle and offer them a story prompt which expresses a moment when they felt something similar to the feelings evoked for them by the psalm they are being invited to study. The next step in the process, that of layering images and music onto the story, is supported by drawing on the many databases which offer images and music around specific psalms. For the student, creating a short digital video which combines their narrative with the psalm’s text, and then layering onto that story images and music which resonate, is both enjoyable and illuminating (Hess, 2012, 408). This way of engaging a psalm is very basic, and has much in common with the form of biblical study which Lutherans label “devotional” (cite), and the Benedictines experience as *lectio divina*.

For many people this first mode also supports the kind of “consciousness-raising” so familiar in womanist work. Sharing a personal story in the context of a story circle invites a learner to hear their story in new ways, through the insights of their fellow circle participants, and doing so

more than once slows that attentiveness down to a pace that, again, allows new insight to emerge. As Weems writes:

As a womanist biblical interpreter and teacher my role is to respect readers' needs to view the bible as a collection of sacred stories while at the same time challenging them to understand their role as agents in the sacred act of preserving stories and passing them down to the next generation. As an agent in the task of preserving and transmitting stories from one generation of women to the next, readers must be empowered (1) to become a part of a story's audience and to feel free to raise questions of the author about his or her assumptions about the world and people's relationship to one another; (2) to use one's imagination to retell the story in ways it was never meant to be told in order to get at hidden truths and meanings embedded in stories; and (3) to take responsibility as a reader/interpreter/storyteller for the impact the stories we tell has on the lives of other women, men, and children who hear them and try to live up to them. (53)

As womanist scholars demonstrate, however, this first mode is all too easily one which can simply re-inscribe preexisting assumptions about a text, because it remains at the level of "sympathetic identification" – that is, it is a first step into a text, a first attempt to listen for resonance in the text. It is an important first step, but also a limited one.

For white students, for instance, the "hidden dimensions" brought to light from a text might simply re-inscribe their existing understanding and convictions, in that way merely putting a biblical "gloss" on what in many cases are oppressive dynamics.

(2) getting the other straight

The second mode of "thinking through others," therefore, is an important next step. Indeed, it can be helpful to think of the four modes as points along a circle, much like Cannon's dance proceeds in a perpetual cycle. "Getting the other straight" is about "providing a systematic account of the internal logic, of the intentional world constructed by the other." This is a mode which aligns well with historical/critical biblical scholarship and is a fruitful next step once a student's curiosity and wonder have been ignited by an initial round of storytelling.

At a very basic level, taking digital stories students have created (think of the psalm exercise) and sharing them in a wider community makes it possible to include voices that *come to us through time*. That is, after an initial round of digital storying, students can return to their rafts and dig more deeply into scholarly resources (particularly historical/critical ones) to add further depth to their pieces. In this mode a teacher is inviting deeper contextualization, essentially asking the learner to go *from their personal story experience* more deeply into a text.

Much recent work in womanist biblical studies provides vitally original understandings of biblical texts, drawing as it does on a much wider range of contextual studies. Gafney's "womanist midrash" on Zipporah, for instance, is a rich resource to offer students as they do this kind of digital storytelling (2015, 131-157).

Unlike pedagogical strategies which focus solely on engaging printed texts, digital storytelling offers a different kind of access to the affective elements of a text. By inviting more sustained attention to these differences, the process of creating a digital story allows learners both to slow down – to observe shifts in meaning they might have glossed over initially – as well as to approach the differences appreciatively. Given how strange biblical texts can appear to contemporary listeners, this process of “believing rather than doubting” (to use Elbow’s insight), offers access points with new possibility (Elbow, 1986).

Both of these ways of “thinking through others” in biblical texts -- the first (other as expert) and the second (getting the other straight) -- live primarily in the early part of Cannon’s dance of redemption. They function as forms of initial conscientization and begin to build anchoring points for the strong central threads of the web of meaning. These are the anchors which connect biblical texts with a learner’s life and history, asserting that these texts are revelatory in some way without foreclosing the meanings that might be made with them.

(3) thinking beyond the other

Cannon’s middle steps in the dance -- emancipatory historiography, theological resources, norm clarification – align well with Shweder’s third mode of “thinking through others”: thinking one’s way out of or beyond the other. Indeed, I believe these are two ways of describing the same process. “Emancipatory historiography,” for example, is a “method of investigation that involves critical, socio-ethical analysis of the past, undertaken by examining who has been silenced, “marginalized,” excluded in specific historical records in order to achieve a more profound understanding of the structural interactions among varying dynamics of our forebears” (81 dictionary of feminist theology). As Russaw (2015) writes:

The epistemological challenge for womanists to know more “than is ‘good’ for” her “and in greater depth,” relative to black women’s experience, requires that womanists expose, transgress, break down, and counter oppressive epistemologies as the subjective and political constructs that they are. This is not to say that womanist epistemologies are not subjective and political as well; we acknowledge this. But womanists must construct other more liberating ways of knowing, epistemologies, that prioritize the justice needs of black communities and other oppressed groups. (243)

Or as Weems (2015) notes:

One of the most effective ways to introduce women students and interested male students to a hermeneutics of liberation is by turning their attention to stories of rape and violence in the bible and asking them what kind of world would our world be if stories like these were normative, if we duplicated, reproduced, or transmitted them to the next generation without warning and comment? (54)

This mode is focused on helping learners to see how exploring the silences, the margins, the interstitial spaces of biblical texts can offer insight.

It is necessary to broaden the range of voices drawn on in the community of truth by drawing on digital stories created by people in other settings. This third mode of “thinking through others” is a moment when pedagogically we are also moving a bit away from my initial definition of workshop-based digital storytelling. When digital storytelling is done in dominant settings, it is not enough simply to draw on the voices of those who are present, or even the voices of biblical texts through time, because far too often the historical record of these texts holds only dominant voices. We must invite silenced and oppressed voices into the conversation, into the storytelling.

Consider, for instance, the challenges involved with engaging silences and structural marginalization with learners who inhabit the privileged ends of various spectra of oppression. Using digital storytelling that focuses solely on personal stories, and then enlarges those stories with historical critical scholarship, still risks ignoring the marginalization of current persons, the impact that specific biblical interpretations still can have on people in the world today. It is only by engaging those dynamics, by finding entry points into perceiving oppression’s impact, that digital storytelling processes can catalyze emancipatory historiography. As a person who bears white privilege, for instance, when I find myself in settings working only with white students, it is imperative that I broaden the voices in the room beyond those of white people. Digital stories created by people in other settings afford me an opportunity to do so.

Shweder (1991) expands upon this dynamic when he writes that:

... ‘thinking through others’ ... is the sense of thinking one’s way out of or beyond the other. It is the sense of passing through the other or intellectually transforming him or her or it into something else – perhaps its negation – by revealing what the life and intentional world of the other has dogmatically hidden away, namely its own incompleteness. It is a third sense, for it properly comes later, after we have already appreciated what the intentional world of the other powerfully reveals and illuminates, from its special point of view. ‘Thinking through others’ is, in its totality, an act of criticism and liberation, as well as of discovery.” (109-110)

From womanist standpoints this “passing through and transforming” is a double-edged sword. Consider that engaging sexism has both the edge of confronting sexism which oppresses women from without – the texts of terror – as well as seeking to heal internalized sexism (all the ways in which biblical stories have been wielded as a sword to subdue women). What can it mean to “think through and beyond” a text in this way? At a minimum it requires drawing on systemic analyses which engage race, class, gender, and other intersecting forms of oppression. Such analyses form “sticky strands” which capture and filter meanings which might otherwise be ignored or even suppressed by dominant voices.

Hebrew bible texts are a rich resource for engaging in this kind of “thinking through others” as a form of liberation, because they are so deeply embedded in our religious traditions – the bedrock, if you will, the anchoring points of our knowing – but their very distance from our contemporary contexts also makes them “strange” in a way that invites study if we are to continue to find them meaningful, revelatory, authoritative.

So how does digital storytelling support such learning? As mentioned earlier, one key way to do so is by inviting other voices into the storytelling conversation, into the community of truth. There are many examples of digital stories which offer critical, compelling, and at times even humorous routes into this necessary form of systemic analysis. I think here of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED talk on the "danger of a single story," or Alok Vaid-Menon's TEDx-Middlebury talk on "we are nothing (and that is beautiful)."⁴

Although neither of these examples is directly connected to the bible, both of these stories draw out dynamics which have immediate resonance to the challenge of living through narratives. Here again, womanist scholars have long drawn on narratives from a wide variety of genres – personal testimony, literature, song, poetry, and so on – claiming such narrative weaving as an essential part of their methodological practices. Weems (2015) notes that:

Stories offer readers an inner script to live by, glimpses into the way things are and more importantly reasons and a way to talk about how things ought not to be. Stories can lure readers into seeing the world in different ways, shock them into a critique of the world in which they live and help them imagine the ways things ought to be. (53)

The pedagogical power of using such digital stories which come absent any specific connection to the bible is that you are connecting your participants' stories to contemporary analyses – again, widening the circle of the community of truth – and doing so in ways that help to make biblical texts immediately relevant to current events. Further, because these stories are digitally available, you can invite them into spaces of learning, into contexts which would otherwise be isolated from such narratives, and awaken learners to the expansive insights of such widening.

The danger, however, is that you can eclipse the biblical texts by reading over them in ways that turn their meaning into mere illustration of points you have already determined will be made. In that case the texts no longer reveal and confront, but only "proof text" pre-existing convictions. Consider, for instance, all of the ways in which biblical texts have been used to reinforce support for slavery, for homophobia, for narrow gender restrictions, and so on.

Cannon's dance of redemption highlights the importance of "norm clarification" in this process. "Thinking through others" by thinking *beyond*, by critiquing, is crucial – and continues to draw on the deep anchoring convictions, while filtering for redemptive, liberative interpretations. Such work can, as Weems notes, recover "the contributions of women such as Hagar, Huldah, Judith, Deborah, Lydia and the Canaanite woman [this] is important for those desperate for role models, images, stories, and examples from the bible to help them struggle and survive the hardships of gender oppression" (52).

⁴ The danger of a single story (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs24lzeg>), we are nothing (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxb-zYthAOA>).

(4) witnessing in the context of engagement with the other

The fourth and final mode of “thinking through others” we are exploring here is a process in which “representing the other goes hand in hand with a process of portraying one’s own self as part of the process of representing the other, thereby encouraging an open-ended self-reflexive dialogic turn of mind” (110). Here we come to the part of “dance of redemption” which centers on strategic options, annunciation and celebration, action.

Here is where performative assembly matters, and where digital stories and the pedagogies they support can draw people beyond mere story-sharing -- digital or otherwise -- into accountable community, where “witnessing in the context of engagement with the other” becomes at once both a daily practice and a catalyst for continuing learning. Here creating digital stories becomes a direct mode for resisting dominant interpretations. We know that stories can be transformative, and finding ways to collaboratively tell stories of resistance -- and then share those stories out into the world -- can be tremendously impactful.

As the last decade has shown, sharing stories in digital spaces can invite people into relationships that demand action. Rather than being stymied by an artificial dichotomy between “online” and “offline” story sharing, digital stories become a route by which to exchange meaning across previously unassailable borders. Vivienne is eloquent about the impact of such work (2016):

Bridge building is reflected in the capacity to negotiate one’s position as a part of or apart from networked publics – including familiar, intimate, counter and unknown. Digital storytelling creates opportunities to ‘bring things up,’ to broach difficult discussions ‘out in the open.’ Ownership of one’s position in society (as represented in a digital story) is reflected in the capacity to receive and give affirmation. Further, public expression of marginalized voices opens space for others to speak as they also negotiate how and where they fit in the world. As a medium that facilitates speaking across difference and bridge building, digital storytelling evokes the profound significance of participatory media as a widespread global phenomenon. (196-197)

This kind of digital storytelling, this “witnessing in the context of engagement with the other” is also the place in which I believe biblical texts continue to be revelatory of truth beyond the individual/personal – this is a mode which demands ongoing humility paired with deep convictions, which demands the deep anchoring strands, wound together by the more fragile but sticky filters.

References

- Cannon, Katie Geneva. 1995. *Katie's Cannon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community*. New York: Continuum.
- Elbow, Peter. 1986. *Embracing Contraries: Explorations in Learning and Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gafney, Wil. 2015. "A womanist midrash on Zipporah," in *I Found God in Me: A Womanist Biblical Hermeneutics Reader*, edited by Mitzi J. Smith, Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.
- Hess, Mary. 2015. "Learning with digital technologies: Privileging persons over machines," *Journal of Moral Theology*, Vol. 4, (1), 131-150.
- Hess, Mary. 2014. "A new culture of learning: Digital storytelling and faith formation," in *Dialog*, Vol. 53, (1), 12-22.
- Hess, Mary. 2013. "Digital storytelling: Empowering feminist and womanist faith formation with young women," in *Media, Religion and Gender*, edited by Mia Lövhelm. New York: Routledge, 169-182.
- Hess, Mary. 2012. "Mirror neurons, the development of empathy, and digital storytelling," *Religious Education*, Vol. 107, (4), 401-414.
- Hill-Collins, Patricia. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Palmer, Parker. 2007. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Russaw, Kimberly Dawn "Wisdom in the garden: The women of Genesis 3 and Alice Walker's *Sophia*," in *I Found God in Me: A Womanist Biblical Hermeneutics Reader*, edited by Mitzi J. Smith, Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.
- Shweder, Richard. 1991. *Thinking Through Cultures: Expeditions in Cultural Psychology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Smith, Mitzi J. 2015. "Introduction," in *I Found God in Me: A Womanist Biblical Hermeneutics Reader*, edited by Mitzi J. Smith, Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.
- Thomas, Douglas and SeelyBrown, John. 2011. *A New Culture of Learning: Cultivating the Imagination for a World of Constant Change*. CreateSpace.
- Vivienne, Sonja. 2016. *Digital Identity and Everyday Activism: Sharing Private Stories with Networked Publics*, Palgrave MacMillan.
- Weems, Renita. 2015. "Re-reading for liberation: African American women and the Bible," in *I Found God in Me: A Womanist Biblical Hermeneutics Reader*, edited by Mitzi J. Smith, Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.



Kyle Matthew Oliver, Teachers College - Columbia University & Virginia Theological Seminary, kmo2144@tc.columbia.edu, REA Annual Meeting November 2, 2018

“Space to be heard”: Facilitating, researching, and documenting digital storytelling in a church summer program

Abstract: Youth development work within and beyond religious settings should honor and engage the experiences participants bring with them, as well as the directions they wish to take their learning. This paper presents such an approach to using digital storytelling to foster healthy identity development. I illustrate and analyze a mini-ethnographic project conducted during a weeklong storytelling experience at the summer program of a Mainline Protestant congregation in a primarily Latinx northeastern suburb. I show that for these three participants, explicit, agentic self-reflection was mediated significantly by the sociotechnical affordances of digital storytelling and the sociocultural structures of the summer camp itself. The resulting identity work clarified and deepened the participants’ understanding of the role of the camp in their development and the contributions they have made to this dynamic community.

Background & Motivation

In a 2017 blog post, social justice education scholar Jamilah Lyiscott warns readers against a harmful framing for much youth development work. After sharing an anecdote about a “savior complex” conversation with a white educator who congratulated Lyiscott for “giv[ing] so many young people voice,” she unpacks the exchange:

We did not give them a voice. What we gave them was space to be heard. Students navigate powerful spaces of learning every single day in their homes and communities. Especially when it comes to students of color, the skills, experiences, and rich knowledges that shape their voices are devalued in the classroom, but are still powerful and have absolutely nothing to do with our “salvation.” (Lyiscott, 2017, n.p.)

In the midst of our everyday religious education practices, it is easy to make similar mistakes. Like our colleagues in K-12 and higher education, we too easily undervalue the life experience of the people we serve, especially young people (Bunge, 2008). In Mainline Protestant denominations like mine, we often center the particular religious and cultural practices of Christians who are middle-class, suburban, and white (e.g., Aelabouni, 2018). And none of us is immune to the tendency to overlook the developmental objective of forming healthy relationships with God, neighbor, and self in favor of the content of our traditions, as if it were the content and not the relationships that are life-giving (Root, 2013).

Mary Hess (2011, 2012, 2014, 2018) has made the case to religious education researchers and practitioners that digital storytelling (see Lambert, 2012) represents a promising activity for supporting healthy religious identity development in a changing and diverse society. Digital storytelling takes the everyday and the extraordinary life experiences of participants as a starting-point for self-reflective and self-authored meaning making. At the same time, it is a practice conducted in small groups of fellow storytellers. As such, we can understand it as

contributing to what Hess elsewhere calls a “community of communities” approach to religious education (2017, p. 35), one that asks some urgent questions of how we approach our work:

Can we embody religious education that educates within and for specific religious communities, but also and concurrently with and for people who are not part of religious communities? ... I fear that until and unless religious communities can communicate – in all the rich senses of that word – our integral and inextricable commitments to relationship across, among, within, between and amidst various kinds of difference, we will lose even more ground (2016, p. 1)

Digital storytelling cultivates relationship across difference by convening what Luttrell calls “audiencings” (2010, pp. 227–229) and what Ackermann calls “conversation with artifacts,” during which “[p]eople learn by switching roles from being producers to being critics, from being actors to being audiences, from holding the stage to moving into the background” (p. 4). It’s a powerful experience to move back and forth between creator and audience. This role flexibility is especially important to a genre that incorporates the semiotic affordances of collaging and remixing. Even in the process of “writing” our own multimodal texts, we are constantly “reading” potential constituent components (photographs, musical selections, etc.) that we and sometimes others have produced in times and places both immediate and distant to the present storymaking in progress. Digital storytelling is a space to be heard and a space to hear—and hopefully also to be understood and to understand.

I have recently situated Hess’s proposal alongside related work in the K-12 literature that takes up the challenge of cultivating an ethic of cosmopolitanism (Appiah, 2008; Hansen, 2017) through an assortment of creative literacy practices (Oliver, 2018). These projects (e.g., Hull & Stornaiulo, 2014; Vasudevan, Kerr, Hibbert, Fernandez, & Park, 2014; Choo, 2018; relatedly Hull & Katz, 2006; Pleasants, 2008; Price-Dennis, Holmes, & Smith, 2015) share with Hess a sophisticated understanding of the ways that personal narrative, multimodal design, and community-based authoring and performance serve to scaffold the sociocultural dynamics of self-reflection, identity negotiation, and empathy, in diverse communities and settings. Digital storytelling offers participants regular and structured opportunities to, in Hansen’s words, “hold their various cultural roots in one hand ... and any number of new possibilities in the other hand, with these possibilities triggered for them both by the curriculum and by the constant stimulation of their peers’ ways of responding to the curriculum and to what might be called the quite miraculous experience of being together day after day after day” (2017, p. 215). The present study seeks to examine that miracle, bringing digital storytelling practices to bear in and on the collective exercise of care, belonging, and “being together” that happens at a church-run summer camp.

Partly due to Hess’s influence, there is also a growing *religious* literature—practitioner-oriented, researcher-oriented, and sometimes both—responding in various ways to the promise of digital storytelling (McQuiston, 2007; Kaare & Lundby, 2008; Hess & Clark, 2011; Clark & Dierberg, 2013; Fentress-Williams & Williams-Duncan, 2015; Oliver, 2017; BimBam, 2018). This and other creative practices can help faith leaders convene diverse, inclusive learning spaces. As such, they become all the more appealing in light of the rapid changes taking place in U.S. religious affiliation and practice (Putnam, 2000; Putnam &

Campbell, 2010; Drescher, 2016; Pew Research Center, 2018), as well as—consequently and additionally—in religious education (see Foster, 2012; Roberto, 2015; Avni, 2017; Root, 2017).

Against this backdrop of change and uncertainty, I believe religious educators serving in congregations will increasingly need to adopt pedagogical modes and models already quite familiar to many who teach in diverse religious schools. To speak only for my Christian tradition: When religious diversity is a given and when interest in (church-as-)institutional programs and (belief-as-)institutional belonging are waning, Christian education can remain vital by expanding the scope of who and how we serve.

For educators committed to particular traditions, this will often mean a shift in orientation from “teaching for commitment” to “teaching from commitment” (Tan, 2009, p. 209). Such a decision does not necessarily represent a retreat from what I would want to call “proclamation” over “exposition”; indeed, an educator who explicitly acknowledges and makes space for the diverse perspectives of multiple storytellers—nurturing the freedom to make meaning according to whatever beliefs and values they bring to the work—may paradoxically find those storytellers more genuinely curious about the teacher’s own perspectives and commitments. At any rate, there will be more opportunities to support the healthy personal development of more learners—and a humane societal understanding of religious traditions—if researchers and practitioners embrace a variety of settings both within and beyond religious communities. Of course, each setting will have its own limitations and opportunities with respect to the enactment of the content of particular faith traditions.

The present work is my first attempt to facilitate and represent the digital storytelling experience with a small community of learners in a faith-adjacent setting. My intention was to trust the meaning-making power of this activity and be alert to a variety of ways in which religious education would happen—at least implicitly. Thus, this paper reports on a short ethnographic study of a digital storytelling project conducted as part of a church-run, non-sectarian summer camp. I facilitated the weeklong experience with a group of three first-year counselors, all rising ninth graders and all children of Latinx immigrant parents. The prompt was simply to “tell a personal story about a meaningful experience in your life.”

The young people chose to collaborate on a piece about how their roles in and experience of the summer camp had changed over the years. Drawing on analyses of field notes, recorded and transcribed conversations and voice memos, and the participants’ multimodal artifacts, I examine the learning experience with particular attention to the dynamics of our co-creativity in shaping both the space and the media we made together. I show that for these three participants, explicit, agentic¹ self-reflection was mediated significantly by the sociotechnical affordances of digital storytelling² and the sociocultural structures of the summer camp itself³. The resulting identity work clarified and deepened the participants’ understanding of the role of the camp in their development and the contributions they have made to this dynamic community.

¹ Defined by Lewis and Moje as “strategic making and remaking of selves; identities; activities; relationships; cultural tools and resources; histories” (2003, p. 1985).

² E.g., taking and discussing photographs in light of both personal experience and the intended message of a collaboratively authored video.

³ E.g., a campwide valuing of collaborative performance as both everyday activity and culminating experience.

Context and Participants

St. Sebastian's⁴ is a mainline Protestant church in Woodfield, a primarily Latinx immigrant community in a northeastern U.S. metropolitan area. The church is located near a major commuter rail line, providing access to both the city center and the neighboring suburbs where many Woodfield residents work in service industries. St. Sebastian's is a primarily Spanish-speaking congregation. Most adult congregants are immigrants from Central and South America. Most of the congregation's children were born in the U.S. and speak both English and Spanish. Each year, the church runs a summer-long, non-religious day camp for children in nearby communities. Approximately one quarter of campers' families attend services and other events at St. Sebastian's.

Most campers and counselors have a Latinx background, and camp is conducted in both English and Spanish according to the needs of the moment and the skills and preferences of the people involved in a given activity. These include outdoor recreation (daily at a Woodfield city park and weekly at a nearby beach), music, art, karate, indoor games, summer homework help, and—increasingly as the session progresses—group performance practice. The camp culminates in a weeknight performance for parents and relatives in which most campers participate in choreographed dances set to both U.S. and Latin American pop music.

I became acquainted with St. Sebastian's as a clergy colleague of the pastors there, and as an occasional volunteer in the church's religious education programming over the course of about three years. When I began looking for a faith or faith-adjacent field site to pilot my participatory ethnographic approach to studying digital storytelling, I reached out to the camp director, Denise. She agreed to have the camp host the project, pending the approval of a second volunteer instructor. Penelope is an area filmmaker and educator who had already signed on as a partner to work a couple times per week with the six counselors-in-training to produce a documentary about the camp. After a couple of conversations, Penelope and I agreed to work separately with our distinct groups but with some common production tools and some mutual facilitation support when we each were available to help the other.

Together Denise and I identified five potential participants: four girls and one boy, two of them rising eighth graders (therefore counselors-in-training) and three of them rising ninth graders (first-year counselors). The three ninth graders (Veronica, Dylan, and Lauren) assented to participate. Dylan and Lauren are cousins; Dylan's parents immigrated from Guatemala, Lauren's, from Guatemala and Argentina. Veronica's parents, now divorced, immigrated from Peru. All three young people were previously known to me. The four of us spent part of four afternoons on the project, about twelve hours total. I also attended the daylong Wednesday field trip during the week of the study (week four of seven) as well as the end-of-camp talent show several weeks later.

Methodological & Theoretical Frames

I locate this research in the tradition of multimodal ethnography (Jewitt, Bezemer, & O'Halloran, 2016) identified by Wissman, Staples, Vasudevan, and Nichols (2015) as *research*

⁴ All person and place names are pseudonyms. Most were assigned by me; two of the three study participants elected to choose their own.

pedagogies. The aim of multimodal ethnography is to use the theoretical tools of social semiotics in order to “make visible the cultural and social practices of a particular community” (Jewitt, Bezemer, & O’Halloran, 2016, p. 132). This process often involves collecting, producing, and discussing a wide range of artifacts, often including sketches, photographs, and text- or audio-based journals and sometimes a more general sampling from the material culture of participants’ lifeworlds (e.g., Pahl, 2006). The goal of these conversations with and around artifacts is to surface the deeply personal meanings participants create and leverage with them.

Incorporating digital storytelling into this methodology is powerful because the researcher gets a first-hand view and explanations of practices common to the setting while at the same time the participants encode them, implicitly and sometimes explicitly, into their story. In their important study of digital storytelling in a community technology center in West Oakland, Hull and Katz (2006) discuss Bruner’s narrative research on autobiographical storytelling and how it is shot through with “thickly agentive” turning points (Bruner, 1994, p. 50). For Taylor, the turning point is the “strong experience” that occasions the story in the first place and shapes the tellers’ and hearers’ conclusions about its meaning (2016, p. 308). For Ricœur, the turning point is the interpretive key to how a diachronic account holds together and proves “productive” for author and audience (1991, p. 7). For Lambert, it is the “moment” we search for in the story circle and scripting process—and around which meanings will solidify and story arcs will pivot (2012, pp. 59–60). In short, thick description of the digital storytelling process is likely to yield significant insights into the personal meanings of both the events that have shaped the storyteller’s life and experience as well as the media representations storytellers create and appropriate in order to “emplot” (Ricœur, 1991) those meanings. Thus, the convergence of multimodal ethnography and digital storytelling allows for rich forms of triangulation and interpretation.

Within multimodal ethnography, Wissman and colleagues’ research pedagogies framework interrogates the possibilities made present when the ethnographic site(s) are simultaneously research spaces *and* teaching spaces. These scholars describe the approach according to three “grounding dimensions of inquiry” (2015, p. 188): created spaces, engaged participation, and embodied inquiry. The significance of (co-)created spaces springs from Wissman and colleagues’ conviction that adolescent literacy practices develop both “within and outside institutional boundaries” (2015, p. 189). A created space can cordon off or “huddle in” an informal learning experience within an otherwise formal one, or vice versa, or it can connect an experience that spans multiple physical, virtual, or hybrid locations. I take these researchers’ rejection of any assumed primacy of formal schooling settings for understanding literacy practices as analogous to my own desire to privilege understandings of meaning-making that may extend beyond the boundaries of institutional religion (e.g., McGuire, 2008; Campbell, 2012; Drescher, 2016).

Engaged participation means that “youth and adults are guided by aims that are emergent and negotiated” (2015, p. 189). Thus, part of how this approach to teaching and research creates “space to be heard” is through a principled commitment to the young people’s autonomy⁵ in determining the scope and priorities of the activity. Finally, these researchers take *embodied inquiry* to “refer to how the realignment of roles and responsibilities, and redistribution of

⁵ Their autonomy is significant but still contingent, obviously. On navigating the inevitable power differentials in youth media, see also Chavez and Soep’s work on a pedagogy of collegiality (2005).

materiality within a space, substantively changes the nature of the inquiry that can occur” (2015, p. 189). Throughout the present study, there is ample opportunity to notice and learn from the apparent meanings and outcomes of the role-flexibility of the participants, the researcher, and various authority figures in and around the camp.

These three “grounding dimensions” spring from the influence on the research pedagogies framework of a broader movement to “spatialize” both literacies research and practice (Sheehy & Leander, 2004) and critical understandings of education more broadly (e.g., Morgan, 2000; Gulson & Symes, 2007). Especially influential in this movement is the work of postmodern geographer Edward Soja, who developed the notion of Thirdspace from the trialectic spatiality of French theoretician Henri Lefebvre. For Lefebvre, space is produced by sociality. Social practice enables and coordinates (1) perceived or material space, (2) conceived or imagined space, and (3) a binary-disrupting, distinct-but-also-encompassing lived space (Soja, 1996). Spatialized studies of literacy practices have examined the social production and function of Thirdspaces in various contexts, such as the hybrid “space between inside and outside” created by people in prison as a site of identity performance and resistance (Wilson, 2004, p. 74).

I have found the the Thirdspace concept useful for understanding the complexly spatialized dynamics of the present study. In particular, I want to focus attention on the ways that the material, imagined, and lived dimensions of the St. Sebastian’s summer camp were interwoven with those of our temporary, negotiated space of teaching, learning, improvisation, and research. What we experienced and documented in the course of this study was a kind of hybridized Thirdspace shaped significantly by both of these overlapping social endeavors: the “camp-ing” and the storytelling. A flexible and shifting gaze between the two should protect us somewhat from “the interpretive loss experienced when a context of literacy practice is considered to be background to the situated practices happening within it” (Sheehy & Leander, 2004, p. 3). As we shall shortly see, there was no way to ignore the challenges and opportunities the camp context created for the storytelling practice.

Before we examine in earnest “the story of the story,” there is one last bit of interlocking methodological and theoretical machinery to discuss, and that regards the question of whether and how this experience—and this study—represents religious education per se. In a time when the conditions are waning for robust, congregation-based, schooling-model religious education programming⁶ (see Foster, 2012), I have followed in the footsteps of many wise colleagues⁷ returning for guidance to the vision of Maria Harris’s *Fashion Me A People*.

For Harris, and in her Christian setting, the pastoral and educational vocation of the Church is embodied by five “curricula” in the broadest and richest sense of that word: *koinonia* (community), *leiturgia* (prayer), *didache* (teaching), *kerygma* (proclamation), and *diakonia* (service). Harris calls for us to “consistently distinguish between the curriculum of schooling and the curriculum of education” (1989, p. 64), that is, to acknowledge that the people of God are formed not only or primarily by the curriculum of Sunday school or adult formation classes but by the integrated experience of living (and participating) as the people of God. However, there’s

⁶ Here I have sometimes used the shorthand “Sunday school as we know it,” though this is admittedly an oversimplification. Also, lamenting robust faith formation infrastructure is not the same as glorifying the original model, about which so many religious educators have significant reservations.

⁷ Foremost among them Lisa Kimball and Dorothy Linthicum of Virginia Theological Seminary and John Roberto of LifelongFaith Associates.

a significant trap involved in this faith-forming ethos, one with its own often-unnoticed gravitational pull:

forms of education other than schooling ... often become the null curriculum. They are left out of our concepts and understandings. Or, at best, they are left implicit, not spoken of or paid attention as part of the educational process. (Harris, 1989, p. 69)

It's well and good to trust that "lex orandi, lex credendi" (roughly: praying shapes believing) and that everyday experiences of belonging and serving form us as disciples. But if religious educators don't help learners *reflect* on how liturgy and private prayers, and how the experience of receiving and offering hospitality, are helping to form their faith—if we don't create explicit opportunities for noticing and claiming these connections—the potential for genuine transformation is limited.

My final observation regards the "explicitness" and "implicitness" at work in our weeklong experience. Since this was a non-sectarian camp, the extent to which any of our shared activity could be explicitly theological was limited. Still, Lauren, Dylan, and Veronica are members of the St. Sebastian's congregation and have at times experienced me, (some) other camp authority figures, and the church grounds in the midst of religious activity. Furthermore, the digital storytelling process made *quite* explicit the participants' understandings of themes and categories (belonging, care, hospitality, etc.) that religious educators know to be relevant to theological formation.⁸ Even though the limitations on our conversation did not allow us to explicitly address "the divine dimension" of their learning, I am nevertheless convinced that "the reign of God was at hand" in the camp around us and in our meaning-making conversations and storytelling. I hope that we planted seeds for such an understanding to develop as they do—and as further opportunities for more explicit theological reflection surface in more appropriate contexts. I believe the explicit meaning making that does surface in the story that follows demonstrates the power of digital storytelling and other creative practices to provide integrative experiences across the settings and the curricula of religious education.

The Story of the Story

As one way of registering the impact of the digital storytelling process on our time together, I will structure this account around a series of turning points. This first of these quite literally occasioned Dylan, Lauren, and Veronica's artifact, and all of them shape my interpretation of our experience together. Although I realize ethnographies of this kind (and length) are not especially common in REA discourse, I also believe that having a relatively detailed account of the project on record will be useful to those considering trying digital storytelling in their own settings.

⁸ Even in a more traditional (i.e., congregational) religious education setting, participants in Kaare and Lundby's study nevertheless focused their stories on "existential themes like dreams for the future, joy, curiosity, friendship, and love" (2008, p. 115).

Getting to Yes—and to the Sprinklers: Negotiating the project’s scope and focus

I noticed a momentary hesitation when I walked into camp director Denise’s office an hour or so before lunch on Monday morning. She asked me if I wanted to get started now, because “some of them would get wet” this afternoon. Somewhat confused, I told her I had some setup to do and asked if we were still OK to start the workshop after lunch as we had planned. She said that would be fine. I didn’t know it yet, but this missed cue on my part set the camp’s rhythms and structures on a collision course with what I was still thinking of as our digital storytelling *workshop*. (Later that day, Lauren would tell me that, due to weather, the day’s typical schedule had been flipped, with structured indoor activities in the morning and outdoor recreation time—today, playing in the sprinklers—in the afternoon.)

After some setup, some lunch, and a complex gathering, the five young people joined Penelope and I in the conference room. Although I had positioned the high-backed, faux-leather chairs evenly around the long conference table and set up my stuff in the center rather than either “head” of the table, they rearranged the chairs without prompting and all sat down opposite opposite Penelope and me. Dylan remarked as he sat down that it felt “like an interview.” I welcomed and thanked the young people and explained what I hoped we could do together this week. Already sensing that the schedule Denise and I had discussed might not be realistic, I elected to skip the “warm-up” activity I had planned.

Instead, I began my brief introduction to digital storytelling, which culminated in an audiencing, as a multimodal “mentor text” (Gainer, 2013), of *Las Abuelas* (Vigran, 2012). This Storycenter-facilitated video about food and family is almost always what I use when introducing people to the genre. The story is vivid and transporting yet technologically unremarkable; it raises questions of culture and identity in an explicit but approachable way; Vigran’s voiceover is expressive but not overly affected; and the story’s turning point represents a straightforward breakthrough in personal understanding. In short, I show this story because I have found it to be accessible in a variety of settings.

We then came to our first turning point. I wasn’t yet “rolling tape” on our conversation, because the young people had not yet assented to participate in the study. My field notes pick up the story:

I asked if any of them might have a story of their own they might want to share in this style. There was a lot of silence. Eventually Veronica said that there was the story of being inspired by her parents coming here as immigrants. ... I asked about other possible “big moments” in people’s lives and didn’t get much of a response. When I probed a little bit, they reluctantly admitted that they weren’t really very interested in doing a story in this style, with Veronica the first to say that, and Dylan agreeing ... When I asked why there wasn’t a lot of enthusiasm about this idea, Veronica volunteered that it [*Las Abuelas*] was a very emotional story. I asked if that seemed like kind of an intimidating thing to make and she said yes. I asked if making a more fun or less personal story might be better, and she said that there wouldn’t really be much point then.

We sat for a moment of excruciating silence (“well that was awkward” were Penelope’s first words after the end of the session) while my facilitation planning shifted more fully into an

improvisational mode (Vasudevan et al., 2014; Wissman et al., 2015) to try and negotiate a way forward.

I asked a quick series of “pivot”-al questions seeking buy-in: Would they perhaps be willing to at least *start* the process to see if they liked it? (Noncommittal looks all around.) Would it perhaps be best for us to begin in earnest tomorrow so they wouldn’t miss sprinkler time today? (Some nods.) Would it perhaps be more fun to work on a story together rather than each producing one? (Some further perking up.) Might *camp* be a fitting topic for a shared story? (Verbal confirmations now.) This last question was inspired in part by earlier comments made by Veronica: (1) that “the church is really like a home” for her, (2) that she’s “been a part of this camp for for six or seven years,” and (3) that camp “felt a lot different this year” because of their increased responsibilities. (Elliot, one of the pastors at St. Sebastian’s, had told me earlier that Veronica had said something similar to the third comment the previous week.) The picture that was beginning to emerge here was that the camp is a locus of both meaning and enthusiasm for this group. In retrospect, it’s unsurprising that the opportunity to tell a story about camp is what turned the tide in our conversations.

By the end of this conversation, Veronica, Lauren, and Dylan said they were willing to participate in at least starting a group-authored story about the camp experience. Sofia and Katherine, the two counselors in training, who were both already participating in Penelope’s documentary film project, opted out. I asked the participants to be sure to get some photographs of the sprinkler play and any other scenes they thought would help tell the story of the camp, and now they seemed genuinely excited. They headed outside, and Penelope and I turned on the recorder to capture our first impressions.



Figure 1. Outdoor sprinkler time on Monday. Photo by Dylan, shortly after the session recounted here.⁹

Our conversation and my subsequent analysis turned up three important insights that shape my understanding of what happened in this session. The first involves the challenge of

⁹ In this and subsequent photos, I have sometimes strategically cropped and blurred photos to obscure faces and locations.

creating a space, within the camp experience, to do the work of digital storytelling. From Dylan's comment about the gathering feeling "like an interview" to the obvious tension between the timing of our session and the day's major fun activity to the complexity of Veronica's feelings about the changing experience of the camp given their new role, it seemed clear to Penelope and I that setting up the digital storytelling experience as a separate workshop removed from the camp's rhythms, locales, and pervasive spirit of fun was unlikely to be appealing to the group.

We saw evidence in support of this interpretation in the participants' increased interest in telling a story as a group (there are no solitary activities at camp) and especially in having the topic of the video be the camp itself. Although the hybrid space we would carve out together would necessarily involve some separation from the counselors' regular responsibilities,¹⁰ I endeavored from this point forward to look for ways to let the digital storytelling experience *deepen* the participants' experience of camp rather than, as it likely felt in this session, cutting them off from it. I later realized that this model of digital storytelling as embedded documentary is consistent with Harris's call (1989) to create opportunities for reflection on our faith-forming experiences while we are in the midst of them.

Still, some discontinuity between the noise and everyday fun of camp and the more reflective storytelling space may also have been important for the participants. It was quite striking to us that Veronica felt comfortable sharing with the group that she could relate to the *Las Abuelas* story because "all of us here are children of immigrants and our families went through a lot of pain and suffering." The pain and suffering of the immigrant experience as portrayed in this digital story is quite subtle. While Vigran reflects implicitly on the colonial history of California and explicitly on differences between her household experience and others', the overall tone of the piece is positive and reflects a pride and appreciation in the author's Latinx upbringing.

As we reflected on the moment through the lens of the "camp should be fun" ethos, we regretted that this mentor text audiencing, at least for Veronica, may have reinforced the "stress being put on immigrant families" or even participated in how "all aspects of Latino identity have been sort of non-consensually politicized in this moment" (Penelope, conversation transcript). It's certainly true that the tone of this part of our conversation and at other times when we discussed immigration was different than the tone during much of the rest of our time together. However, it's also true that St. Sebastian's holds immigration advocacy events with youth participation, and Denise had told me that this year at camp they planned to discuss "hard topics" like immigration and race. As the week went on, I believe the opportunity to reflect on their experience in the presence of peers and a supportive adult was helpful for our participants. Certainly it was clear that they were engaged in active reflection during these exchanges, including identifying and sharing their feelings and day-to-day coping strategies as well as learning to see both similarities and differences between their own families' experiences and their peers'.

Most of all, Veronica's contributions reinforced for me the importance of continuing to hold space for the young people's agency—to take our conversations and media making in the

¹⁰ The counselors work in redundant teams so that the ebb and flow of mandatory breaks, doctors appointments and other absences, etc. don't interfere with the staff's ability to safely supervise the children. That being said, the participants did tell me that they felt some pressure to return from our sessions in time to still be helpful to their teams in the afternoon.

directions that interested them and in which they felt as safe as possible. In this respect, I was later quite grateful that Katherine and Sofia had exercised their right not to participate in the study. Their decision highlighted the power I endeavored to share with the group. Indeed, Penelope helped me see how this “assent form moment” represented a rare opportunity for self-determination in the culture of the camp. She told me that the participants in her project, which is not formal research but simply another part of the official programming, hadn’t really been given a choice about participating. She said she sometimes struggled to motivate the young people in her group to participate. After our initial conversation, such struggles were rare with this group.

In short, I believe that from the earliest stages of the digital storytelling project, a clear ideological commitment to the process of negotiating its role and scope with the participants had an impact both on the product and on our co-created learning space. Although our Monday session underscored that this process isn’t easy, such negotiations may provide one possible approach to addressing the critique that camp¹¹ and church¹² are spaces of frustratingly limited agency for young people.

From Campers to Counselors: Representing camp and changing roles within in

I made several important changes to the style of our convening when we began on Tuesday. First, I got permission to gather our group in the seating area of Elliot’s office. It’s a much more comfortable and informal room for a group of our size, and we occasionally benefited from insight and friendly banter with the pastor. Second, following the word-for-word identical advice I’d gotten from both Penelope and Elliot (“make them feel special”), I got the group donuts. Third, since we had chosen the topic of our story on Monday, we got to begin the session with an informal conversation about their favorite topic: camp. This process roughly paralleled what Lambert calls the “story circle” in a digital storytelling workshop. During this component, participants share—usually individually—about the events and experiences they wish to represent in their stories, discovering insights for themselves and seeking feedback from the group (2012).

Right away, Veronica returned to a theme I was hearing for the third time now: that the experience of camp had changed this year. The conversation quickly turned to the new responsibilities they had now as counselors. Lauren spoke about the importance of being role

¹¹ Only 9% of campers surveyed (10% of white campers, 7% of nonwhite campers) in a large benchmark study commissioned by the American Camp Association reported optimal levels of opportunity for decision making at camp (e.g., “I get to decide what activities I’m going to do here”); just 2% of campers (white and nonwhite) reported optimal levels for leadership opportunities (e.g., “How often have you helped plan activities and events?”) (Thurber, 2006, p. 5).

¹² There was a telling characterization of differences in generational agency and buy-in at church by Dylan in our final conversation: *Kyle*: What would you think about doing a project like this in Sunday school? *Dylan*: I feel like it would be different. I don’t think we’d be talking about camp we’d be talking about like church and how if we like it. *Kyle*: Like if you like church? Okay. You think it would make a good video? *Dylan*: **Depends on the people who make it. If it was kids it’d probably be like “Oh I have to sit in the church listening to people at the altar and just sit there.** But if it would be like the parents it would be like “Oh, we’re talking about God, that’s helping me” (boldface mine for conceptual emphasis).

models for the kids. Veronica spoke about the responsibility of getting the children safely to the park. I asked if that sense of responsibility was a new feeling for them, but all three said it's a common responsibility from their family life, caring for siblings and cousins.

Both of these responsibilities, being a role model and attending to campers' safety, were represented for the participants by a photo Dylan had taken, which we started to call the "rules" photo (Figure 2). In it, Keith, the assistant director, speaks to campers about what rules they will need to follow before an activity can begin or continue. I had seen a similar rules session Monday after my conversation with Penelope, when I joined campers for an hour or two of observation. As our week together continued, I noticed that this photo in particular took on a placeholding role. There was a taken-for-granted understanding that *this* photo formally represented the rules/safety dimension of camp and that that dimension needed to be in the video.



Figure 2. Keith explains the rules before an activity, to keep everybody safe. Photo by Dylan.

This process of "audiencing" particularly meaningful photos for the group often proved fruitful. The first photo Lauren shared (Figure 3) became the jumping-off point for nuanced and concrete reflections on the emotional dimensions of what it means to be a counselor. It shows a camper, Juliet, reading a *Junie B. Jones* book. What's somewhat difficult to grasp spatially is that Juliet and Lauren are both up on the stage of the church's large multipurpose hall, and Juliet is actually leaning on Lauren's lap. When I asked if the two have a good relationship, Lauren told me that Juliet is new this year so she (Lauren) has been "sticking around her, like, helping her around."

This exchange immediately prompted both Lauren and Veronica to tell a story about a past counselor who played a similar role for them:

Veronica: I remember when I was a child ... in my first year here I was really nervous cuz I didn't know any of these people. And the first counselor in that time was Emma. ...

[S]he helped me out and I realized that she was a nice kind person so I got stuck to her, and, like, I'm a little upset that she left.

Elliot (pastor, from across the room): I know!

Lauren: My first encounter with Emma was at the park. I was on, like, this, like, little game and I needed someone to like spin me. So I was just sitting there bored and she, like, spoke to me in Spanish and she's like "Do you need help?" And I was like, yeah, but I was like so nervous just coming here for the first time.

This pattern was pretty common during our time together: a photo would occasion an explanation of some phenomenon of camp culture, often with the sharing of memories. Sometimes this “historical consciousness” merely took note of the way a particular tradition had developed. Other times, like this one, the photographs prompted a kind of an ethical reasoning I thought of as empathy-across-time. In this mode of reasoning about their current practices, the memory of having had a particular experience as a camper in the past affected the way they behave *toward* the campers as counselors today. As Pahl notes in her analysis of a different multimodal ethnography project: “Past selves are placed within the present as the ‘ensemble’ of resources is assembled” (2012, p. 212).



Figure 3. Lauren literally supporting Juliet, just as Emma had previously supported her. Photo by Lauren.

Like the rules photo, the picture of Lauren and Juliet became, at least for me and I think for the others, a kind of icon of what I started calling Lauren's "camp persona."¹³ After hearing another story or two painting this picture of Lauren as unofficial camp nurturer, I tried out the idea with her:

Kyle: I'm getting the sense that, like, that you are a very supportive person. Is that ... am I getting that right?

Lauren: My mom gets really mad about it too because she says I put others' needs before mine ... I'm just that type of person.

Dylan and Veronica also each had ideas about their own persona. Dylan described himself as someone who "usually do[es] what they tell [him] to do," lots of logistical support and literal heavy lifting. The group had a harder time pinning down the role Veronica plays:

Lauren: She's like the one that mostly, like ... I like think, like, the kids respect Veronica a lot, because she's like serious and everything. Because Veronica can be a fun type of person but when she's serious, she's serious. So she, like, gives directions and everything.

Kyle: How do I like tell the difference? How do I know if I'm with fun Veronica or serious Veronica?

Lauren: You can tell.

Veronica: You can really tell. Um, when I'm with the kids, I have fun with them. Like, for example, if one of them, like, we have a friend of ours that likes to talk a lot. And she comes and talks to us and I tell her, "Oh it's not the right time."

This confident role flexibility, and awareness of same, was very consistent with the emotional intelligence I'd noticed in Veronica throughout our brief time together—an ability to read the room, determine what kind of contribution would be helpful, step forward or step back as appropriate, and keep things moving. That ability proved increasingly important as our experience progressed, especially as we made the "final push" toward completing the story.

By now well into Tuesday afternoon, I was really getting to know the camp, and we were really getting to know each other. Lauren, Dylan, and Veronica had a conceptual shape for the story (I summarized it as "Campers to Counselors: The Movie"), and we had a plan for assembling our remaining materials. They were going to lead me on a walking tour of the camp, explaining to me what was happening in the different activities and taking photos that we would use in the video. They decided they wanted to start the story from a collection of photographs and put words to it afterward.

¹³ For a summary of the rich ways camp experiences support youth identity development, see Garst, Brown, and Bialeschki (2011). In particular, the authors discuss camp as a site both of identity revision and, for staff, of learning to honestly and confidently show forth one's "true self."

The day's turning point came at a literal "turn" in our tour. We were coming down the narrow hallway that leads from the art room to the homework room, and the assistant director, Keith, saw us coming. Wanting to minimize disruption and explain my presence as an unfamiliar adult hanging out with young people, I started to explain what we were up to. When I said to Keith, "They're giving me a tour," he replied with an observation I hadn't fully grasped myself: "Well it looks like you guys know what you're doing."

He was right. We had become a group, a well functioning one. The normally taciturn Dylan was giving detailed logistical narration, focusing on aspects of the camp experience he thought I might be interested in based on our afternoon's conversation.¹⁴ Lauren was using the opportunity of our meandering to catch up on the afternoon's goings-on, figuring out which groups were at which point in the rotation process. Veronica was quietly and efficiently snapping photographs. It didn't look like the "workshop" I had planned to facilitate. Still, almost without me realizing it, the group had "owned their insight," "owned their emotions," and found "the moment" (Lambert's steps 1–3). They were now confidently "seeing" their story (step 4) while continuing to acculturate me to the camp they'd spent the afternoon reflecting on. We had carved out for ourselves in the day-to-day life of St. Sebastian's Camp a hybrid identity as embedded digital storytellers, built a Thirdspace in and of the camp but also distinct from it. Not everyone at camp knew what that meant—yet—but they could see us living it. Best of all, by this point the young people were leading the way.

Assembly required: Adopting and resisting media and camp conventions

Lauren, Veronica, and even Dylan were more enthusiastic and talkative from the beginning when I gathered them on Thursday afternoon. We reviewed Tuesday's work and planned what we would do today. I passed out laptops for the first time. Not wanting to get bogged down in file transfers given our tight schedule, I'd preloaded all the photos the participants had taken thus far. We chatted more about camp as we looked at the photos they had assembled.

Since our learning space had come together around a conversational and improvisational process (and certainly not a workshop with delineated segments of instruction and solo work time), I embraced "teachable moments" when opportunities presented themselves. For example, when reviewing photos we came back to one portraying the "jok[ing] around" camp tradition of taking "baby pictures," in which male counselors pose in a way that makes them look pregnant:

Kyle: You said you like the rules photo and you like the baby picture photo.

Lauren: Yeah, because it shows how we like to joke around but at times when it's like a serious matter we're serious about it, so.

K: You know I was thinking about it ... that there's another ... you can look at it later but there's another photo of those same two guys and they're more serious. So like one thing you can do—

L: When they were just standing like that?

¹⁴ For example, when the hit game Fortnite came up in our conversation earlier, I expressed my ignorance and curiosity about the game and got a detailed demo, led by Dylan.

K: —yeah, so one thing you can do with a digital story is, like, put two things together, you know. Like, so if you're trying to say, like, “OK, sometimes we're silly and sometimes we're serious.”

L: Cuz I was like guys you want to get together for a picture? And they just stood there like that and I was like okay.

K: So you could do, like, you could show one of the pictures and then the other, or you could put them like next to each other. It depends on how you want to do. But that could be a cool thing.

And then the conversation moved on to another photograph. This is a very representative exchange. In the recording it's even clearer that I was floundering a bit as I introduced the idea, perhaps as I mentally debated about whether or not to use the technical term of *juxtaposition* in my description the technique. It's also not clear how actively Lauren was considering this design option or whether she was thinking more about the moment in which she took the photo.¹⁵ The serious photo and one of the “baby pictures” did both make the final video (see Figure 4), but they're temporally separated from each other. On the other hand, there are other moments of conceptual and temporal juxtaposition in the final piece. Notice that I finish the exchange as I did so many times, by reaffirming that I was just making suggestions. I think the participants tended to take me at my word when I repeatedly reinforced that these were their decisions to make.



¹⁵ This process of moving back and forth through time is, of course, one of the reasons digital storytelling is a helpful process for mediating reflection. However, that same phenomenon can occasionally make it difficult to stay on task.



Figure 4: Above, a “baby picture” screenshot from 0:15 in the final digital story (voiceover: “we still find a way to have fun while doing our job”). Below, its more serious partner photo from 0:57–0:59 (voiceover: seemingly unrelated).

After our review, they decided based on the rule of thumb I shared (from Lambert) that they might need a few more photos to support a complete 1–2 minute video. This necessitated a quick lesson in using AirDrop to send photos from their iPhones to the laptops, as they returned from various photo hunts. At first, Dylan took the lead on overseeing the transfer of images, but over the remainder of the experience he proved to be an effective coach of technical skills. By the end of the week everyone seemed comfortable transferring and cropping photos and making edits to the video.

The group came quite organically to the solution to the problem of imposing a structure on their collection of images. At one point, Dylan made the suggestion that they make the video “like a trailer,” dramatically impersonating a voiceover artist and saying “three kids, will join their camp, to unite ... their family. Duh duh duh.” He also mentioned that he knew iMovie allows you to make trailer. Lauren had stepped away to participate in a dance practice session, so Dylan and Veronica scrolled through and previewed a dozen or so of iMovie’s genre-based trailer templates. Along the way, they gave reasons why particular templates might work (e.g., Veronica: “We should do Family, because we’re basically like a family”). In the end, they chose Coming of Age, a good genre match given their major theme.

While as an educator and researcher interested in the semiotic affordances of multimodal storytelling I was somewhat disappointed the group chose to work from a template, the decision had two important advantages. Editorially, iMovie trailer templates have a “Storyboard” mode, which helped Veronica and Dylan begin to organize their photos conceptually. The first title screen in the main “Coming of Age” trailer template comes preloaded with the words “the story of a boy” followed by slots for inserting five still photographs to show the boy growing up. Dylan entered the phrase “camp generations” as new title text, and began to insert photos of camp participants increasing by age—a much beloved photo of one of the youngest campers, the one of Juliet reading on Lauren’s lap, and the counselors’ “baby picture” from Figure 4. This

choice established a pattern in which the participants inserted related photos into the storyboard, tried to identify a proper heading to describe them, and then iteratively adjusted heading and photo choice based on trial and error, conversation among themselves, and feedback from me and eventually others.

Logistically, the advantage of using the template was that it kept the process moving. Suddenly, they had a rough heuristic for judging how close the video was to done, and this helped build a sense of momentum. For a while it looked like they might be able to finish in time to audience their story at Friday morning's "fake" talent show, in which the counselors "show the kids that they shouldn't be nervous for their talent show." This possibility motivated them to continue working efficiently.

The turning point on Thursday happened pretty late in the day. Lauren had returned from her earlier dance practice; Veronica had returned from her later orthodontist appointment. All three had weighed in, done some editing, watched and discussed dozens of drafts. And then came this:

Dylan: Now all we need is our voices on there.

Lauren: I'm not putting my voice,

Veronica: No.

L: Because I feel like our voices will like ruin it.

D: But. But. we were supposed to record our voices.

L: I don't wanna do my voice. [...]

Kyle: I mean, you went with a template that has a lot of text included. So, I mean, I feel like that kinda helps you tell the story.

D: Eh.

L: Yeah.

D: I mean they're all like that.

L: Cuz it explains all the pictures too.

V: That's so true.

One challenging aspect of honoring the young people's autonomy was deciding how to advise them when they disagreed about how to continue. I decided that I wasn't going to try to steer them toward recording voiceover given Lauren and Veronica's apparent firmness here, especially since Dylan had had his editorial perspective well accounted for by being the most comfortable with the computer.

The conversation briefly turned to other concerns, and then someone went to get Denise to show her the (nearly) final product. Knowing that the young people valued her opinion, I probed a bit after her initial glowing reaction:

Kyle: Did you notice anything in particular?

Denise: Just how you guys captured everything, every aspect of it. We do do safety, we do have fun.

Lauren: Yeah.

D: That was cool.

L: I like it, it's nice.

D: So all you need is the CITs, right?

L: Yeah, just that one photo of the CITs.

V: Tomorrow in the morning, in the breakfast I
 L: Serving like lunch or something.
 D: OK.
 L: Cuz it's, like, mostly, like, a video of, like, our, like, experience going from, like, campers from, like, CITs to, like, counselors.
 D: Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Mm hmm, that was cool, that's different, that was cool.
 L (*referencing computer screen*): So it's like camper.
 D: Mm hmm.
 L: CITs, counselors, and you guys, directors.
 D: OK OK OK, cool. That's fun.
 L: Yeah.
 K: I think you guys did awesome.
 D: You guys did a really good job.
 L: It was fun, I liked it.
 D: So they don't actually talk in the video?
 K: Well, we we were talking about that. That's up to—
 Elliot (*from across the room*): He wants them to.
 K: What's that?
 E: He wants them to.
 K: Oh, I, it's up to you guys. This is your video.
 D: Just because. Alright. Now that you guys are explaining it to me, it makes sense. Just watching the pictures ... I wouldn't have—like, ok, when you say camp generations, like, if you guys had been ... if you had said exactly what you just said, that would have just made it fit together for me in my mind. So think about adding just a little. You guys have pictures of yourselves already. Talking isn't, you know, it's just gonna make us understand, really, what the video is about.
 L: Yeah.
 K: You wouldn't need a lot of words words.
 D: Yeah, just sum it up.
 V: Mm kay.
 L: Yeah, ok.

From here I described a few options about how we could proceed: formally writing a script, playing the video and letting them improvise, doing interviews and then looking for representative quotations to isolate and edit in. I used provisional language (“you wanna try ...?”, “another thing we could do ...”) throughout. Eventually Denise cut in:

Denise: Yes, sorry, I'm gonna step out. Great job guys. Consider doing that. (*Leaves*)
 Kyle: Like, so tell me... do you just wanna be done, or you think it's gonna be hard to do the voice, or you think you really shouldn't do the voice?
 Lauren: I feel like in the very beginning we should say our experience from, like, campers to CIT to counselors ...
 K: Mm hmm.
 V: —has been an amazing experience, we look forward to more in the future ...
 L: We look forward to assisting this camp more in the, like, throughout the years.

K: Yeah, yeah, so you wanna just open up a word doc and just type some stuff up? I think you guys can do this. I think it'll be cool.

This moment seems to me an almost perfect encapsulation of the complex web of influence, mutual care, pride in work, and desire for approval that had formed in our co-created storytelling space within the rhythms and structures of camp. Veronica and Lauren wanted to be done, perhaps mostly for the sake of being done, and perhaps also to make it possible to screen the story at the “fake talent show” in the morning. However, the power of audience feedback is always strong, even more so when it comes from a beloved authority figure. And Elliot had added a crucial piece of context for Denise, knowing from observations and from conversations with me that I find scripting and voiceover to be powerful dimensions of this work but that I wasn't going to force them to do it.

Whose agency, whose design, whose *voice* does the final product represent? Primarily, still, the young people's. Although Lauren and Veronica were at first resistant to adding a final voiceover layer, I believe ultimately it was the content-based feedback from Denise that was the most important factor in their decision to move forward. We had clearly established that they loved this camp and that the “camp generations” journey was deeply meaningful to them. The group shared a commitment to getting a particular idea across, and they had just found out it didn't land as forcefully as they had hoped with an uninitiated audience. Having observed these three all week, having seen the respectful but not overly deferential way they interacted with Denise and Keith in ordinary moments, I am reasonably confident that if they hadn't felt compelled *by the desire to improve the story*, they would at least have put up a fight about having to do more work.

The role I tried to play in this moment was as mediator between two negotiating parties: the camp and church authorities (Denise and Elliot, respectively) and the storytelling authorities (Lauren, Veronica, and Dylan). I elaborated possible ways to follow up on Denise's suggestion, and when she left she mirrored my provisional language (“*Consider doing that*”). Notice finally that last leg of the negotiation led directly into the composition process—a process that unfolded remarkably quickly once it had started.¹⁶ The three of them basically talked it out, in the turn-taking manner suggested by the final lines of the previous transcript excerpt. Eventually they created three labels to describe where each snippet of voiceover should be inserted. This initial exchange and the period of fruitful work that followed represents a moment when everyone's interlocking role flexibility dynamically resolved to scaffold a sound conclusion that honored the integrity of the story and the storytellers.

After the script was complete, we moved immediately into recording. By now it was almost time for camp to end for the day. I had been using a handheld field recorder during our sessions throughout the week, but the group was more excited than I expected when I broke out a shotgun mic for better sound quality. Their enthusiastic reaction and playful engagement with the recording process made me rethink how I might motivate voiceover in the future, and it served as a reminder of the importance of research pedagogies' emphasis on redistributing not just authority but also materiality within the learning space. In retrospect, I associate this realization with the advice Penelope had given me early in the week, that the chance to work with special

¹⁶ The time from the moment when Denise asked if they were planning to record their voices to the point where we began recording was just twenty minutes.

equipment often had a motivating effect because it was “flashy” and “not elite but, like, glamorous”—that it was part of how to help participants “feel special.”



Figure 5: Veronica engineers the recording of Lauren’s voiceover.

The final script is reproduced in Table 1, along with details of how the young people overlaid the voiceover onto the 1 minute, 9 second trailer¹⁷ during the first hour or so of our session on Friday afternoon. While I regretted that we didn’t have time for the participants to choose more personally meaningful music,¹⁸ I was grateful that to add the voiceover we did have to convert the trailer into a regular iMovie project. This change allowed the young people to get a taste for the more finely detailed editing control that is possible in the digital storytelling process. For example, the group was (understandably) delighted that they could position Dylan’s voiceover so that the word “express yourself” in the recording corresponded perfectly to the “express yourself” title already present in the video.

Although a detailed multimodal analysis of the completed video is beyond the scope of this paper, notice in particular that Denise’s advice bore good fruit. Lauren’s portion of the voiceover makes more explicit the connection between the textual and photo elements that communicate their main idea, and Veronica’s portion extends the trajectory of this personal journey into the future. The middle section describes the camp experience more generally, including the experience of belonging and family that we had discussed so much on Tuesday. At the center of this portion—and of the video itself—is the idea I plan to take up in subsequent, more detailed analyses: “You are cared for, respected and you won’t be forgotten.” That could be the motto for more than just the camp and its role in these young people’s identity development. In my understanding, it summarizes the core vocation of St. Sebastian’s Church, especially in these days of brutal intimidation, deportations, and government conducted family separation.

¹⁷By the time of the presentation of this paper I will have produced a de-identified edit of the video for publishing online.

¹⁸ As an integral part of the talent show dances and a regular soundtrack in the art room, music is everywhere at camp. One reason I’m excited for the opportunity to tell this story elsewhere as a podcast rather than a paper is to let these and other sounds do more of the scene-setting.

Table 1: Final script of The Summer Camp by Lauren, Veronica, and Dylan

<i>Label: In the beginning Time: 0:10–0:25 Narrator: Lauren</i>
[on-screen title: “St. Sebastian Films”] we grew up at this camp, we’ve been attending it for 6-7 years. Now that we are counselors [title: “camp generations”] it’s a whole different experience we now have more responsibilities. But we still find a way to have fun while doing our job. From being playful campers, [title: “Family Bondings”] to c.i.t.’s assisting this camp, to full-grown counselors helping our head counselors the responsibilities have grown along with us.
<i>Label: Before “express yourself” Time: 0:26–0:35 Narrator: Dylan</i>
At this camp there is something [title: “FUN!!!”] for everyone. You are cared for, respected and you won’t be forgotten. There’s always a way to [title: “express yourself!”] express yourself. [title: safety] [title: activities]
<i>Label: Before “our second home...” Time: 0:57–1:05 Narrator: Veronica</i>
[title: “our second home...”] Our experience from campers to c.i.t.’s to counselors has been an amazing opportunity, we look forward to assisting this camp more years to come.

That line has opened up for me a new interpretation of what followed the completion of the project. Once the three had finished up their edits and re-screened the completed product for Denise¹⁹, they asked for permission to show it to the various camper groups individually. (Recall that they had narrowly missed their chance to include it at the “fake talent show.”) As I followed them through the spaces of the camp, watching them assertively request an audience over and over again, my first interpretation was to view these mobile screenings as a performance not unlike the talent show’s dances and karate demonstrations. V.D.L. (as they had identified themselves as directors in the credits) were digital storytellers. They had done good work, and they wanted their peers and their charges to see and appreciate their take on the journey of their involvement with this community. Remembering especially their “empathy-across-time” reflections from Tuesday, their implied message seemed to be “You too can become counselors someday.”

I think that was part of what was happening. But remembering also the sight of Veronica, Dylan, and Lauren shepherding the youngest campers around the screen, laughing along as little ones recognized the authors’ voices and sometimes even photos of themselves, it occurred to me that these screenings were also embodied acts of caring. The participants were still also *counselors*, still making sure everyone was in their proper place, still seeking to balance fun and

¹⁹ Her response: “I was able to understand it better, when you guys, like, had the voiceover. ... With the pictures, I didn’t know you guys felt that way ... I mean I don’t know, it could have been that you guys were counselors and you hated it: ‘I wish i was a camper again.’ But like just to explain the transformation for you guys. It gave me a different perspective. Cuz I didn’t have that transformation.”

seriousness from moment to moment. “You too are cared for and respected” was their secondary message. Perhaps in our final journey together through the camp, I wasn’t just watching troubadours. Perhaps, for a moment, they were itinerant pastors and preachers, bearing a contextually appropriate gospel of love and inclusion.



Figure 6: Lauren, Dylan, and Veronica, on the couch in Elliot’s office, being serious and silly. These are the opening and closing images in their story, respectively. Photo by me.

Final Reflections and Future Directions

I've attempted in this mini-ethnographic treatment of our digital storytelling experience to balance the descriptive with the analytical, the potential for insight and new knowledge with the potential to model and advocate for a particular way of orienting our work with young people in religious education. This choice corresponds to my belief that the existing digital storytelling literature, especially in the religious sphere, is insufficiently transparent about how the process unfolds. Filling this gap has the potential to (1) ground researchers' claims about outcomes in a concrete and detailed picture of how those outcomes may have come about, and (2) help other researchers and practitioners imagine and perhaps plan for how they might take up this activity with the people they serve. Moreover, my focus on how we carved out a space together within the larger structures and practices of camp has the theoretical value of foregrounding the interplay of the context with the practice and, I hope, inspiring creative thought in particular about ways to incorporate the practice as a mode of embedded reflection within some larger sphere of shared activity in faith and faith-adjacent settings.

I hope in my follow-up dissertation study to work with camp leadership partners to more substantially formalize the space for engaging the practice. While I value having had the opportunity to explore the complexities of building buy-in for the very idea of participating, we could have spent more time on different questions if digital storytelling had been one among many choices of natural camp activities (perhaps for a group of campers and counselors together?) rather than something campers had to "step away" from camp to participate in. I would also like to increase both the length of engagement relative to the length of camp and the total amount of time spent together.

Analytically, my next steps with the data from our experience is to focus more tightly on the themes that emerged from the big-picture work I've conducted in this paper. Regarding the culture of camp, I'm interested in the age- and role-differentiated practices of caring (cf. Lutrell, 2013), especially as they relate to campers' experiences in immigrant families and communities during a time of increased anti-immigrant sentiment. There is much that I have "seen" but not said about our discussions of immigration—purely from a concern for length—and doubtless even more that I have not yet seen. Regarding the mediation of the digital storytelling process in the participants' reflection, I'd like to do a much more fine-grained analysis of their treatment of the various artifacts: decisions to include or exclude, the specific role of each included artifact in the final whole, the editorial interplay between the three participants, etc. The role of Denise—and, to a lesser extent, Elliot and even Penelope—as framers and respondents was relatively easy to see because it was relatively easy to isolate. More detailed work on the conversations within our four-person core group will likely surface new insights about collaborative media authoring in this context.

Methodologically and "documentarily," I am most excited by the prospect of examining and representing this experience in different modes. As I mentioned in the proposal for this paper but have had to defer to another venue for space, I conceived of this project in part as an experiment in "ethnographic podcasting." While this paper has benefitted throughout from the detailed transcriptions I made of our recorded conversations and work sessions, there is much to learn about this experience that is better said and heard than written and read. During my transcription process, I was quite amazed by occurrences, behaviors, and even a whole interpersonal storyline to which I was *entirely* oblivious during our week together but that practically leapt out of the recordings. I want to tell those stories in a more appropriate format.

And with my colleagues in the Media and Social Change Lab (see Literat et al., 2018), I am optimistic that “Dissertation: The Podcast” (working title) might also have the potential to reach a wider, more practitioner-heavy audience than, if you will, “Dissertation: The Manuscript” or “Dissertation: The Journal Article(s).” Given that this project sought to shape and hold “space to be heard” in the St. Sebastian’s Camp and beyond, this trajectory in both research and religious educational advocacy seems especially urgent.

What I heard—and saw—most clearly in this space agrees very strongly with Lutrell’s conclusions from a not-unrelated study and context: “children tell and live stories that recognise and place value on caring as a *relational activity and collective responsibility* rather than an individual, private matter” (2013, p. 296, italics mine). As I attempt to imagine an “inventory of traces” (see Pahl, 2006) connecting the modes and practices of caring I observed across the time, spaces, and artifacts of this study, I now “see” those traces all originating from a material, imagined, and ultimately lived space (Soja, 1996) hiding in plain site in the data from my very first day at St. Sebastian’s.

While I was inside licking my wounds after our first rocky session, Dylan was outside with the others taking the photograph I cropped as Figure 1. I’ve slightly recropped (and slightly rotated) it as Figure 7 to pull out the important constituents: four counselors arrayed in a U-shape around the center of the sprinkler activity. Whenever the camp is in an outdoor space that requires careful supervision, the staff creates a shape like this. It’s a circle(ish) of inclusion, attentiveness, and safety. The shape was more obvious on Wednesday’s beach field trip. As I stood on the shore helping Penelope keep track of the CITs swimming with GoPros, I would watch the “human U” flex and distort, as individual counselors moved slightly to focus on a particular camper(s) in their direct vicinity, trusting that others could hold the intended purpose of the wriggling constellation for a moment and attend to the camp as a whole.

I wish I had a photograph of Dylan, Lauren, and Veronica as part of that “human U.” This may be their first year as “full-grown counselors,” but “6-7 years” as campers and CITs has taught them plenty about how to hold space as an act of caring. It’s no surprise then, in retrospect, that they would so thoughtfully and lovingly hold it when given the invitation to tell the story of the place and the people they care so much about.



Figure 7: The lived shape of caring at St. Sebastian’s Camp.

References

- Aelabouni, M. J. (2018, August 11). "You might be a Lutheran if your VBS snack is tostadas": Mediated nostalgia and counter-aesthetics in "Decolonize Lutheranism." Paper presented at International Society for Media, Religion, & Culture Meeting, Boulder, CO.
- Appiah, K. A. (2008). Education for global citizenship. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, 107(1), 83-99.
- Avni, S. (2017). Considering disruptive and transformative Jewish education. *Journal of Jewish Education* 83(3), 170–172.
- BimBam. (2018, July 5). *Animation in the classroom: Learning by creating* [YouTube playlist]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLT3E92DW2HbhDFM-Xwfh3umwPqqc6rreT>
- Bruner, J. (1994). The "remembered" self. In U. Neisser & R. Fivush (Eds.), *The remembering self: Construction and accuracy in the self-narrative* (pp. 41–54). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Bunge, M. J. (2008). Biblical and theological perspectives on children, parents, and 'best practices' for faith formation: Resources for child, youth, and family ministry today. *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 47(4), 348–360.
- Campbell, H. A. (2012). Understanding the relationship between religion online and offline in a networked society. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 80(1), 64–93.
- Chávez, V., & Soep, E. (2005). Youth radio and the pedagogy of collegiality. *Harvard Educational Review*, 75(4), 409–434.
- Choo, S. S. (2018). The need for cosmopolitan literacy in a global age: Implications for teaching literature. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 62(1), 7–12.
- Clark, L. S. & Dierberg, J. (2013). Digital storytelling and collective religious identity in a moderate to progressive youth group. In H. A. Campbell (ed.), *Digital religion: Understanding religious practice in new media worlds*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Drescher, E. (2016). *Choosing our religion: The spiritual lives of America's nones*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Fentress-Williams, J. & Williams-Duncan, S. (2015, June 4). Everything is a remix: Using digital storytelling to re-engage oral texts. Paper presented at Pedagogical Possibilities: New Paradigms in Teaching for Ministry, Nashville, TN. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efuhB0a8348>
- Foster, C. R. (2012). *From generation to generation: The adaptive challenge of mainline protestant education in forming faith*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.
- Gainer, J. (2013). 21st-century mentor texts: Developing critical literacies in the information age. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 57(1), 16–19.
- Garst, B. A., Brown, L. P., & Bialeschki, M. D. (2011). Youth development and the camp experience. *New Directions for Youth Development*, (130), 73–88.
- Gulson, K. N., & Symes, C. (2007). *Spatial theories of education: Policy and geography matters*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hansen, D. T. (2017). Cosmopolitanism as education: A philosophy for educators in our time. *Religious Education*, 112(3), 207–216.
- Hess, M. E. (2011). 2010 presidential address: Learning religion and religiously learning amid global cultural flows. *Religious Education* 106(4), 360–377.

- Hess, M. E. (2012). Mirror neurons, the development of empathy, and digital story telling. *Religious Education*, 107, 401–414.
- Hess, M. E. (2014). A new culture of learning: Digital storytelling and faith formation. *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 53(1), 12–22.
- Hess, M. E. (2016, November 5). Playing our way into complex adaptive action in religious education. Paper presented at Religious Education Association Annual Meeting, Pittsburgh, PA. Retrieved from <https://www.religiouseducation.net/papers/rea2016-hess.pdf>
- Hess, M. E. (2017). Designing curricular approaches for interfaith competency. In E. S. Fernandez (Ed.), *Teaching for a multifaith world* (pp. 34–55). Eugene, OR: Pickwick.
- Hess, M. E. (2018, August 9). Religious digital storytelling as a ground for inhabiting public discourse. Paper presented at International Society for Media, Religion, & Culture Meeting, Boulder, CO.
- Hess, M. E., & Clark, L. S. (2011). *Storying Faith* [collection of online resources]. Retrieved from <https://www.storyingfaith.org/>
- Hull, G. A., & Stornaiuolo, A. (2014). Cosmopolitan literacies, social networks, and “proper distance”: Striving to understand in a global world. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 44(1), 15–44.
- Hull, G. A., & Katz, M.-L. (2006). Crafting an agentive self: Case studies of digital storytelling. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 41(1), 43–81.
- Jewitt, C., Bezemer, J., & O’Halloran, K. (2016). *Introducing multimodality*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kaare, B. H. & Lundby, K. (2008). Mediatized lives: Autobiography and assumed authenticity in digital storytelling. In K. Lundby (ed.), *Digital storytelling, mediatized stories: Self-representations in new media*, 105–122. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Lambert, J. (2012). *Digital storytelling: Capturing lives, creating community*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lewis, C., & Moje, E. B. (2003). Sociocultural perspectives meet critical theories: Producing knowledge through multiple frameworks. *International Journal of Learning*, 10, 1979–1995.
- Luttrell, W. (2010). ‘A camera is a big responsibility’: a lens for analysing children’s visual voices. *Visual Studies*, 25(3), 224–237.
- Luttrell, W. (2013). Children’s counter-narratives of care: Towards educational justice. *Children & Society* 27, 295–308.
- Lyiscott, J. (2017, May 18). If you think you’re giving students of color a voice, get over yourself. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/@heinemann/if-you-think-youre-giving-students-of-color-a-voice-get-over-yourself-cc8a4a684f16>
- McGuire, M. B. (2008). *Lived religion: Faith and practice in everyday life*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- McQuiston, R. (2007). *Digital disciples: Reconceptualizing adolescent confirmation instruction by combining biblical storytelling and digital media*. DMin thesis, United Theological School, Dayton, OH.
- Morgan, J. (2000). Critical pedagogy: The spaces that make the difference. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 8(3), 273–289.

- Oliver, K. M. (Producer). (2017, November 29). Teaching Torah on YouTube [Audio podcast]. *Media and Social Change Podcast*. Retrieved from <https://soundcloud.com/masclab/episode-3-teaching-torah-on-youtube>
- Oliver, K. M. (2018, August 9). Toward digital literacies as markers of professional competency for public-facing religious leadership in the new media age. Paper presented at International Society for Media, Religion, & Culture Meeting, Boulder, CO. Retrieved from http://bit.ly/ISMRC_KMO
- Pahl, K. (2006). An inventory of traces: children's photographs of their toys in three London homes. *Visual Communication*, 5(1), 95–114.
- Pahl, K. (2012). Time and space as a resource for meaning-making by children and young people in home and community settings. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 2(3), 201–216.
- Pleasants, H. (2008). Negotiating identity projects: Exploring the digital storytelling experiences of three African American girls. In M. L. Hill & L. Vasudevan (Eds.), *Media, learning, and sites of possibility* (pp. 205–233). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Price-Dennis, D., Holmes, K. A., & Smith, E. (2015). Exploring digital literacy practices in an inclusive classroom. *The Reading Teacher*, 69(2), 195–205.
- Ricœur, P. (1991). *From text to action: Essays in hermeneutics II*. (K. Blamey & J. B. Thompson, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Roberto, J. (2015). *Reimagining faith formation for the 21st century: Engaging all ages and generations*. Naugatuck, CT: Lifelong Faith Publications.
- Root, A. (2013). *The relational pastor: Sharing in Christ by sharing ourselves*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.
- Root, A. (2017). *Faith formation in a secular age: Responding to the church's obsession with youthfulness*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Scharer, M., & Hilberath, B. J. (2008). *The practice of communicative theology: An introduction to a new theological culture*. (B. Hinze, Trans.). New York, NY: Crossroad.
- Sheehy, M., & Leander, K. (2004). Introduction. In K. Leander & Sheehy, Margaret (Eds.), *Spatializing literacy research and practice* (pp. 1–13). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Soja, E. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Tan, C. (2009). Taking faith seriously: Philosophical thoughts on religious education. *Beliefs and Values: Understanding the Global Implications of Human Nature*, 1(2), 209–219.
- Taylor, C. (2016). *The language animal: The full shape of the human linguistic capacity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Thurber, C. (2006). *Inspirations: Developmental supports and opportunities of youths' experiences at camp*. Martinsville, IN: American Camp Association. Retrieved from https://www.acacamps.org/sites/default/files/resource_library/Inspirations.pdf
- Vasudevan, L., Kerr, K. R., Hibbert, M., Fernandez, E., & Park, A. (2014). Cosmopolitan literacies of belonging in an after-school program with court-involved youths. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 57(7), 538–548.
- Vigran, A. (2012, October 24). *Las Abuelas* [digital story]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6Cl2B96Er8>
- Wissman, K. K., Staples, J. M., Vasudevan, L., & Nichols, R. E. (2015). Cultivating Research Pedagogies with Adolescents: Created Spaces, Engaged Participation, and Embodied Inquiry. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 46(2), 186–197.

Mathew D. Scruggs
Duquesne University
scruggsm@duq.edu

2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4

Symbolic Performativity and Contesting Whiteness: A Latinx Perspective on Popular Religiosity and Religious Education

Abstract

This paper seeks to contest white normativity by employing Latinx epistemological categories illustrated in *Religiosidad Popular*. The performance of whiteness, as often typified by ossification of canon, doctrine, and dogma, is subverted through the symbolic performativity of Latinx popular religious practices where community, relationality, and justice are the main objects of religious education.

Introduction

A theologian, a Catholic school teacher, and a Catholic seminarian walk into a bar. On any other day this opening statement would be the start of an innocuous joke. Yet, in this particular experience, this was a consciousness raising moment where white normativity in theological education manifested in myself and in others. I, the theologian, had been invited by a friend to have drinks at a German bar in Pittsburgh. Coming from New Mexico in pursuit of my PhD, I struggled to adjust to a new culture and new surroundings. I discussed my Abuela's spirituality and the way she did theology in *la cortidiano* (the everyday). Discussing how I missed the way of doing theology *Latinamente*, my companions looked sternly at me and said, "What your grandmother was doing is not theology." I was taken aback. My *abuela* was an orphan from Juarez, Mexico and came to the U.S. undocumented. She had gone to Mass every Sunday and did a *Posada* every Christmas. She would put offerings on her *ofrenda*. She would help teach young men and women to dance traditional Mexican dances at her local Church. She hoped for a better life. Yet to these trained theologians, her theology was not considered valid. They suggested that the height of the normative function of theology is to be a science of definition and canon as promulgated by Leo XIII's *Aeterni Patris*. In this document, Thomas Aquinas' theology as science is set to be normative. I was appalled at their blatant disregard of Latinx theology done in the performative. Yet, upon further reflection I became aware of my own white normativity and how it functioned in my own theological education.

In my undergraduate biblical training I studied through the historical-critical lens made famous by German theologians. In my master's degree I studied the *Resourcement* of Catholic thought in the early 20th century also founded by German and French theologians. In my entire undergraduate and master's career I had only read two books authored by a person of color and no books written by women of color. I realized that my companions that night were only capitulating to the same educational white privileging I had received. Their white normativity,

and mine, had been traditioned and ossified. Such whiteness, as gender, is a performative construct and manifested in the field of religion and religious education, whiteness and Eurocentrism are often wedded to the type of education that is enamored with definition, doctrine, dogma, and canon as a science; leaving no room for my *abuela's* theology. One does not have to look too far back in American Academia and Religious Education to see that what was considered normative was to “do theology” in the way of the White European. For example, in order to receive a doctorate in Theology one would have to learn French and German. To perpetuate such a Eurocentric norm in academia is to perform whiteness.

I seek to contest this performativity of whiteness through developing a way of teaching theology that is not based on doctrine, dogma, and canon, but derives from Latinx religious sensibilities, such as my *abuela's*: based on symbol, performance, and ritual. Such a religious education does not result in canonical or doctrinal definitions but teaches *relationalidad*, *comunidad*, and *justicia*. I will posit three Latinx religious practices of *la posada*, *ex-voto*, and *milagritos* as examples of a way of doing and teaching theology that takes the student away from the Eurocentric constructions of definition and canon towards a phenomenological and experiential approach to religious education in order to create an alternative performativity in constructing a non-white epistemology through Latinx *Religiosidad Popular*.

Constructing and Performing White Normativity

I identify whiteness as a performance of taking the subjectivity of another person and objectifying them into static categories of identity. The performance of white privilege is rooted in the traditioning of static and totalizing conceptions onto people of color as a means of ossifying one's own identity, stated in the negative.¹ The performance of negatively stating one's identity through the objectification of the other's identity in construction of whiteness is paralleled in religious studies. When one sees the construction of white normativity and white privilege as an attempt to solidify static categories of identity, teaching religion through the attempt of passing on immobile categories of dogma by normalizing Eurocentric theology and marginalizing decolonial performative epistemologies perpetuates the same constructions of white identity. Thus, teaching religion and constructing whiteness are both formed through performance and repetition of what are considered “pure” categories, over and against categories and bodies that are deemed impure. Identity for religious studies and for whiteness rests in the performance of negatively stating one's identity against another.

The performance of Whiteness as negatively stating one's identity in opposition to a totalized conception of the other has a long and troubled history in enlightenment thought. As M. Shawn Copeland states, “Indeed, from the eighteenth century until well into the twentieth, their [enlightenment philosophers] ideas about race served to reinforce proslavery attitudes, to sustain

¹ Here I use the same category of Totalization as Emmanuel Levinas in his work *Totality and Infinity*, yet I also argue that Levinas himself totalizes people of color by advocating for an encounter of the face without characteristics thus perpetuating a Eurocentric colorblindness to the marginalization of people of color.

racial segregation and discrimination, and to exert subtle, perhaps devastating influence on metaphysics and ethics.”² From Kant stating “Humanity exists in its greatest perfection in the white race. The yellow Indians have a smaller amount of Talent. The Negroes are lower and the lowest are a part of the American peoples”³ to Hegel suggesting that Africans are without history and barbarous⁴, enlightenment philosophers have posited their own identity in contradistinction to the superimposed categories they placed on non-Europeans. Not only did these enlightenment philosophers stereotype non-European’s to reinforce their own white supremacy, but they equated such white supremacy with reason itself. Thus, to contest these normative claims of supremacy is to contest reason itself. To contest negative racial representations is to contest the enlightenment’s universal reason as static categories itself.

White supremacy, now internalized as reason, gave rise to new and more subtle institutions to preserve “whiteness”. Halley, Eschleman, and Vijaya discuss that once slavery was dissolved, the South became more obsessed with racial purity as a static category. Going so far as instituted the “one drop of blood rule.”⁵ Where once someone knew they were white because they were not a slave, the abolishment of slavery threatened that negative structure of identity. Racial purity laws, therefore, went so far as to suggest that if a person had 1/35th amount of non-white blood in their veins, they were not considered white. According to Halley, Eschleman, and Vijaya “In other words, U.S. courts defined ‘white’ through a process of . . . systematically identifying who was non-White.”⁶ Now that overt racism is no longer socially acceptable, new forms of what have been called colorblind racism has taken their place in which Whites, subtly blamed marginalized communities and individuals for what are perceived to be social failures.⁷ This structural racism suggests that it is the marginalized communities own fault for not working hard enough to overcome disadvantages. Today’s racism is preconditioned by the ideas civil rights legislation has ended racism, policies that are created to “level” the playing field are no longer needed, and that a lack of success is a result of a failure of, “racial groups to

² M Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*, Innovations (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 10

³ As quoted by Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze in “The Color of Reason: The Idea of Race in Kant’s Anthropology” in *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*. ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1997), 118.

⁴ see Georg Wilhelm Fredreich Hegel, “Geographical Basis of World History” in *Race and the Enlightenment: a Reader*. ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze., (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1997)

⁵See Halley, Jean O'Malley, Amy Eshleman, and Ramya Mahadevan Vijaya. *Seeing white. [electronic resource] : an introduction to white privilege and race*. n.p.: Lanham, MD : Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010., 2010. *eBook & Streaming Video Collection (Gumberg Library)*, EBSCOhost (accessed August 19, 2018).

⁶ Ian Haney-López, *White by Law: the Legal Construction of Race*, 10th ed., Critical America (New York: New York University Press, 2006),27.

⁷See Elain A. Robinson, “Whiteness: The Structure of Institutional Racism” in *Moral Issues and Christian Responses 8th edition*. Eds. Patricial Beattle jung, L. Shannon Jung. (Grand Rapids: Fortress, 2013).

take advantage of the opportunities that exist.”⁸ Ideas of white identity as being pure are subtly connected to privilege and deservedness. One essentially knows one is white because their rewards are based on hard work without recognizing the privilege afforded to them by the systematic advantages afforded to them by white supremacy. The outright bifurcation of who is in and who is out is supplanted with subtle and subconscious biases that re-substantiate systems of oppression. The performance of whiteness as tradition is thus internalized into a cultural construct meant to advantage one group, however “innocently” over another.

If one were to take the methodology of traditioning totalizing principles on the basis of a negative affirmation of identity, (e.g, one is White through arguing that one is not Black or Latinx), then such a method of negative identification and ossification itself becomes a *performance* of white normativity. The process in which one attempts to pass down ossified categories of identity are in fact a performance of normalization of whiteness. Moving such a performance of white normativity and imagined constructions of race into the realm of religious education thus means that the parallel method of defining doctrine, clarifying canon, and ossifying dogma as science is itself a method of white normativity.⁹ If as Mikulich suggests that,

The persistent legacy of racism and White privilege shapes the way Americans conceive and perceive race, as well as the way they use social, political, and economic power to delimit “who is who, who belongs and who does not, who deserves what, and who is capable of what”¹⁰

then the way of passing on religious doctrine as delimiting “who is who, who belongs and who does not, who deserves what, and who is capable of what”, through doctrinal and canonical categories, shares in that same legacy. If religious studies, and particularly Catholic and Christian religious studies comes down to identifying oneself in the negative, as it has often done in the past, then its methodology is the same as white normativity. If one knows they are Catholic because they are not Protestant, Arian, Monophysite, Jansenist, then one recapitulates the same epistemological move as constructions of whiteness where one knows they are white because they are not Black, Hispanic, or Amerindian. Fernando Segovia states,

Modern Christian theology has been, by and large, a theology of colonization and its discourse a colonial discourses: a theology of ‘we’/center, grounded in western civilization; a theology of enlightenment and privilege, looked upon as far superior to anything that ‘they’/margins could ever produce or aspire to

⁸ Robinson, 228.

⁹ Notice that both Enlightenment constructions of race and Eurocentric theology makes an appeal to science to substantiate their superiority over marginalized communities.

¹⁰ Alex Mikulich, “Mapping ‘Whiteness’: The Complexity of Racial Formation and Subversive Moral Imagination of the Motley Crowd” in *Journal of the society of Christian Ethics*, 25, 1 (2005); 99-122, 103. Here Mikulich is quoting Matthew Frye Jacobsen, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 10.

produce; and a theology of hegemony and mission, whereby the margins could be brought under effective control and raised to the civilized standards of the west by way of either its North American or Western European variants.¹¹

When Eurocentric theologies deny the validity of other contexts and posit the universality of European/Euroamerican contexts, then one performs white normativity because the hegemonic need to control identity is identical in universalizing theology and universalizing white experience as normative.

The symptoms of performing whiteness in religious education is that whiteness is universalized and nonwhite communities are contextualized. That is, no matter what seminary, religious studies department, or parochial school, the authors that are considered to have a universal normative claim on theology are white European authors. Authors of color, and much less women of color, are often relegated to the field of contextual theology without the acknowledgement that European and Euro-American Theology is itself contextual. Angelina E. Castagno's article on "Multicultural Education and the Protection of Whiteness" suggests that teachers often enact colorblind difference and powerblind sameness through performing assumptions of universality over particularity. Performing whiteness in education manifests itself when, "Whiteness pushes us to acknowledge difference in certain small ways (i.e., colorblind difference), but overall it encourages sameness (i.e., powerblind sameness)."¹² This is paralleled by paternalistically acknowledging difference in the field of religious studies by offering courses in contextual theology as electives but not letting particular contexts have any normative claims on Eurocentric theologies. When one acknowledges differences but still maintains the same power structures and citational privilege of what authors have normative claim over theology the conversation moves from difference to sameness. Thus, "Multicultural education is intended to highlight, and thus reduce, inequities, but the sameness discourse instead serves to hide such inequities."¹³ By suggesting that a certain way doing theology is universally beneficial through the traditioning of doctrines, it necessarily excludes those who are rooted in a culture who exist outside of doctrinal understanding of theological reasoning. Thus, an appeal to colorblind difference by allowing contextual theologies to be taught so long as it does not infringe on the practices of theology proper (meaning Eurocentric theology) only temporarily assuages the problem because it fails to acknowledge its own powerblindness in making universally normative claims of itself. This is not to suggest that universally normative claims themselves should be done away with, but one should acknowledge that by not allowing marginalized communities to make normative claims (especially if one holds to the preferential option of the poor), one increases their marginalization and increases their liminality.

¹¹ Fernando Segovia "In the World but Not of It: Exile as Locus for a Theology of Diaspora" in *Hispanic/Latino Theology: Challenge and Promise*, eds. Ada Maria Asasi-Diaz and Fernando Segovia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 201.

¹² Angela E. Castagno, "Multicultural Education and the Protection of Whiteness" in *American Journal of Education*. Vol 120 no. 1 (Nov 2013) pp. 101-128. 108.

¹³Castagno 113.

Whiteness is the performance of an ideal through systematically defining and categorizing the “nonideal.” Religious studies, whose method is often the same by defining orthodox and heterodox, performs the same whiteness in its institutions and in its method of education. What is needed is an alternative performance of difference and community that attempts to celebrate difference through performing things that seek to not categorize but embrace difference. I suggest that Latinx performative rituals as a means of religious education provides such an alternative performance and epistemology.

Latinx Alternative Epistemology

Latinx theologies have long contested the static categories employed by enlightenment empiricism as well as its corollary of modern and post-modern thought. Rather than being a theology that embraces individual categories of identity eager to separate what is pure against what is impure and what is ideal from the less ideal, Latinx theologies employ the categories of *Mestizaje*, *Mulatez*, and *Nepantla*. Virgilio Elizondo posited *Mestizaje* as an epistemological starting point in Latinx theology.¹⁴ *Mestizaje* is, “employed not only as a paradigm of racial diversity, but of all other diversity found in Latino/a communities.”¹⁵ When it comes to ethnic identity in the United States, especially for Mexican Americans in the Southwest, one is not Mexican nor are they American, they are in between. Being *Mestizo/a* is to be rejected by one’s country of origin and one’s country of birth. To be *Mestizaje* exists in between. Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz further delineates the complexity of in-betweenness by adding the category of *Mulatez* to Latinx theology.¹⁶ Rather than only seeing a push and pull between being Hispanic and being Euroamerican, *Latinidad* is further complicated by the role of slavery in Latinx identity. No longer is there an in-betweenness between Hispanics and Euroamericans, but Latinx community must figure into their identity the fact that much of their culture, identity, and being is interconnected with African identity brought to the Americas via the slave trade. With the mixture of identities at the heart of Hispanic experience, one must add a third category of mixture to understand the pluriform Latinx experience. *Nepantla* as a word, “originates among the indigenous peoples who have contributed to the overall Latinx identity. This Aztec word connotes being in the middle, “that situation,” as anthropologist Jorge Klor de Alva reminds us, “in which a person remains suspended in the middle between a lost or disfigured past and a present that has not been assimilated or understood.””¹⁷ *Nepantla* not only includes *Mestizaje*

¹⁴ See Elizondo’s groundbreaking work, *Galilean Journey: the Mexican-American Promise*, rev. and expanded ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000).

¹⁵ Ruy G. Suarez Rivero “U.S. Latino/a Theology: A View from the Outside” in *From the Heart of Our People*. Eds. Orlando Espin and Miguel H. Diaz. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999) 230-259. 241.

¹⁶ See Ada María Isasi-Díaz, “Naming Ourselves” in *En La Lucha: In the Struggle*, 10th ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004)

¹⁷ Miguel de La Torre, “A Colonized Christmas Story” in *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* Volume: 71 issue: 4; 408-417
Article first published online: September 15, 2017; Issue published: October 1, 2017, 410

and *Mulatez* identities, but also adds indigeneity in the multilayered identities of Latinx communities. *Nepantla* requires seeing past binaries and simultaneously having double vision that subverts the static categories of white normativity. As Gloria Anzaldúa stated, "Living between cultures results in 'seeing' double, first from the perspective of one culture, then from the perspective of another. Seeing from two or more perspectives simultaneously renders those cultures transparent."¹⁸ Because *Mestizaje*, *Mulatez*, and *Nepantla* deal with the intersections and overlapping of a multiplicity of identities, static categories and ossification of identity stated in the negative is not possible because *Mestizaje*, *Mulatez*, and *Nepantla* exist to subvert identifications based on purity. Because of the interconnected matrices of identity, these Latinx categories become epistemological preconditions for understanding Latinx popular religiosity that blurs the everyday from the divine and that resists the very notions of doctrinification and categorization.

The way the epistemological categories of *Mestizaje*, *Mulatez*, and *Nepantla* are played out in religious practice is through Latinx *Religiosidad Popular*. Latinx Popular Religiosity, as an alternative epistemology, is rooted in the performative and symbolic and is the praxiological key to subverting identities constructed in the negative. Latinx practices have a distinct history from the history of Catholics coming into the United States from Northern Europe. While Catholics from Northern Europe had been entrenched in doctrinal definitions of Trent as a counter distinctive identity from Protestants, Latinx Catholicism in South America arrived prior to the reformation and retained much of its medieval Iberian character of symbol and rite.¹⁹ Rather than a static ossification of categories superimposed onto others, Latinx epistemology is active and open. Through the performance of Latinx Popular Religion, what is taught to the uncatechized are not formulations of in-groups and outgroups. Rather, Latinx Popular Religiosity teaches *relationalidad*, *comunidades*, and *justicia* through the very acts they symbolize. Three examples of Popular religiosity, *Las Posadas*, *Ex-Votos*, and *Milagritos*, illustrate the performative nature and the teaching of *relationalidad*, *comunidades*, y *justicia* of Latinx Catholicism and Latinx religious education.

Las Posadas

Las Posadas is a performative Novena of prayers re-enacting the parts of the nativity story of Jesus. More specifically, *Las Posadas* is the reenactment of pregnant Mary and Joseph looking for a room at the inn (*Posada*). Usually, both Mary and Joseph are performed by a young person in the community. Mary and Joseph lead a procession from house to house and reenact the rejection from not having a vacancy in the inn. While processing from house to house a song is

¹⁸ Anna Louise, Keating "From Boderlands and New Mestizas to Nepantlas and Nepantleras: Anzalduan Theories for social Change" in *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* (Ahead Publishing House, 2006), 5-16, 8.

¹⁹ For a concise history of Latino/a popular Catholicism see, Orlando O. Espín, *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections On Popular Catholicism* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997).

sung from the perspectives of Mary, Joseph, and the Judeans who reject them. The goal of the *Posada* is to educate the participants in both the Nativity story and more importantly in identifying with Mary and Joseph as pilgrims in search for a place to stay. In performing the ritual act of the *Posada*, the participants of the procession walk the footsteps of Mary and Joseph with them. The ritual song says to Mary, “We are walking, following the footprints, all who are asking, who is that star?...What a happy road is seen in this land; all of us kneeling are with her.”

²⁰ The performance, especially for the Latinx community is not just a game, or a play, but rather a prayer where one experiences the rejection of Mary and Joseph. One does not just learn the story of Mary and Joseph and their rejection from the Judeans, one lives the story and experiences the rejection themselves. When Mary and Joseph finally find a place to stay in a lowly manger, one lives the moment of joy and rest alongside Mary and Joseph. According to Miguel de La Torre, “for many walking in solidarity with the Holy Family, they are doing more than simply reenacting the familiar biblical story. As increased homelessness and immigration restrictions disproportionately impact our barrios, the story reenactment reminds participants of the challenge of providing a home for all.”²¹

Such performativity of the nativity story plays three roles in religious education. It first teaches the nativity story to the younger community. As an activity of community formation, the parish community *camina con Jesús, María, y José* to form a universal community of journeying pilgrims. Walking the streets alongside Mary and Joseph, and if one is particularly fortunate, a live donkey, allows for students to commit the *Posada* into long-term memory and make them part of the story. Second, the *Posada* allows one to experience the emotions felt through the rejection of Mary and Joseph because one explicitly identifies them in their rejection. A relationship is formed between Mary, Joseph, and Jesus with the congregation that surpasses metaphor but constitutes a real relationship with the divine. Third, and most importantly, the *Posadas* function as moral formation to show hospitality to the stranger. According to Ana Maria Pineda, to participate in a *Posada* is to, “ritually participate in being rejected and being welcomed, in slamming the door on the needy and opening it wide. They are in this way renewed in the Christian practice of hospitality, the practice of providing a space where the stranger is taken in and known as one who bears gifts.”²² For the Pilgrims, “Reenacting *Las Posadas* signifies the risk-taking and life-seeking migrations Latinx families are often called to undertake due to the consequences of colonialism. Participating in *Las Posadas* reveals the most basic understanding of who God is and what political acts we are called to enact.”²³ Through enacting the *Posada*, it becomes difficult to reject the migrant who knocks on the door of the United States. If Mary and Joseph are forced to move because of unjust economic structures in the

²⁰ Elizondo, 35.

²¹ De La Torre, “A Colonized Christmas Story”, 413.

²² Ana María Pineda, “Hospitality,” in *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, ed. Dorothy C. Bass (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 29–42 (31).

²³ De La Torre, 414.

nativity story, one can more easily empathize the Jose and Maria who knock on door of the U.S. border because of unjust global economic structures.

In contesting white normativity, *Las Posadas* illustrates that performing the migrancy of Mary and Joseph requires a preference of openness and fluidity over doctrine and dogma. To be a pilgrim is not to be defined by a static identity but to always be on the move, dodging attempts to totalize identity by being rejected and outcast. Through the constant movement of the pilgrim, Mary, Joseph, Jesus, and the community, openness to the other becomes embedded in the community's narrative. As a matter of justice for migrants, one cannot simply argue to welcome the stranger based on natural law, but through the performance of Mary and Joseph's movement from Nazareth to Bethlehem, one ingrains the virtues of hospitality and justice. In fact, it is probably the staticization and ossification of dogma, doctrine, and canon, that allows for a staticization on border mobility and the construction of whiteness through the categorization of migrants. Through the Posada, one moves from the static category of us vs. them and performs and identities with people on the move. Through the performing of La Posada, the static category of whiteness is undermined, and those who participate and perform the novena, experience and identify with the non-static category of migrancy.

Ex-Voto

An *ex-voto* is a votive offering usually commissioned to give thanks to God in completion of a vow or a promise. More often than not, *ex-votos* take the form of a commissioned painting telling the story of the miracle, promise, or achievement. In the southwest, numerous restaurants, public businesses, and private homes have murals or paintings depicting a particular moment where the family who owns the business or home had a promise or miracle fulfilled by God.

The most famous *ex-voto* painting would be the one commissioned by Guillermo and Matilda Kahlo commissioned on behalf of their daughter, Frida, on the occasion of escaping death in a Trolley car accident. The painting depicts the accident with Frida's leg being crushed by a Trolley car. *La Virgen de Dolores* is painted in the corner looking over and after Frida. The inscription below the *ex-voto* does not describe the incident; it simply states who is thanked and for what. The description of the event is the painting itself. The painting or the offering does not explain in static categories how the miracle happened, the nature of the miracle, or the nature of the divine person or *santo*. There is little to be said about doctrine or canon in an *ex-voto*.

Ex-votos are commissioned for many reasons. A victory in battle, the overcoming of an ailment, the success of a student. Sometimes, *ex-votos* are commissioned for having a boyfriend successfully sneak into a bedroom, almost get caught by parents, and narrowly escaping. The commissioning of *ex-votos* illustrate the internalization of faith in the everyday.

The act of painting or commissioning an *ex-voto* functions in religious education to illustrate the character of the divine rather than description of the divine through static categories. One reads an *ex-voto*, much like an icon. Yet, rather than reading an icon through the depiction of a saint, the picture teaches the faithfulness of God, the *santo*, or the divine. The commissioning of the *ex-voto* itself functions as a performance and thanksgiving from the living experience of faith. As such, the commissioning of the painting is not patronage of the arts, but

the internalization of faith in the family and the community. Ex-votos pass on faith stories from generation to generation with little dogma or doctrine, yet they explain and personalize the faithfulness of God.

While patronizing the arts in Northern Europe was an exercise of power, privilege and status, the commissioning of ex-votos among the poor in the southwest attest to the preferential option of the poor and their faith. God, Jesus, Mary and the Saints, are illustrated to be deeply involved in the lives of the everyday community. The community commissions these paintings as a sign of relationship with the divine. Justice is illustrated in the everyday through the public proclamation that God cares about the poor and those struggling to get by. Ex-votos show God and the saints care in the everyday. In the passing on of religious traditions under the normative white construction involves a passing down of doctrine and dogma, the performance of ex-votos pass down faith stories of the kind of God who exists in relationship with the Latinx community.

Milagritos

Milagritos, or Milagros (the *ito* functions as a diminutive to denote smallness), function as performance of theurgy, a quid-pro-quo in a sense. Usually, in the form of a tiny token, figurine, or small metal figure of a body part, a milagrito is taken to a shrine and offered up to God, Mary, or a *santo*, in exchange for healing or a miracle. Sometimes a milagrito is offered as a thanksgiving for a miracle where they are, “Placed at a shrine that is considered to have miraculous power, they are attached to the clothing of the saint’s statue responsible for the miracle.”²⁴ One can see milagritos as tiny images of body parts nailed to the bell at San Miguel’s chapel in Sante Fe in exchange for healing. My mother and I nailed tiny metal figures of a pancreas for healing for diabetes at this site. Or, one can see tiny figurines and rosaries at different shrines out in the desert on the way to cross the border in exchange for safety and health. While many theologians are weary of the offering of goods in hopeful exchange of miracles often calling such gifts superstitious, if one takes the preferential option of the poor seriously then these gifts and sacrifices illustrate the hope that the poor have in God. As an act of thanksgiving one can see that those who have come to the United States, in the modern practice of *milagritos*, come back to difficult places of their journey and offer citizenship papers, marriage licenses, or parts of a driver’s license to give thanks to God or the saint for having blessed them in their new life in U.S.

Through the ritual performance of offering an *milagro* at a shrine, one is taught that God is a God who is manifested in the everyday, who hears the cries of his/her people. Rather than being taught that God is the ground of being, or, “that which nothing greater can be thought,” God is taught to be the one who suffers with and for us. When a milagrito is attached to a crucifix, which it often is, or flowers are offered to *La Virgin de Dolorosa*, one does not encounter abstract characters but rather the flesh and blood of human beings who lived and died in solidarity with our pain. In the same way *Ex-Votos* illustrate community, relationality, and

²⁴ Ana Maria Pineda, “Imágenes de Dios en El Camino: Retablos, Ex-votos, Milagritos and Murals” in *Theological Studies*, vol 65, 2: 364-379, 368.

justice through the commissioning of a painting, the performance of offering a *milagro* offers the same educational benefits. One is taught community in that one can offer *milagros* on behalf of family or friend. One is taught relationality in offering a *milagro* to a *Santo* implies a relational love between the divine and the one who offers. Justice is seen two ways, by implying God's preferential option for the poor and subverting what is considered superstitious by white normativity. Those that make a pilgrimage to a shrine like the one in Chimayo, New Mexico to eat the holy dirt and leave a tiny charm are not ones that have unlimited access to health care, nor are they one's that can afford the large doctors' bills that come with chronic illnesses, rather they are those who are on their last hope. By performing the act of offering a *milagro*, one illustrates that God has a special love for the poor while at the same time revealing the injustice of the American healthcare system. To denigrate the practice of *milagritos* is to denigrate the faith of those whom white normativity has marginalized.

Through performing the sacrifice of offering a *milagro*, risking being called superstitious, and public humiliation, white normativity is subverted because the very thing that is often called wild and naïve is the very thing that brings hope to the marginalized. The subversion of normative reason and respectability in favor of hope suggests that the normative construction of teaching religious doctrine through passing down static categories cannot offer hope to those who are poor and marginalized. Rather, the open performance and manifestation of hope suggests that teaching of religion is rooted in praxis and justice. Because white normative reason justifies and requires a minimum amount of suffering, the only thing that can be deemed reasonable is the possibility of the superstitious. If white normativity is suspicious of the quid-pro-quo in the *milagro*, it is because it wishes to render invisible the lengths the marginalized are willing to go for justice. When one is marginalized because whiteness has relegated a person of color invisible, the only reasonable reaction is to render visible one's suffering through the public performance of sacrifice making suffering visible.

A Final Suggestion

If performing whiteness in religious education is defined as the passing along static categories of identity formed by determining what is not white and religious education typically functions in the same way, then the Latinx praxis-oriented education subverts these static categories. By employing the epistemological preconditions of *Mestizaje*, *Mulatez*, and *Nepantla*, Latinx Popular religiosity teaches relationality, community and justice. By looking at three examples of Latinx Popular religiosity, one can see that the static categories which delineate in-groups and out-groups are not the primary concern as it is with the methodology of white performativity.

What can white allies do to participate in dismantling white normativity in religious education? Here I offer three suggestions. First, although it would seem obvious, one should lift up voices of the marginalized and avoid citational privilege in the choice of textbooks for classes. Second, while it is important to move away from a doctrinal and canonical formulation of religious education, white allies should be careful not to appropriate the experiences of the marginalized. If one is to employ Latinx Popular Religiosity, it is important not to pretend to be a neutral observer of these Latinx rituals. One must acknowledge one's privilege to be an observer.

Solidarity means participation in the plight of the marginalized. Thus, it is necessary that if one is to put on a *posada*, participate in *ex-votos*, or hang *milagritos* that the lessons of relationality and community are employed by conversing and participating alongside the communities of faith that practice these devotions. The final suggestion is to listen to the ways of knowing that exist outside the normalized constructions of theology. In patiently listening to the popular religiosity of marginalized communities, one can see that such a popular religiosity reveals the injustices of mainstream theology. In listening to the prayers of the marginalized, Whiteness' oppressive character can be revealed and dismantled.

Bibliography

- Castagno, Angela E. "Multicultural Education and the Protection of Whiteness" in *American Journal of Education*. Vol 120 no. 1 (Nov 2013) pp. 101-128.
- Copeland, M Shawn. *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*. Innovations. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.
- De La Torre, Miguel. "A Colonized Christmas Story" in *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* Volume: 71 issue: 4,; 408-417.
- Elizondo, Virgilio. *Galilean Journey: the Mexican-American Promise*, rev. and expanded ed. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000.
- Espín, Orlando O. *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections On Popular Catholicism*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997.
- Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi. "The Color of Reason: The Idea of Race in Kant's Anthropology" in *Postcolonial African Philosophy: a Critical Reader*. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1997.
- Halley, Jean O'Malley, Amy Eshleman, and Ramya Mahadevan Vijaya. *Seeing White: an Introduction to White Privilege and Race*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010.
- Haney-López, Ian. *White by Law: the Legal Construction of Race*. 10th ed. Critical America. New York: New York University Press, 2006.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhem Fredreich. "Geographical Basis of World History" in *Race and the Enlightenment: a Reader*. ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1997.
- Isasi-Díaz, Ada María. *En La Lucha: In the Struggle*, 10th ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.
- Keating, Anna Louise. "From Borderlands and New Mestizas to Nepantlas and Nepantleras: Anzaldúan Theories for social Change" in *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* (Ahead Publishing House, 2006), 5-16.
- Lévinas, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: an Essay On Exteriority*. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1969.
- Mikulich, Alex. "Mapping 'Whiteness': The Complexity of Racial Formation and Subversive Moral Imagination of the Motley Crowd" in *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 25, 1 (2005); 99-122.
- Pineda, Ana Maria. "Hospitality," in *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, ed. Dorothy C. Bass (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 29-42.
- "Imágenes de Dios en El Camino: Retablos, Ex-votos, Milagritos and Murals" in *Theological Studies*, vol 65, 2: 364-379.
- Rivero, Ruy G. Suarez. "U.S. Latino/a Theology: A View from the Outside" in *From the Heart of Our People*. Eds. Orlando Espin and Miguel H. Diaz. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999.
- Robinson, Elaine A. "Whiteness: The Structure of Institutional Racism" in *Moral Issues and Christian Responses 8th edition*. Eds. Patricial Beattle jung, L. Shannon Jung. Grand Rapids: Fortress, 2013.

Segovia, Fernando. "In the World but Not of It: Exile as Locus for a Theology of Diaspora" in *Hispanic/Latino Theology: Challenge and Promise*, eds. Ada Maria Asasi-Diaz and Fernando Segovia. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996.

Emily Jendzejec
Boston College
jendzeje@bc.edu

2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov. 2-4

Abstract

This paper seeks to explore how Catholic universities can work to dismantle racist campus culture and confront legacies of White supremacy. The paper draws heavily from the concepts and challenges within Jeannine Hill Fletcher's *the sin of white supremacy* (2017). The paper argues that the virtues of love, humility and solidarity can serve as a theological framework for Catholic universities to become anti-racist institutions. This paper then looks at several possible actions Catholic universities can take to strategically combat legacies of White supremacy and dismantle systemic racism on campus.

Confronting the Sin of White Supremacy Dismantling Systemic Racism on Catholic College Campuses

In early October 2017, there was a series of blatant racist incidents on Boston College's campus. Several *Black Lives Matter* posters located on student's residence hall doors were vandalized and a disturbing racist Snapchat by a current student went viral. In response to these incidents, a vigil and sanctioned march were planned and attended by several hundred students, faculty and administrators. When interviewed about the incidents, a BC administrator stated: "What we've experienced is not general to the student body...Our students are not racist, and many of them understand that very nature of [BC] is to treat everyone with human dignity."¹ Then, on October 18, 2017, hundreds of Boston College students walked out of class in a protest of what they saw as the administration's continued failure to directly confront racism on campus. Students who organized the walk-out dismissed the sentiment offered by the BC administrator arguing that the university was not doing enough to combat racism on campus and they failed to name these incidences as a larger racism problem on campus. Student organizer Olivia Sutton argued that, "There is a racist culture here, and it comes in all different forms of micro-aggressions, macro-aggressions, directly or indirectly, or even passivity."²

Many Catholic universities such as Boston College are already actively working to dismantle racist culture on their campuses. Yet this is not done by solely condemning blatantly racist acts and framing them as isolated incidences. Blatant racist acts cannot be seen as "isolat-

¹Regina Munch "How Not to Fight Campus Racism" Commonweal Magazine Online, October 31, 2017 Found at: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/update-how-not-fight-campus-racism>.

² Ibid.

ed” incidences, they must be named and dealt with as part of a larger problem of White supremacy on Catholic college campuses. Catholic universities like Boston College, that are predominately White institutions, must examine what it means be a predominately White institution, and how this reality may perpetuate White supremacy and impact the college experience and formation process of all its students.

This paper argues that US Catholic universities must work to dismantle racist campus culture and confront their legacies of White supremacy. The paper draws heavily from Jeannine Hill Fletcher’s *the sin of white supremacy* (2017). This paper explores practical possibilities for beginning the work of examining how to combat the structural realities of White supremacy on Catholic college campuses.

This paper has three parts. The first looks at Hill Fletcher’s interrogation of the historical narrative of the relationship of White supremacy and Christian identity in the United States, with particular attention to the role of Catholic higher education. The second explores the possibility of using the virtues of love, humility and solidarity to create an anti-racist theology to confront White supremacy on college campuses. The third part suggests ways that US Catholic universities can work on becoming anti-racist institutions. I will argue particularly that in order for there to be a shift in campus culture away from White supremacy, explicit work with the White student majority needs to be done on developing healthy racial identities. I draw specifically in this argument on JR Helms, *Toward a Model of White Racial Identity Development* (1990). This section is an exploratory exercise that seeks to begin a conversation of concrete ways universities can begin to take action.

The Sin of White Supremacy

In her groundbreaking book *the sin of white supremacy*, theologian Jeannine Hill Fletcher explicitly states that, “If Christians desire a world of racial justice and religious integrity, understanding the sin of supremacy and theology’s role within it is our only way forward.”³ The book’s primary audience is White Christians and she invites us to reflect on White supremacy as systemized racism that prioritizes some to the diminishment of others. Her thesis is that not only have White Christians participated in systems that prioritize White people over People of Color, but that Christian theology has been used to excuse and even promote White supremacy. Ultimately Hill Fletcher argues that the sin of White supremacy is that there is enormous racialized disparity in the United States and Christian theology had a part to play in that. She argues that:

As we seek a way forward we must see how Whiteness and Christianness have been twin pillars of the dominant religio-racial project. Moreover, since the benefits assigned to those who inhabit the category of White Christian have been wide ranging, and the denial of benefits for those who fall outside the category have been death dealing, we need to interrogate the relationship of White supremacy and Christian identity. What this investigation will help us see is that the theology

³ Jeannine Hill Fletcher *The Sin of White Supremacy: Christianity, Racism, and Religious Diversity in America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2017), 5.

of Christian supremacy gave birth to the ideology of White supremacy, and that White supremacy grew from a dangerous ideology to an accepted position inherited by Whites.⁴

Hill Fletcher is quick to point out that theologians and universities had a direct role in shaping White supremacist ideology. Hill Fletcher explains that, “Theologians helped shape Christian thought around practices of domination and ‘destruction of indigenous ways.’”⁵ She urges readers to know that it was not uneducated Christians that were coming up with these links, but “rather the most highly trained Christian theologians, ministers, university professors, and university presidents who manufactured knowledge that would become the ideology of White Christian supremacy.”⁶ For example, August Thebaud, a French-American Jesuit educator and publicist in the late 1800s played a key role in expanding US Catholic university system and shaped who the Jesuits would focus on educating. Thebaud’s influential writings advocated for Irish Catholics to fit the “White Christian frame” but did little to aid Native Americans in this same light. His writings were persuasive in who Jesuit institutions of higher education focused on educating in the United States.⁷ His collusion with the religio-racial project had direct influences on how Jesuit institutions perpetuated White supremacy and why they continue to be predominately White institutions today.

When one thinks of contemporary issues of White supremacy on college campuses, visions of Neo-nazis marching down the streets of Charlottesville, Virginia may come to mind or incidents like the one described that happened at Boston College at the beginning of this paper. While White supremacists like the ones who gathered in Charlottesville are explicitly racist in their actions and ideologies, the White supremacy that Hill Fletcher is describing in her book is beyond personal racism. She stresses throughout the book that while the evil of personal racism is alive and well, she is more concerned with the broader social sin of structural racism. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva concurs in his book *Racism without Racists* (2014) by insisting “the more we assume that the problem of racism is limited to the Klan, the Birthers, the Tea Party, or the Republican Party, the less we understand that racial domination is a collective process and that the main problems nowadays is not the folks with hoods, but the folks dressed in suits!”⁸

Hill Fletcher strongly critiques those she calls “good White Christians” that see themselves as sympathetic to causes of equality but do not see the problems of injustice and disparity due to structural racism “as their own”.⁹ This type of “color-blind” racism, as Bonilla-Silva

⁴ Hill Fletcher, 5.

⁵ Ibid, 8

⁶ Ibid, 13.

⁷ Ibid, 22.

⁸ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva *Racism without Racists* (Boulder: Rowman, 2014), xv.

⁹ Hill Fletcher, ix.

coins it, is just as damaging as blatant racism. This is the type of racism that allows White supremacy as a collective process to continue to exist within the practices, attitudes, and ideologies in wider institutions such as Catholic universities that often are made up of well-meaning White people in positions of power. White supremacy permeates many of our institutions of higher education and to deny this reality is to allow it to perpetuate continued disenfranchisement of People of Color. An urgent question is how do Catholic universities not enable students, staff and faculty who fall into Hill Fletcher's category of types of "good White Christians" to remain complacent?

Bonilla-Silva urges institutions to consider the nuances of committing to becoming *anti-racist* and not claiming to be non-racist. He explains that being "anti-racist begins with understanding the institutional nature of racial matters and accepting that all actors in a racialized society are affected materially and ideologically by racial structures."¹⁰ This implies taking responsibility for your unwilling participation in racist histories, practices and cultural hegemony. Hill Fletcher argues that if "Christians are guided by a vision that desires well-being for all, we must see clearly the effects of the sins of the past and the continuing sins of the present that make White supremacy a structural reality."¹¹ We turn to now look more closely at how certain theological virtues can help us reflect on this vision that desires well-being for all so that it can manifest in our universities, our Church and our world.

Confronting the "Sin of White Supremacy" through Love, Humility and Solidarity

Hill Fletcher argues that, "Structural White Supremacy is the Kingdom of evil."¹² So how do we instead build the Kingdom of God? Hill Fletcher emphasizes that we must renew a focus on Jesus' central commandment to *love*. She explains that emphasizing the Christian call to love can aid in "Reviving ancient wisdoms to critique the epic failure to love that is White supremacy and hoping for patterns for a way forward to love in a weighted world."¹³ She points to the Gospels for examples of how Jesus taught us to love. She explains that it is a love in direct contrast to the self-serving love that allows White supremacy to flourish. It is a love that moves beyond boundaries, and is rooted in a desire to intimately know others and to be in right relationship.¹⁴ Hill Fletcher also emphasizes that a renewed understanding of Christology can provide an articulation for who we are called to love. She invites readers to reflect on who the crucified are today. She argues that, "God lives within the body of the tortured and through the Crucified

¹⁰ Bonilla-Silva, 15.

¹¹ Hill Fletcher, 83.

¹² Ibid, 94.

¹³ Ibid, 111

¹⁴ Ibid, 113.

One.”¹⁵ It is a love that is not relegated to the sentimental realm, but one that calls us to action, to stand with the torture victim, to side with the crucified.

While Hill Fletcher’s book is groundbreaking in articulating this sin of White supremacy, she is not the first White Catholic theologian to confront White supremacy. In 1963, Thomas Merton wrote “Letters to a White Liberal” at the height of the Civil Rights Movement. It is lesser known than many of his other works and this is probably no coincidence since it is an explicit condemnation and challenge to White liberals who opposed violence and war, yet were not working for racial justice in the United States.

In the letter Merton invokes Pope Paul VI’s call during the second session of Vatican II for the Church to set an obligation to purify and renew its inner life. He explains that Pope Paul VI’s reasoning was for internal purification was “because it is only after this work of internal sanctification has been accomplished that the Church will be able to show herself to the whole world and say: Who sees me, sees Christ.”¹⁶ Merton saw this as an opportunity for the Church to have an examination of conscience with regard to confronting racism in the United States.

For Merton charity nor mere belief in equality were enough to confront racism. Merton reflected directly to White Christians that:

Our religion adds that what we do to (African Americans), we do to Christ, since we are a free society, based on respect for the dignity of the human personas as taught to the world by Christianity. How then, do we treat this other Christ, this person, who happens to be black?¹⁷

This was a call to action. And this action was not to be based in charity, but in an honest reflection on how White liberals did damage in assuming superiority. He goes on to explain that:

To assume the superiority of the white race and European-American culture as axiomatic, and to proceed from there to “integrate” all other races and cultures by a purely one-sided operation is a pure travesty of Catholic unity in truth. In fact, this fake Catholicism, this parody of unity which is no unity at all but a one-sided and arbitrary attempt to reduce others to a condition of identity with ourselves is one of the most disastrous of misconceptions.¹⁸

Merton was severely critiquing the superiority complex of even White liberals who assumed that African Americans wanted to be “accepted into the white’s man’s society.”¹⁹ Rather, Merton be-

¹⁵ Ibid, 135.

¹⁶ Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Destruction* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1963), 12.

¹⁷ Merton, 17.

¹⁸ Ibid, 17.

¹⁹ Ibid, 57.

lieved that atonement was necessary and that this consisted of concrete actions of reforming social systems that perpetuate injustices and that the work must be lead by African Americans.²⁰ These concrete actions of atonement were filled with the call for *humility*.

In addition to the theological concepts of *love* that Hill Fletcher offers and *humility* that Merton offers, the concept of *solidarity* should support an anti-racist theological framework. Solidarity is a pillar of Catholic Social Teaching and a virtue that must be cultivated if we are to live as disciples who wish to follow Jesus' examples of how to love. St. John Paul II wrote that:

[Solidarity] is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.²¹

In the work of anti-racism, committing to the common good must be a two-fold project, beginning with looking at both our internalized biases and looking at the systems we are complicit in. Solidarity must be rooted in humility and love, and not based on charity nor sympathy.

Ada Maria Isasi Diaz in her essay "Love of Neighbor in the Twenty-first Century" (1996) explicitly names solidarity as the appropriate "present-day expression of the gospel mandate that we love our neighbor."²² The goal of solidarity she explains "is to participate in the ongoing process of liberation through which we Christians become a significantly positive force in the unfolding of the "kin-dom" of God."²³ This process is one based in mutuality that moves beyond charity, and is rooted in a "dialogic process" in which the oppressed must "utter the first word."²⁴ Solidarity is not only the realization of mutuality or engagement in dialogue, it is made manifest in action. Diaz insists that "the unfolding of the kin-dom of God, which indeed promotes human fulfillment, is made possible only when just structures and situations exist."²⁵

Rooted in commitments of love, humility and solidarity, it is the responsibility of all Christians, and most urgently the work of White Christians, to confront the sins of White supremacy and work to dismantle racist cultures in the institutions we belong to. Hill Fletcher argues that:

²⁰ Ibid, 67.

²¹ St. John Paul II, "On Social Concern" in *Sollicitudo Rei Sociali* No. 38 Found at: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/solidarity.cfm> Accessed on May 10, 2018.

²² Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for The Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 88.

²³ Isasi-Diaz, 89

²⁴ Ibid, 98.

²⁵ Ibid, 101.

Even if Christians today are not directly responsible for creating the conditions of dispossession and disparity, when we do nothing to change current conditions, the story of our faith and our symbolic capital supports an unjust status quo by default.²⁶

We now turn to the Catholic university as a space to do this anti-racist work.

Confronting White Supremacy on Catholic College Campuses

There are many facets to how White supremacy permeates Catholic campus cultures. This section is merely an attempt to explore possibilities that can serve as a starting point to inspire brainstorming and encourage action. Below I offer a two-pronged approach for getting started on college campuses. First, what would it look like for college administrations to use an explicitly anti-racist theological lens when making decisions that inform mission, ministry and strategic plans? And second, how could student formation programming help all students develop healthy racial identities?

How can administrations heed Merton's call to humility and to conduct an internal examination of conscience about how racist culture exists within? While many Catholic universities were founded to give opportunities to the marginalized, historical realities are more complex than these simple narratives and often schools also have a history of complicity and perpetuation of racism in the United States. One must only look to the recent news stories from Georgetown University, where Jesuits in the mid-1800s sold dozens of slaves to create an endowment for the school.²⁷ This specific story fortunately has a redemptive component. The current leaders at Georgetown are taking responsibility for these past actions and asking for forgiveness and giving reparations to descendants of the people who were sold at the hands of the Jesuits. This story offers a hopeful model of how universities can face their pasts, and repent. While all Catholic higher education institutions might not have explicit ties to slavery, each institution could go through a discernment process at looking at the school's historical complicity in systemic racism and be aware of how this history effects the current culture that exists.

Hill Fletcher offers a practical discernment tool to begin to do this work, derived from her personal experiences with the Ignatian spiritual tradition. She suggests that with St. Ignatius of Loyola as a guide to put love into practice, questions that can be asked are: *What have we done to the crucified (past)? What are we doing to the crucified (present)? What ought we do for the crucified?*²⁸ What would it look like for an administration to take a serious look at these questions and attempt to answer them in light of a legacy of White supremacy. What would it change

²⁶ Hill Fletcher, 107.

²⁷ Daniel Burke "In emotional service, Jesuits and Georgetown repent for slave trading" April 20, 2017, Accessed at: <http://www.cnn.com/2017/04/18/living/georgetown-slavery-service/index.html>

²⁸ Hill Fletcher, 160.

if all strategic planning, rooted in the theological concepts of love, humility and solidarity, took seriously the last question of *what ought we do for the crucified?* It is not enough to promote diversity and multicultural education and training. The administration can do more in explicitly working to fight institutional racism by looking point blank at how White supremacy has shaped its past and continues to permeate its present culture.

While the administration has a role at implementing strategic planning, a crucial role in shifting current and future campus culture is fostering healthy racial identity development for all students. While Catholic colleges explicitly want to nurture the faith development of students, nurturing racial identity development should also be a priority. Generally speaking, the task of formation of healthy racial identities currently falls on multicultural offices and it is often assumed that it is formational work to be done with exclusively Students of Color. While it is crucial for Students of Color to have strong support in formational programming for developing healthy racial identities, there is often a gaping hole in explicit racial identity programming and formation for White students. While the goal of fostering healthy racial identity development should be for all students, in order for there to be a shift away from a racist culture, explicit work with what is often the White majority needs to be done.

For this idea I lean specifically on the theories of Janet Helms in her model of White Racial Identity Development.²⁹ More training and discussion must occur on college campuses with faculty, administrators, staff and students on why healthy White racial identity development is paramount in student formation programming and how to do it. A healthy White racial identity is one in which an individual is aware of how their race unjustly privileges them in society, but it is not an identity that brings shame or resentment. An individual with a healthy White racial identity can be an advocate in the work of dismantling systemic racism and in working on changing their own behaviors and actions which contribute to racist culture.

Focusing on nurturing healthy White racial identities among White students could address Hill Fletcher's critique of the apathy and often ignorance of "good White Christians" on issues of systemic racism. The goal would be to engage the majority of White students who don't think that the problems of racism pertain to them. Helms' argues that "he or she must accept his or her own Whiteness, the cultural implications of being White, and define a view of Self as a racial being that does not depend on the perceived superiority of one racial group over another."³⁰ Helms' White Racial Identity Development theory consists of six stages: Contact, Disintegration, Reintegration, Pseudo-independence, Immersion, and Autonomy.³¹ While students will come to college located in a diversity of these stages, the goal is to help identify where students are so they can continue to grow and work towards an anti-racist healthy White identity.

²⁹ Helms is a research psychologist well known for her studies on ethnic minority issues. This research was first published in her book *Black and White Identity Development: Theory, Research and Practice* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1990).

³⁰ J. E. Helms "Toward a Model of White Racial Identity Development" in *College Student Development and Academic Life: Psychological, Intellectual, Social and Moral Issues*, eds Karen Arnold and Ilda Carreiro King (New York: Garland, 1997), 207.

³¹ Helms, 210.

Framing racial identity work within the context of the theological virtues of love, humility, and solidarity will ensure that the reaction to this work is not shame and antipathy. Anti-racism training should not demonize White students nor label them “racist.” The goal instead is to nurture students and embolden them to become more aware of their own identities, and empower them to be advocates and allies in racial justice work. Bonilla-Silva argues that:

We must nurture a large cohort of anti-racist whites to begin challenging color-blind nonsense from within. Whites’ collective denial about the true nature of race relations may help them feel good, but it is also one of the greatest obstacles to doing the right thing. In racial matters as in therapy, admission of denial is the preamble for the beginning of recovery.³²

Helms’ theory provides a tool and language to begin to nurture cohorts of anti-racist White students. As student formation work takes into account healthy racial identity of all students, the next question is where/when should this work be taking place and who should be facilitating this work?

While there may not be a need to create new programming, how can current student programming that engage a multitude of students such as orientation, retreats, and service/immersion trips be conducted through a theologically based anti-racist lens? This would require training for staff, faculty, and student leaders. There are many organizations that lead such faith-based trainings. One example is Chicago-based non-profit Crossroads, that has a long history of working with predominately White faith-based organizations at addressing first steps at dismantling racism.³³

There are also current campus initiatives to look to for inspiration, if it is decided that additional programming would aid in combatting White supremacy on campus. The multicultural office at Loyola University of Chicago runs a program called R.A.W. (Rambler Analyzing Whiteness). The website explains that, “The purpose of R.A.W. is to create an affinity space on campus for self-identified White students who want to become anti-racist, anti-supremacist White allies.”³⁴ I want to emphasize again though that this work should not be silo-d to multicultural or diversity offices, nor to campus ministry offices. A commitment to becoming an anti-racist institution means that this work should permeate all of the student formation programming. Again, this work should be explicitly steeped in the theological virtues of love, humility and solidarity. This will not only allow an institution to have a cohesive faith-based anti-racist mission across campus, but might also serve as a beacon of hope, and a model for the rest of the Church to follow.

³² Ibid, 307.

³³ <http://crossroadsantiracism.org>

³⁴ <https://www.luc.edu/diversity/programs/ramblersanalyzingwhiteness/>

Conclusion

If Catholic universities leave White supremacy unexamined, then continued ignorance of communal and individual roles in systemic racism will result in perpetuation of racist culture on campuses. This paper has sought to explore Hill Fletcher's notion of the sin of White supremacy and how it relates to US Catholic universities. This paper has provided a suggestion for anti-racist work on Catholic campuses to be grounded in the virtues of love, humility and solidarity. It has offered concrete suggestions for beginning anti-racist work through strategic planning efforts of the university administration and in student formation programming. This paper does not claim to be a comprehensive overview of the sin of White supremacy, nor offer an easy solution for how to combat it. It is merely my hope that it helps spark conversation on how to explicitly name, confront and begin to dismantle systemic racism at Catholic universities. Bonilla-Silva warns that the commitment to becoming an anti-racist institution is not easy and will not happen overnight. He admits "The ride will be rough, but after your eyes have been opened, there is no point in standing still."³⁵ Let us pray that Catholic universities do not stand still, and commit to moving forward in confronting the sin of White supremacy.

Works Cited

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva *Racism without Racists* (Boulder: Rowman, 2014).

Jeannine Hill Fletcher *The Sin of White Supremacy: Christianity, Racism, and Religious Diversity in America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2017).

J. E. Helms "Toward a Model of White Racial Identity Development" in *College Student Development and Academic Life: Psychological, Intellectual, Social and Moral Issues*, eds Karen Arnold and Ilda Carreiro King (New York: Garland, 1997), 207-225.

Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for The Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996),

Thomas Merton *Seeds of Destruction* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1963).

³⁵ Bonilla-Silva, 15.

Mercy Langat
Asbury Theological Seminary
mercy.langat@asburyseminary.edu

Bethany Addington
Nazarene Theological College - Manchester
bethany.addington@asburyseminary.edu

2018 REA Annual Meeting - Nov. 2-4

SACRED SECLUSION: FORMATION THROUGH LIMINALITY AND HOSPITALITY IN THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSROOM

Abstract:

Though precarious and uncomfortable, the liminal experience of suspension between places, experiences, or identities postures one to see and understand the world in fresh and deeply enriching ways. This paper proposes that the religious education classroom offers a liminal space in which distance from a society dominated by white normativity may be cultivated to create opportunity for hospitality and embrace of the marginalized ‘other.’ The classroom as a liminal environment invites students and educators to deliberately step away from a societal context in which white westerners act almost exclusively as the ‘host’ on whose terms dialogue is conducted and resources are distributed. In entering into the liminal classroom, white students and educators commit to adopt the role of ‘guest,’ submitting to non-white students, educators, and educational resources as specially-qualified ‘hosts.’

Sacred Seclusion

The term liminality has been defined as, “A transitory and precarious phase between stable states, which is marked off by conceptual, spatial and/or temporal barriers, within which individuals, groups and/or objects are set apart from society and/or the everyday.”¹ One example of liminal experience can be found in the initiation rites of the Kenyan Kalenjin tribe. For the Kalenjin people, the transition from boyhood to manhood is traditionally marked by a period of seclusion from the community, during which time the young men are instructed in the traditions of the tribe and the essential lessons of Kalenjin manhood. At the conclusion of this period of seclusion and initiation, those who withdrew from the community as boys return to their people as men, having been transformed, prepared, and equipped to fulfill their new role in the community.

¹ Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen and Joshua Edelman, “Liminality,” *Ecumenica* 7, no. 1–2 (2014): 1.

This paper seeks to demonstrate how the religious education classroom provides a liminal space in which distance from a society dominated by white normativity can be cultivated through the practice of hospitality. In a world dominated by polarizing politics and hateful hegemony, religious educators and institutions are uniquely poised to foster new and creatively engaged responses to ‘otherness’ in the sacred liminality of the classroom, and to equip students with the tools needed to implement these approaches in their own personal and professional contexts. Such a task must begin with a hearty acknowledgement of the dangers and deep inadequacies of any educational model tailored to suit the needs and perspectives of white westerners as ‘normative’ at great expense to those who fall beyond that narrow field of normativity. Further, new educational models and approaches must be anchored firmly in conviction of the utter necessity of diverse and multifaceted perspectives for educational integrity and honest pursuit of truth.

With these fundamental acknowledgements in mind, this paper proposes implementing practices of hospitality in the liminal environment of religious education classrooms as a means of combating white normativity and fostering mutually empowering cross-cultural and interethnic relationship. The inherent liminality of the classroom offers opportunity to invite students and educators alike to leave behind their stable cultural contexts in which white westerners act almost exclusively as the normative ‘host’— the party on whose terms dialogue is conducted and resources are distributed. In entering into the more precarious space of the liminal classroom physically, socially, and spiritually, white students and educators commit to adopt the role of ‘guest,’ submitting to non-white and non-western students, educators, and educational resources as particularly valuable and specially-qualified hosts. The deliberate reversal of guest and host roles serves to quiet the cacophony of white hegemony, and to amplify the voices of historically marginalized people. Additionally, the centering of diverse and non-white experiences empowers those individuals who are systematically disenfranchised in western society and equips students of privilege to return to their communities beyond the classroom with greater cultural competency, empathy, and resources for advocacy.

Liminality

When considering creating brave spaces amidst conflict and crisis spurred by systemic racism, discrimination, and xenophobia, liminality isn’t the first thing that comes to mind. Liminality has been defined as “neither here nor there...betwixt and between the positions assigned...”² It is quite easy to disregard it and simply view it as another descriptive word. However, quick research on liminality proves that it is significant and relevant to topics such as identity, ritual process, education, and transformation among many others. This section will discuss the history and usage of liminality and the three-fold stages found in liminality.

History and Usage of Liminality

Arnold Van Gennep, a French Anthropologist, who was studying anthropology of ritual, coined the word “liminality” in 1908; he used it to describe rites of passage. Later in 1964, Victor Turner, a British anthropologist, popularized it through his work that also dealt with rites

² Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969), 94-95.

of passage. These two anthropologists established that liminality was the second of three stages in the rite of passage ritual. The first stage was separation while the third stage was *communitas*. Separation signified dispersion from a group; individuals detach from the community and enter into the liminal stage. The liminal stage is ambiguous; individuals in this stage portray behaviors that are submissive or humble. *Communitas* is the reincorporation into the community that one had detached from.

Turner based his research on rituals, particularly rites of passage, in African societies. These societies were at the time considered uncivilized and barbaric, and the people were viewed as savages. As time progressed, Turner became more interested in placing liminality within modernity. He “became interested in what happened to the liminal in modern societies where social structures were not so clearly established that they could be discarded and remade, even through ritual.”³ This led him to study performance studies in collaboration with Richard Schechner, a theatre director and theorist. Turner studied performers whose identity was continuously betwixt their own identity and the identity they took. This study and collaboration seems to be the beginning of scholars from other disciplines applying the usage of liminality.⁴

Following the collaborative research in performance studies, the study of liminality began gaining ground in various other fields including the field of theology. Trebilcock, who has studied “theology in context liminality,” argues “liminality theory has a particular application to theological discourse because of the close association of ritual to theology in traditional formulations of the tradition...”⁵ Therefore, it is necessary to empirically search for theological knowledge in liminality. Franciscan friar Father Richard Rohr applied this concept to theology by describing the liminal space as “the prophetic position,” a sacred place on the spiritual edge of the inside. This sacred place is not marked by “an outsider throwing rocks or a comfortable insider who defends the status quo, but one who lives precariously with two perspectives held tightly together.”⁶

There is indication that when liminality was first coined by Van Gennep and later popularized by Turner, it was used to describe a stage or phase in a ritual. As its application crosses over to different disciplines, it is used to describe a place either in one’s life or a physical space. Therefore, individuals describing themselves as third culture kids or immigrants who have lived in more than one place can refer to themselves as Liminals. This means that they often live in the juxtaposition of feeling as though they do not fit in any culture that they have lived in, yet at the same time, fitting in. They constantly live in cultural tension where they often have to think about and adjust particular cultural values, traditions, and norms to fit the cultural context they find themselves. This could be as simple as an immigrant child speaking with one accent, dialect or language while at home and changing to another while at school or when with friends.

On the other hand, a liminal space can be used to describe a position in one’s life. Rohr says liminal spaces are “when we are betwixt and between, have left one room but not yet entered the next room, any hiatus between stages of life, stages of faith, jobs, loves, or

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Michelle Trebilcock, “*Theology in Context: Liminality*,” *Colloquium* 48, no. 1 (May 2016): 74–86.

⁶ Richard Rohr, “*On the Edge of the Inside: The Prophetic Position*,” *Tikkun* (October 9, 2007): 1.

relationships. It is that graced time when we are not certain or in control, when something genuinely new can happen...”⁷ Liminal spaces can also refer to physical places that people occupy. This could be a house, church, or prayer room just to name some. In the rites of passage that Van Gennep and Turner studied, the individuals were not only in a liminal phase but in a physical liminal space as well. The rite of passage took place in an actual space. They entered that space with one identity and left with another; transformation occurred. Rohr proposes that “...much of the work of the biblical God and human destiny itself is to get people into liminal space and to keep them there long enough to learn something essential and genuinely new. It is the ultimate teachable space.”⁸ In this paper, liminality is discussed as a physical space, more specifically, the classroom space. The repeated and ritualistic entering of this physical liminal space week by week may be tailored to draw students into an experience of social and cultural liminality as well.⁹ There might be references to Liminals, people who identify themselves as between two or more cultures.

The Three-Fold Stages in a Classroom

The application of Van Gennep’s and Turner’s three-fold stages (separation, liminality, and communitas) in the ritual process are essential in creating spaces that elevate marginalized voices and experiences. In this section, the three-fold process will be discussed as it relates to the religious classroom. As previously mentioned, separation describes detachment from one’s community. In the classroom context, this is similar to students leaving their homes, families, and communities to enter the classroom. This detachment could take place daily or weekly depending on when the student is scheduled to go to the classroom.

When students enter the classroom, they enter the liminal stage. Even though the students come from particular cultures, homes, families and communities, they “tend to develop an intense comradeship and egalitarianism” on the basis that they are all students.¹⁰ As they learn, they might draw from their experiences in their communities. However, “their behavior is normally passive or humble; they must obey their instructors implicitly.”¹¹ The liminal stage is important because transformation takes place; students are fashioned anew through paradigm shifts in their perspective and worldview. This paradigm shift is spurred by hospitality in the prophetic position.

One of the most important transformations that occurs in the liminal classroom is that students learn through dialogue and narrative exchange “that the high could not be high unless the low existed, and he who is high must experience what it is like to be low.”¹² When

⁷ Richard Rohr, *Adam's Return: The Five Promises of Male Initiation*, (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 2016): 135.

⁸ Richard Rohr, “*On the Edge of the Inside*”, 1

⁹ We see parallels between the ritual acts that Turner describes in *Rites of Passage* and the ritualistic attendance of class throughout a term. In this ‘ritual’, students leave their community/households to enter the classroom (liminal space) and then eventually return back to their community.

¹⁰ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 95.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid, 97.

reincorporation into the community occurs during *communitas*, students enter the community with the acknowledgement to an indispensable and common human bond.¹³ Turner posits that “*communitas* has an existential quality; it involves the whole man in his relation to other whole men.”¹⁴ Better understanding and empathy of the “other” essentially mark *Communitas*. People no longer live side by side but rather, with one another.

Hospitality as Robust Love of Stranger and of ‘Strangeness’

The ancient Judeo-Christian tradition of hospitality recognizes outsiders and strangers as bearers and conduits of extraordinary blessing. The call to welcome the stranger is rooted in a robust appreciation of the deep and multifaceted value of otherness as a means through which divinity powerfully encounters and enriches human life and community.¹⁵ Our natural human inclination is to form our deepest bonds with those who share significant aspects of our identity and experience. However, Judeo-Christian hospitality rests upon the premise that it is our difference—our cultural, ideological, and experiential otherness—which adds rich dimension to our practices of mutual sharing.¹⁶ The giving and receiving of two identically-resourced parties amounts to little more than a customary exchange of favors. To host and be hosted by those utterly unlike ourselves, however, blossoms into a three-dimensional hospitality in which our welcome is met and reciprocated, not only with human hospitality, but with divine blessing as well.

A hospitality-oriented approach to religious education recognizes that a student’s particular value to the learning process does not derive from his or her uniformity with others in the classroom or in the broader societal context. Rather, it is those distinct and unparalleled gifts, experiences, and characteristics which uniquely equip each student to contribute much-needed insight in the collective effort to explore what it means to be human and to live rightly in community with one another. By this measure, every student is specially-qualified to participate in the process of transformational education.¹⁷

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid, 127.

¹⁵ Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999) 21.

¹⁶ W. Tali Hairston, “Agents of Reconciliation,” *Mutuality* 21, no 1 (2014): 18.

¹⁷ We have borrowed our vision for transformation and definition of “transformational teaching” from George W. Slavich, who first coined the term and defines it as “the expressed or unexpressed goal to increase students’ mastery of key course concepts while transforming their learning-related attitudes, values, beliefs, and skills...This process involves creating dynamic relationships between teachers, students, and a shared body of knowledge in a way that promotes student learning and personal growth.” Slavich’s view of transformational teaching views collaborative classroom learning experiences as catalysts for sustained personal change beyond the classroom environment. See G.M. Slavich, *Transformational Teaching: E-xcellence in Teaching* 5 (Oct. 5, 2005) 55-59, and G.M. Slavich and Philip G. Zimbardo, “Transformational Teaching: Theoretical Underpinnings, Basic Principles, and Core Methods,” *Educational Psychology Review* 24, no. 4 (2012): 569-608.

Ancient Hospitality

Ethnographic research has revealed that hospitality is one of fewer than 70 social characteristics which is present in every known culture, and is therefore recognized as a cultural universal.¹⁸ Put another way, though the particular practices associated with hospitality may vary from context to context, every people group has established customs for encountering outsiders and welcoming them. In the ancient Mediterranean context—the cradle of civilization—hospitality served as a means through which strangers could be transformed into friends. While at first hearing this may strike one as sentimental, hospitable practices in antiquity were far from mere exercises in warm charitability and social convention. Rather, practices of hospitality existed in part as a social necessity to navigate the dangers of encountering and engaging outsiders. In the ancient context, the practice of hospitality was, for guest and host alike, a matter of life and death.

The strong and protective kinship of ancient communities meant that neighbors knew one another well and were often at least distantly related. In venturing outside the safety of one's community, travelers faced a constant threat of attack while remaining precariously dependent on the hospitality of the strangers they encountered as they journeyed through foreign territory.¹⁹ Likewise, local residents encountering outsiders in their community had little way of knowing whether the strangers were enemy marauders, or simply vulnerable sojourners in need of food and shelter. The transformation of strangers to friends through hospitality, therefore, served as an essential means by which outsiders were evaluated and potential threats neutralized. By establishing relationship and disarming fears, both parties could be increasingly assured of safety in the presence of the 'other.'²⁰

Though these patterns of hospitality were established in an era very different from our contemporary context, we would submit that they bear special relevance and insight for religious education and the task of engaging alterity in a space dominated by white normativity. In the present-day North American context, cultural and ethnic 'strangers' are increasingly viewed with suspicion and fear, or conversely as exotic and mysterious. The former fosters environments in which assimilation to white cultural norms is all but mandatory for survival. The latter lends itself to a mythicizing or caricaturing of the other, reducing an individual to a two-dimensional type of his or her ethnic identity, or to whatever characteristics most alienate him or her from the normative white, western, male identity. In both cases, those perceived as 'non-normative' enter the classroom as outsiders, bearing the steady stress of being detached from the communities in which they themselves are 'normative,' and so precariously at the mercy of a system dominated by white culture, white perspectives, and white sensitivities. Like the ancient near-east, this too is an experience of strangers encountering strangers, and a context in which we suggest that the legitimate doubts, dangers, and distresses of engaging strangers may be alleviated and transformed through sustained practices of hospitality.

¹⁸ John J. Pilch, "Hospitality," *Handbook of Biblical Social Values*, 3rd ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998): 96-99, 131.

¹⁹ Samuel E. Balentine, "Hospitality," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Theology*, (New York, NY.: Oxford University, 2015), Web.

²⁰ Andrew Arterbury, "Entertaining Angels: Hospitality in Luke-Acts," *Christian Reflection* 25 (2007): 21.

Hospitality in Liminal Spaces

The transformation of stranger to friend in ancient hospitality took place in three distinct moves, which intersect and parallel the threefold structure of liminality. Examination of hospitality practices in liminal spaces offers a fresh vantage point from which to navigate the problem of white normativity and hegemony in the religious education classroom and beyond. This section recognizes both the genuine strain and rich transformative potential of otherness experienced in liminal spaces.

Step One: Evaluation of Outsiders

Upon encountering an outsider in the ancient context, a potential host would begin by evaluating whether the stranger posed a threat to the community. This assessment typically included a test designed to determine whether a guest was sincere and would willingly embrace the values of the society.²¹ Because strangers were commonly perceived as threatening to a community, the invitation of a host represented not only an offer of provision, but also of protection from the host's own kinship community.

This evaluative stage of hospitality coincides with the separation phase of liminality. To be a hospitable host, whether in antiquity or in the contemporary classroom, is to stand in the marginal and often precarious between space one's native community and the vulnerable outsider. Likewise, in order to become a guest, one must first become a stranger, venturing outside one's own community of kinship and into a vulnerable space of unknowing and being unknown. In the language of liminality, this is a form of separation—a space where strangers meet together in the common territory of their mutual strangeness to one another, apart from the native contexts in which each is wholly included, recognized, represented, and known.

Indeed, those who belong to minority and historically-marginalized groups are acutely familiar with the experience of being precariously separate from one's home community and perpetually evaluated as a potentially harmful stranger. The pervasive normativity of whiteness places a heavy burden of strangeness on the shoulders of all who fall outside the narrow field of normativity. This paper proposes that white students and educators participate in the alleviation of this burden of strangeness by taking deliberate steps to bear some of its weight themselves. This is accomplished in part by white students' commitment to enter the classroom as a liminal space—one in which white culture will not be permitted to dominate unchallenged, and in which white normativity will be actively contested. In so doing, white students and educators adopt deliberate separation from their own native community and so begin to share the burden of otherness with their non-white peers. The sharing and shouldering of the experience of otherness draws students together in the uncomfortable but transformative space of liminality. Of this space, Dr. Christine Valters Paintner has reflected, "We each have a threshold of tolerance for uncomfortable or painful experiences...The only way to widen our threshold of tolerance is to dance at its edges, to consciously go to uncomfortable places and stay present. When we risk the unfamiliar, our resilience grows and we become more capable of living life fully."²²

²¹ Samuel E. Balentine, "Hospitality."

²² Christine Valters Paintner, "The Spiritual Practice of Being Uncomfortable." *Patheos* (blog), May 24, 2011.

In the context of religious education as a liminal space, then, the predominating unifier among those present is their common otherness. Hospitality invites a willing submission to the uncomfortable and life-giving experience of being and encountering each other as ‘stranger’ as the necessary first step to mutually-empowering friendship. To acknowledge otherness in this way—not as a kind of mystical exoticism or fearful strangeness, but as a simple fact of difference—postures students to embrace one another with what Z.D. Gurevitch describes as an “ability to not understand.” Elaborating on this concept, Gurevitch writes:

The ability to not understand is the ability to recognize and behold the other (or the self) as an other. In a moment of not understanding, what had been considered “understood” is relinquished as mere image...It highlights the other side of dialogue, the threatening yet exciting realm of strangeness, distance, and not understanding. When the other is perceived as strange, he or she is liberated from the image that one has projected onto the other’s experience from the center of one’s self. The other then emerges as an independent and distant phenomenon.²³

The hospitality of the ancient world presupposed strangeness as one of its central components. Hospitality was not a practice extended to family and friends, but was extended as the particular form of welcome to those outside one’s community.²⁴

The preliminary stage of hospitality recognizes that a robust commitment to friendship cannot be established unless it is preceded by a period of evaluation and trust-building through sustained engagement. Whether in the ancient near-eastern wilderness or the contemporary religious education classroom, hospitality is meant to be neither blindly undiscerning, nor captive to comfort or controlled by fear. Hospitality, for guest and host alike, requires conscious and measured courage in venturing beyond the borders of security and into the liminal space of being a stranger and encountering strangers. “Hospitality begins at the gate,” writes Christine Pohl, “in the doorway, on the bridges between public and private space. Finding and creating threshold places is important for contemporary expressions of hospitality.”²⁵ Together, the inherent liminality of the classroom, the ritualistic weekly gathering and dispersing, and the spiritual and interpersonal nature of religious education offer a valuable threshold space for the cultivation of hospitable engagement. Each instance of vulnerable submission, empathic listening, and prophetic speaking is a moment in which love is tangibly expressed, trust is built, and strangers’ capacity for friendship is deepened.

Stage Two: Transformation of Strangers to Liminal Guests

Once ancient sojourners had demonstrated that they pose no threat of violence, a host could invite them into the liminal phase of hospitality—the move from stranger to guest.²⁶ In any context, the role of guest involves a degree of disenfranchisement, and even in the context of the

²³ Z.D. Gurevitch, “The Power of Not Understanding: The Meeting of Conflicting Identities,” *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 25 no. 2 (1989), 163.

²⁴ John J. Pilch, “Hospitality,” 96.

²⁵ Christine Pohl, *Making Room*, 95.

²⁶ John J. Pilch, “Hospitality,” 97.

most genuine generosity, the role of host constitutes a position of power.²⁷ The power of a host arises from the availability of resources, relational connectedness, and social privilege. As a possessor of needed resources, the host reserves the right to determine how and to whom those resources are distributed. Further, a host remains in close proximity to his or her own community and resources, and so maintains the protection of the dominant community, as well as the power to withdraw the offer of hospitality at any time. By contrast, the sojourner, even in the relative safety of the host's care, remains precariously separated from the security of his or her own community, and subject to the authority and expectations of the host community. For this reason, a hard distinction between guest and host produces a miniature power structure which mirrors the imbalance of power that exists within the broader society—an imbalance which is in many ways responsible for the marginalization of the 'guests' in the first place.

Thus, if left unchecked, the power of hosts can perpetuate the disenfranchisement of the very guests they seek to welcome.²⁸ Any relationship in which one party perpetually serves as host and the other as guest is a relationship of oppression. By contrast, the more dynamically these roles are shared, the greater the relationship's capacity for mutuality and intimacy. Mutual sharing of guest and host roles is stimulated by a liminal environment in which possession of the space remains fluid. As contributions are made from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives, ownership of the space is passed from one person to another and back again. Continual pendulation between guest and host is itself a challenging liminal experience, requiring sustained commitment and ongoing practice in receiving possession and readily relinquishing it.²⁹ In the context of the religious education classroom, the educator serves as facilitator and guide for shared ownership of the space, as well as the primary example, modeling a dynamic balance of guesting and hosting, self-expression and self-sacrifice, prophetic sharing and authentic listening.

In the widespread white normativity of the North American context, white individuals naturally and often unwittingly bear the privilege of a host—one on whose terms and in whose space dialogue occurs, events are interpreted, and sociopolitical resources are shared. Therefore it is important to recognize that majority and minority students, even when equally submitted to the experience of 'strangeness' in the liminal classroom, do not come to that experience on equal terms. White individuals generally have far less knowledge of minority cultures than minority students have of majority culture. Those from historically underrepresented and marginalized groups learn white culture as a matter of survival; white individuals, if they are to learn minority culture at all, typically do so as a matter of personal or professional interest.

Therefore, it is not enough simply to invite culturally and ethnically diverse students and resources into a classroom space and expect genuine transformation and cultural competency to naturally precipitate.³⁰ Rather, the existing imbalance of power must be met with efforts toward counterbalance through practices of hospitality and submission to the other. The aim of

²⁷ Tobias Brandner, "Hosts and Guests: Hospitality as an Emerging Paradigm in Mission," *International Review of Mission Int Rev Missions* 102, no. 1 (2013): 96.

²⁸ Christine Pohl, *Making Room*, 118-9.

²⁹ Nathan Loewen has explored some practical challenges and implications of sharing guest and host roles in the religious education classroom in his helpful article entitled "Whose Place Is This Anyway? Reflecting upon Hospitality and Higher Education," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 19, no. 1, (2016): 4-19.

³⁰ Nathan Loewen, "Whose Place Is This Anyway?," 8.

counterbalance is to invert the static guest and host roles inherent in a white normative environment and to foster shared possession of the classroom by offering safe and meaningful opportunity for systematically-marginalized students to serve as empowered hosts. This goal requires concerted effort especially on the part of majority students and educators to increase cultural competency and practice identification and interrogation of whiteness as a non-universal experience.³¹

Stage Three: Friendship Becomes Kinship

The third and final phase of ancient hospitality is the establishment of friendship, which coincides with the *communitas* stage of liminality. This phase took place at the time of a guest's departure from the host's home. If the departure took place on good terms, they parted as friends, which implied a commitment to an ongoing bond of fictive kinship between the host's community and the guest's.³² A guest departing from a host as friend was expected to return home "singing the praises" of the host among relatives and friends, so that the relationship of security and trust that had been cultivated between guest and host could be shared with the entire community.³³

In terms of hospitality practiced in the contemporary religious education classroom, this final step is exceedingly important for lasting transformation beyond the classroom setting. Because students and educators often originate from largely homogeneous communities, the separation and subsequent transformation of the liminal classroom is meant ultimately to prepare them to return to those communities with new tools, competencies, and practices for engaging strangers and transforming them into friends. The sharing of guest and host roles and creation of counterbalance are learned and tested in the small-scale liminality of the classroom so that they may be further refined and implemented in each student's professional and social context beyond the classroom. The education of a liminal classroom seeks to equip and empower those who share that sacred space to return home "singing the praises" of their strangers-turned-friends. In this way, the relationships of mutual trust, respect, and empowerment first established in sacred seclusion may be carried out into the public space of daily life and shared with one's entire community.

³¹ The proposal that the greater proportion of responsibility in combating white hegemony belongs to white students and educators is derived in part from Miroslav Volf's discussion of "the nonsymmetry of relationship." This concept recognizes that relationship is always and inextricably bound to the power dynamics of its context. Volf concludes, "[Hierarchies] must be inverted....The equality and reciprocity that are at the heart of embrace can be reached only through self-sacrifice, even if self-sacrifice is not a positive good, but a necessary *via dolorosa* in a world of enmity and indifference toward the joy of reciprocal embrace." See Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996, 145-6.

³² Christine Pohl, *Making Room*, 17.

³³ John J. Pilch, "Hospitality," 97.

Practices of Sacred Seclusion

In light of the above conceptual analysis of liminality and hospitality in the context of religious education, we would like to offer a few practical insights for embracing the liminal experience of otherness, extending and receiving hospitality, fostering shared possession of the liminal classroom, and creating counterbalance. The practices suggested here are just a few means that have been proven effective for accomplishing these aims in the classroom. However, as a particular group of students and educators become more familiar with one another, including the specific gifts, values, and needs of each, they will likely discover additional and more tailored practices of hospitality that are especially meaningful and fruitful for their context.

One of the simplest and most significant opportunities to practice hospitality in the liminal classroom is through a particular approach to dialogue. The acts of speaking and listening closely parallel the roles of hosting and being guest. Active listening creates energized space into which the other can enter freely and become increasingly known. Courageous sharing, particularly out of those places and experiences that make us feel most ‘other,’ foster deepened empathy and understanding, while drawing others to share courageously as well. In their book, *Execution*, Ram Charan and Bossidy describe the transformative power of dialogue:

Dialogue alters the psychology of a group. It can either expand a group’s capacity to think or shrink it. It can be energizing or energy-draining. It can create self-confidence and optimism, or it can produce pessimism. It can create unity, or it can create bitter factions. Robust dialogue brings out reality, even when that reality makes people feel uncomfortable, because it has purpose and meaning. It is open, tough, focused, and informal. The aim is to invite multiple viewpoints, see the pros and cons of each one, and try honestly and candidly to construct new viewpoints. This is the dynamic that stimulates new questions, new ideas, and new insights rather than wasting energy defending the old order.³⁴

Closely related to dialogue is the practice of storytelling. From our earliest childhood, narrative deeply shapes our identity and our understanding of the world around us. Sharing personal narratives offers students opportunity to communicate something about their sense of self and relation to the world.³⁵ Listening to the narratives of others allows us to practice “the ability not to understand” and instead to know and engage with others as they present themselves to be, and not as what we assume they are.³⁶ Storytelling not only fosters understanding, relationship, and empathy, but also forms and transforms our very sense of self, reorienting our own identities in relation to the identities of those with whom stories are shared. It is important to note that the sharing of minority students does not constitute a representation of one’s entire cultural identity group. No single person or story is capable of adequately representing entire cultures, nor is it reasonable to place such a burden. To this end, award-winning novelist and acclaimed feminist, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, has stated, “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are

³⁴ Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan, *Execution: the Discipline of Getting Things Done*, (New York: Random House, 2011): 104.

³⁵ Dean P. Manternach, “Moral Dynamics of Storytelling: Inviting Transformation,” Paper presented at the Religious Education Association Annual Meeting, Dubuque, IA, November 2006, 3.

³⁶ Nathan Loewen, “Whose Place Is This Anyway?,” 6.

incomplete. They make one story become the only story.”³⁷ By contrast, as greater numbers of stories are shared, stereotypes and two-dimensional views give way to more rich, nuanced, and full-orbed understanding.

Finally, counterbalance is created in introducing non-white and non-western resources, as well as equipping students to seek out and engage diverse resources as well. By tailoring course outcomes to highlight the central role that non-white contributions are expected to play. Likewise, by requiring interaction with authors of a variety of backgrounds on key course assignments, students are equipped with skills for cross-cultural academic engagement and for building cultural competency on their own beyond the classroom. On the part of white western students and educators, the bridging of the cultural competency gap requires additional effort in the form of active listening, self-reflection, and critical analysis. Underrepresented and non-white students, by contrast, create counterbalance through courageous engagement and patient perspective sharing in the presence of those peers who have much yet to learn.

Conclusion

The Kalenjin rite of passage calls boys into seclusion from their community in order to send them back again, after a period of transformation, fully-equipped to take their place as leaders in the community. Similarly, religious education students enter the sacred liminal space of the classroom, leaving behind their own communities, in order to return home as agents of transformation. The weekly ritual of students’ gathering into the classroom and dispersing into their communities cultivates a sacred space in which the repeated encounters of strangers gives way to a rich camaraderie of friendship. In facilitating this sacred space, educators lead the way in both teaching and demonstrating submission to the role of guest and creation of counterbalance in order to empower and amplify marginalized voices. A dynamic sharing of guest and host roles opens students to a new and uncomfortable experiences of otherness. It is precisely the discomfort and disorientation inherent in these liminal spaces which makes it a prophetic position in which genuine transformation can occur.

³⁷ Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story,” Speech presented at TED: Ideas Worth Spreading, July 2009.

Bibliography

- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "The Danger of a Single Story." TED: Ideas Worth Spreading. July 2009, www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html.
- Arterbury, Andrew. "Entertaining Angels: Hospitality in Luke-Acts." *Christian Reflection* 25 (2007): 22-26.
- Balentine, Samuel E. "Hospitality." *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Theology*, New York, NY: Oxford University, 2015. Web.
- Bossidy, Larry and Charan, Ram. *Execution: the Discipline of Getting Things Done*. New York: Random House Business Books, 2011.
- Brandner, Tobias. "Hosts and Guests: Hospitality as an Emerging Paradigm in Mission." *International Review of Mission Int Rev Missions* 102, no. 1 (2013): 94-102.
- Hairston, W. Tali. "Agents of Reconciliation." *Mutuality* 21.1 (2014): 17-18.
- Loewen, Nathan. "Whose Place Is This Anyway? Reflecting upon Hospitality and Higher Education." *Teaching Theology & Religion*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2016, doi:10.1111/teth.12317.
- Manternach, Dean P. "Moral Dynamics of Storytelling: Inviting Transformation." Paper presented at the Religious Education Association Annual Meeting, Dubuque, IA, November 2006.
- Valters Paintner, Christine. "The Spiritual Practice of Being Uncomfortable." *Patheos* (blog), May 24, 2011. Accessed September 15, 2018.
<http://www.patheos.com/resources/additional-resources/2011/05/spiritual-practice-of-being-uncomfortable-christine-valters-paintner-05-25-2011>
- Pilch, John J. "Hospitality," *Handbook of Biblical Social Values*. 3rd ed. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998.
- Pohl, Christine. *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999.
- Rohr, Richard. "On the Edge of the Inside: The Prophetic Position." *Tikkun*, October 9, 2007.
- _____. Rohr, Richard. *Adam's Return: The Five Promises of Male Initiation*. New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 2016.
- Skjoldager-Nielsen, Kim, and Joshua Edelman. "Liminality." *Ecumenica* 7, no. 1-2 (2014): 33-40.
- Slavich, G.M., *Transformational Teaching. E-xcellence in Teaching* 5, (Oct. 2005): 55-59.

Slavich, G. M. and Zimbardo, Phillip G., “Transformational Teaching: Theoretical Underpinnings, Basic Principles, and Core Methods.” *Educational Psychology Review*. 24(4): 569-608; Springer, 2012.

Trebilcock, Michelle. “Theology in Context: Liminality.” *Colloquium* 48, no. 1 (May 2016): 74-86.

Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969.

Volf, Miroslav. *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.

Julia Yingnan Ji / Teachers College, Columbia University / yj2277@tc.columbia.edu
REA Annual Meeting [November 2-4, 2018]

Creating Brave Spaces through Spiritual Critical Friendship in and outside Classroom

Abstract

In this study, through interviewing four international and immigrant students of color, I try to learn their experience during their study at American religious or theological education programs around three areas: (1) white normativity, (2) becoming authentic humans, and (3) spiritual friendship. I then envision and analyze how to create brave spaces that encourage open and genuine conversations to foster maximum learning outcomes and meaningful connections among learners through an approach of spiritual critical friendship. I furthermore discuss the cultivation of learners to become more authentically human beings through such learning and connection experiences within and outside classrooms.

Prologue

It was at a class when the instructor told us about the Religious Education Association 2018 conference. An African American colleague responded to part of the conference theme, “Beyond white normativity.” “there’s this song called ‘Whiter than snow.’” “Yes, exactly,” the instructor affirmed. This was followed by excited talk about how such a song re-enforced racism.

However, I was a little upset. Because, this was one of my favorite praising songs at church back in China. I wondered silently: I think the name of song refers to “cleansing our sins. ?” I mean, I especially liked the part of the lyrics of “whiter than snow,” as I desire so: because I wanted to be cleansed by Lord Jesus so thoroughly that I become clean as “whiter than snow.”

Such an occasion confuses me. While it’s hospitable and open to the African American colleagues, I’m not sure my view would be welcomed. I blame myself for lacking “guts” - not daring to utter my thoughts to my colleagues, and to my professor to find out how they would respond.

I found myself wrestling through my thinking: why can’t I? Isn’t this a learning space in which, each of us learners is not only entitled to share our opinions, but is obligated to exchange thoughts on a topic raised by the instructor and/or a colleague for the purpose of learning? But, can I? Would my (“dissident”) question hurt my colleague, or be deemed as disrespectful?

As I reflected on it, my daily prayer from an Orthodox prayer book came to mind: “Lord, give me the strength to be truthful, honest, kind and helpful to others.” I am thinking, what is the help that I need to be able to live out this prayer in this case? How will a genuine conversation take place in and outside classrooms?

Introduction

White normativity is an important research issue in American critical educational research and in various social science disciplines. Yet international students' experience of this phenomenon remains largely unknown.

I understand from the experience of colleagues and myself, who are students from different parts of the world and with different colors of skin, we see white normativity experienced from different angles and levels different from Americans; we experience daily life in America from "outsider" positions. Therefore, I would like to inquire whether the experience of 'white normativity' has emerged, or not, in their experiences, or has been, avoided intentionally in their learning spaces.

I aim to draw on what is learned from these learners to consider what it means to co-create a brave space that fosters maximum learning outcomes and meaningful connections among learners. Ultimately, I hope to find ways to cultivate learners to become more authentically human beings through such learning and connection experiences within and outside classrooms.

Honest expression of opinions around sensitive topics often requires the participants to face challenge, difficulties and controversies. Consequently there is a possibility of feeling discomfort when engaging in the challenge of genuine dialogue around topics like diversity and other sensitive issues.

It calls forth a brave space for students from both abroad and domestically to engage in authentic discussions about such subject as 'white normativity' and other sensitive issues of race and ethnicity. One definition of a brave space is: "wherein students, teachers and citizens generally can come together to have hard conversations and hear each other out - even and especially when that is challenging. This includes the practice of Sitting with Discomfort." (AllSides Dictionary)

Why is it so important for genuine conversations to take place in learning spaces, especially for religious leaders? It meets two urgent needs of this world: 1) meaningful connections, as each person, perhaps, seeks after/is in need of meaningful connections that build virtue, and help the person to connect to God more deeply, and 2) a need to nurture authentic dialogue between different groups in different settings: groups of different generations within one church; different church denominations; different faith traditions; religious communities and secular communities, and so on. To do so, it is fundamental to create a space for religious leaders to develop their capacities for such engagement themselves. From my experience, there remains much potential in the learning spaces in religious and theological education programs to intentionally work towards realizing such potential.

In this research, first, I try to learn about the experience of students from outside America during their study at American religious or theological education programs around three areas: (1) white normativity; (2) becoming authentic humans; and (3) spiritual friendship. I have interviewed four international and immigrant students who are either currently studying at religious or theological education programs in an American institution or have recently finished their graduate study. I then introduce the concepts of critical friendship and spiritual friendship, and try to explore an

approach combining the two in an attempt to create brave spaces to fulfill two purposes. First, to have open, and authentic conversations for optimal learning to occur. Second, to foster greater meaningful connections among the learners.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research methodology. I conducted in-depth interviews with each participant about their experiences. I recruited four international or immigrant students of color as research participants. They are either currently studying at an American religious or theological education program, or recently graduated from such a program. With one participant two interviews were conducted, three with another. The interview durations range from 60 minutes to 120 minutes. Each interview was audio recorded with the participant's permission. The audio records of the interviews were transcribed by the researcher. While reading the transcripts, I highlighted key concepts and significant statements and wrote notes to record initial thoughts about ideas for analyzing the text.

Table 1 below that shows the demographic information of the participants (P):

Participant	Age	International or immigrant student	Country of Origin	Christian Tradition	Gender	Year(s) of residence in the US	Current student & year at the institution Recent graduate/ year of graduation
P1: Allen	46	International	Ghana	Episcopal	M	1	Current student/2 nd year
P2: Ben	45	Immigrant	Nigeria	Catholic	M	10	Current student/2 nd year
P3: Charlie	37	International	Vietnam and France	Methodist	M	12	Current student/3 rd year
P4: Donna	31	Immigrant	Egypt	Catholic Orthodox	F	11	Recent graduate/May 2018

Table 1: Participants of the study (Pseudonyms are used in all tables.)

This research intends to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the participants' experience around white normativity in educational related activities in and outside classrooms?
2. What is the participants' perceptions and experience of 1) becoming more authentic human, and 2) spiritual friendship?
3. How does one create brave space(s) that nurtures authentic encounters, through the lens and approach of spiritual critical friendship?

Findings

I will first report what I found about the experience of the participants of the study. My reported data will be clustered in three groups to demonstrate participants' experience of white normativity, becoming more authentic human and spiritual friendship.

Experiences around white normativity

The definition of white normativity I used is listed below by Kathy Winings (2017):

White normativity is the defining of cultural practices, attitudes, assumptions, and ideologies in the wider society and culture using the white culture as the standard, the norm. A related term *White privilege*, is similar in that there are freedoms, advantages, benefits, access, and opportunities whites enjoy — consciously and unconsciously — that are not necessarily enjoyed to the same degree by other ethnicities. *White supremacy* refers to the system of structural or societal racism that privileges whites, whether or not there is racial hatred present. Regardless of the term used, this is a serious issue in creating a beloved community.

This problem has also continued to haunt our faith-based communities. We have been unable to adequately and fully address white normativity or, using a more common term, whiteness. Whiteness refers to all the ways in which the white culture maintains its privileged status and dominance over and above all other ethnicities and cultures.

The participants have a range of experiences around white normativity. Two out of four said they did not experience white normativity or racism either against them as international students or as immigrants of color, nor in their observation against their colleagues. One reported an incident that occurred to a friend. Another one expressed racism as common experience in American institutions and society. Their reported experience are represented by the interview quotes recorded below.

In response to my questions about whether the experience of 'white normativity' has emerged, or not, in their experiences, or has been, avoided intentionally in learning spaces to these "outsider students," Allen shared:

That experience could be true. But I don't see it at all. Not from my professors. Such as [the professor of] Sacred Theology invites us for dinner all the time, is open to all of us, you don't see any discrimination. No. ... When students talked about it, there are students who are silent, but they did not speak against it. They do not condemn it. They are just quiet.

Allen confirmed in his experience, people can talk about it freely in his learning environments, and such discussions are supported by his "white lecturers":

There is plenty of space for us to discuss issues related to racism, feminism, etc. Professors invite us to speak, and colleagues also asked me to speak up in class. The class discussion is authentic, mutual, open. Lecturers also support it...like

‘that’s a problem we see, and we have to deal with it.’ Many of the complaints were about racism.

Different to Allen, Charlie shared an incident from his friend’s experience of racism manifested in Asian students’ campus lives. In the incident, the friend dropped several drops of fish sauce on the table, the dining area then is covered by the odor. Some students felt uncomfortable and started saying things like “O man, Asian crab again!” “That’s a small example, but it can hurt.” Said Charlie.

Among the participants, Ben expressed strongly racism is part of his experience in American institutions. For instance, he shared that in one of the institutions he studied at, a professor strongly suspected an international student from Africa plagiarized a paper, because the paper was in extraordinary quality. Even if the student showed his manuscript to prove the paper was written by himself, the professor still assigned a very low grade. Ben shared that many African students did not go to graduation ceremony even as their expression about the way they were treated.

Perceptions and experiences around becoming more authentic human being.

Regarding what authentic humans are, Ben said:

An authentic human is being comfortable in your skin, in your position. It’s not like you are bending over. You are who are you. It’s not like you change your skin color. If you are white, leave [it]. But in a way it lifts up the other... You also do not demean the other person. You also see the other as a good, unique person, and open to accept what the other brings.

To Ben, being authentic itself is empowering.

Allen reports: “An authentic human being is someone who lives by the principle of Christ. Someone who (22:20) restores the image of God, There is no life to me, without Jesus Christ, serving God, humanity, that kind of thing. More come to the image of God.”

In response to “Are there experiences of encounters with fellow learners of diverse color, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds that help them become more authentic humans? If so, what are those encounters like?” Ben recalled one incident:

Once I’m in an office. Many people in line, need to get paperwork signed. One big guy came. He’s my professor. He jumped the line. He wanted his paper to be signed [first]. He did it because he’s assuming first, he’s in an authority position; second, professor; third, he’s a big guy; fourth, his task is urgent. I said to him: there are many people staying in line, you either wait at the end of the line, or you speak with them to see whether they agree with your jumping. He went back to the end of the line.

Many years later, I never expected, he came to me to tell me he learned a lesson from my talking to him. It was good to him. He thanked me.

That was a humbling experience, a valuable experience for me. If you ask me where I got the moral courage to do it. I can't explain it. What's more fulfilling to me [is that] I didn't remember, for him to remember to tell me.

Donna shared an experience related to the diversity of being a Sister, but not to do with skin color or the position of being an immigrant or racial outsider, as perceived by her, but more a divergence of different social values that proved challenging for her. This encounter challenged to figure out what her vocation was:

I remember one thing I face at one of my classes in my grad school. It's not because I'm being somebody being an outsider. That's more because I'm a Sister, I face new challenges at school. One of the professors would ask me like why do I want to do this program. For my counseling program, it seems like you have to choose to be a counselor. It's not somebody telling you you need to be a counselor, then you go for school and become a counselor. This is what happened with me, the professor asked me why do you want to be a counselor. I told her, well, because the church told me that I need to have a counseling degree, and that's why I'm doing this program. She said that doesn't work with us, because you have to choose what you want to be, it's that not somebody told you this is what you have to be, and you do it. I told her well...in being a Sister you have to obey, you have to listen, without argument, without like saying this is what I want, this is not what I want.

She felt this is not normal, she felt this is something weird. According to my culture, and my choice of becoming a Sister, this is something normal to me. However this is not for her. So I had a hard time during the 1st year of counseling, because I was trying to figure out if this is something I want to do, or this is something that I was told to do. Then I reached to a point that I figured out this is the right choice, this is something for me to do, this is going to be my life, ...my service; so I have to love it; I have to accept it, and face more about it.

Experience around spiritual friendship

Table 2 below shows the participants' reports on their spiritual friends.

Participants	Spiritual friends	Substitute of Spiritual friends
P1: Allen		student adviser, lecturer, pastor
P2: Ben	St. Teresa of Avila	
P3: Charlie	the friend who witnessed Gospel to him	
P4: Donna		spiritual father and spiritual guide

Table 2: Participants reported spiritual friendship

As shown in Table 2, only one participant asserted he had a spiritual friend. Another participant reported that his spiritual friend is St. Teresa of Avila. The other two

participants have substitute spiritual friends as: spiritual father, spiritual guide, pastor, student adviser and lecturer. Two had a spiritual friend, Ben and Charlie.

Charlie who reported he has a spiritual friend says that this was one of the friends who witnessed to him the Christian faith, and from then there was a special bond between them. His understanding of spiritual friend is “there is a special bond between the participants, namely Lord Jesus, and because of this bond, one needs to be responsible for what s/he shares about with the friend. It needs to be for the purpose of lifting up the partner.” He furthermore reported that he wouldn’t call his spiritual friend a best friend. A best friend is someone he “can talk with anytime, who would visit him at 4am, and who he knows that would drop everything to come to him if he asks.”

In summary, three out of four participants expressed they “know how to tackle spiritual issues” and “deal with life.” They do that largely by themselves. Two out of four participants expressed a barrier, or lack of opportunity to share personal struggles and weaknesses, or personal needs with fellow learners or people around, due to the leadership or role model position they have. In that role, people look up to them and get counsel from them. For instance, in response to my question: do you have the type of friends that you would share personal things? Donna gave the account below:

I have a spiritual guide and I speak with her. But I wouldn’t say I have a friend that I would share things with them. Spiritual guidance, yes. Because living a religious life it’s a bit difficult, it’s not like a regular person, where I can share whatever I want, with my friends, no I can’t. Because people would look at me as an ideal example for them... and I think to share my weakness or my struggles in life with them would cheat my image of a Sister to them.

I talk to people about stuff, but I can’t share my personal experience with them, or I have to be wise enough because people would still look at me as like an idol...If I’m struggling with that... then I’ll change their beliefs. I have to be wise to not say such things, because I could lose them. They could lose their own faith. I don’t want to be that person that would drag them to that.

Allen, responded:

With colleagues, we talk about spiritual things. But it’s not about addressing [my] personal or spiritual needs. No. usually It’s often about their questions. They want to speak. They want to do something. They know I’m a pastor. They want my thoughts.

Ben shared “payer is friendship. I take it very seriously.” He prays all the time. He responded: “Yes, I do. [I have spiritual friend(s).] Spiritual friends include also the saints. For instance, I have St. Teresa of Avila as a spiritual friend.” He said at his “developmental level” he knew how to cope with the situations (as opposed when being a child he cried a lot.)

Analysis

I will focus on how learning and development occurs from participants’ experiences of becoming more authentic human beings and spiritual friendships, in order to analyze how an approach of spiritual critical friendship can achieve the purposes of

the study: build greater meaningful connections among learners, foster brave spaces for open and authentic conversations for maximum learning to occur, and ultimately, cultivate learners to become more authentically human beings through such learning and connection experiences within and outside classrooms.

Four noticeable elements about how participants learn and grow emerged from the participants' reported experience. First, all four participants in facing critical incidents during their graduate study or life have gone to another being, someone other than themselves, for help, support and feedback. This critical part of the exploration led to these outcomes: solution, illumination that answers their quests, or a companion and support as both process and end.

Second, it appears that both triggers and outcomes of learning involve the critical thinking process. Participants' assumptions were revealed, challenged, and illuminated by questions raised by their professor, friends or colleagues. The given feedback appeared to be honest expressions rooted in the value held by the persons whom the participants spoke with.

Third, the give-and-take feedback between the participants and the party they met with took place in personal interaction.

Fourth, regarding how spiritual friendships help cultivate the participants' growth and development, the common features are: (1) from the content of the topic under discussion, (2) from the trust and the bond with the spiritual friendship, and (3) the type of questions their friends asked, and how the questions were asked. The concern, care and love bore in the questions and the way they are presented; how well the friends listened to them and gave feedback to encourage further thought.

Discussion

According to the themes emerged, I see a few opportunities to utilize learning to cultivate growth and help participants to become more authentic humans.

In the act of reaching out, common to all participants, they were triggered by a life event, driven by an innate human drive, then reached out to a trustful party for support and feedback. This effort of connecting and communicating with another being was clearly a critical step that lead to the learning outcomes. Therefore, the act of reaching out, and the communication process between the participants and those who they connected with proved to be a learning activity.

When subjects communicate with one another, the "between-human" (Buber 1962, p. 298) of the subjects becomes an co-created interpersonal space of connection and communication, that allows the life experience of the subjects to be shared, listened to, reflected upon and supportive and critical feedback to be provided by a fellow human. This relational space functions as a holding space characterized by balanced challenge and support. (as cited in Woo, 2012, p. 829)

This poses two opportunities to me: first, an approach that can replicate a similar environment to foster the learning processes during a time of disorientation. Second, it

is worth to intentionally creating this environment for the purpose of a “greater good” – cultivation of the authenticity in the learners, and foster learning and growth to the maximum inside and outside classrooms.

Based on practice and experience, I envision a framework combining critical friendship and spiritual friendship to be applied in learning and in life to cultivate the learning outcomes. In next section I will discuss this approach.

What spiritual critical friendship looks like

As the starting point of an approach to spiritual critical friendship is “friendship,” I’ll start from the concept of friends. According to Handal (1999),

Friends are people who are close to us, who support us, and who provide confirmation. They often disregard our weak points or excuse them rather than confront us with them. Criticism is generally conveyed by others who are not as close to us, perhaps our supervisors or representatives of viewpoints different from our own. But in fact a real friend is someone to rely on, someone who will hold a critical mirror before us if necessary. (p. 63)

The statement above discusses the “sweetness” of friends that supports us without being critical towards us. Meanwhile it points out opportunities contained in being a “real friend” to help a friend to grow by “holding a critical mirror.” I suppose such opportunities are most available to those who are at the position of friends to one. Ones who are close enough to see, and hold the mirror for us.

This points to a fundamental reason for the need of “real friend.” A simple yet basic human reality is we are limited in our perspectives, knowledge, ways of thinking; we are imperfect in our ways of being. Please imagine, if our limits, weaknesses and mistakes that we are blind about are to be revealed, how would you like it to happen? Wouldn’t it be better if we are told such reality about our limitations by a real friend, who loves and cares for us and advocates for our successes.

Critical friendship theory

According to Costa and Kallick (1993), a critical friend is:

A trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critique of work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work. (as cited in Storey & Richard, 2013, p. 17)

The critical friendship approach holds a tension: “high degree of unconditional positive regard” and “critics that can be conditional, negative and intolerant of failure” for the good of, success of the work of the friend. It provides a structure for a pair, a few or a group of learners to engage in interactive reflection to review a situation or an experience, to solicit feedback in an intentionally built relational space. Each activity in the Critical Friends group (CFG) model “contains elements of careful

description, enforced thoughtful listening, and then questioning feedback.” These are the basic elements of reflection. A CFG protocol entails five steps (Storey and Richard, 2013):

- 1) *Presentation of the dilemma/issue*;
- 2) *Probing session*: for the critical friends to ask questions to fully understand the context of the situation, the task at hand and the outcomes that the learner is working toward;
- 3) *Warm, positive feedback*: supportive, appreciative statements about the work presented;
- 4) *Cool or more distanced feedback*: offers different ways to think about the work presented and/or raises questions;
- 5) *Challenge/hard feedback*: challenges and extends the presenter's thinking and/or raises concerns.”

In general, this process uses time limits and agreed-upon purpose and norms as a structure to help learners to focus on their interactive reflection process, and prevents “the rush-to-comment approach that our busy lives seem to promote.” (Storey and Richard, 2013)

What’s particular about the critical friendship approach is that its process focuses on “developing collegial relationships, encouraging reflective practice, and rethinking leadership.” This process is carried out through cooperative adult learning, interactive reflective practices and critical feedback providing.

While the CFG approach is widely used in the educational world for teacher training, and students learning enhancement, I argue and advocate that it can be taken a step further in a religious education contexts – towards practice and deepening spiritual friendship.

Spiritual friendship

Spiritual friendship involves a transcendental being in the midst of the participants in addition to the other elements of friendship. The essence of Christian spiritual friendship is: “Here we are, you and I, and... a third, Christ, is in our midst.” as claimed by Aelred (p. 51) Spiritual friendship functions to cultivate the participants towards deeper connections with the transcendental being. The maturity of the participants develops in proportion to their connection to the transcendental being.

I envision that the application of the CFG approach deepens spiritual friendship among learners, to enhance the learning efficacy in religious and theological educational scenarios. Based on the participants’ reports, and literature, what forms and sustains spiritual friendship includes the topic under discussion, the consciousness and the function of the spiritual bond created by the transcendental being in partnership with the participants in the midst of the friendship. Consequently, a dynamic among learners with spiritual friendships consists of two active relationships: one, an intentional, interpersonal partnership between the participating subjects with the transcendental being for building up the friend(s); two, a relationship between the friend(s) that lifts both up towards greater awareness, tapping into and ascension towards the transcendental being.

Spiritual and critical friendship and adult learning

It must be made clear that CFG consists of basic elements of reflection: careful description, thoughtful listening and then questioning feedback. It is critical to first of all conduct attentive and thoughtful listening. But the discussion in this article will focus on questioning feedback.

The essential way for adults to continue to learn is through incidental learning from experience. Learning occurs when one links one's experience to one's belief system in reflective practices. Further, having access to feedback that is "constructive, descriptive, and useful is crucial in supporting greater learning and deeper understanding," as reported in National School Reform Faculty (2012). (Storey and Richard, 2013, p. 18)

Comprehensive, truthful and constructive critical feedback is essential to facilitate different dimensions of learning and development: knowing, doing and being. For example, to a finished task, the feedback that facilitates learning and development effectively includes: descriptions about what is done well so the learner should continue doing, and what are the improvement opportunities along with helpful resources.

Learning how to provide *descriptive and constructive* critical feedback is crucial to foster learning and growth. It is not easy job to either provide or receive feedback. One necessary feedback to enhance learning is critical feedback. McGuire and Inlow contend, "Participants are often unwilling or uneasy about participating in two essential pieces of the interactive reflection process: giving and receiving critical feedback." Page and Hulse-Killacky (1999) report that even in situations designed for group and individual learning, people are quite fearful and hesitant about giving critical feedback... When critical feedback is presented, participants often become quite defensive and angry." (P. 372)

It is understandable the closer it gets to the core of the person – the being, the more challenging it is to receive and give critical feedback. Fear of critical feedback can stop learners from opening up, having authentic conversations with fellow learners and thus are diminished in their learning potentials. However, practice giving and receiving "corrective feedback" in a group learning environment will help learners "overcoming the common fear of giving negative feedback, confronting beliefs about oneself, learning to give feedback in ways that help people learn, and seeing the impact one's own behavior has on others," claimed by Page and Hulse-Killacky (1999) (as cited by McGuire and Inlow, 2005.)

To become more authentic human being entails constant integration of one's way of being with knowing and doing. A critical learning task is self-awareness. Knowing the self is inseparable from learning from a mirror - the eyes of others as we are limited in our own view. Graph 1 below, a version of the Johari Window illustrates the dynamic of "knowing (learning) and feedback" about the "self."

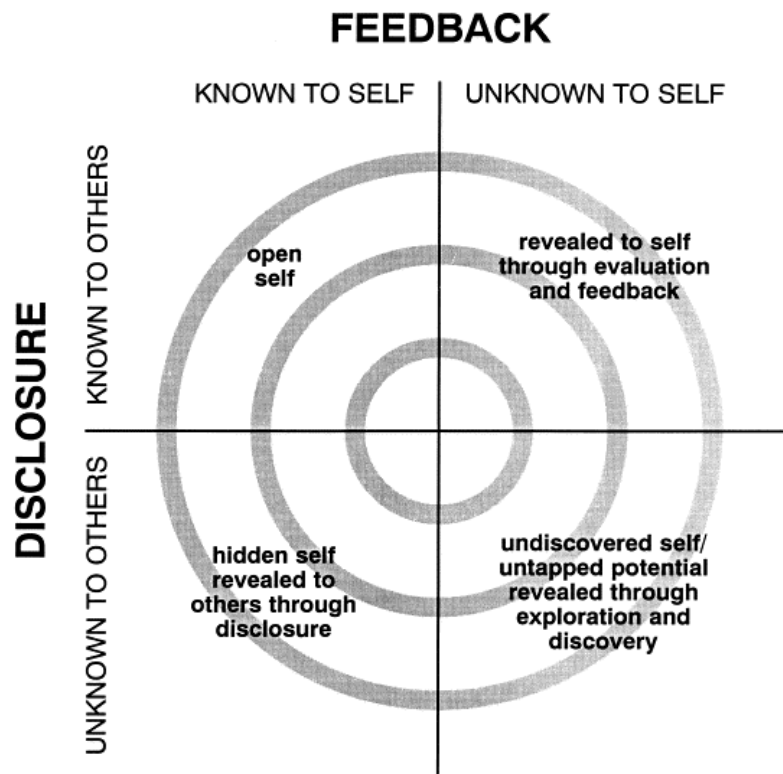


Figure 1 Johari Window

Graph 1 reveals these truths: First, there are things about ourselves that we do not know, but are known by others. Second, such hidden truths about ourselves can be learned from feedback from those who know them (remember the “real friend” as one who holds a “critical mirror” before us, see page 9.) People who we interact with more and at greater depth likely know more about some hidden truths about us. I suggest that this learning most optimally takes place in the realm of spiritual friendship, given the space is guarded and guided by the Spirit.

I see two potentials to cultivate spiritual critical friendship in a religious education environment. First, spiritual friendship features the participants relating to the transcendental being while they relate to one another. This living Being works as a “catalyst” in the relational space of the learners. So from the outset the learners have an enabler helping them to solicit and provide feedback. Second, it is a golden opportunity for the learners to develop their leadership potential by engaging in such learning activities: to attain greater self-knowledge and to practice humbleness and courage - being intentionally open to being more vulnerable to disclose more of the self, and so to be able to better connect with fellow learners at a deeper level. I see such leadership qualities and experiences essential for religious leaders to grow. Engaging in the learning environment this way is one way to grow such qualities intentionally.

Last, I’d like to share some of my experience of exploring spiritual critical friendship, how I found that it enhances learning, and cultivates growth and development.

An excerpt from a reflective journal that records one most profound learning experience I have during my graduate study:

...In tears, I talked with one peer learner, Ann, my confusions, asking for her feedback. It turned out that this conversation was a hugely helpful peer coaching to me. She shared with me her similar experience at work, and how she dealt with it.... It was especially helpful to rehearse a prospect way to respond to the situation with Ann. It further produced a more meaningful connection that likely leads to future mutual support and development between Ann and I. Through this peer coaching, I was supported and helped emotionally, enhanced knowledge and skill, and it produced a deeper relationship. I can't be more thankful for this encounter. Ann was an angel-like colleague God sent me in an oppressive incident. The peer coaching turned this "dark experience" into a profound learning experience to me. Based on the reflection Ann and I did together, I then sent to the instructor of the class a record and reflection of this incident in class, with the thought this might be useful for her future reference in supporting learners.

This encounter worked as a starting point towards critical friendship. After this, I'm open to Ann to receive and give her critical feedback.

A most profound transformational growth experience I have was from communicating with Vivian was from communicating with Vivian, a friend-like mentor who I met in a study program at church. A particular way she serves is through building spiritual friendships with fellow female believers. She related to me as an authentic person. She shared her weakness with me. Meanwhile, clearly she executed ability and maturity to build me up, especially spiritually. During a sorrowful occasion in my life, my attention was largely around rejection. Vivien, said to me during a long conversation, in her typical gentle yet firm voice: "Lord Jesus was alone, as he was abandoned by the whole world, when he was on the cross." – It was such a gentle brook that flowed into me, a meek light that enlightened my whole being. For the first time, I experienced at the bottom of a valley, I was lifted up to a deeper awareness, and connection with God, through a new perspective that points to a critical reality. From then on, a new door has opened to me: to taste and share the experience of Lord through personal experience of sufferance.

These friendships give me a taste and hope for spiritual critical friendship. I was supported by the friendship. The friends accepted me with hospitality, meanwhile "held the critical mirror for me," and shared a perspective where God was reflected. Through interactive reflection, I received constructive and critical feedback that helps me to experience the following learning outcomes:

Greater self-understanding

Increased knowledge of situations

Skills of communication and interaction with fellow humans

Greater understanding of God, and ways to relate to and interact with God

Greater trust in God

Critical thinking skills enhancement

Becoming more true to oneself

Creating brave spaces through spiritual critical friendship

I will try to lay out the basic elements in creating brave space(s) that nurture authentic encounters, through the lens and approach of spiritual critical friendship in this section.

The relational space created by spiritual friendship is characterized by: (1) the transcendental being permeates in the midst the relationship as a replied-upon, enabling force, thus “a special connection at play between the participants,” such as the “special bond” between Charlie and his spiritual friend; (2) a like spirit and like mindedness in the participants paves the way for receiving and giving the needed feedback. These together invite and encourage the “hidden self” to walk into a gentle light, for joy and growing into a more integrated, authentic person.

This space created by spiritual critical friendship, is a brave space, that invites and enables the participants to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) – to provide the needed feedback to facilitate and help fellow learners to learn and grow. This is a process of learning. It invites the participants to strive for such practice: the thinking and feeling person be present to the fellow learners first and foremost, conduct attentive and thoughtful listening, asking caring questions and have interactive reflection, and then give feedback. (Jung, 2018) All these are to be practiced in love.

For me, this is (more) possible in spiritual friendship, each participant, enabled by the transcendental being, effectively partners with the transcendental being to take the responsibility for a spiritual friend: to diligently grow to become a spiritual friend. For me, this entails:

- First and foremost trying one’s best to seek after presence of God, to union with God. Rooted in, guarded and guided by the Spirit, then:
- Learn, and practice being gentle to the friend(s) all the time
- Caring for the friend (by prayer and/or showing the care to the friend)
- Learn about the friends’ concerns (his/her tasks at hand, etc.)
- Keeping the friend accountable in love, including “care enough to confront.”
- If possible, try to become “best friend” of the spiritual friend as well, according to what that means to the friend.

Specific in communication between spiritual friends, such contents are to be communicated intentionally:

To draw on the power of *attention*:

- meaning making of daily experience in light of God
- make “spiritual bouquet” from the experience (St. Francis De. Sales)
- how it connects to one’s vocation
- make resolution
- each participant shares about same time length (e.g. each one spends 30 ms.)

I believe one way to address the societal structural phenomenon of white normativity is to work with individual persons and our classes through “one being influences

another being in interactions.” Such influences take place in the intersubjective space in daily interactions. Perhaps we could try to grasp such deeply meaningful opportunities by developing spiritual critical friendship. I would like to invite readers of this article to consider: how would you grasp such deeply meaningful opportunities? What will your version of spiritual critical friendship look like?

Reference:

- Aelred of Rievaulx (1974). *On Spiritual friendship*. (M. E. Laker, Trans.). Washington, D.C.: Cistercian Publications, Consortium Press.
- Brave Space. (n.d.). In *AllSides Dictionary online*. Retrieved from <https://www.allsides.com/dictionary/brave-space>
- Handal, G. (1999, Autumn). Consultation using critical friends. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 79, 59–70.
- Jung, J. J. (2018). *The lost discipline of conversation: Surprising lessons in spiritual formation drawn from the English puritans*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.
- McGuire, A. P., & Inlow, L. (2005, Spring). Interactive Reflection as a Creative Teaching Strategy, *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 22, (3), 365-379.
- Manning, P. R. (2018). Mediating fruitful encounters with truth, transcendence, and difference by teaching critical thinking, *Religious Education*, DOI: 10.1080/00344087.2018.1456107
- Page, B. J., & Hulse-Killacky, D. (1999). Development and Validation of the Corrective Feedback Self-Efficacy Instrument. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 24, 37–54.
- Storey, V. A. & Richard, B. M. (2013). Critical friends groups: moving beyond mentoring. In V. A. Storey ((Eds.), *Redesigning professional education doctorates: Applications of critical friendship theory to the EdD* (pp. 9-23). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- K Winings. (2017, November 27). The challenges in addressing white normativity. Retrieved from <https://appliedunificationism.com/2017/11/27/the-challenges-in-addressing-white-normativity/comment-page-1/>
- Woo, J. (2012). ‘Inclusion’ in Martin Buber’s dialogue pedagogy. *Z Erziehungswiss*, 15, 829–84. DOI 10.1007/s11618-012-0327-3
- St. Francis De. Sales (1955). *Introduction to the devout life*. (J. K. Ryan, Trans.). Image Books

Prof.Dr. Mualla Selçuk

Ankara University

selcuk@divinity.ankara.edu.tr

Teaching Beyond Normativity: What Opportunities Does Religious Education have to Create Brave Spaces and Overcome Cultural Biases?

Abstract

In His Farewell Sermon delivered in AD 632 Prophet Muhammed is reported to have declared “All humankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab also a white has no superiority over a black except by piety (taqwa) and good action.”

In this paper I will examine the content and construction of whiteness not as a matter of color or a racial category. Rather whiteness, here, will serve as a normative function by defining the expected or dominant range of human conducts and the norms of an authoritative culture.

What does it mean when we define white normativity in terms of culture? How do we make that determination, and what does it imply? These questions have different implications in different context. In this presentation whiteness defines what we call “the normal” or strongly approved behaviors. Whiteness encompasses normativity and is used as the standard and as the norm. White normativity may have arisen in part from the numerical superiority. There is a need of addressing all forms of discrimination against any supremacy in education. Subsequently, the issue of gender inequality could be considered as a target of whiteness.

Paper:

A gender blind education of teacher training

The Islamic religious education as currently theorized and practiced is limited in its capacity to contribute to promote human rights in general and gender equality in particular. I see women’s rights as the most burning human rights issue in Turkey where I am from. As a matter of fact, Turkey has historically been engaged in international legal frameworks of human rights. Non-discrimination and equality between women and men are considered as the main principles in legislation. All individuals are equal without any discrimination before the law, irrespective of language, race, color, sex, political opinion, philosophical belief, religion and sect or any such considerations. Yet, women are still victims of discrimination at work, at home and in the society. Women suffer violations of their human rights in their whole lives. Gender inequality, combating violence against women, honor killings, forced and early marriage remain major challenges in terms of human rights. The oppression on women is one of the most unaddressed issues in religious education. Although there have certainly been things to celebrate such as overwhelming number of girls schooling and the rapidly rising awareness towards gender discrimination because of the feminist movement but if we look at the big picture women still get a very raw deal.

How can religious education address this depressing situation?

What is the role of RE in helping Muslim women to live authentically human?

What is the appropriate approach in going beyond the restricted grounds of normativity in terms of interpretations of religious sources?

How do women resist the power that comes with hegemony and cultural codes created by patriarchal society?

Islam is condemned by some as blocking the way. Some use the poor status of women in Muslim societies as justification for their reaction. Others derive conclusions from the literal interpretations of the Quran defining women as weak and inferior to men! Some depend on traditional perceptions which portray women as inherently evil, intellectually incapable, and spiritually lacking. Some find a woman's character may be lacking in situations that require testimony and responsibility. They may even claim that women are unsuitable for performing certain tasks or for functioning in certain ways in society. There are those who are not satisfied with the situation, oppose the socially created forms of discriminations and feel responsible to overcome the barriers and the prejudice, yet they do not have a strong religiously supported voice.

As a practicing Muslim woman and a lecturer of religious education my faith pushed me to engage with the following questions during my teaching:

- Does the Qur'anic text serve to oppress or liberate people especially women?
- Where is women's voice in the history of the tradition and today?

Developing a Teacher Training Model

These sorts of perceptions and discourses exemplified above, inspired me some years ago to give more importance to the relationship between the text and context in my courses. As I explored these questions it became increasingly clear to me I was tasked to develop a training model of establishing ground rules to help my student teachers engage with one another over the controversial issues in Islam such as gender equality, jihad, politics and other religions. In doing so, firstly I challenged the prevailing knowledge structure of the students and the "normative claims", that is at a level of accepting everything literally and without questioning. Because the students needed to face the living tradition before opening the floor to critical reflection. They needed to acknowledge the fact that the knowing subject is temporal and is a historical being. How we know is rooted in who we are and at which time we live. There is a strong bound between our being in time and place and our way of knowing. Our knowledge is constructed. It is not given but contextual. It is not absolute, not fixed but mutable. Context is the social cultural location of the knower and has a profound effect on knowledge and the way of knowing.

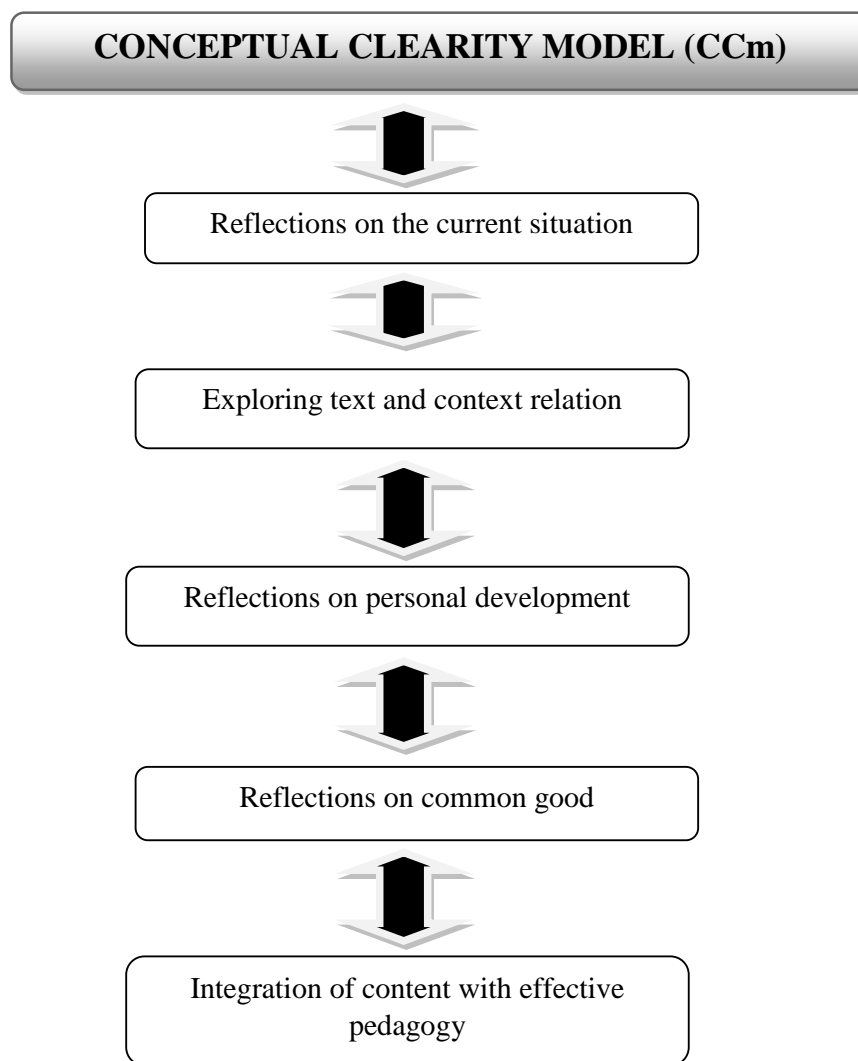
I gave a high degree of emphasis in my courses to the social-historical context of the Qur'anic passages, taking into consideration the view of the first addressees as well as the whole life of the Prophet and his life practices/praxis. My hope was to help my students come to a broader understanding of the Quran. A more holistic understanding would pave a better way of translating the meaning of the text into the context of today. Otherwise their understanding of the text would be insufficient and incomplete. They may even do injustice to the text by driving rigid rules from it.

My work, throughout the time has involved into further steps of exploring how we might reconceive Islamic Religious Education to offer a fresh insight into God-human being relationship through a personal quest and a search for common good. Because one of the big challenges, and hopefully achievements was not only a matter of creating sound interpretations but also to structure those interpretations into a teachable format.

This paper will propose a teacher training model coined by the presenter as Conceptual Clarity Model (CCm) to put forward how the universal vision of the text can help students to move beyond normativity and open up themselves to a new horizon and a decisive direction in general and towards gender equality in particular. The aim is to present at REA this model and discuss its dimensions with the invited colleagues.

Description of the Key Aspects and the Aims of the Model

As shown below the model has 5 key aspects, reflections on the current situation, exploring text and context relation, reflections on personal development, reflections for common good, integration of the content with an effective pedagogy.



Before presenting a brief overview of the model I have a focus particularly on “reflective thinking”. Recently, reflective thinking became a very popular expression among religious education teachers and it is highly underlined in almost every subjects of the curriculum in teaching religion. Here we need to remind ourselves that reflection is not an intellectual act

only. The Qur'an values reflective thinking and presents it as a psychological process and also as an action-oriented and historically embedded act.¹

Reflections on the current situation. Not all students will have the same degree of knowledge over the issue. This is a phase in which students uncover the much of the pre knowledge they have in stock, bring their living experiences, their common codes of conduct, reflect on their feelings and action regarding the issue. They explain common understanding and practices around the issue, question on what is the evidence of their understanding, what experiences promote this understanding and behaviors. To lead a discussion of ongoing argumentations around the issue, teachers could ask such questions:

What is happening? What do people think and say? How do they behave? What do they believe and what do they value?

Shortly, this is a phase of collecting ready-made answers or inspirations from existing success to provide foods for thoughts and pushing students to move from their comfort zone.

Exploring of text and context relationship. A historical- critical analysis where the students uncover the spirit of the text and develop the ability of discerning messages that are directed to the original hearers of a specific time and place and those that are intended for general audiences of every time and place. It is crucial for teachers to develop contextual thinking in a discursive tradition which has produced historically contingent categorizations of doctrines and practices. The historical-critical study takes place around the questions of what happened before and during the time of the Prophet? What did the Qur'an bring to the fore? What developed in history? What are the essentials for today? and more.

The objectives in terms of developing students' skills are:

- Experiencing that the context is the background and the horizon at the same time.
- Gaining a broader perspective on the ethos of the knowledge in the Quran as well as its moral and intellectual grounding.
- Being aware of the link between past, present and future while communicating with the text.

Reflections on personal development. This is a phase where the student has an option to ask the question of what does all mean to me personally?

- Teachers will develop students' knowledge and understanding about:
- Ways to enhance the role of religion in personal development
- The meaning of being steward on earth

¹ *And all things we have created by pairs that haply, you may reflect. (51/49)*

Do they not reflect on the Qur'an? Or are there locks open their hearts? (47/24)

Man should reflect on what he/she was created from. (86/5)

Will you not then reflect? (37/155)

And verily you know the first creation. Why, then, you do not reflect? (56/62)

-The meaning of “knowing yourself”

-The relation between socially or culturally behaviors and personal choices

The students should be concerned about the human tendency that resides in mind and heart to reveal the role of feelings, deliberations, values, and commitments such as our tendency to perceive ourselves favorably and ignore the situations of others. Or in other words, we judge ourselves according our ideals and judge others according to their wrong actions!

Some questions to raise awareness in this key learning could be:

Is there any relation between religion and prejudice? What are the experiences that may shape prejudice? What are the negative feelings that are sometimes just felt internally and sometimes expressed openly? What are the examples of faulty generalizations to certain groups or individuals? What are the discriminative behaviors as well as thoughts and feelings towards race, gender, disabled, sexual orientations, faiths and religions?

Reflections for common good. This phase is a search for a theology which has a public language and develop students’ appreciation of and commitment to socially just ways of living. Skills in forming and maintaining positive relationship towards other need to be improved.

Without delivering static ”truths” or determined attitudes teachers should encourage students through raising concern for the welfare, rights and dignity of all people and how equity is effected by cultural norms and social practices..

Some leading search questions and themes could be:

As people of faith how can we contribute to the common good and become caring members of the society? What are the means? What are the characteristics of a relation involving intimacy, commitment and permanency? Does social distance affect our acceptance of the different?

In this regard, students become involved in finding out examples of narratives, tales and symbols from the history of religions that were meant to shape social structures; in examining carefully and critically social practices so as to identify the causes and the possible results of promoting oppressions of other groups and viewing the other as a threat; in analyzing the harmful consequences of seeing the world literally in black and white and having the mindset which classifies people as those who are acceptable and those who are not; in examining exaggerated beliefs that members of a group possess a certain trait that defines the group. e.g., all Muslims are...., all Hindus are....

Integration of content with effective pedagogy. This phase is where students work to maintain integrity between faith and life.

Teacher should make sure that accurate picture is being gained for understanding the uniqueness of each person and show that people are more than a single story. Furthermore, teachers should enrich the experiences of what it means to be fully human.

The following questions may assist in ensuring that the information explored is relevant:

What is it that exactly a Muslim believes? What is the main drive of the mind and the heart towards the Divine?

What underlying commitments about faith, knowledge and education at work? So that students can grow in what Islam calls *musalama* (i.e., a peaceful relationship with God, with oneself, with others and the creation).

Each of five aspects is important in its own right. Teachers may use one aspect or a combination of several, or use it as a whole depending on their aims and objectives in which they intend to develop students' skills, knowledge and attitudes regarding the issue.

Creating Brave Spaces Using Conceptual Clarity Model

To keep the model from being too abstract, in this section, I discuss the common rules and characteristics of Conceptual Clarity by giving the example of the status of woman in the Qur'an. Within the time and space constraints I will demonstrate how this model might be used on the exploring text and context relationship aspect. This phase, encompasses two elements: Epistemology and Pedagogy.

Epistemology: That is what is known and how what is known can be known. Any concept of learning from religion depends on being clear about what teachers know about it. Teachers' mastery of content should be attended to. Subject content in Islamic religious education seems to be an area which is not clear enough in teachers' minds. We need to develop an explanatory theological framework for the teachers to enable them to present the content in such an appropriate way that pupils could beneficially learn about and from it.

Teachers should create a theological framework within a chronological and historical context. In order to understand the Qur'anic verse some must know the Arabian Peninsula, the context where the Quran was revealed, in respect to its geographical, cultural, social, political, economic and religious aspects. The historical context must be known in order to understand the Quran better, which was revealed to be understood with facts and culture playing an obvious role in the formation of the divine text. The sequence of events and dates are important in ascertaining the relationship between the events, since the chronology is an important key for the interpretation in determining the reasons and effects. The events in history can be explained in the context of causality. The events have a background. It is not possible to analyze any event properly, unless background is enlightened. Though the dating of the Qur'an is not easy, a chronology can be accomplished largely in the light of sources of history of Islam and the sources on the occasions of the Revelation (*Asbab-ı Nuzul* in Arabic).

Pedagogy: That is the communication about and the critical reflection on what is known. Here theological foundations of the content must be secured to provide the learners a base to reflect on.

The leading idea of the communicative model is (1) to get the teachers to think about the historical context of the Qur'anic verses (2) to provide them with a universal theological vision of the text that will allow them to approach the actual context.

Thus teachers and students will have the opportunity to encounter the principles behind the literal meaning of the text and explore what social position their faith attributes to itself in a plural society. The advantage of this religious pedagogy is that plurality is taken seriously and the religious knowledge needs to be contextualized for transformation and change.

What Does the Qur'an say about woman?

(1) Epistemological Framework

This level of information requires scholarly ways of communicating with the text for a deeper understanding of how to engage the students with the core message of the Qur'an.

The following verses uncover the basic aims of the Qur'an:

- Yea, indeed: everyone who surrenders his whole being unto God, and is a doer of good withal, shall have his reward with his Sustainer; and all such need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve. (2/ 112)
- [But,] behold, as for those who say, Our Sustainer is God, and then steadfastly pursue the right way - upon them do angels often descend, [saying:] Fear not and grieve not, but receive the glad tiding of that paradise which has been promised to you! (41/30)
- Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has Faith, verily, to him will We give a new Life, a life that is good and pure and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions. (17/ 97)
- O mankind! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God is all-knowing, all-aware. (13)
- To a happy state shall indeed attain the one who causes this [self] to grow in purity.(91/9)
- ...and persevere in doing good, behold, God loves the doers of good. (2/195)

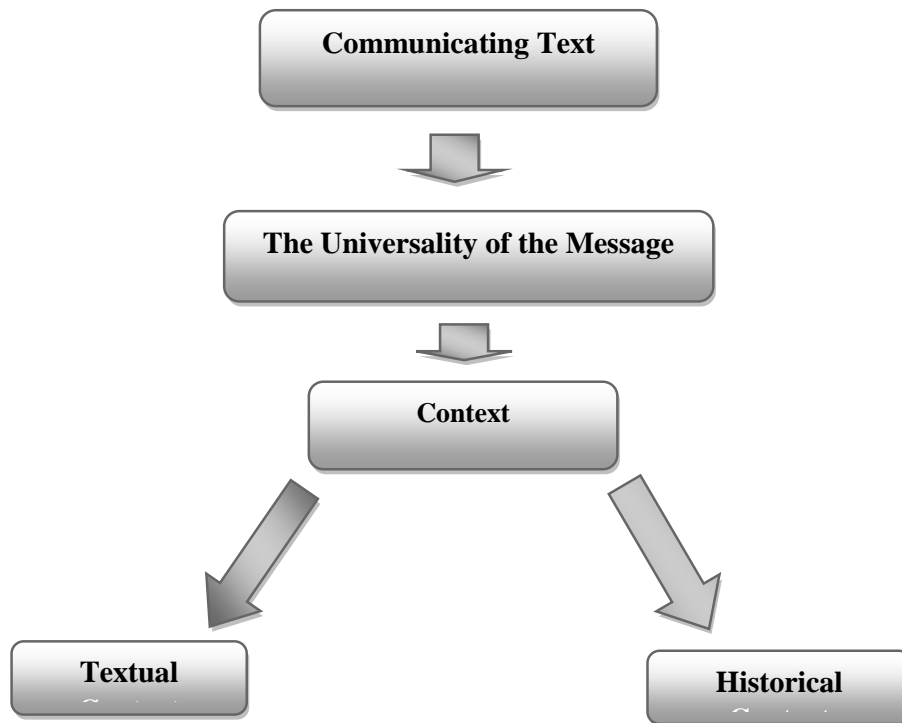
The following verses could provide an insight about gender equality and the notion of individuality:

- O Mankind! Be conscious of your Sustainer, who has created you out of one living entity, and out of it created its mate, and out of the two spread abroad a multitude of men and women. (4/ 1)
- I will not allow the deeds of any of you to be lost, whether you are male or female, each is like the other. (3/95)
- The Believers, men and women, are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, pay the poor-due, and obey Allah and His Messenger. On them will Allah pour His mercy: for Allah is Mighty, Wise. ((9/71)

It is important to note that actions have no gender:

- Verily, for all men and women who have surrendered themselves unto God, and all believing men and believing women, and all truly devout men and truly devout women, and all men and women who are true to their word, and all men and women who are patient in adversity, and all men and women who humble themselves [before God], and all men and women who give in charity, and all self-denying men and self-

denying women, and all men and women who are mindful of their chastity, and all men and women who remember God unceasingly: for [all of] them has God readied forgiveness of sins and a mighty reward. (33/ 35)



An illustration of how to examine the role of context

Working on the following verses teachers could explain the power of context and help students realize how culture influences the way people learn, perceive, categorize, believe and behave under different circumstances. Analyses made through the lens of culture about the values of the audience, their social roles in the society, and the codes of interpersonal communication will broaden students' understanding.

- And they assign daughters for Allah. - Glory be to Him! - and for themselves what they desire! When news is brought to one of them, of (the birth of) a female (child), his face darkens, and he is filled with inward grief! (16/57-58)
- And call upon two of your men to act as witnesses; and if two men are not available, then a man and two women from among such as are acceptable to you as witnesses, so that if one of them should make a mistake, the other could remind her. (2/282)
- Men shall take full care of women with the bounties which God has bestowed more abundantly on the former than on the latter, and with what they may spend out of their possessions. And the righteous women are the truly devout ones, who guard the intimacy which God has [ordained to be] guarded. (4/34)
- Never has God endowed any man with two hearts in one body: and [just as] He has never made your wives whom you may have declared to be as unlawful to you as your mothers' bodies [truly] your mothers, so, too, has He never made your adopted sons [truly] your sons: these are but [figures of] speech uttered by your mouths - whereas

God speaks the [absolute] truth: and it is He alone who can show [you] the right path. (33/4)

- ...but if you have reason to fear that you might not be able to treat them with equal fairness, then [only] one - or [from among] those whom you rightfully possess (4/3) ; And it will not be within your power to treat your wives with equal fairness, however much you may desire it... (4/129)
- O Children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover your shame, as well as to be an adornment to you. But the raiment of righteousness,- that is the best. Such are among the Signs of Allah, that they may receive admonition! (7/ 26)

(2) Pedagogy towards Contextualization

Students are encouraged to engage with the sort of questions below so that they reflect upon the social, political, historical, religious and textual contexts in which the core message of the Qur'an is embedded. Furthermore, they develop their ability to discern between the local and time-bond dimension of the text and its universal ethos.

What is the meaning of the text for the first addressee?

What were the cultural norms at that time?

What is the nature of the message? Is it a legal, ethical or theological text?

Is it universal or particular to a specific situation?

How could the message be related to the universal objectives of the Quran?

How was the message applied at that time and what were its different applications throughout history? How could we apply it to our contemporary context?

What do you think about the universality and the specificity of the message?

Can you propose some examples of applications for today?

Can you suggest alternative ways of understanding the text?

Can you suggest alternative ways of understanding the text?

These questions create an understanding around the context of the verses which could be considered as historical and lead to the exploration of the universal vision of the message. Regarding the issue of gender, students usually come up with a sufficient and necessary conclusion for generating an understanding that women and men are equal in the eye of God, all humans are sacred and the Divine will ask respecting a person's dignity whether woman or man. Teachers may demonstrate this fundamental truth in their educational efforts and make necessary strides to move forward by using the other phases of the model.

When you change your practice you change your education

Teaching and learning practices through CCm;

- provide a deeper, more extensive and systematized knowledge and understanding for teachers when they are often overwhelmed with the daunting task of answering the question of why am I teaching this?

- assist students to widen their perspectives and helps them take an epistemic stance on conversations about meaningful relations towards God, themselves, the other and the creation.

- help to correct the misconceptions and develop scholarly religious thinking

- contribute to students' personal, social and moral development

The model comes from many years of my researching and teaching about “basic concepts of Islam within the internal and the external factors of learning environment”, all in an attempt to give sufficient breadth to Islamic Religious Education that opens up a space to mutual understanding which the Qur'an defines as *taaruf*. In its creating process I built on the gained knowledge and experiences in the field of human science studies, human relationships and of course in theological researches. The first version of the model was presented at the REA Conference in 2010 in a panel discussion under the title of where are we and where might be going in RE?

Although I have been teaching with this model for almost 10 years I still see it relatively new for growth and refinement. Clearly the model cannot lead to easy implementation in the classroom. In my interactions with students I see myself primarily as a lecturer and from time to time as a coach. The time I spend lecturing usually feels easy but it is much harder when I act more like a coach than a lecturer trying to evoke their understanding, create certain challenges and placing them in certain situations for reflection. Even harder are times when I work with them to clarify their understanding of the meaning of certain concepts from an Islamic perspective.

What remains in my mind from these interactions most of the time period is the importance of conceptual clarity which I also focused in some of my works. Conceptual clarity stands out as one of the most distinctive modes of my teaching. A desire to understand clearly, to seek connections among the verses of the text and explanations of the background of the message, to know self and other or to give appropriate responses to common shared human problems sometimes worked like a wakeup call and sometimes created much confusion in the students' minds.

I believe qualitative and quantitative studies would be useful in measuring its influence on teaching and learning practices. I welcome your feedbacks to help me see the strengths and the shortfalls of the model and go further. My concern is to invite my students move from relying upon secure acceptance of the dominant view towards fostering conceptual clarity through reflection in action and bring meaning into the context of the person today. This exploration of the link between past, present and future could be considered to be an opportunity to create brave spaces of overcoming biases and respecting diversity and valuing equality. It is spectacularly rewarding when I see my students moving up from their former state of being and reaching on a path of discovery where they can offer even a very brief refresher of seeing things in a new and different way. This is, in my understanding, what religious education is all about!

Sources grounding the presentation

The arguments in this paper are based on the following works.

Selçuk, M., Albayrak, H. and Bozkurt, N. (2010). *Kur'an ve Birey : Radikal Söylem Üstüne (The Qur'an and the individual :A Response on Radical Discourse)* ,Ankara: Turhan Kitabevi

Selçuk, M. (2012). How Does the Qur'an See "The People of the Book"? An Example of the Communicative Model of Islamic Education. In *Reaching for the Sky. Religious Education from Christian and Islamic Perspectives*, eds. S. El Bouayadi-van de Watering and S. Miedema,11-35. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi

-----and J. Valk.(2012). "Knowing Self and Others: A worldview Model for Religious Education in Turkey." *Religious Education*: 107 (5): 443-454

Selçuk, M. (2015). "Interreligiöse Bildung: Sich Selbst und den anderen (er) kennen: Theologische Fakultät der Universität Ankara Beispiele aus dem Lehrplan der Weltreligionen" in *Islam und Europa*, 154-166. Ankara: Deutsche Botschaft

Valk,J., Albayrak.,H. and Selcuk, M. (2017). *An Islamic Worldview from Turkey: Religion in a Modern, Secular and Democratic State*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan

Selçuk, M. and Ter Avest, I. (2017). "Communicating Qur'anic Texts : A Model for Intra-and Interreligious Education" in *Interfaith Education for All: Theoretical Perspectives for Transformative Action*, eds. D.Wielzen and I. Ter Avest, 83-93. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers



Natascha Kienstra^{1,2}, Monique van Dijk-Groeneboer¹, and Olav Boelens¹

¹ School of Catholic Theology, Tilburg University, Utrecht, the Netherlands

² Radboud Teachers Academy, Radboud University (RU), Nijmegen, the Netherlands

N.H.H.Kienstra@uvt.nl

2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF INTERRELIGIOUS STUDENT LEARNING IN CLASSROOM TEACHING

ABSTRACT

In the Netherlands schools are highly plural, and religious education therefore has an extra challenge in teaching students to inquire the different religious perspectives. Students have to develop their own perspective in this, using their experiences and the communication with other students in the classroom. This approach might help students to look at cultural and religious values of others from their own perspective, be aware of this perspective, and last but not least develop a way to encounter peers by using their other religious perspectives.

In this article the development of an interreligious exercise is described, namely an interreligious encounter passport. This exercise is then tested in classrooms. Using questionnaires students were asked about learning characteristics regarding 'the inside' and 'the foreign' perspective in communication in the development of the passport, in a dialogue and a plenary discussion. Higher thinking skills were used to describe the learning strategies and to be able to establish the students' perspective.

INTRODUCTION

The Netherlands is a highly plural country with many religions, cultures and ethnic backgrounds. With its origin in Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, and an increasing secularisation, the Netherlands nowadays has high percentages for the Christian religion (40%; in the world 33%), for no religion (49%; in the world 12%), and much lower percentages for Muslim (5%; world 22%), Hindu (0.5%; world 14%), Buddhist (0.5%; world 7%) and 'other religion' (5%; world 12%) (see Johnsons & Grim, 2013, for world percentages; Schmeets & Mensvoort, 2015, for Dutch percentages). All schools in the Netherlands are government funded. Article 23 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of education. Thus, individuals or groups are free to found schools based on their particular worldview orientation, and to establish curricula for their education (where the quality is regularly checked by an inspectory body of the government). In general, public schools are accessible for all children regardless of their (parents') religious, philosophical or worldview orientation. These schools provide education on behalf of the State. Private schools, on the other hand, offer education that is grounded in a particular religious or ideological belief. Among these are Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Hindu and Jewish schools. When we look at the religious background of schools, most of the 655 secondary schools are confessional, being either Roman Catholic (153) or Protestant (133), with 184 public schools and 185 other non-public schools (Statistics Netherlands 2016).

In this Dutch context the concepts of 'white' and 'black' schools are used. The current narrative on 'black' and 'white schools' is embedded within the educational structure of the Netherlands and pertains only to the Dutch society as compared to other European countries (Van Gelder 2016). There are, however, different understandings of these notions. Generally speaking, 'black schools' refer to schools where at least 70 percent of the children come from non-Western migrant backgrounds. 'White schools' on the other hand refer to schools with predominantly white Dutch children (also at least 70 percent of the total school population).

Wielzen and Van Dijk describe the origin of this division in schools that since the 1970s can be found mainly in the big cities in the Netherlands:

The (mostly Turkish and Moroccan) immigrant children began visiting schools in their new neighborhoods, but had to overcome a language barrier. The Dutch government then presupposed that these children would eventually repatriate to their country of birth. To avoid any disconnection with their culture and native language, the Dutch government introduced *Onderwijs in Eigen Taal en Cultuur* (Education in Original Language and Culture – OETC). This education policy, as can be argued, lead to a concentration of immigrant children – mostly Muslims – in schools that were traditionally populated by white Dutch children. But as the number of children from ethnic minorities increased, white Dutch parents began withdrawing their children from these schools and enrolling them in schools with none to less immigrant children, located in other districts. The motive behind such a decision is often linked to fear of quality loss, from which poor education results ensue. As a result of this so called 'white flight', schools in concentrated areas – i.e., districts where, according to the definition of the *Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau* (the Netherlands Institute for Social Research), the population of the minorities is greater than their share in the urban population as a whole – have over the years turned into 'black schools'. In such districts, relatively many low-educated immigrants with a social disadvantage live, usually mixed with native Dutch people with lower incomes (Wielzen & Van Dijk 2018).

'Black schools' can also refer to (mixed) schools of which the majority of the children are from parents with lower educational levels. And it can also refer to schools with a majority of white Dutch children from parents with lower educational levels and living in a deprived area (Simons 2011).

Apart from this difference in cultural background, schools in the Netherlands have highly diverse religious populations as well. And how can one enter religious education in a plural classroom? It is the school that is the place in which language can be provided to carry out these conversations properly. To discover with each other what the charge of words and customs is, whether on a religious basis or not. Learning to understand each other and therefore getting to know oneself better is an important goal in this interreligious learning. Meeting the other in your class, and learning in the presence of the other person is the goal (Roebben 2015, 72). It is no longer prescribed what the one true religion is.

The division into mono, multi- and interreligious learning is helpful here. Until a few decades ago the confessional schools were used to mono-religious learning: introducing the pupils into their own religious tradition including learning the customs and rituals and reading the texts (for example, preparing for the first communion at school). Mono-religious learning is no longer possible with a diverse population. Multi-religious learning is learning all religions that occur in a class, school or society, without choosing a position. This is often called 'philosophy of life' as a subject at school, and that term makes it clear that this is the outward perspective: objectively, and especially without connection with one's own identity, looking at all religions. Of course, it is doubtful whether one can look at religion objectively,

but that philosophical discussion is going too far for now. The third form is interreligious learning. Here, from and through other religions that are present in class, learning is about and through religions. The lived religion then comes into view, the function it has for people, connecting to choices and distilling underlying core values. Through the perspectives of others, one develops one's own perspective, on both one's own religion and that of the others. A nice term in this context is inter-faith education, after the eponymous book by Wielzen and Ter Avest (2017). Inter-faith education looks at the exchange of people's faith experiences, which is less abstract than looking at the concept of 'religion'. It is about diversity and plurality, but also about interbelievingness and interreligiousness.

Turning back to our diverse classrooms. Mono-religious education is obviously not a fruitful approach to deal with this diversity. In public or non-confessional schools multi-religious classroom teaching is often chosen. Teaching is *about* religions, in a broad perspective and without learning about the functional dimension of religion for people, because personal religious statements lead to hot disputes these days in the Netherlands (Ter Avest & Wielzen 2017).

It must be possible to practice change of perspectives with students, but it is vulnerable because it concerns core values. Each student must be able to search for her or his own compass, values that are essential and choices that can be made on the basis of this. This learning can only be done in the safe vicinity of the other person, who listens sincerely and pays attention, and also asks questions to get a sharper insight for the seeker himself. 'Learning in diversity', Bert Roebben calls it so beautifully (2015, 75). This safety can only occur if the teacher her/himself is firm and calm, open to all that presents himself and dares to testify of his or her own compass and values.

The affective and attitudinal prerequisites for the development of a religious self that consists of multiple perspectives, could be enhanced by an interreligious curriculum aimed at changes of perspectives and interpersonal exchanges of ideas (compare Sterkens 2005, 85). According to Sterkens (2005, 70) four perspectives are important. The first perspective is the *auto-interpretation of one's own religious tradition*, for example: a Christian reflects on his own Christian tradition. The second perspective is the *auto-interpretation of foreign religious traditions*, for example: a Christian looks at the Islam as a Christian. The third perspective is (are) the *allo-interpretation(s) of one's own tradition*, for example: a Christian interprets or criticizes the Christian tradition from the perspective of the Islamic tradition. The fourth and final perspective is (are) the *allo-interpretation(s) of foreign tradition(s)*, for example: a Christian shifts his perspective to that of the Islamic tradition and reflects on the Islamic tradition.

However, earlier empirical research in the Netherlands seemed to indicate that interreligious learning by students is not possible in the classroom (Sterkens, 2001). In the discussion of his results Sterkens (2005, 87) suggested, among others, that this may be caused by the teacher teaching the Islamic tradition mostly from the Christian perspective, because she/he is not sufficiently able to teach from the perspective of the Islamic tradition. In an earlier study we investigated this empirically (Kienstra, Van Dijk-Groeneboer, & Boelens, 2017) and found that student teachers (when the teacher possesses a master's degree in theology or religious studies, and is studying for an educational master) appear to be more effective than school teachers and teacher trainers. Hence, the current study focuses on how the students' interreligious learning differs as a result of having a student teacher or a school teacher. The conceptual framework of a religious education lesson is adopted wherein the relationship between teacher behavior and interreligious learning by students plays a central role. This relationship is studied in the context of the lesson design (Figure 1).

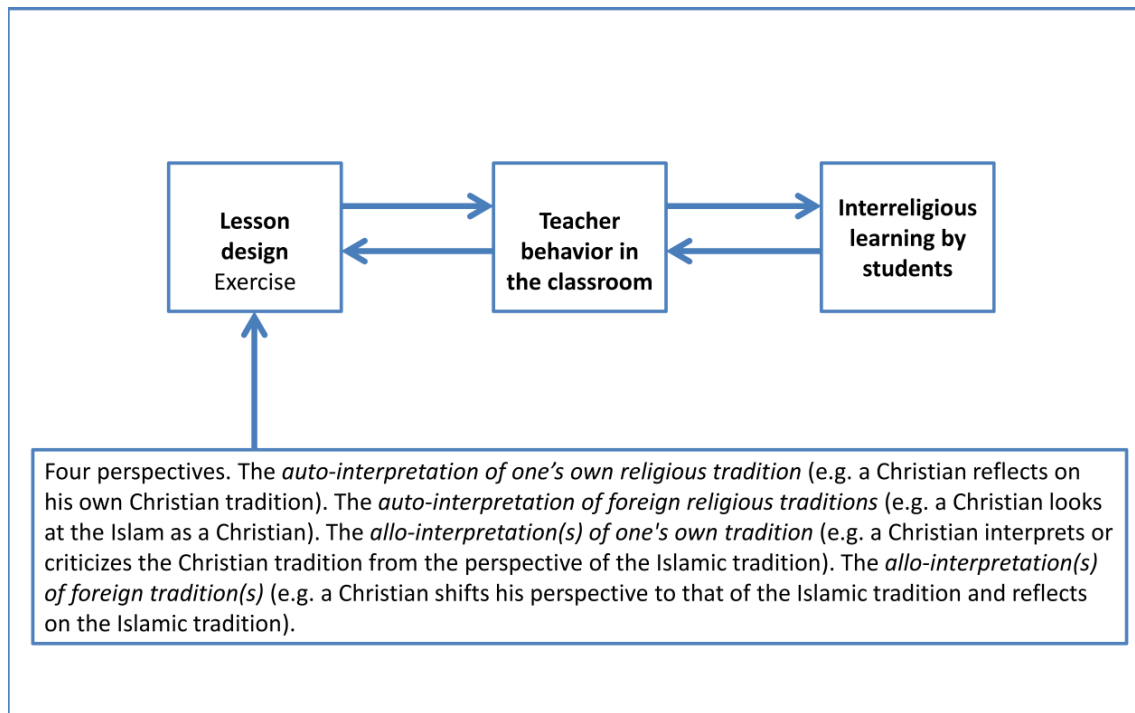


Figure 1. Conceptual scheme for the educational process involved in interreligious learning

Data from multiple classes from a student teacher and a school teacher are studied. Both teachers are working at the Dutch Stanislas college. They are using Ignatian Pedagogy as a basis for pedagogical and didactic action. In doing so, they are in line with the Jesuit tradition that led to the foundation of this school. Stanislas has six branches in the Netherlands, which are Catholic and inter-confessional. The Stanislas college is the only Jesuit college in the Netherlands, but there are more than 2000 in the world. In Ignatian Pedagogy education is aimed at the growth and maturation of 'man as a whole', i.e. not only at the acquisition of knowledge, but also at the development of affective, motoric, creative, intuitive, social and religious capacities; students are offered a learning environment in which they feel safe and in which they receive care and personal attention. Ignatian Pedagogy strives for experiential and personalized learning, so that students are personally involved in the learning material and the learning process, and reflect on this (Van den Akker & Ten Berge, 2018). It assumes that students can reflect if they are stimulated in a good way (experience). The students discover the meaning and essential value of the learned material. They trace and discover the relationship between the material and other school subjects, and value the implications of the material in the constant search for truth and freedom. Students examine their own reactions and feelings, deepen their new relationship with themselves and others, discover the truth more and more, and discover and understand themselves more and who they are in relationships with others.

In the context of the Catholic School of Theology, van Dijk-Groeneboer, Boelens, and Kienstra (2017) developed teaching materials intended to approach the foreign tradition from the perspective of this foreign tradition (instead of a student's own tradition). Students describe their own perspectives in 'passports'. The teaching materials dealt with making the passports and using it in dialogues. The activating exercise *Passport: Let's talk about the real stuff* was embedded in a theological discourse (note, not in a religious studies discourse, see

Baumfield, 2002). Each individual elaborated an interreligious encounter passport. These passports were first discussed in smaller groups and then in a plenary evaluation.

Table 1. Worksheet of the activating exercise *Passport: Let's talk about the real stuff*.

<p>Individual thinking</p> <p>Create an interreligious encounter passport, containing the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name ... • Age ... • What kind of work do you / Where do you work (additional earnings) ... • What's in your backpack of personal experiences, what do you take with you from your biography ... • What is your faith? What does your answer mean? ... <p>Dialogue in a small group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, how do you, as a Christian, view your own Christian tradition? • How do you, as a Christian, look at Islam, for example? • How would you look at your own Christian tradition from the Islamic tradition? • As a Christian, how do you view Islam from the Islamic tradition? • Which aspects do you particularly address in religion (Biblical stories, rituals, insights, figures from church history, etc.)? Please be specific here. • How does this backpack affect your interests? • What expertise do you have in your backpack for the backpack of students? <p>Plenary evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you prevent conflict, racism? • Is this passport finished? • What have you learned: did you learn to listen and to express yourself?
--

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

To study the relationship between teaching context and interreligious learning by students, a qualitative methodology was used. In the data collection phase, interpretation of the findings led to separate case-wise summaries collected in a matrix with mostly qualitative findings. Miles and Huberman (1994) described this matrix as a “meta-matrix.”

The meta-matrix was studied using an approach known in qualitative methodology as comparative case analysis (cross-case synthesis, Yin 2014) of lessons. We chose comparative case analysis to increase the generalizability to cases (other lessons) that were not observed. In our earlier studies (Kienstra, Imants, Karskens, & Van der Heijden 2015, and Kienstra, & Van der Heijden 2015), this method yielded very stable results, even though the number of cases studied was relatively small.

The data collection for this study was conducted in the following way. The data sources were: the exercise used, and the reflections by the students. We have studied these data sources through (i) the teaching materials, (ii) post-lesson questionnaires for all students present, and (iii) the completed passport by the students. A general explanation of the results of the initial analysis is given below, particularly the operationalizations used for the learning context, and how the students learned.

Questionnaire

88 Students that participated in two lessons of a teacher and in two lessons of a student teacher were invited to fill in a questionnaire. Of the 88 students 42 completed the questionnaire (in class H3B 19 did, and 9 did not; in A3A 1 did, and 22 did not; in A3B 14 did, and 9 did not; and in G3A 8 did, and 6 did not). In the questionnaires these students indicated when they expressed themselves most explicitly about religion: during the instruction, the thinking about and writing of their own interreligious encounter passport; or during the dialogues in the smaller groups and in the plenary meeting. The students also indicated which way of learning fitted most closely to the exercise that was used. Following Kienstra, Karskens, and Imants (2014) and Kienstra, Van Dijk-Groeneboer, and Boelens

(2018) we distinguished three ways of learning, namely learning through narratives and conversations, through inquiry, and through juridical debate. In an open question, students indicated the scaffolds that were important in guiding them through the learning process (Van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen 2010, 2011): giving feedback, hinting, instructing, explaining, modeling, questioning, and showing understanding/giving space/listening. Parallel to our former study (Kienstra, Van Dijk-Groeneboer & Boelens 2018), in this study a distinction is made between lower order, higher-order, and meta-cognitive questioning. Students were also asked at what level learning took place. To qualify such levels, Baumfield's (2003) higher-thinking skills were adopted (i.e., evaluation, critique, thinking about one's thinking). These stages entail testing, producing criticism, and reflecting (Kienstra, Karskens, & Imants, 2014; Kienstra, Imants, Karskens, & Van der Heijden, 2015). It is examined which of the four perspectives were discussed in the dialogues in the smaller groups and in the plenary meeting.

Initial analysis: individual results

Table 2 presents the descriptive findings for the two teachers. The topics in the table follow the order of the questions in the questionnaire.

We provide a reading instruction for Lesson 1, which is in the first data column of Table 2. The teacher is a student teacher. In the classroom 28 students were present. In this lesson Limarley used the passport exercise, which is learning through narratives and conversations, and falls into the connective truth finding approach. The exercise's learning activities were akin to the connective truth finding approach (mentioned 19.33 times), learning through inquiry, i.e. the test-based approach (.33 times), and to juridical debate (.33 times). According to the students, the teacher used four scaffolds in his guiding: instructing (2.5 times), explaining (9 times), lower order questioning (once), and showing understanding/giving space/listening (1.5 times). Four different perspectives were used, namely *auto* own and foreign traditions (7 and 6 times), and *allo* own and foreign traditions (10 and 9 times). There are higher levels of interreligious learning reached (producing criticism, and reflecting).

In the column of Table 2 describing the Totals, we find that students state that, for the Design variable approaches, learning through narratives and conversations (connective truth finding, CTF) is realized most often (31.83 out of 44 times), and learning through inquiry (test-based truth finding, TTF) and learning through debate (JD) less often (1.83 and 10.33 out of 44 times). Notice that some teachers used more than one approach.

From among the seven scaffold types, the teachers displayed 21 teacher behaviors; these included hints (3.5 times), instructing (3.5 times), explaining (9.5 times), and questioning (2 times lower order and 1 time higher-order), and showing understanding/giving space/listening (1.5 times).

The students state that all four Perspectives, *auto own tradition*, *auto foreign traditions*, *allo own tradition* and *allo foreign tradition(s)*, are realized in their lessons (lesson 1, 3, and 4). In the last column of Table 2 we find that 'allo own tradition' is observed most often (27 times), followed by 'allo foreign traditions' (23 times). The two other perspectives appear less often ('auto foreign tradition', 20, and 'auto own tradition', 19). We did not find an order in the perspectives, i.e., we did not find that observing one specific perspective implies finding another specific perspective.

W.r.t. interreligious learning by students, *producing criticism* and *reflecting*, we distinguish 'producing criticism', from 'reflecting', both being higher-order levels. Once 'Producing criticism' was the highest level and three times 'reflecting'. Thus in all classes higher-order levels were mentioned by the students.

Table 2

Meta-matrix with results for variables regarding Context, Lesson design, Teacher behavior, Interreligious learning by students, and Perspectives in four lessons

VARIABLE		Lesson 1 (H3B) Limarley	Lesson 2 (A3A) June	Lesson 3 (A3B) June	Lesson 4 (G3A) Limarley	Total	Instrument*
I. Context variable							
<i>Teacher characteristics</i>							
Student teacher		Yes	No	No	Yes		
School teacher		No	Yes	Yes	No		
<i>Student characteristics</i>							
Number of students in classroom		28	23	23	14	88	
II. Design variable							
Approaches	Design	CTF	CTF	CTF	CTF		a
Connective truth finding (CTF)	Learning activities	19.33	1	10.5	1	31.83	b
Test-based truth finding (TTF)		0.33		1.5		1.83	
Juridical debate (JD)		0.33		3	7	10.33	
III. Teacher behavior							
Scaffolds	Execution of exercise		**				b
Feedback							
Hints (Hin)				3.5		3.5	
Instructing (Inst)		2.5		1		3.5	
Explaining (Exp)		9		.5		9.5	
Modeling (Mo)							
Lower order questioning (LOQ)		1			1	2	
Higher-order questioning (HOQ)					1	1	
Meta-cognitive questioning (MCQ)							
Showing understanding, giving space and listening		1.5				1.5	

IV. Interreligious learning by students							
<i>Highest level reached</i>							b
Producing criticism		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1	
Reflecting		Yes	No	Yes	Yes	3	
Mark 1-10			8.3				c
<i>Perspectives: auto/allo of own/foreign tradition(s)</i>							b
Auto own tradition		7	0	4	8	19	
Auto foreign traditions		6	0	6	8	20	
Allo own tradition		10	0	9	8	27	
Allo foreign tradition(s)		9	-	7	7	23	

* a = the teaching materials; b = questionnaires; c = completed passports by students

** None of the students did respond on this question.

When we compare the four variables in Table 2, the *allo* Perspectives (27 and 23 times makes 50 times) were realized most often, followed by the Design variable (44 times at least one approach was used), followed by Teacher behavior Scaffolds (21 times). Realization of the *auto* Perspectives seems more difficult (20 and 19 times). The variables *allo* and *auto* Perspectives have to do with the domain specific context. On the one hand the interreligious perspectives were sufficiently clear to the students and therefore it may be that the students were reluctant to express themselves w.r.t. their own tradition. On the other hand, the teachers appear to be less often guiding w.r.t. the auto traditions, as the scaffolds feedback, modeling, and metacognitive questioning were not used.

Comparative case study: using rival patterns

In the comparative case study the meta-matrix in Table 2 is used to cluster the cases (lessons) into rival patterns in a systematic way (compare Kienstra & Van der Heijden, 2015). This is done using the following steps (compare Yin, 2014). Using a theoretical framework for interreligious learning in Step 1 a pattern of interreligious learning effectively is formulated. In Step 2 this pattern is tested against a lesson in the meta-matrix that fits the theoretical pattern well. Then, using the theoretical framework we formulate in Step 3 a rival pattern of interreligious learning less effectively. In Step 4 this rival pattern is tested against a lesson from the meta-matrix. In Step 5 we classify each of the remaining lessons into each of the two complementary patterns. The general idea is that in some lessons the students are learning interreligious more effectively than in other lessons, and this effectivity may be related to the context variables and the teacher behavior.

The aim of the first step of the comparative case analysis is to derive a theoretical pattern of effective interreligious learning. Interreligious learning is effective when Reflecting is the highest level reached, and the *other's* Perspectives (*allo*) are used, see Effective Pattern in Table 3. At the top of Table 3 is the Design variable, i.e. the three ways of learning, namely learning through narratives and conversations, through inquiry, and through juridical debate. In the middle we find Teacher behavior, i.e. scaffolds, and at the bottom Interreligious learning by students. From our earlier work (see references above) we assign the following aspects to the theoretical Effective Pattern: the Design variable interreligious learning as inquiry and juridical debate (TTF and JD), goes together with the Teacher behavior higher-order and meta-cognitive questioning, and reflecting as the highest level of Interreligious learning by students together with the *other's* perspectives (in Table 3 labelled with a '+'; a plus indicates that a row label appears relatively more often in a pattern).

In the second step we identify one lesson in the meta-matrix (Table 2) that fits best in the Effective Pattern. This turns out to be lesson 4 by student teacher Limarley (compare the meta-matrix in Table 2). In the third step of the comparative case analysis a rival pattern is derived from the theoretical framework (not displayed here). In this rival pattern interreligious learning has a (relatively) lower level than in the Effective pattern. In the fourth step one lesson is chosen from the meta-matrix (Table 2) that fitted well in the rival pattern. This is lesson 2 by teacher June.

In the last step of the comparative case analysis the remaining two lessons are classified into the Effective or the rival pattern: in the end lesson 4 is classified in the effective pattern and lessons 1, 2, and 3 in the rival pattern, the less effective pattern. Here we make the remark that lessons 1, 2, and 3 also have characteristics of the effective pattern: in lesson 2 there is a high mark given by the teacher for a student's passport, yet the highest level is not reached; in lesson 3 learning through inquiry and juridical debate is mentioned but less often. We note that comparative case analysis with rival patterns is popular in educational research, see for example Meirink, Imants, Meijer, and Verloop (2010).

Table 3. Pattern in scores on the variables teaching context and interreligious learning by students.

VARIABLES	EFFECTIVE PATTERN
II. Design of a lesson	
<i>Approaches</i>	
Connected truth finding (Ctf)	
Test-based truth finding (Ttf)	+
Juridical debate (Jd)	+
III. Teacher behavior	
<i>Scaffolds</i>	
Feedback	
Hints (Hin)	
Instructing (Inst)	
Explaining (Exp)	
Modeling (Mo)	
Lower-order questioning (LOQ)	
Higher-order questioning (HOQ)	+
Meta-cognitive questioning (MCQ)	+
Showing understanding, giving space and listening	
IV. Students interreligious learning	
<i>Highest level reached (1-5)</i>	
Producing criticism	
Reflecting	+
<i>Perspectives - Auto/allo of own/foreign tradition(s)</i>	
Auto own tradition	
Auto foreign traditions	
Allo own tradition	+
Allo foreign tradition(s)	+

An interreligious encounter passport developed in the classroom: The most effective

Students' questionnaire responses from this lesson are described below.

"Karen, 14 [years old]. I work in an orchid garden. I am also a Christian, but I do little with my faith. It is often not part of my day."

"As a Christian, I think you pray and go to church on Sunday. You believe that someone has created something. You also go to church on days like Easter (death Jesus) and Christmas (birth Jesus). I see it [Islam] as a faith, other people believe in it and have different traditions. It's not that I think that's really weird. If you are extremely Islamic, it [Christian tradition] is not normal. If you are Muslim as I am a Christian, I think you look at it as another faith, as you believe in your faith. You have to keep to a lot, know more (able to speak/read Arabic, eating halal). The reason why people believe in what they believe in and what they are willing to sacrifice for their faith. What should they do? Of their faith and whether they do so? I myself have family members who are not Christian, but more spiritual. I think that is interesting. Things happen with a reason, everyone reaches a point in life where they feel low but always get up again to continue."

[How do you prevent conflict, racism?] "By accepting that someone is different, and treating him/her as you would like to be treated." [Is this passport finished?] "No, because there are always things that happen in your life that come in your backpack or passport. I have learned that everyone has a different faith and has a different view on other beliefs."

The questionnaire asked Karen to identify her way of learning, and the teacher's behaviors. Examples of her responses are as follows: "narrative - own thoughts - constructing - connecting. Discussed what we had written down."

DISCUSSION

In earlier studies CTF is not always the most effective truth-finding method (Kienstra et al. 2015; Kienstra & Van der Heijden, in review). In the current small-scale study, students learned most effectively using CTF through a form of debate during a passport exercise (which is in agreement with the CTF approach's underlying principles).

Is Ignatian Pedagogy as a pedagogy conducive to these learning outcomes? There is other research that shows that students taught from the perspective of Ignatian Pedagogy have difficulty reflecting (Kingsale, 2018).

In the current study we found that the student teacher appeared to be more effective than the school teacher, and we also found this in an earlier study (Kienstra, van Dijk-Groeneboer, & Boelens, 2017). How can we interpret that student teachers appear to be more effective? Possibly the younger age of a student teacher can be an explanatory factor, but also the period in which younger people have grown up, i.e., the cohort they are in. American (Putnam 2007) and Dutch sociological research (Engbersen, Snel, & 't Hart 2015) found in longitudinal research that there is less engagement among early ethnically less diverse groups, there is more engagement among more recent ethnically diverse groups, and there is less engagement among the current ethnically more diverse groups. If we link this with the age cohorts of the teachers and the immigration movements in the Netherlands, then the school teacher could belong to the cohort of early ethnically less diverse groups (less engagement goes along with fewer perspectives and fewer effective interreligious learning) and the student teacher to more recent ethnically diverse groups (more engagement goes along with more perspectives and more effective interreligious learning).

Finally, the quality of the data for this study was mixed. First, for lesson 2 the teacher misunderstood the instruction we gave with the result that he was unable to deliver all the data requested. Second, of the 88 students approached with the questionnaire, only 42 responded. Also, four lessons is a small number, and this may lead to interpretation problems. For example, Lesson 4 was most effective and we just attributed this to the fact that the teacher was a student teacher, in line with earlier results from other studies. However, the four lessons were not given to a homogenous group of classes, as lesson four was given to a class on a Dutch gymnasium level, which in theory have the best students. So this could be an explanation for the good results of lesson 4 as well.

CONCLUSIONS

A student teacher and a school teacher presented an interreligious exercise to two of their classes. The results from the questionnaire and the completed passports show that the students discussed the own or foreign tradition from the *other* perspective. In most lessons the students made use of all four auto-allo of own-foreign perspectives. Higher-thinking skills were used, the effectivity of interreligious learning by students in lessons was observed, and the role the teacher played to enhance this interreligious learning was discovered.

Higher-thinking skills were evident among students during the passport exercise. The lesson's design was primarily based on CTF; JD occurred most frequently in effective learning activities.

In another study (Kienstra, Van Dijk-Groeneboer, & Boelens, 2018) the scaffolds higher-order and metacognitive questioning produced thinking of a higher level. Hence, the passport exercise is an effective one means achieving higher-level of interreligious learning when combined with appropriate scaffolds in a suitable teaching context. The student teacher reached the highest level of interreligious learning while using the *other's* perspectives and juridical debate, together with the teacher behavior higher-order questioning.

It is remarkable that we find such a strong resemblance between the different studies (Kienstra, Imants, Karskens, & Van der Heijden, 2015; Kienstra, Van Dijk-Groeneboer, & Boelens, 2017; Kienstra, Van Dijk-Groeneboer, & Boelens, 2018; Kienstra & Van der Heijden, in review), given that the sample sizes of the studies are small. We classify most of the differences between the four studies as minor, and further replication of these studies,

hopefully by other researchers, could shed light on these differences. Currently we are conducting research in a similar but different field, ethics education, where the methodology that we have used in this study is proving useful as well.

REFERENCES

- Baumfield, V. (2003). Democratic RE: Preparing young people for citizenship. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 25(3), 173-184.
- . (2002). *Thinking through religious education*. Cambridge: Chris Kington.
- Engbersen, G., Snel, E., & 't Hart, M. 2015. *Mattheüs in de buurt: over burgerparticipatie en ongelijkheid in steden*. Rotterdam: Kennis Werk Plaats Leefbare Wijken.
- Gelder, L., van (2016). 'Zwarte en witte scholen, het lijkt wel apartheid' [Black and White Schools. Sounds Like Apartheid]. Retrieved on Februari 16, 2018: <https://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/-zwarte-en-witte-scholen-het-lijkt-wel-apartheid~a4433206/>.
- Greenacre, M. (2007). *Correspondence analysis in practice* (2nd ed.). Boca Raton: CRC.
- Johnsons, T.M., & Grim, B. J. 2013. *The world's religions in figures*. Malden/Oxford: John Wiley and Sons.
- Kienstra, N., & Van der Heijden, P. G. M. (in review). Doing Philosophy Effectively II: A Replication and Elaboration of Student Learning in Classroom Teaching.
- Kienstra, N., Van Dijk-Groeneboer, M., & Boelens, O. (2018). Religious-thinking-through using bibliodrama: An empirical study of student learning in classroom teaching. *Religious Education*. doi: 10.1080/00344087.2017.1403788.
- . (2017). An empirical study of interreligious classroom teaching. *REA Annual Meeting 2017 Proceedings: Learning in Encounter. Crossroads, Connections, Collaborations*, 255-265.
- Kienstra, N., & Van der Heijden, P.G.M. (2015). "Using correspondence analysis in multiple case studies." *Bulletin de Méthodologie Sociologique*, 128:5–22.
- Kienstra, N., Imants, J., Karskens, M., & Van der Heijden, P. G. M. 2015. "Doing philosophy effectively: Student learning in classroom teaching." *PLOS ONE* 10(9): e0137590. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0137590.
- Kienstra, N., Karskens, M., & Imants, J. 2014. "Three approaches to doing philosophy: A proposal for grouping philosophical exercises in classroom teaching." *Metaphilosophy*, 45(2), 288-319.
- Meirink, J. A., Imants, J., Meijer, P. C., & Verloop, N. 2010. Teacher learning and collaboration in innovative teams. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 40(2), 161-181.
- Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A.M. 1994. *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Putnam R. D. 2007. "E pluribus unum. Diversity and community in the twenty-first century: The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture." *Scandinavian Political Studies* 30(2), 137-174.
- Roebben, B. 2015. *Inclusieve godsdienstoppedagogiek. Grondlijnen voor levensbeschouwelijke vorming*. Leuven: Acco.
- Schmeets, H., & van Mensvoort, C. 2015. *Religieuze betrokkenheid van bevolkingsgroepen*. Den Haag/Heerlen: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek.
- Simons, J. (2011). Zwarte scholen en vrijheid van onderwijs. Taal, denken en werkelijkheid rondom segregatie in het onderwijs [Black Schools and Freedom of Education. Language, Thinking and Reality About Segregation in Education]. Retrieved on April 4, 2018: https://www.vosabb.nl/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Essay_Jo_Simons.pdf.
- Statistics Netherlands (2016). <http://www.statisticsNetherlands2016>.

- Sterkens, C. 2005. "Multireligiositeit als voorwaarde voor effectief interreligieus onderwijs? Empirische resultaten vanuit een sociaal-constructivistisch perspectief." In: *Interreligieus leren op de basisschool. Perspectieven op vakontwikkeling en schoolontwikkeling*, 61-93. Budel: Damon.
- . 2001. *Interreligious learning: the problem of interreligious dialogue in primary education*. Leiden: Brill.
- Ter Avest, I., & Wielzen, D.R. 2017. "In retrospect – children's voices on interreligious education." In: *Interfaith education for all*, 175-188. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Van den Akker, D., & Ten Berge, B. *Brochure Ignatiaanse Pedagogiek op het Stanislascollege*. <http://www.stanislashuis.nl/igpe/brochure.php?n=0>. 31 August 2018.
- Van de Pol, J., M. Volman, and J. Beishuizen. 2011. Patterns of contingent teaching in teacher-student interaction. *Learning and Instruction* 21:46–57. doi:10.1016/j.learninstruc.2009.10.004.
- . 2010. Scaffolding in teacher–student interaction: A decade of research. *Educational Psychology Review* 22:271–96. doi:10.1007/s10648-010-9127-6.
- Van Dijk-Groeneboer, M., Boelens, O., & Kienstra, N. 2017. *Geïnspireerde lessen. Vakspecifieke werkvormen voor onderwijs in godsdienst en levensbeschouwing*. Tilburg University: PrismaPrint.
- Wielzen, D. & M. van Dijk-Groeneboer 2018. *Black and white schools in the Netherlands: Toward a pedagogy of belonging, inclusivity and normality*. Paper presented on REA conference, Washington, 2018.
- Yin, R. K. 2014 (1st ed. 1993). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



Sang-il Kim
Boston University
likeellul@gmail.com
REA Annual Meeting
Nov. 2-4, 2018.

The Storied Power of Grace for Hillbillies: Teaching the Doctrine of Justification by Grace, Narratively

Abstract

With the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States in 2016, racial crimes have skyrocketed, especially among the white working class against the non-white and immigrants. Therefore, this paper begins by asking the following question: what lies behind such upsurge of hatred? More specifically, what are some of the shared narratives that spurred the white working class to not only brew, but also to act upon such rage against the non-white and immigrants? Drawing upon the work of the sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, I analyze the rage and anger of the white working class through hearing their stories, not only to examine the veracity of their claims, but also to empathize their situations and propose a new way forward. Afterwards, I attempt to re-contextualize the doctrine of justification by grace through faith as a powerful resource for re-storying the white-working class' understandings of reality. Even when the doctrine has been hardly utilized as the source of racial healing and reconciliation, I draw upon Elsa Tamez, Miroslav Volf, James K. A. Smith, and Perry Yoder to shed light on the enormous potential of the doctrine as a sort of narrative to bring shalom to the conflicts between the white working class and the non-white and immigrants in this country.

Posing the Question: The Great Paradox in the Southern White Working Class

The election of President Donald Trump in 2016 marks a watershed moment in many ways, one of which is the skyrocketing tension over racial issues. In the past couple of years, before Trump's presidential election, tragedies such as the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson in 2014, the Charleston church shooting by Dylann S. Roof in 2015 began to take place with more frequency.¹ After the presidential election, the year 2017 saw the car attack against the Charlottesville anti-racist rally, resulted in the tragic death of a woman.² In response to this series of heinous attacks against human dignity, inundated are books and other types of media as to how Americans should handle the potentially explosive issue of racism. As variegated as all these media are, their approaches to the issue of racism are as varied as can be. Simply by looking at a best-selling book chart such as Amazon Charts, one can get a sense of how different

¹ See New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/08/13/us/ferguson-missouri-town-under-siege-after-police-shooting.html>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/27/us/politics/charlottesville-death-hate-crime-charges.html>

approaches are employed in order to get to the heart of the matter. Among them are a personal memoir (J.D. Vance's *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of Family and Culture in Crisis*), a historical analysis looking forward to the future (Jon Meacham's *The Soul of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels*), and a political commentary on the Trump presidency (Bob Woodward's *Fear: Trump in the White House*). In one way or the other they are all dealing with the issue of white normativity and racism. While each of these approaches has its respective advantages and disadvantages, in this paper I set out to uncover the shared narratives of the white working class that has led them to the recent expressions of rage against the non-whites and immigrants. Such task is immensely important for my theological analysis on the doctrine of justification, for no theological analysis could be fruitful for the flourishing of humanity unless it is grounded in the relatively accurate understandings of reality. It is commonly agreed among theologians that ethnographic work provides for such understandings of reality.³

Thus, of many perspectives and genres, I engage with the work of ethnography, particularly the Berkeley sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild's *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*.⁴ In this work, Hochschild focuses on the politically right-leaning group called the Tea Party. Her primary concern in conducting this research is amply attested to in numerous statistical records over the ever-growing chasm between the political left and the right. "In 1960s, when a survey asked American adults whether it would "disturb" them if their child married a member of the other political party, no more than 5 percent of either party answered "yes." But in 2010, 33 percent of Democrats and 40 percent of Republicans answered "yes.""⁵ Interestingly enough, through her research she has found out that this ideological conflicts happen along the fault line of race, as the rage comes from the Southern white working class against the non-whites and immigrants.⁶ As a sociologist at UC Berkeley, arguably the center of American progressive politics, Hochschild openly acknowledges that there is an empathy wall blocking between her and the Tea Party members in this regard. Her puzzlement toward them began with what she calls the great paradox, well explained in the following.

Many Tea Party advocates work in or run small businesses. Yet the politicians they support back laws that consolidate the monopoly power of the very largest companies that are poised to swallow up smaller ones. Small farmers voting with Monsanto? Corner drugstore owners voting with Walmart? The local bookstore owner voting with

³ For the value of ethnographic research on the work of theology, see Pete Ward, ed. *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012) and Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen, eds, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011).

⁴ Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (

⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁶ Ibid., 146. "The deep story of the right, the *feels-as-if* story, corresponds to a real structural squeeze. People want to achieve the American dream, but for a mixture of reasons feel they are being held back, and this leads people of the right to feel frustrated, angry, and betrayed by the government. Race is an essential part of this story."

Amazon? If I were a small business owner, I would welcome lower company taxes, sure, but strengthening the monopolies that could force me out of business? I didn't get it.⁷

Such great paradox does not stop at welcoming conglomerates that might hurt their own businesses. Their favorable attitudes toward big businesses are immediately translated into hostility toward federal government. They see a stark contrast between businesses and the federal government, tantamount to the battle between good and evil. In fact, Hochschild observes that not receiving federal government's money in whatsoever type of aid or loan operates as a litmus test for honorable status among the Tea Party members.⁸ Why is this? What kind of narratives do these Southern, white working class share, which the progressives like Hochschild in the coastal urban areas such as San Francisco or Boston do not see?

Such is the driving force behind Hochschild's research, and for her 5-year period research she has "accumulated 4,690 pages of transcripts based on interviews with a core of forty Tea Party advocates and twenty others from various walks of life—teachers, social workers, lawyers, and government officials."⁹ What Hochschild has in mind here is to remove the empathy wall between her and the Tea Party members. Instead of blindly critiquing the Southern white working class as responsible for all the tragedies mentioned in the foregoing, Hochschild says, "if I could truly enter the minds and hearts of people on the far right on the issue of the water they drink, the animals they hunt, the lakes they swim in, the streams they fish in, the air they breathe, I could get to know them up close."¹⁰ In other words, Hochschild is trying to listen to their stories without passing any prejudgment toward them. This is important for the following theological task of mine in two respects. First, it resembles the spirit of empathic love in Jesus' Incarnation. Hochschild is trying to put herself in the shoes of their lives, which could serve as a great pathway to more empathic understanding toward any person or group. Second, given that this paper contemplates how to teach the Tea Party members God's justifying grace as a remedy for their problem, which I will describe in more detail below, listening to their stories is a necessary step. In this light, I will jump right into the stories of the White working class with the aid of Hochschild's ethnographic research below.

Getting at the Core of the Issue: Deep Story and the Lost Honor (Shame) of the White Working Class

To get to the heart of the issue Hochschild is determined to find out the deep story of the white working class. What is deep story? It is a story behind the superficial telling of someone's story. It is a story of justifying and defending one's current ways of life, which "*feels-as-if*" true. Hochschild's own definition of what deep story is is worthwhile a fuller quote here.

⁷ Ibid., 10.

⁸ Ibid., 114.

⁹ Ibid., 18. Also, see Appendix A in *Strangers in Their Own Land*, in which Hochschild gives a detailed description of her research methodology. Overall, she is adopting an ethnographic research method that is "exploratory" or "hypothesis generating."

¹⁰ Ibid. 21.

It's the story feelings tell, in the language of symbols. It removes judgment. It removes fact. It tells us how things feel. Such a story permits those on both sides of the political spectrum to stand back and explore the *subjective prism* through which the party on the other side sees the world. And I don't believe we understand anyone's politics, right or left, without it. For we all have a deep story.¹¹

Having defined deep story like this, Hochschild weaves many stories of her interviewees into a shared narrative, that is, a shared deep story of the white working class. According to Hochschild, there are three important constituents of this deep story of theirs: a failed (or delayed) American dream, non-whites and immigrants as line cutters, and a sense of betrayal by the federal government. Below I will give a detailed description of each of them, one by one.

First, a failed (or delayed) American Dream is the initiating factor here. Hochschild puts it that “the American Dream is a dream of progress—the idea that you're better off than your forebears just as they superseded their parents before you—and extends beyond money and stuff.”¹² Thus, the natural expectation is that as long as they put into enough effort, at least as much as that of their parents' generation, then there will be progress. However, as is well known, the situation did not go as they expected: “You've suffered long hours, layoffs, and exposure to dangerous chemicals at work, and received reduced pensions. You have shown moral character through trial by fire, and the American Dream of prosperity and security is a reward for all of this, showing who you have been and are—a badge of honor.”¹³ In fact, the economist and policy scholar Robert Reich explains in his documentary movie *Inequality for All*, that back in 1978 an average white working class male used to earn \$48,000 while the top 1% made \$393,000. Fast forward the clock, in 2010 an average white working class male earns \$33,000, while the top 1% makes over a million dollars.¹⁴ Through the expressions of frustration and feelings of hopelessness, this statistical record is verified over and over again in Hochschild's interviews.

Second, it is in this situation that the white working class began to see the non-whites and immigrants as those cutting in line. What needs to be noted is that back in the past the white working class used to perceive the non-whites and immigrants as standing behind them in line. However, as the failed American Dream and all its offshoots show, it is no longer the case. Hochschild's description of what goes on inside the minds of the typical white working class goes like this.

As they cut in, it feels like you are being moved back. How can they just do that? Who are they? Some are black. Through affirmative action plans, pushed by the federal government, they are being given preference for places in colleges and universities, apprenticeships, jobs, welfare payments, and free lunches... Blacks, women, immigrants, refugees, brown pelicans—all have cut ahead of you in line. But it's people like *you* who

¹¹ Ibid., 135.

¹² Ibid., 136.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Robert Reich, *Inequality for All*

have made this country great. You feel uneasy. It has to be said: the line cutters irritate you. They are violating rules of fairness.”¹⁵

Last, because of the foregoing, they now feel betrayed by the government. “Then you become suspicious. If people are cutting in line ahead of you, someone must be *helping* them. Who?”¹⁶ It is not hard to guess that in their minds this someone who must be helping them is the federal government. Thus, “you feel betrayed. The president is *their* president, not *your* president. Now you have your guard way up. Watch out for lies.”¹⁷

Note that this might be far from accurate facts and correct judgment, for that is what a deep story does. Living out such a deep story must provoke in them depression and sympathy toward their own circumstances, and anger toward those who caused it. So the puzzlement of Hochschild, let alone so many who do not live among the white working class begin to make sense. It is in this light that I approach the issue of teaching God’s justifying grace for them. However, one thing that lies behind such a deep story is the sense of lost honor, or the sense of shame in them. All throughout her book, Hochschild makes it quite clear that keeping and cultivating honor is an important part of who they are for the white working class in the South, and it is her analysis that the deep story that was just rehearsed had taken from them their due honor. At least, that is how they felt about living the deep story of theirs.

“Crazy redneck.” “White trash.” “Ignorant Southern Bible-thumper.” You realize that’s *you* they’re talking about. You hear these terms on the radio, on television, read them on blogs. The gall. You’re offended. You’re angry... You are a stranger in your own land. You do not recognize yourself in how others see you. It is a struggle to feel seen and honored. And to feel honored you have to feel—and feel seen as—moving forward. But through no fault of your own, and in ways that are hidden, you are slipping backward.¹⁸

So they feel helpless, yet they are desperate to find a way out of this endless maze. “You feel stuck between a strong desire to be recognized for who you really are and all you’ve really done, and dread at joining the parade of “poor me’s.” You want to rise up against these downward forces. There is a political movement made up of people such as yourself who share your deep story. It’s called the Tea Party.”¹⁹

In the remainder of this paper, then, I will show how God’s justifying grace could be a much better alternative to the Tea Party and its hatred toward the non-whites and immigrants. In the end, I close the paper with some pedagogical suggestions for teaching this grace of God in a way that leads the white working class to retell their deep story. The deep story that does not bash the non-whites and immigrants, but lets them see the facts and makes accurate judgments on what they are caught up in.

¹⁵ Ibid., 137.

¹⁶ Ibid., 139.

¹⁷ Ibid., 140.

¹⁸ Ibid., 144.

¹⁹ Ibid., 145.

Re-reading the Deep Story of the Southern White Working Class through God's Justifying Grace: A Deep Story for Recovering Honor

According to Hochschild, as I shared above, the white working class generally feels betrayed by the government and cut-in by the non-white and immigrants. In place of the narrative that provokes rage against the non-white and immigrants, the white working class needs an alternative narrative for racial reconciliation, and I argue that the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, as a narrative of God's recognizing the human worth of every person, has powerful potential to achieve the hoped-for reconciliation, precisely because of the power of God's grace as a free gift of recognizing each and every human person's worth.

I begin with this question. What does it mean that God's justifying grace in the doctrine of justification by grace through faith is able to restore the lost honor of the white working class? The key to responding to this question hangs on God's justifying acts redefining the human relationship with God and with one another. One of the significant consequences of such redefined relationship is, I argue, resilience to the messages of lost honor (shame) prevalent among the white working class. Before proceeding to my arguments, it should be noted that dealing with the whole debates surrounding the doctrine of justification goes beyond the purpose of this paper, which might be, at any rate, an overambitious task to tackle on in such a short section as this. Thus, I restrict my inquiry into making a case for the potentials of the doctrine as it pertains to re-telling the deep story of the white working class.

Having said that, I will unfold my arguments in the following three steps. First, I should begin with the inextricable relationship between justice and justification in the Biblical traditions, especially from the Hebrew Bible, for it seems to be a scholarly consensus that separating justice from justification is one of the main causes of contemporary loss of appeal in the doctrine itself.²⁰ Justice is an important concern for anyone living in the 21st century; showing how God's justice constitutes God's justifying acts, and vice versa, will open up a spacious room for bringing back the relevance of the doctrine to the interests of contemporary Americans. Second, given that the lost honor/shame, defined as 'an emotional response to the experiences of insignificance in one's worth as a human person,'²¹ is one of the results of a distorted and fallen relationship between God and human persons, I will argue that the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, as inherent part of God's justice will be able to help the white working class re-tell their deep story.

First, speaking in general, why has the doctrine of justification lost its appeal to contemporary audience in North America? This also means that the doctrine in its current formulation can no longer fulfill its role as critical discourse to the dominant culture, particularly that of shame among the white working class. There might be numerous answers to this question, but scholars seem to be in consensus that the loss of connection between justification and justice is one of the primary reasons for the contemporary loss of appeal in the doctrine, let alone the possibility of critiquing the dominant culture.

²⁰ See Dong-Chun Kim, ed. *Justification and Justice* (Seoul, Korea: New Wave Plus Publisher, 2017), Elsa Tamez, *The Amnesty of Grace: Justification by Faith from a Latin American Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publisher, 1991), and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice in Love* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015).

²¹ See footnote 4.

In this regard, Kathryn Tanner draws on the contribution of biblical theology to restoring God's justice back to God's justification toward sinners.²² Unlike the traditional definition of biblical theology interpreting and articulating the conceptual apparatus of the Bible within the Bible itself, Tanner's use of biblical theology actively engages and challenges the Christian traditions in light of biblical interpretation, the concern of which is oftentimes quite different from that of Christians living and working in post-biblical times.²³ Therefore, while Paul's concern in addressing God's justification has to do with "showing the way in which God's covenants extend beyond the Jews, and how God nevertheless remains faithful to the covenant promises made to them,"²⁴ the theological concerns of Luther and Calvin in addressing God's mercy of justification vis-à-vis justice are different not only from that of Paul, but from those of each other, as follows.

God's mercy in Jesus Christ replaces the wrath of God under the law, which follows a strict canon of justice (Luther). Or, mercy and justice are commonly kept separate: God's mercy enables us in some sense to keep the law, to be just, but God's mercy does not substantially modify the nature of that law or justice; it seems a mere condition of its fulfillment (Calvinism).²⁵

In this light, Tanner understands one of the benefits of her doing of biblical theology as providing "a certain slant on the content of the terms of the account—a certain slant, that is, on the character and manner of divine initiative and the nature of human transformation."²⁶ In other words, reflecting the biblical understanding of the dynamic of justice and justification back into the contemporary theological problematics could result in shedding a new light on the calloused topic, especially in terms of redefining the God-human as well as the human-human relationship. This is precisely because the separation of justice from justification happened through the historical contextualizing processes of the doctrine. If so, what are so different about the biblical perspective on justice vis-à-vis justification from the contemporary one?

As for this question, Tanner says three things. "First, justice and righteousness are understood in the context of relationship. Second, they are not often opposed to mercy. And third, human justice and righteousness are often supposed to be modeled on, or correspond to, God's own justice and righteousness."²⁷ Concerning the first point, justice and righteousness have emphasis less on judging and punishing the party held accountable for sin and more on restoring them back

²² Kathryn Tanner, "Justification and Justice in a Theology of Grace," *Theology Today*. Vol 55, Issue 4: 510-523. Also, for works on the deep connection between justice and justification, see footnote 44.

²³ According to Tanner, biblical theology has three possible senses in its meaning. The first is whatever theologizing that engages the Bible in support of, or with reference to, the interpreter's theological position. The second is biblical theology in its traditional sense, that is, "the interpreter's constructive efforts to fill out and develop conceptually the germ of theological ideas or the evocative symbols, images, and stories, present in biblical texts."²³ Tanner hastens to add that this second sense "amounts here to commentary on the Bible that takes the theological ends of greater conceptual articulation and coherence for its goals."²³

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 511.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 513. Afterwards, Tanner elaborates more on the benefits of her biblical theology: "My procedure allows later Christian theologies to retain their own concerns while modifying them from within, so to speak, by making the use of their central terms (justification, righteousness, and justice) more biblical. One looks back to the Bible for illumination from the standpoint of someone properly working within post-biblical theologies of justification that are designed to respond to later histories of controversy."

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 512.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 514.

to their relationships with God and with the victims. In this regard, justification is given a new slant for redefining the God-human and the human-human relationships. “To justify someone is to restore that person to his or her proper or rightful place within the relationship, and thereby it involves the restoration or reconstitution of the relationship itself. Justice is that way of life, that body of ordinances or directives, set down by Yahweh.”²⁸ This leads to Tanner’s second point of the dynamic of justice and mercy. If justice and righteousness are to be understood on relational terms, as is with justification, then God’s mercy cannot be the polar opposite of justice, as is often assumed. For that matter, God’s justification cannot be synonymous with mercy, as it is understood in separation from justice.

Yahweh does not break off relations with those who would make the covenant void by violating justice—those who oppress the widow and orphan. Yahweh does not break relations with them as they deserve—Yahweh is merciful. But in being merciful in this way, Yahweh remains righteous in the sense of faithful to the covenant, faithful to God’s own intent to be the God of Israel... God’s righteousness was, then, from the very beginning an act of mercy, something that was not owed.²⁹

In light of Tanner’s first and second points, her third point of modelling human justice after God’s should not be hard to understand. In fact, Tanner puts this point concisely and cogently as follows. “The people of God are to act towards other human beings as God acts towards them—with a comparable sort of righteousness and justice. For example, God opposed their oppression by Pharaoh, and raised them up to a new life in fellowship with their God; so Israel is to oppose oppression in its midst and become a society in which special care is given to the dispossessed—the stranger, widow, and orphan.”³⁰ This becomes the basis for which the doctrine of justification goes beyond the vertical God-human relationships toward the horizontal human-human relationship. Therefore, justification is never mere forgiveness of sins, nor simple reconciliation with God, nor the individual sinner’s liberation from guilt, but it involves offering mercy to others in view of restoring the broken relationship with them, for this restored relationship is based on God’s justice, which “means primarily that God works to eradicate human fault and restore the relations violated by it.”³¹

Now, such redefined relationship in light of God’s justifying acts vis-à-vis justice has enormous implication on the culture dominated by the lost honor, or shame, defined as ‘an emotional response to the experiences of insignificance in one’s worth as a human person.’ Below I elaborate more on this.

Living and breathing in such a culture, as in the culture of the white working class, one can naturally ask, how can God’s justifying acts in line with God’s justice not only critique such culture of shame, but also envision new lives for those inundated with the messages of shame? The message of the doctrine of justification is that God has restored the status of those who deem themselves unworthy and unlovable back to become the worthy and valuable ones before God, because a God of just mercy cannot do otherwise. A natural corollary of that message is that those who call themselves God’s people should do likewise to their neighbors, just as God has shown mercy to them. Thus, if fully accepted and believed, this message that God has justified

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 515.

³⁰ Ibid., 516.

³¹ Ibid., 520.

the unworthy ones has tremendous potentials for restoring broken relationships, at both individual and communal levels. Thus, Miroslav Volf boldly proclaims that some of the first recipients of this message are those who suffer shame most: the poor and marginalized.

Could the hope for inner cities lie in part in the retrieval of the doctrine of justification by grace? How could dead streets receive life from a dead doctrine? Imagine that you have no job, no money, you live cut off from the rest of society in a world ruled by poverty and violence, your skin is the “wrong” color—and you have no hope that any of this will change. Around you is a society governed by the iron law of achievement. Its gilded goods are flaunted before your eyes on TV screens, and in a thousand ways society tells you every day that you are worthless because you have no achievements. You are a failure, and you know that you will continue to be a failure because there is no way to achieve tomorrow what you have not managed to achieve today. Your dignity is shattered and your soul is enveloped in the darkness of despair. But the gospel tells you that you are not defined by outside forces. It tells you that you count—even more, that you are loved unconditionally and infinitely, irrespective of anything you have achieved or failed to achieve, even that you are loved a tad bit more than those whose efforts have been crowned with success.³²

Now, how do we teach such acts of God’s justifying grace crystalized in the doctrine of justification to the white working class? I will close this paper with some suggestions for pedagogical concerns.

Teaching God’s Justifying Grace for Hillbillies, Narratively

The important premise to keep in mind as I begin the last section of this paper is that stories always entail identities, and vice versa. The deep story of the white working class ended up brewing in them identity of the lost honor and the corollary anger against the non-whites and immigrants. As an immigrant and an Asian American myself, teaching the white working class about God’s justifying grace is not just a matter of theory, but a crucial issue that I have to learn to help the white Americans deal with.

Having said that, my question for this section is, how do lives experience change? I believe the answer to that question lies in changing the narrative of the person(s). As I said already, intertwined with one’s narrative is one’s identity, for apart from one’s story of life there is no way to understand who one is, i.e., one’s identity. Therefore, the core issue for teaching God’s justifying grace to the depressed, angry white working class is to show them how God’s justifying grace restores their lost honor to them.

This teaching process could be done in the three following steps: showing them their deep story, showing them God’s justifying grace, and showing them how God’s justifying grace retells their deep story. If so, the role of teaching here is to help the two stories—the story of God’s

³² Miroslav Volf, *Against the Tide: Love in a Time of Petty Dreams and Persisting Enmities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010), 138.

justifying grace and the deep story of the white working class—to encounter each other. This is called narrative encounter, characterized with the four following statements. According to Ivor F. Goodson and Scherto R. Gill, narrative encounter is: 1. Encounter requires attentiveness to the other, and otherness; 2. Encounter unfolds something new about the other, but also about the ‘other’ or the ‘unfamiliar’ of oneself; 3. Encounter has embedded in it the interplay of social and historical traditions; 4. Encounter involves different language(s), i.e., different modes of expression which play a part in enabling the fusion of horizon.³³

Given that the doctrine of God’s justifying grace has been rendered virtually irrelevant, and that the deep story of the white working class is about to bring upon the white working class all kinds of trouble, the encounter between the two narratives satisfy all four characterizations by bringing attention not only to the other, but also to the ‘other’ in the self. Besides, both the deep story of the white working class and Christian theology deserve to be called either a social or a historical tradition. Lastly, the encounter of these two narratives involves different modes of expression which are similar enough to enable the fusion of horizon.

When the white working class gets to see the honor-restoring power of God’s grace, they will no longer be holding on to their own deep story they have created, and the doctrine of God’s justifying grace, itself restoring its ‘honor’ of relevance to contemporaries, will go through changes in a way that is communicable to them. Moreover, what needs to be paid attention to is the role of narrative encounter in teaching emotion and desires. As is shown above, the primary emotion God’s justifying grace conveys to is the sense of honor, i.e., feeling of being recognized, which Hochschild acknowledged as the deep longing of the white working class. It is this longing for which their deep story is designed to fulfill, yet when they see that the deep story does not do the work, they turn to the Tea Party to fulfill this longing.

In that regard, narrative encounter should keep in mind this change of longing and emotion, from anger and depression to joy and honor. It is my hope that this paper does not remain an academic musing, but a practical step toward changing and helping the suffering white working class to be able to see the grace of God who honors them without belittling anyone or group of people, for everyone is created in the image of God, and we all deserve to be honored.

³³ Ivor F. Goodson & Scherto R. Gill, *Narrative Pedagogy: Life History and Learning* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2011), 78.

Paper for the REA Annual Meeting 2018 in Washington D.C.

US-North Korean Nuclear Tension and Its Application in the Context of Religious Education

Dr. Moon Son

Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea

Abstract

This study reflects the regional context of Northeast Asian countries embodied in US-North Korean nuclear tension. The researcher uses the methodological inquiry of practical theology to analyze the political affairs and intertwine with religious education. The ecology of religious education to dismantle the threat of ethnic and racial discrimination such as white supremacy supports a shared pedagogy between students and their teachers in the narrative of Jesus to challenge all forms of oppression as the democratic presence of God.

The United States President Donald Trump's "fire and fury" remark toward the North Korea regime led by Kim Jong-un provokes the military tension on the Korean Peninsula and triggers the North Korean nuclear threat to US territory through often testing nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles to arrive at the West Coast in the United States. The researcher has a basic idea to see the diplomatic circuit of North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un and US President Donald Trump to swing between the North Korean nuclear threat and its US nuclear counterstrike with more comprehensive perspective of practical theology rather than Western rules as white supremacy in the political system in Washington, D.C. Especially, the researcher recognizes the comprehensiveness of practical theology to be applied in the political discourse about the nuclear issues between the United States and North Korea. Such comprehensive flexibility of practical theology will be the academic and practical chances to exchange the political discourse and the practical dialogue of religious education.

Bruce W. Jentleson, who is professor of Public Policy and Political Science at Duke University, notices that President Donald Trump's foreign policy as the "America First" approach globally makes regional issues in Asia more problematic (2017, 10). He argues that Trump's economic and assertive nationalism will make Chinese Xi Jinping take the position of "the champion of free trade" among Asian countries (2017, 11). This means the loss of the United States' global influence in these regions. Furthermore, through the military alliances between the North Korea, China and

Russia in Northeast Asia, there is a high-risk factor that the United States may lose the golden time to protect very serious threats of the North Korea's nuclear program and intercontinental missile systems (Kahler 2017, 27). As an Asian religious scholar in the regional context of such nuclear threat's reality, the researcher encounters existentially the seriousness of Trump's foreign policy as the America First approach in the similarity with "white supremacy." That is the survival issue and reality of many ethnic and racial generations in such Northeast Asian context. As the 66th United States Secretary of State Dr. Condoleezza Rice's remarks, "North Korea's nuclear program was a global, not just a regional, issue. Its treatment of its own people offended not just the President but also our country's commitment to human rights," the researcher has a basic mind to approach the North Korea's nuclear issues as the foundational principle of democracy such as human rights rather than an assertive nationalism as pseudo-alternative of white supremacy (2011, 37).

The researcher as a religious educator in such Northeast Asian context finds a dialogical common ground between political affairs and religious education in George Albert Coe's historical sentence, "Religious education alone takes account to the whole personality, of all its powers, all its duties, all its possibilities and of the ultimate reality of the environment" (Coe 1903). That has the distinct feature of the twenty first century's reframing structure of progressive education to include the practice of social engagement for reconstructing society and government in the meaningful purpose of religious education (Osmer and Schweitzer 2003, 84). The main concern of researcher is the dialectical ecology of religious education to undo the racial and ethnic processes of white supremacy and to encourage the "principle of reciprocity" among participants as the ideals of democracy and then to realize "the socioethical ideal of the democracy of God" on the basis of the Christian faith (Moore 2007, 11; Osmer and Schweitzer 2003, 87). Especially, the frame of reference of "White Practical Theology" suggested by Tom Beaudoin and Katherine Turpin may be a scaffolding setting of practical theology for "methodological inquiry" to analyze the "cultural privilege of whites" and a "white discipline" embodied in Trump's foreign policy as the America First approach (2014, 259). The researcher thinks that Beaudoin and Turpin's methodological frame is the reference of practical theology to intertwine the academic and practical gaps between political affairs and religious education. In addition, the researcher understands their methodology of practical theology as an adequate formulation to universalize the "cultural homogeneity" of white supremacy for instituting the ecology of religious education to undo the threat of "race and racism" and to form "religious identity" for Asian people in their context (Beaudoin and Turpin 2014, 267; Mercer 2017, 2). In other words, the ecology of religious education to encourage personal and corporate theological reflection in order to dismantle the threats of racial and ethnic discrimination of white supremacy recognizes brave challenges of our learners and their teacher's endeavors to open the expansion of their religious identity formation in a shared pedagogy between students and their teachers in light of "the narrative of Jesus to challenge all forms of oppression" (Jennings 2017, 64; Mercer 2014, 98).

The Other Side of the World: China as an Uprising East Asian Country

The regional issue in religious education has some special meaning. The representative book

to deal with the regional issue of religious education is Richard Osmer and Friedrich Schweitzer's book, *Religious Education between Modernization and Globalization*. The subtitle of that book is *New Perspectives on the United States and Germany*. In that book, Osmer and Schweitzer (2003) describe the transformative progress of two countries – the United States and Germany in a transitional era from modernization to globalization. In other words, the regional issue of both countries constitutes of the main stream of that book. They emphasize that “religious education stands in an interdependent relationships to its social contexts,” since the main goal of religious education is closely related to “a common goal of promoting the well-being of our societies and the human community as a whole” (Osmer and Schweitzer 2003, 5). In this aspect of religious education, I have recently interested in the regional issue between Korea and China. The foreign relationship between both countries adds the dynamics of such meanings with the relational issue of the United States and Japan in Korean peninsula. Chinese students among foreign students to study in Korean universities consist of the most population. Recently 800,000 Korean peoples live in China. According to 2007 statistical analysis of Korean World Mission Association, 14,905 Korean Protestant missionaries worked in 168 countries. Among them, Korean missionaries working in China was recorded at the 1st rank as 2,640 peoples among them.

Especially, the recent foreign issues such as joining the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) led by China and deploying the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in Korean peninsula promote the multilateral relationship between Korea, China and the United States. In fact, many Koreans have many concerns about Chinese foreign leadership of Chinese President Xi Jinping. China and the United States are the big two countries in foreign and economic affairs. In the depth of geopolitical tensions between China and the US and between China and Japan, President Xi is carrying out strongly his “anti-corruption campaign” as Chinese domestic agenda (Feng 2014, 27). And his personal popularity and confidence is very high in China and other foreign countries. Thus, any people anticipates cautiously toward Chinese democratization. However, professional political scientists recognize that President Xi remains the stereotypical pattern of “a pragmatic Chinese leader” and does not change “the course of China’s grand strategy of a ‘peaceful rise’” which is shaped by foreign policy of “Chinese ‘self-righteousness’” to maintain a real “competitor” in relation to the United States about world affairs (Feng 2014, 27). Chinese political scientist Zhu Feng, who is Professor of International Relations at Nanjing University in China, analyzes that the “territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas” with “China’s military modernization” and its expansion is in relation to the concrete realization of “Chinese ‘self-righteousness’ mindset” rather than a direct challenge to the United States’ central role for the liberal world order in world affairs as a “new Cold War” (2014, 27).

Even President Xi Jinping’s personal popularity and his political confidence are very high, it is not easy to anticipate the transformative change in Chinese political affair, since the Chinese political leadership maintains its traditional pattern of closed framework. The United States’ influential political scientist Susan Shirk, who is Professor of China and Pacific Relations at UC San Diego and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State under President Clinton administration,

analyzes the oligarchical structure of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Especially, the leadership election process is very conservative and closed. Generally speaking, in China, the political decision making is determined by the Politburo Standing Committee and the Military Commission. According to Susan Shirk's political analysis, Chinese "leadership competition" is covered by "wraps" (2008, 52). For example, the hottest political issue of "the Seventeenth Chinese Communist Party Congress in fall 2007" was who becomes a successor of President Hu Jintao (Shirk 2008, 52). Many people thought Zeng Qinghong, who was a right-hand man of former President Jiang Zemin, as Hu's successor. But the Central Military Commission did not appointed Zeng, who served as vice president, in its number two position, since he was very old (Shirk 2008, 52). Of course, we are able to recognize that China currently experiences "the explosion of information" through "market-oriented and Internet-based new sources" (Shirk 2011, 2). However, the Chinese Communist Party controls the public through its strong media regulation devices and monitors "the actions of subordinate officials" in the local governments through recognizing the openness of media "as a watchdog" (Shirk 2011, 5). In this Chinese current circumstances, it is important how we construct the project of religious education to apply religious educational practice in the foreign relationship between the United States, China, South and North Korea. The researcher explores the potentiality of heterogeneity for the context of religious education in the perspective of these countries' foreign policy.

The Communication with Heterogeneity: The Narrative of *The Greatest Showman*

In the film of *The Greatest Showman* (2017), Barnum experienced big despair that his circus performed building was fired by the protestors. The music of "From Now On" was sung for a new start from deep despair by his circus members and him. The researcher wants to see this film in the perspective of the theory of communication. This part of that movie shows the success of communication between his members and him as their leader. The success of communication means to arrive at some consensus in their thoughts and ideas (Littlejohn 2017, 4). The researcher thinks that a degree of consensus among the members of that community makes a decision whether or not their communication succeeds. Even though some protestors broke the place for their show, in the scenes which we have seen they do not fail in their communication. Such behavior means the successful exchange of their ideas or thoughts.

In other words, the status of interdependence among the members of that community is very positive. Barnum's community maintains a series of "interacting components" (Littlejohn 2017, 42). We can recognize that a series of mechanism regulates their members' behavior, even though their community's heterogeneity is very high. This means there is a larger system to include Barnum's community. What is such larger system to include Barnum's community? The researcher thinks that it is our generation to be emotionally persuaded by that movie's diversity. Our generation recognizes the heterogeneity which the narrative of that movie emphasizes. In my mind, Barnum's system exists in our generation's perspective to favor such difference and diversity. And such system's sustainability can be remained.

In this movie, we can find the way to manage the conflict between Barnum's members. Any communication pattern can resolve some differences effectively. Sometimes the continuity of communication may deepen the conflicts between members, since their differences are emphasized. However, that movie shows well that the foreignness successfully consists of the solidarity of their community (Littlejohn 2017, 240). Here such foreignness can be understood in the perspective of a new potentiality of that community. We can recognize that any foreignness motivates the potentiality of our community to enhance such productivity through that movie. This relates to expansion of human self in the context of religious education.

A New Task of Religious Education for Reorganizing Human Self

The moral issue in religious education recently is very important. The researcher deals with such issue of religious education in the relation with human self. Hyun-Sook Kim (2006) places the main goal and purpose of religious education on moral "solutions for this moral confusion" in recent society (2006, 453). She presents "complex, multicultural and multireligious world" as the main distinctions of modern society (Kim 2006, 453). And the main goal and purpose of religious education in this society is to provide modern people with "substantive norms or moral principles" in order to sustain their personal identity (Kim 2006, 453). That is the background story of religious education. The researcher has interested in the working role of religious education between morality and Christian faith. Kim presents three distinctions of personal identity as such working role of religious education. The first is a relational identity, the second is an equal identity, and the third is an open identity. The relational identity focuses on "both freedom and interdependence" (Kim 2006, 454). Freedom and interdependence have each counter direction of moral value and characteristics. For example, many peoples hope to realize individual freedom rather than interdependence. So, the moral value of interdependence is near to traditional society rather than modern society. Therefore, modern religious education calls for the moral value and attitude of relationality to modern people. Secondly, the equal identity is related to equal "faithful response to God in love in nonecclesial and ecclesial contexts" (Kim 2006, 454). Thirdly, the open identity means the hospitable recognition of various moral values and beliefs. In this narrative, the close relationship between moral growth and faithful development is very important presupposition.

Harold Horell, who is Professor of Religious Education at Fordham University, also delivers the meaningful narrative between morality and religious education. Especially, he thinks that religious education in any faithful community contributes to generating and understanding of "the dynamics of moral awareness" (Horell 2014, 424). He says, "Morality is a constitutive dimension of faith" (Horell 2014, 424). For example, when we read the Biblical scripture of "Love your neighbors as much as you love yourself" in the story of the Good Samaritan in the New Testament (Luke 10:27), we are naturally able to recognize moral awareness in our mind. For at least many Christian educators, it is very natural that "a Christian vision" of "the fuller realization of the Reign of God" and the ultimate of moral life coexist (Horell 2014, 425). Horell argues that religious education may be the main channel for many people to see "moral issues in the light of their faith conviction" (2014, 425). In a secular society, the main point is that such moral awareness expands

from Christianity to other religious traditions. However, the researcher has interested in our “moral and religious outlooks in the unique revelation of God in Jesus Christ” (Horell 2014, 427). We have the certainty that the life and ministry of Jesus Christ transforms the moral awareness in the church. And we believe that such moral and religious outlooks in the church has the harmonious relationship with their neighbors in “common values and a shared outlook” (Horell 2014, 428). The main topic of Christian religious education is to take Christian faith tradition into the learning context. Thus, many Christian educators have interested in the membership process of their religious communities. And the moral issues of religious education will be helpful for forming Christian character in public discourse and everyday lives in the world. In other words, the topic of moral awareness contributes to bridging the gap between faith community and the world in a secular society.

If the researcher’s first interest is the relationship between religious education and moral awareness, his second concern is the concept of hermeneutics. Here, the researcher does not deal with deeply the topic of hermeneutics. His interest is when religious educators use this concept, that is, hermeneutics. Most of all, Hyun-Sook Kim uses the concept or meaning of “hermeneutical engagement,” when she explores “the interdisciplinary relationship between theology and human sciences” (2009, 244). Therefore, the hermeneutical-praxis of religious education is closely related to educational activities to understand and discern “God’s will” in our concrete situation of a secular society (Kim 2009, 244). Especially, she focuses on a “dialectical understanding” between “theological traditions and educational practices” in the Korean context (2009, 245). The researcher thinks that Kim’s idea provides a good framework to understand the nature of religious education, that is, the hermeneutical engagement of religious education. And the researcher thinks that Groome’s short paper is a good example to discern the meaning of religious education in some context.

In that paper, firstly, Thomas Groome uses the word of “holiness of life” (2007, 362). This concept is related to the faithfulness in “discipleship to Jesus Christ” (Groome 2007, 362). This means “our own care of soul” in “the help of God’s grace” (Groome 2007, 363). Secondly, the purpose of religious education is to realize “the reign of God” in this world (Groome 2007, 363). That is the way to become disciples of Jesus Christ and means our efforts to honor “the biblical sense of knowledge and knowing” (Groome 2007, 364). Thirdly, the nature of religious education is to help learners root in their religious tradition and is to expand God’s love into their neighbors in the aspect of “universality” (Groome 2007, 364). Fourthly, religious educators need to have the theological understanding about human condition (Groome 2007, 365). That is to become the foundation to honor our learners. Fifthly, it is very important to learn and teach the religious tradition in their religious community. We do not think to separate some religious tradition and their religious community. It means that religious education presupposes any religious community. Sixthly, the nature of religious education focuses on the close relationship between faith tradition and their everyday lives. The last point of religious education is to maintain the balance between our efforts and God’s grace.

Here we need to focus on our concern that Hyun-Sook Kim's remarks emphasize the equality in a neo-liberal world where the ultimate value of human dignity might be disregarded as a means or a profit for any purpose "in the name of efficiency and accountability" (2015, 481). We are able to assume the meaning and purpose of religious education to move toward the ideal growth of personality in public society:

"We must also provide an educational environment in which students can dedicate themselves to their faith in God and at the same time participate in decision making for their own lives as well as for the sake of the society in which they live" (Kim 2015, 282).

The Condition of the Self for Human Development

The formation of human self to be effective in the sacred and secular worlds is a recent concern of religious education. Human development is the natural phenomena. Psychologists used to study the process of human development. The concept of postconventionality means the highest stage of human development. Modern people usually experience the process of development from the pre-conventional stage through the conventional period to the postconventional level. When we study the process of human development, we focus on the transforming process of the self. Here, human development means the growth of the self. In other words, that means the development in the structure of the self, that is, the structure of human consciousness.

How do human development and the Trinity connect with each other? We can find the possible relationship between human development and the Trinity in the Bible. The Bible says, "So God created humans to be like himself; he made men and women" (Genesis 1:27). This Biblical scripture shows the structural similarity between human development and the Trinity. The social doctrine of the Trinity shows well mutual indwelling and reciprocal interpenetration based on the principles of cooperation and equality between three Persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. The moderate feminist scholar such as Sallie McFague, who is Professor of Vanderbilt University in the US, argues that the traditional names of the Trinity are very male-oriented. So, she suggests to use the neutral words such as the following: Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer instead of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Like this, the social doctrine and the feminist perspective of the Trinity reflect well the principles of cooperation and equality in the divine entity. At the same time, these principles of the Trinity provide the meaningful insights for human development. That means the transforming process in structural pattern of human consciousness.

Robert Kegan focuses to study the structural pattern of human consciousness. He argues that human consciousness experiences the five stage orders and its developmental pattern has the helix shape in the sensitive relationship between subject and object. The shape of helix means the dynamic transition or transformation in the human developmental process. The first order of human consciousness means that of children between the ages of two and six. Their thinking is

fantastic and illogical, their feelings are impulsive and fluid, and their social-relation is egocentric (Kegan 1994, 29). Next, the children between the ages of seven and ten have the characteristics of the second order of human consciousness. Their thinking becomes concrete and logical, their feelings have time-enduring character, and their social relation reflects “a separate mind and a distinct point of view” (Kegan 1994, 29). The third order of human consciousness reflects the psychological characteristics of adolescents. Their thinking is abstract, their feelings shows self-reflexive emotion, and their social relation reveals the loyalty and devotion to any people in the community or some ideas (Kegan 1994, 32).

The adults in the fourth order of human consciousness have “a self-evaluating, self-governing system” (Kim 2001, 275). Their consciousness has “a complex or integrated system” (Kegan 1994, 92). They emphasize “the continuous creating and recreating of roles” rather than the strict adherence to our social roles (Kegan 1994, 96). The fifth order of consciousness has the quality of the multi-self which is multiple and interrelated. In this order of consciousness, some people recognize the co-existence of difference and conflicts between each people, group, community, and society. Kegan applies such co-existence of difference and conflicts within human mind to a kind of “conflict resolution” in the postmodern society such as the following: “Postmodernism suggests a kind of ‘conflict resolution’ in which the Palestinian discovers her own Israeli-ness, the rich man discovers his poverty, the woman discovers the man insider her” (1994, 320-321).

The transition from the first order to the second order is realized by the durability of the human self. The children between the ages of seven and ten can sustain more durable characters in their thinking, feeling, and social relation than the children between the ages of two and six. The transition from the second order to the third order means the expansion of scope where the self of the third order can use more comprehensive resources such as thinking, feeling, and social relation to constitute human consciousness than that of the second order. For example, adolescents usually have broader comprehensibility in thinking, feeling, and social relation than the elementary school students. The fourth order and the fifth order of human consciousness divide the development of adult people into two sides of characteristics. The subjective character is remarkable in the fourth order and the inter-subjective or multi-subjective character is influential in the fifth order. The fourth order of human consciousness has the sustainable ego boundary. And the fifth order of human consciousness accepts the place for others within her or his ego boundary. That means the co-existence of the self and others in her or his ego boundary. Therefore, in the fifth order of consciousness, the thinking, feeling, and social relation with paradoxical patterns are possible.

The Trinity also has the paradoxical pattern. The coexistence of the oneness and the many is possible in Three Persons of the Trinity. The Oneness is not the Many and the Many are not the Oneness. However, this paradox or mystery is possible in the Trinity. Three Persons in the Trinity have each distinguishing entity as the Father or Creator, the Son or Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit or Sustainer. However, three Persons can sustain the unity. Here, we can find the coexistence of the unity and the diversity. Sometimes, when we encounter the new life circumstances, we experience severe embarrassment. But, our selves have the mystery over our consciousness. They

have the surprising capacity to overcome some barriers of our circumstances. The researcher thinks that it is the surprising and mysterious capacity of our selves. He sincerely hopes our class provides the moment to vitalize the mystery capacity within the self.

The Expansion of Human Self in Freudian Idea

Sigmund Freud was born on May 6, 1859 and died on September 23, 1939. He was a physician and neurologist. He could not but concentrate on the unconscious life, since his patients' conscious life was severely distorted. Therefore, he developed "dream analysis and free association techniques" for modern psychoanalysis (Loder 1998, 21). Freud found "a dual drive theory of motivation" in the unconscious way: One is "a life instinct," that is, "libido" and the other is "a death instinct," that is, "destrudo." (Loder 1998, 21). These unconscious motivational drives are the sensitive and pleasurable zones through which the person interacts with the environment. Freud's religious background is also very typical. He had a Jewish mind and regarded himself as dream's interpreter like Joseph in the Bible. In addition, he had experienced a Roman Catholic baptism through his "nanny" (Loder 1998, 21). Therefore, Freudian truth of human nature is able to be understood in relation to "God" (Loder 1998, 21). For Freud, if the unconscious drives work on the main factors of "the interaction between the person and her environment," the rule of the ego, that is, the reality principle also governs both interactions (Loder 1998, 22). Freudian psychic model consists of the intrapsychic reality, the extrapsychic public reality, and the reality principle. The reality principle of the ego is sustained in the balance between the intrapsychic and extrapsychic public reality. The rule of the ego is "designed to maximize satisfaction and ensure survival" (Loder 1998, 22). Even though the rule of the ego is very important factor to sustain the balance between the intrapsychic and the extrapsychic realities, Freud himself "concentrated more on the unconscious than on the ego per se" (Loder 1998, 22).

For Habermas, Freudian psychoanalysis provides "learning mechanism of internalization" (1987, 9). This mechanism describes "objective structure of meaning" in human mind (Habermas 1987, 9). Usually human being proceeds the process of that mechanism through "the structure of assimilation" and the structure of reflection" (Habermas 1987, 9). The former means the activity to subjectify an external object and the latter means the activity to objectify the self critically. Through these both internal activities in human mind, the self comes to have the perspective to see itself objectively and critically. This is very similar with Piagetian perspective about the human consciousness. Even though Freud focuses on the unconscious rather than the conscious, The researcher thinks that Habermas' understanding of Freudian internalization is very meaningful in the aspect that such internalizing process in our learning can be facilitated through students' "engagement" rather than "control" under them (Eisner 2002, 142). In other words, students' engagement in our educational environment will be the criteria to facilitate the internalizing process of learning and to see the self critically and objectively and then to lead some development of the subject.

Designing the Transformation of Human Self

Human self asks for some transformation in the substantive encounter with the world. For Kegan (1994), the meaning of curriculum can be understood as the cultural contents which human self in the world is encountered with. He distinguishes the modern self and the postmodern self through the way to construct “difference and conflict” (Kegan 1994, 307). The modern self has the completeness and wholeness of the meaning. It means “our *own* way of looking at and relating to the world” (Kegan 1994, 308). Any person who has the modern self does not try to change other person’s perspective. That person tries to explore a comprehensive view in order to solve difference and conflict. It explains the distinction of the modern self.

The postmodern self has the different view about differences and oppositions with the modern self. Usually, we used to find differences and oppositions in the other person rather than in each of us. However the postmodern self understands differences and oppositions in the other person as a part of our whole narrative to construct our own being. In other words, the postmodern self utilizes differences and oppositions with the other person as some chance to “recover our own complexity” (Kegan 1994, 310). Likewise the postmodern self has the capacity to lead us to see “our own oppositeness” in difference and conflict with the other person (Kegan 1994, 310).

The postmodern self has a new organism of “trans-system or “cross-form” to move a core of self from subject to object (Kegan 1994, 313). Such system can be understood as “multipleness” rather than “completeness” (Kegan 1994, 313). The postmodern self has some dynamic to “relativize *systemic knowing*” and then makes us move beyond the limitation of our wholeness (Kegan 1994, 317). The postmodern curriculum therefore distinguishes the normative goal and the descriptive goal. The normative goal depends on the wholeness of the curriculum of the modern world. But the descriptive goal recognizes the multiple possibility of the curriculum of the postmodern world. Therefore the adult students to have “self-direction” need to challenge “the assumptions of wholeness, completeness, and the priority of the self” in the encounter with the postmodern curriculum. In the end, the relation with the other person transforms a single system of our self into “our multiple selves” to recognize our own limitation (Kegan 1994, 351).

The Comprehensive Strategy in Religious Education for Transforming Human Self

The transformative model for expanding human self in religious education may be understood in Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore’s “Relational Teaching.” Moore is a representative Christian educator in the United States and is a current Dean of the Divinity School at Boston University. She often came to Korea and delivered her lectures at Yonsei University. Her relational teaching as narrative method is precisely explained in her representative book, *Teaching from the Heart: Theology and Educational Method*. In that book, she describes the narrative method as some “passions” to connect person and event, the cultural and religious stories, and the stories of person and the earth (1998, 131). She recognizes the educational meaning of narrative teaching in seeing human life in the relationship between “the parts” and “the whole” (1998, 131). To see the parts in relation to the whole means to understand our lives in theological and faithful reorganization through the Biblical texts or stories. Especially, she emphasizes the importance of narrative

teaching as “a significant mode of human communication” (1998, 132). Moreover, Moore supposes the organic and web-likely interconnected view of the world. It becomes the precondition of narrative communication about the relationship between the world and human being. Likewise, narrative teaching has some distinction to generate educational and “moral imagination” in our natural lives or many Christian communities rather than make “cause-and-effect way” (Moore 1998, 138).

The role of imagination in narrative teaching is to provide our learners with “artistic experience” (Moore 1998, 139). And educational imagination promotes the primitive perspective to connect the human and natural words (Moore 1998, 139). That means the link of theology and imagination through the stories. She understand the main distinction of narrative thought in some natural connection of action and consciousness. Here consciousness means comprehensively the human thinking, feeling, and willing. She emphasizes that narrative thought is different with “logico-scientific thinking” such as “description, explanation, and verification” (1998, 140). Therefore narrative teaching promotes the lineal and organic link between personal consciousness and the social reality, since human consciousness reflects imaginative and individual awareness and experience of the world with “a form of indirect communication” (Moore 1998, 141). And Moore understands the importance of narrative teaching as an essential channel for human growth and the initiative dynamic to form and transform the world (1998, 142-143). Likewise, narrative method generates the transformation of human consciousness and the reality of the world through both organic relation of human and the world with a mode of indirect communication to promote artistic experience for our learners. Especially we need to know the distinction of narrative teaching to solve a sensitive tension or conflict to be generated between religious differences in our public environment. In this aspect, Moore’s educational model can be applied as the device of religious education to transform the distinctive resources of heterogeneity and difference into a new potentiality to reformulate human self in our public and secular society where the harshness of racism .

References

- Beaudoin, T., and K. Turpin. 2014. White practical theology. In *Opening the field of practical theology: An introduction*, ed. K. A. Cahalan and G. S. Mikoski, 251-269. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Coe, G. A. 1903. Religious education as a part of general education. In *The religious education association: Proceedings of the first convention, Chicago 1903*, 44-52. Chicago: The Religious Education Association. <http://old.religiouseducation.net/journal/historical/Coe.pdf> (accessed May 15, 2018).
- Eisner, E. W. 2002. *The educational imagination: On the design and evaluation of school programs*. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education.

- Feng, Z. 2014. Geopolitics and China's response: Be a co-operator and competitor. *Global Asia* 9 (3): 24-29.
- Groome, T. H. 2007. Advice to beginners-and to myself. *Religious Education* 102 (4): 362-366.
- Habermas, J. 1987. *The theology of communicative action*. Vol. Two, *Lifeworld and system: A critique of functionalist reason*. Translated by Thomas McCarthy. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press. (Original work published 1981)
- Horell, H. 2014. On learning to see the world religiously: Moral awareness, faith, and public moral discourse. *Religious Education* 109 (4): 424-439.
- Jennings, W. J. 2017. Race and the educated imagination: Outlining a pedagogy of belonging. *Religious Education* 112 (1): 58-65.
- Jentleson, B. W. 2017. Trump's global foreign policy is bad news for Asia. *Global Asia* 12 (4): 10-14.
- Kahler, M. 2017. Asia's Trump peril: Reckoning with economic conflict. *Global Asia* 12 (4): 26-31.
- Kegan, R. 1994. *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Kim, H.-S. 2001. Christian education for postconventional Christian identity in the modern context. *International Journal of Practical Theology* 5 (2): 260-286.
- Kim, H.-S. 2006. Education in a postconventional society. *Religious Education* 101 (4): 453-457.
- Kim, H.-S. 2009. Redefining the theological and academic identity of religious education. *Religious Education* 104 (3): 243-246.
- Kim, H.-S. 2015. Reclaiming equality in a neo-liberal world. *Religious Education* 110 (5): 480-482.
- Littlejohn, S. W., K. A. Foss, and J. G. Oetzel. 2017. *Theories of human community*. 11th ed. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- Loder, J. E. 1998. *The logic of the spirit: Human development in theological perspective*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mercer, J. A. 2014. Feminist and womanist practical theology. In *Opening the field of practical theology: An introduction*, ed. K. A. Cahalan and G. S. Mikoski, 97-114. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Mercer, J. A. 2017. A space for hard conversation on race, racism, anti-racism, and religious education (Editorial). *Religious Education* 112 (1): 1-2.

Moore, D. L. 2007. *Overcoming religious illiteracy: A cultural studies approach to the study of religion in secondary education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Moore, M. E. M. 1998. *Teaching from the heart: Theology and educational method*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International.

Osmer, R. R., and F. Schweitzer. 2003. *Religious education between modernization and globalization: New perspective on the United States and Germany*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Rice, C. 2011. *No higher honor: A memoir of my years of Washington*. New York: Crown Publishers.

Shirk, S. L. 2008. *China: Fragile superpower*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Shirk, S. L. 2011. Changing media, changing China. In *Changing media, changing China*, ed. S. L. Shirk, 1-37. New York: Oxford University Press.

Notes on contributor

Dr. Moon Son is Visiting Professor of Christian education in College of Theology at Yonsei University, Seoul in South Korea. E-mail: son0925@hotmail.com



W. Y. Alice Chan, Ph.D. Candidate
McGill University
alice.chan@mail.mcgill.ca

Emile Lester,
Associate Professor of Political Science and International Affairs,
University of Mary Washington
elester@umw.edu

2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4, Washington, D.C.

Intersectionality and identity politics of race, religion, and class in Georgia public schools

In 2015, an US non-sectarian, non-partisan, non-profit initiated a new religious literacy project (hereafter “the Project”) in two Georgian public school districts. Now in its inaugural year of teacher training, the Project aims to foster religious literacy among teachers so that they are better informed and equipped to teach the current state standards that pertain to religion, as well as address religious discrimination, in line with the “rights, respect, and responsibilities” in the First Amendment. As evaluators of the Project, we notice three emerging themes that reflect the current tensions in the South, the US, and the world – the need to go beyond white normativity (to consider race), beyond Christian-Protestant normativity (to consider dominant religions in a secular state), and beyond the public school (to discuss class and resegregation). This presentation is an opportunity to discuss the three emerging themes and co-explore them in relation to the teaching of intersectionality and identity politics alongside presentation attendees.

In 1963, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. lamented that, “in America, the church is still the most segregated major institution in America.” “The first way that the church can repent, the first way that it can move out into the arena of social reform,” he continued, “is to remove the yoke of segregation from its own body.” Over fifty years later, Rev. King Jr.’s analysis on the Church, prejudice, and segregation still stand.

In our evaluation of a new religious literacy project (hereafter “the Project”) by a US non-sectarian, non-partisan non-profit, we have immersed our data collection in metro Georgia, mostly Atlanta and the suburban environment surrounding the Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS), and Central Georgia, in the towns and cities associated with Bleckley County Public Schools (BCPS).¹ Since 2015, the Project has developed relationships with GCPS and BCPS with an aim to offer a blend of online and in-person religious literacy training among public school teachers so that they are better informed and equipped to teach the current state standards that pertain to religion, while addressing religious discrimination. Our role has been to evaluate the success of the Project and understand how it can be of benefit to Georgia.

While the evaluation began with a focus on teacher and community leaders’ perspectives on religious identities, religious traditions, and the teaching about religion in public schools, our observations and perspectives from 44 local interviews illustrate that a conversation related to teaching about religion in Georgian public schools intertwines racial, religious, and class-based

¹ A brief description of the Project will be shared during the conference presentation.

tensions at the individual and societal level. To introduce these emerging themes of our study, this paper discusses the complexities of region and race, Christian-Protestant normativity juxtaposed to the inclusion of a diversity of religions, as well as racial and class-based resegregation within the dichotomy of public and private schools; thereby, expanding the conference discussion on white normativity to consider other norms and their complications in Georgia and the South. We also extend the conversation in the South to consider the saliency of understanding tensions between personal and national identity that permeates globally today.

As educators ourselves, we understand that the tensions teachers may have between their personal identity, the curriculum, and their socio-cultural and/or political views influence their practice. With respect to the Project, we ask: How aware are teachers of their own intersectionality and identity politics, and that of their students? Can this knowledge inform their religious literacy so that religious literacy training is not perceived as an attack on their personal self or their conception of national identity? This is of exceptional concern as one participant remarked that many teachers present a simplistic teaching of American history who personally believes that the US is a Christian nation. “Convincing them that it's not could be a problem” (Manis, interviewed March 2018).

We begin this discussion by first clarifying our theoretical framework for this discussion based in Crenshaw (1991), and Hill-Collins and Bilge’s (2016) conception of intersectionality and Kruks’ (2001) philosophical approach to identity politics. Afterwards, the three emerging themes from our evaluation are presented alongside questions that we would like to discuss with attendees during our presentation. Embedded in each theme is a consideration of how the Project, and others, can promote respect for diversity and intersectionality among white evangelical Christians without alienating them, as many feel marginalized and under attack from mainstream American culture.

Theoretical Framework

The emerging themes are distinct but they also intersect and raise the complexity in varying convergences of race, religion, and class, e.g. black, Muslim, and middle class students who may attend public school versus ethnically South Asian, Muslim, and upper-middle class students who attend private schools. To unpack this discussion, we refer to the theoretical frameworks of intersectionality and identity politics (Crenshaw, 1991; Hill-Collins & Bilge, 2016). Through intersectionality, we recognize the oppression on specific identity markers in society and how one’s oppression is compounded when one oppressed marker is coupled with other oppressed markers. However, the power dynamics within one’s intersectionality varies by context, and one can be disenfranchised without an association to several oppressed markers. For example, white evangelical Christians are a majority in the areas of our evaluation. Yet, they may be a minority on some university campuses and sense that their voices are suppressed. More generally, evangelicals may be dominant in Georgia, but be a minority in other parts of the US and sense that they are marginalized nationally, as mentioned by educator interviewees in BCPS and Macon. In recognizing this, we also use intersectionality as a framework to analyze the social power dynamics that exist in the varying milieus across Georgia.

In relation, identity politics refers to the political sentiments that one affiliates to particular identities in society and is typically expressed by those who have been marginalized or feel that they have been marginalized.

What makes identity politics a significant departure from earlier, pre-identarian forms of the politics of recognition is its demand for recognition on the basis of the very grounds on which recognition has previously been denied: it is *qua* women, *qua* blacks, *qua* lesbians that groups demand recognition. The demand is not for inclusion within the fold of “universal humankind” on the basis of shared human attributes; nor is it for respect “in spite of” one’s differences. Rather, what is demanded is respect for oneself *as* different (Kruks, 2001, 85).

As this demand may rise out of an understanding of self and one’s intersectionality, the idea of and mention of identity politics in the US today provokes a negative response from many sides as various groups feel marginalized or threatened. For example, anxiety levels have increased among some white Americans upon discussion of a shift in majority-minority groups in the US (Mutz, 2018). Perhaps in consideration of these perspectives, Steve Bannon, Trump’s previous chief strategist, described a conversation with Trump where he expressed, “The Democrats...the longer they talk about identity politics, I got ’em. I want them to talk about racism every day. If the left is focused on race and identity, and we go with economic nationalism, we can crush the Democrats” (Bannon in Kutner, 2017). Although it can be difficult to fully understand the views of Bannon, he has shown here that identity politics has been equated with specific political parties and marginalized groups by some, which has raised a degree of contempt from others rather than a recognition and respect for difference. In particular, Bannon presented the Democrats as a party that focuses on the voices of racially marginalized individuals while omitting the concerns of others. As a result, he and the Trump administration presented itself as an advocate for the suppressed voices of those excluded by the Democrats – the white majority, in his perspective, where 39.9% self-identify as Christians (PRRI, 2018).²

Methodology and Thematic Analysis

To date, we have conducted 44 interviews with Georgians (in January, March, and May 2018). With support from the Project’s Regional Coordinator and Advisory Council members, we used snowball sampling to approach each participant, comprising community leaders, religious leaders, school administrators, teachers, students, parents, and academics in political science, history, education, and religious studies. Table 1 and 2 lists their demographic data, which reflects Georgia’s predominantly white and Christian populations noted in Table 3.

Table 1: Summary of interviewees based on gender and religious tradition

Gender	White	Black	Middle Eastern	Asian	Unsure
Male	26	1	-	3	-
Female	12	-	1	-	1
Total	38	1	1	3	1

² The 2017 national figure of 39.9% white Christians is based on 15.3% white evangelicals, 13.3% white mainline Protestants, and 11.3% of white Catholic (<http://ava.prri.org/#religious/2017/MetroAreas/religion/m/national>).

Table 2: Summary of interviewees based on gender and religious tradition

Gender	Christian	Jewish	Muslim	Hindu	Unaffiliated	Did not self-identify
Male	Mainline – 3; Evangelical – 12; Catholic – 3; Did not specify – 3; LDS – 1	Reformed – 3	-	3	-	3
Female	Mainline – 4; Evangelical – 3; Catholic – 0; Did not specify – 1	“Not religious” – 1; Did not specify – 1	1	-	2	-
Total	30	5	1	3	2	3

Each interview was recorded with an audio-recorder and transcribed verbatim. Recordings were omitted only when an interviewee preferred to not be recorded, in which case notes were taken during the interview. In most cases, interviews were conducted one-on-one. The Regional Coordinator of the program participated in the interviews on occasion. We acknowledge that this could have posed a conflict of interest when Advisory Council members of the Project were interviewed while the Regional Coordinator attended. However, in most circumstances, we found it beneficial to observe the interaction between the two individuals and gain further contextual insight in being part of the conversations before and after the interviews as both evaluators are not from Georgia.

Using the transcription and notes, each interview was analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The analysis has raised the following three themes thus far.

Emerging Themes

1. Beyond white normativity: region and race

In 2017, 46% of Atlantans were white, non-Hispanic, 31% were African American (marking Atlanta the US metro area with the largest African American population), 12% Hispanic, and 3% Asian or Pacific Islander³ (PRRI American Values Atlas, 2018). This differs somewhat from the statewide demographics of 52% white, non-Hispanic, 29% African American, 9% Hispanic, and 2% Asian or Pacific Islander⁴. Moreover, in consideration of the intersectionality of race and religion, PRRI reported that in 2017, the combined percentage of White evangelical Protestants (21%) and White mainline Protestants (12%) were comparably larger than the percentage of Black Protestants (20%) in Georgia⁵, illustrated in Table 3. However, in Atlanta, the

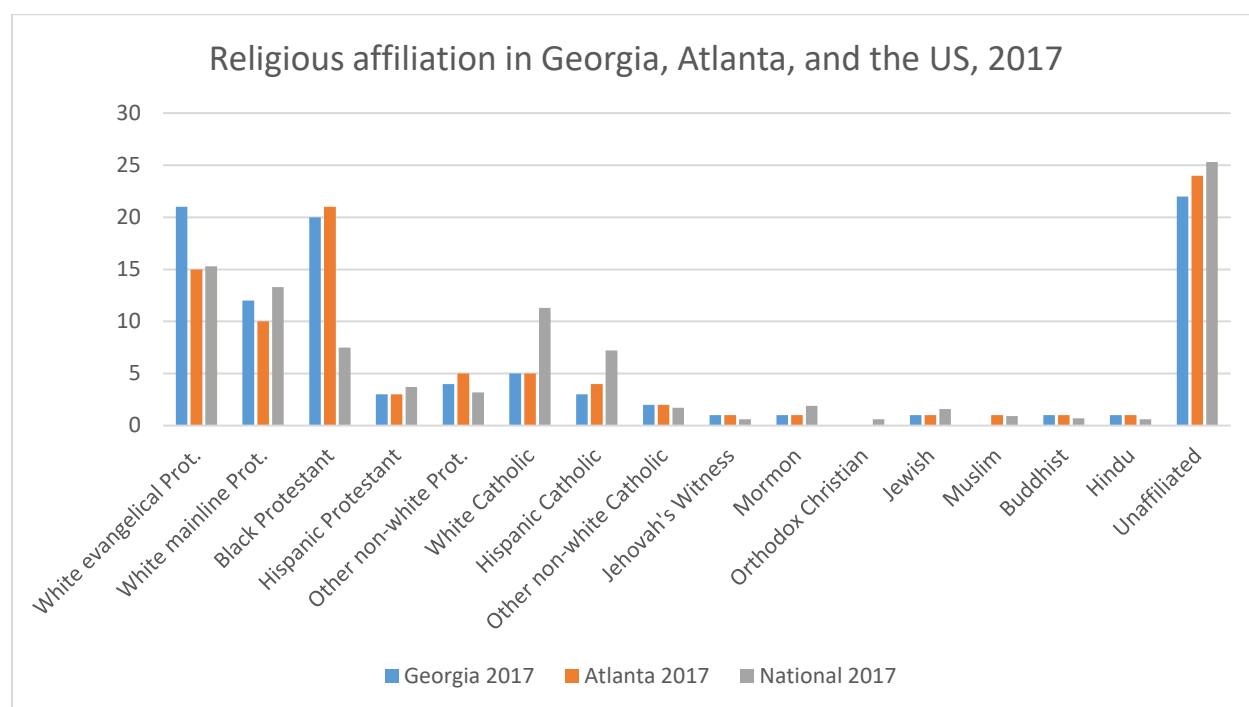
³ Demographic details for Atlanta by race are listed online here:
<http://ava.prri.org/#demographics/2017/MetroAreas/race/1,2,3,4,5>

⁴ Data at the state level is available online here: <http://ava.prri.org/#demographics/2017/States/race/m/US-GA>

⁵ Data for Georgia by Religious Tradition is available online here:
<http://ava.prri.org/#religious/2017/States/religion/m/US-GA>

25% White Protestants (comprising 15% of White evangelical Protestants and 10% White mainline Protestants) were similar to the 21% of Black Protestants, suggesting the presence of two majorities⁶ despite the potential normativity of one over the other. John Dunaway, Professor Emeritus of French and Interdisciplinary Studies, Mercer University, and founder of “Building the Beloved Community Symposium,” a program pairing African-American and white clergy, explained this contemporary separation between white and black majorities in Christian groups.

Table 3: Religious affiliation in Georgia, Atlanta, and the US, 2017



In Macon, Georgia, Dunaway explained that the history of the First Baptist Church and a First Baptist Church of Christ, as both white individuals and their slaves attended the former church until the Emancipation Proclamation, when African Americans organized the latter church across the street from the former one. “So there are two First Baptist Churches downtown in Macon, and there are a lot of cases throughout the South where there will be, I don't know, for example, an Ebenezer Baptist Church and down the road is another black Ebenezer Baptist Church.” To mend such divides, Dunaway described that the New Baptist Covenant, a national organization, established the Covenant of Action⁷ projects that aim to, “get those churches [that were once one congregation before the civil war] to not necessarily merge but at least collaborate” (Dunaway, March 2018 interview). In his own efforts, Dunaway also aims to bridge the racial segregation locally through his annual “Building the Beloved Community Symposium⁸” (named after the

⁶ This paper does not elaborate on the nuances among Black Protestants but heterogeneity exists among Black Protestants, despite the lack of detail in the PRRI data in Table 3. See Pomerantz (1997), Branch (1989), and Gould (2017).

⁷ Details about New Baptist Covenant and the Covenant of Action projects are available here: <http://newbaptistcovenant.org/our-calling-new/>

⁸ The “Building the Beloved Community Symposium” details available here: <http://community.mercer.edu/beloved/history/>

references to the “Beloved Community” in MLK speeches) that gathers and encourages relationships among clergy from different races and denominations.

With such demographics and historical and contemporary racial segregation, a project situated in the South could not dismiss a discussion on religion and its relation to race. Thus, in reviewing the Project’s aims to address religious discrimination, we asked interviewees if they thought that the Project could also address race. With the historical and current cultural divide between black and white churches,⁹ many leaders we spoke with (such as FM, KR, and DG) struggled to articulate their concerns but were hopeful and anticipate that the formation of dialogue skills in discussing one controversial topic, such as religion, could potentially facilitate even more taboo discussions of race. Andrew Manis was perhaps the most comfortable interviewee in broaching this contentious topic.

In our conversation with Dr. Manis, Professor of History at Middle Georgia State University, and author of *Macon Black and White: An unutterable separation in the American century* (2004), he explained that, “Race and religion in America, and especially in the South, where slavery was and where Jim Crow was, you can’t really separate those very easily.” Among his students, he found it difficult to teach about certain topics as some white students used those topics as a “license to check out, either mentally or physically.” “They’ll say, ‘It’s black history. It pertains to black people. It’s a black thing. It doesn’t really effect my ethnic group or me as a color-blind American’”. As a result, Manis highly recommended that aspects of historical discrimination could be discussed under a focus of multiculturalism that includes the realities of Irish Americans in the 1840s and 50s, or the prejudice towards Arabs or Muslims today.

The fact that you can trace these issues to ethnic groups other than African-Americans provides a perspective that can be illuminating to many white students and to many black students or students of other ethnic traditions because they see that these are problems that every ethnic group has experienced to some extent. I think that it universalizes the problem and that’s healthy to know that it happens with the other ethnic groups.

To breach the conversation on race (and in turn religion) in the South, he suggested broadening the discussion to go beyond the black and white majority groups. Despite the attempt to blur such racial lines, Manis did raise the reality of regional tensions as well.

In our conversation, Manis offered to help with the Project in case the Project sought to include a southern versus “Yankee accent,” since individuals with a southern accent may be more readily welcomed, illustrating an understanding of whiteness that extends beyond race to consider one’s regional affiliation. Although all the teacher trainers and speakers in the Project were white,

⁹ In 1845, the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society aimed to disqualify any slave owner from missionary service. In response to these sanctions, some Baptist churches in the South left the Society to form the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), “a haven for pro-slavery Southern Christians,” so that they could keep their slaves and continue missionary work (Jones, 2016, p. 168). For decades, the SBC excused its institutional complicity by placing the onus of maintaining racist norms on individual members and not the institution (Jones, 2016). However, in 1995, the SBC issued an official apology in Atlanta on its 150th year anniversary (See <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/899/resolution-on-racial-reconciliation-on-the-150th-anniversary-of-the-southern-baptist-convention>). Since then, the non-white SBC-affiliated congregations increased from 5% in 1990 to 20% in 2010, but the diversity results from an increase in majority-black and Latino churches, as less than 1% of SBC churches are multiethnic. (See <http://accesswdun.com/print/2012/6/249806>).

with the exception of one, they did not reflect the presumed representation of a Southern religious leader. Thus, Manis' candidness shared an affinity that some others only showed in attitude and action; thereby, articulating the historical and contemporary inclusion and exclusion that exists based on one's race, perceived whiteness, and perhaps one's assumed political affiliation.

For example, David Gushee, Professor of Christian Ethics and Director of the Center for Theology and Public Life, School of Theology, Mercer University, shared that the course might be interpreted as (and might in reality be to an extent) an imposition from elitist about local community (interview, January 2018). One specific self-identified Christian evangelical teacher in our study (BK, January 2018 interview) expressed these sentiments as she shared that Georgia is a "Southern, Confederate, redneck state" and that she was concerned about an elitist bias in the Project. "I was a little wary of the essays [in the teacher training material] that had been published on the Harvard website...taking me to a Harvard website...Being conservative I don't look at Harvard as being conservative." Here, BK's specific example presents the intersectionality and bias based on region, political affiliation, aspects of race, and class. Although she did not explicitly state it, many of her ideas, and those of Gushee and Manis, relate to sentiments from southerners; understood to be from families with "generations-long histories in the South," "have a regional sense of place tied intrinsically to their identities,"¹⁰ and where changes are determined by locals (Falk & Webb, 2010, p. 69).

The skepticism towards "non-southerner" individuals, identities, and groups raised the following questions in our evaluation that relate to local and global concerns:

- In Georgia: How important is it to have teacher trainers that reflect the average teacher in the Project by accent, political affiliation, and race? If regional identity is so important, is the presence of a non-black or non-white trainer ineffective?
- In America: How are in and out-groups formed, and how does this inform one's regional authority?
- Internationally: Is the sensitive issue of racial discrimination best articulated from a local authority figure, or does the understanding or respect towards a particular authority differ based on context?

2. Beyond Christian-Protestant normativity: White Christian America remains the majority religion in the US with mainline Protestants largely in the Northeast and upper Midwest and evangelical Protestants mostly in the South (Jones, 2016). Alongside this demographic reality are national historical narratives represented in key speeches by George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King Jr. that are steeped with biblical references [even as Washington and Lincoln often defied conventional beliefs in their own private religious practice and refused to conceive the American founding documents in narrowly sectarian terms]. To this, Manis (March 2018) said that many history teachers today probably share a single narrative about the formation of the US as it is easier to convey than the complexity and diversity in religious communities throughout US history. Yet, this historical narrative ignores the demographic changes that some have experienced nationally from 1974 to 2014, as Protestant and Catholic populations dropped from 63 to 47% and 26 to 22%, respectively, while the unaffiliated population increased from 7 to

¹⁰ Falk and Webb (2010) found that there is no specific definition of a southerner, but the most commonly reported were language (accents and vernacular expressions), customs, religion, politics, the Confederate flag, and the importance of family.

22% (Jones, 2016). In contrast, locally, the teachers' lived experience in Georgia may not differ greatly from their potentially single narrative understanding of US history.

In Georgia, PRRI's American Values Atlas data from 2013 to 2017 shows that the population of White evangelical Protestants (approximately 23% of the population), white mainline Protestants (approximately 12% of the population), Black Protestants (approximately 21% of the population), Hispanic Protestants (almost consistently 3%), and other non-white Protestants (approximately 3.5%) have remained quite steady¹¹. Table 3 details the breakdown of demographic data by religious tradition in Georgia, Atlanta, and the US in 2017. In this setting, we observed three nuances within and beyond Christian-Protestant normativity.

Firstly, we noted that among Christians, a discussion on religious diversity pertained to the differences within Christianity. For, in a milieu where a common introduction in Georgia included the question, "where do you go to church?" (Christopher Lawrence, January 2018 interview), local leaders knew that the diversity in south Georgia included Presbyterians, Methodists, the church of Christ (Brad Bryant, January 2018), and that interfaith meant conversations between Baptists and other Protestants (Aaron Sataloff, January 2018). "Probably the most liberal religion we have is Episcopalians, and we don't have other religions, everybody is Christian-based, now we have a large Mormon population here [in Central Georgia]. But everything is pretty much Christ-centered" (Steve Smith, January 2018). Regarding non-Protestant denominations, Aaron Sataloff, a local senior rabbi remarked that, "Catholicism on its own is quite controversial. If you ask a Baptist if Catholics are part of the same faith tradition, they might have a different answer for you." Additionally, Sataloff elaborated to say that he has learned about Christian culture but he was uncertain if they learned about Jewish culture. As these attitudes described the public sphere, narratives from school settings show that these descriptions are apt among students and teachers also.

Janell Johnson, Professor in the Department of Religious Studies, Mercer University, shared that when her daughter's middle school was voting for the school yearbook cover, every single option included a cross or were "blatantly kind of Jesus Saves, you know, very religious," and some parents reacted against them. "Some people were outraged that people would complain about that. There is that very conservative base, but also the voices are there somewhere that are willing to stand up to that and say no, we want more separation of church and state." In her own lectures, she explained that outspoken conservatism existed among her students too. "I have gotten a lot of pushback in my courses because I stress a lot of feminist kinds of issues... I've had students e-mail me and tell me they're tired of the feminist crap." Scott Nash, also a Professor in the Department of Religious Studies, Mercer University, believed that these attitudes existed among teachers as well. (January 2018).

Secondly, we noted that moving beyond Christian-Protestant normativity included non-Christian worldviews and a particular discomfort regarding Islam. Within the larger society, George Wirth (January 2018), Pastor Emeritus at First Presbyterian church in Atlanta, explained that, "I know that there are schools all over this state, and superintendents who are going to find out that this program includes Islam, not just Jewish, Christian, but Islam, and Hinduism, and Buddhism. Their initial reaction because of the sheer fear and prejudice here is going to be to shut

¹¹ The largest change existed among the unaffiliated, with 16% in 2013 and 22% by 2017. Altogether, data from 2013 to 2017 by Religious Tradition in Georgia was tallied separately and are available here: <http://ava.prri.org/#religious/2017/States/religion/m/>

that down... This state is not a really receptive state to teaching about other religions besides Judeo-Christian.” Similarly, Gushee described “a simmering distrust of Muslims is higher in [the] South and Georgia than other places,” that the distrust worsened after 9/11, and that he was skeptical about a successful implementation of the Project in small-town Georgia even if the curriculum included teaching the history of Islam (January 2018). In Newton County, a community complained about zoning for a mosque “because in those folks’ mind that was tantamount to terrorist” (Brad Bryant, January 2018). The communal identity to Judeo-Christianity seemed to coincide with a regional and national association to protect against an “other” that appeared untrustworthy and threatened public safety. Teachers shared a similar outlook at the classroom level.

JK, a teacher in Central Georgia (January 2018) said that, “We are pretty much a Christian community.” Yet she did note that with the nearby U.S. Air Force base in Warner Robins “[you] never know what culture they bring in.” In reviewing the professional development training material on Buddhism, JK said that, “[I] just don’t understand this... [The] part about Jesus [is] so familiar. I don’t know enough about other religions.” She did share that the professional development training she completed “opened my eyes to some of the things,” and that she was happy to have completed it and looked forward to her child studying about different world religions. Yet, she felt that the Project would be helpful to “witness to other people” as well, although it was unclear if she meant to witness in action or word. Likewise, KF, another teacher in the area, stated that, “[you] can’t take what I am away from the classroom... [I am a] child of God...not afraid to tell them what I believe” (January 2018). Yet, despite the suggestions towards proselytization, KF noted that Muslim students were especially mocked and that she “definitely thinks it would be a good thing” for the course to teach about respect towards Muslims. She felt that, “if parents knew background [of the Project] they would be supportive,” especially if “students have options . . . could sign a waiver,” as “everyone in this community are Christians – Bible Belt.” A third teacher, BK (January 2018), shared that she is a very conservative Christian and that, “my job [as a Christian] is to tell you the truth” but she did not espouse using public schools to promote Christianity. Rather, she felt that teaching about religion should be an elective course that is discussed thoroughly at the college level, as she felt that teaching about religion “is a job for parents” and that asking the public schools to teach it was similar to “taking this most important job away from parents.”

These conversations highlighted the struggle that teachers had in balancing their personal views with their professional practice, and how a personal Christian worldview and beliefs informed their teaching about any religion. In some senses, such as those from BK, the suggestion of a religious literacy program seemed to pose a personal attack on the teachers’ religious identity and role as a parent. Thus, although the Project aims to protect the First Amendment freedoms of all individuals, it also appears to challenge an understanding of one’s self and one’s conception of their regional, if not national, identity.

Thirdly, while we noticed tensions of intersectionality within Christian groups and between Christian and non-Christian groups, one interviewee also noted the complexities within non-Christian groups and spoke about the differences among Muslims in Georgia. “For Muslim communities, until probably 2005-6, the majority of Muslims in the Atlanta area were probably African-American. It’s now very close to being balanced if not weighing in the other direction. Where now probably half African-American and half immigrant. And that has led to a significant diversity in the type of Muslim communities there are” (JM, January 2018). Within this diversity,

based on race and geographic socio-cultural practices, were also observable conflicts between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims.

In going beyond Christian-Protestant normativity, we found that the variance among black and white Christians raises the diversity among people of the same religion in the same geographic locale, the tensions within Christian-Protestant groups themselves, unease and prejudice between Christian and non-Christian groups, as well as conflicts within some non-Christian groups. These observations raise three questions :

- In Georgia: How much priority should interfaith initiatives give to racial diversity as opposed to diversity between Christian and non-Christian groups? Might a discussion on diversity overall be more effective in addressing race indirectly?
- In America: How can regional and national history be taught to include more narratives from minority groups in US history, e.g. the generational contributions of US Sikh or Muslim citizens, so that minority groups are not perceived as a threat to regional or national identity or security? Alternatively, how does one introduce training about diversity without alienating evangelical Christians who themselves and at times for legitimate reasons feel marginalized?
- Internationally: How does one's conception of the national identity inform one's personal identity?

3. Beyond the public school: From 2010 to 2017, the demographics of public school enrollment shifted in Georgia from 3 to 4% of Asians, remained consistent at 37% among black students, rose from 12 to 15% for Hispanic students, and dropped from 44 to 40% for white students (Table 4). While the enrollment among the same groups in BCPS remained consistent (Table 5), groups in GCPS fluctuated (Table 6), where Asian enrollment remained at 10%, but black enrollment rose from 29 to 32%, Hispanic enrollment from 25 to 30%, and white enrollment dropped drastically from 32 to 24%.¹² These changes highlight the potential for white flight and resegregation in public education, where wealthier families attend private schools and others may have relocated to another school district based on class, race, or religious preferences. However, the data that we have complicates this segregation in the two specific districts of BCPS and GCPS.

¹² Table 4, 5, and 6 are summarized data from the Georgia Governor's Office of Student Achievement "Enrollment by subgroup programs" downloadable data from the years 2010 to 2017, from <https://gosa.georgia.gov/downloadable-data>.

Table 4: Enrollment to public schools by race/ethnicity across Georgia, 2010-2017

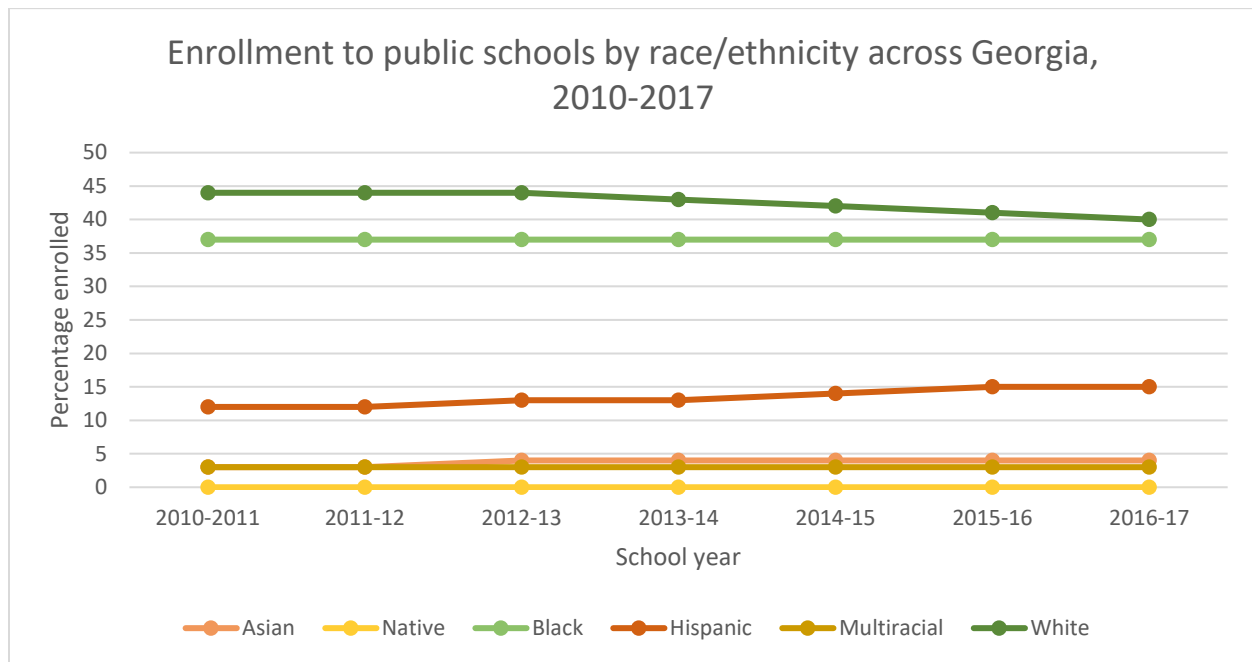


Table 5: Enrollment to Bleckley County Public Schools by race/ethnicity, 2010-2017

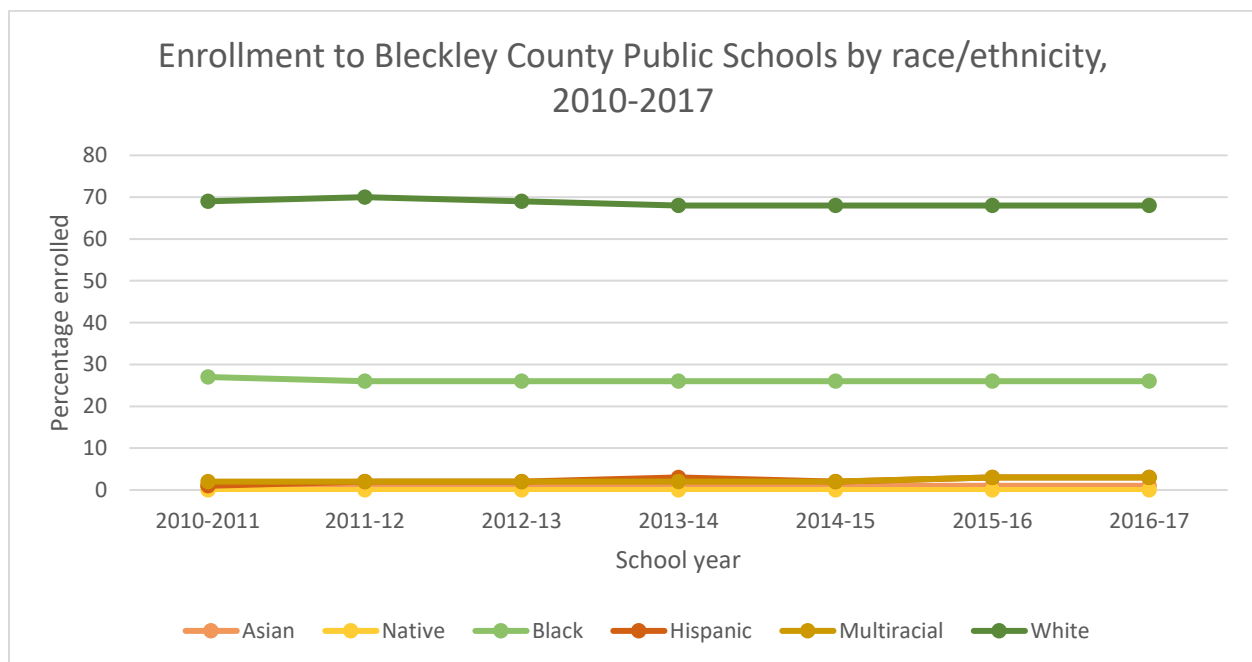
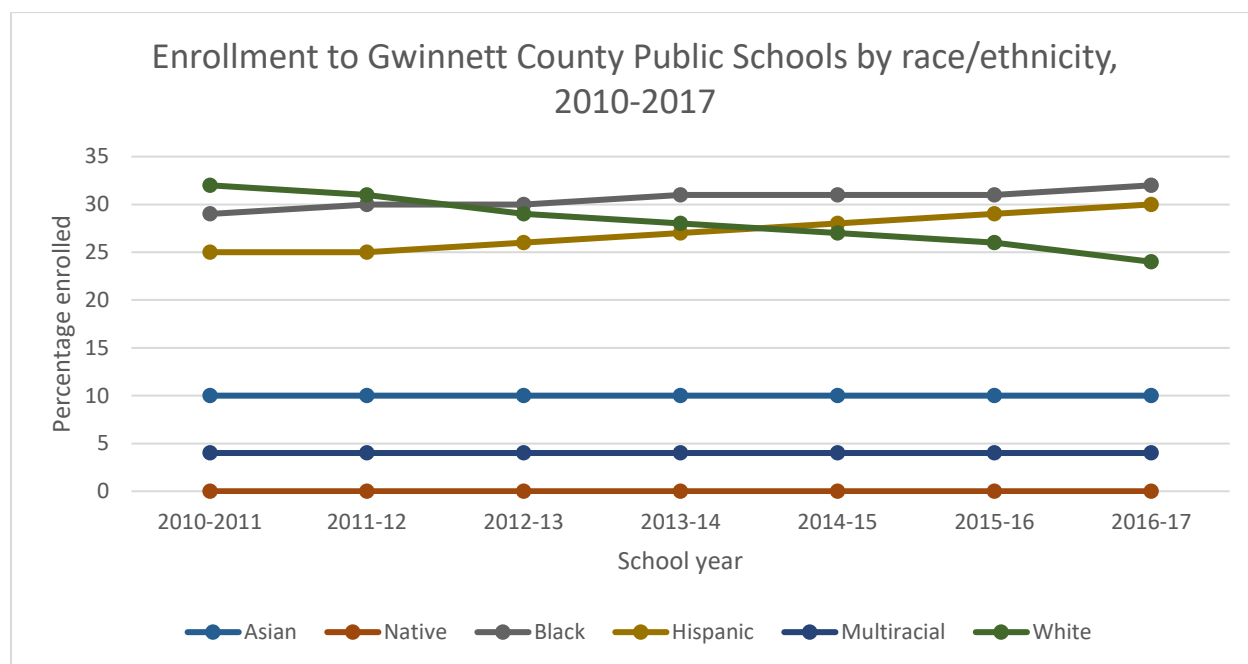


Table 6: Enrollment to Gwinnett County Public Schools by race/ethnicity, 2010-2017



Using data from 1988 and 1990, Fairlie and Resch (2002) found that white families were leaving public schools that had “large concentrations of poor minority school children,” specifically poor black schoolchildren as “white flight from Asians and Hispanics are less clear” (p. 32). This finding remains relevant as Archbal, Hurwitz, and Hurwitz’s (2016) review across 26 years of data (from 1990 to 2016) show that, “the overall proportion of whites in public schools has declined” (p. 6). Reasons include residential demographics, institutional level policies, such as attendance zoning, and aspects of parental choice, such as the preference for charter schools. These findings relate to the experiences of many US suburbs, but a discussion of class in BCPS and GCPS may not be relevant, as the percentage of students eligible for free/reduced lunch¹³ in BCPS (increasing slightly to 36% in the 2015 to 2016 school year) and GCPS are quite moderate (as it decreased slightly in the same period to 21%), compared to statewide percentages that rose from 57% in 2010 to 62% in 2016¹⁴. In Gwinnett County, the median household income between 2012 and 2016 was \$61,865¹⁵, suggesting that class may not be the main rationale for the decrease in white enrollment, and that other aspects of parental preference may be shifting the decreasing white enrollment in the midst of increasing Hispanic and black enrollment.

Although the Project focuses on GCPS and BCPS, these observations and our interviews raised questions about the public school environment in Georgia and the US in general. As GCPS

¹³ The Georgia Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program replaced the Free/Reduced Lunch program in 2013 and established new criteria in an effort to better identify students who may be or come from low-income families. Details are available here: <https://gosa.georgia.gov/changes-freereduced-priced-lunch-measure-student-poverty>

¹⁴ Data can be found under “Directly Certified (District Level)” for the years 2013 to 2017 here: <https://gosa.georgia.gov/downloadable-data>. State data is available here: <https://gaawards.gosa.ga.gov/analytics/saw.dll?PortalPages>

¹⁵ Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

and BCPS may be outliers to the norm, our interviews in Central Georgia may be more informative as we consider larger trends in other parts of Georgia and the US.

In Central Georgia, a leader in the Women's Interfaith Alliance of Central Georgia explained that many Muslim families in the interfaith group chose to send their children to charter or private schools. From her observation and conversations with the Muslim mothers in the group, she sensed that the mothers may prefer non-public schools as they were uncomfortable with school zoning allocation and concerned about a potential lack of support for their children at the school. As a result, many of the Muslim mothers, who felt that the charter schools were still “quite white,” seemed to find that it was an alternate option if the local non-denominational private school that many Muslim parents preferred was not available.

While school zoning may be a main rationale for private or charter schooling, it seemed like the local private school was also more attentive to the needs of religious minority students. At the local private school attended by most of the Muslim students that she knew, Martin, who is familiar with members of the administration, shared that the administration is very sensitive and aware of discrimination. In order to heighten the awareness of teachers to understand the discrimination that students may be experiencing, the administration asked the Alliance to create an educational panel for their staff. This may have resulted in a fourth grade teacher who tried to include world religions in her multiculturalism lessons and the presentation of an “Eid song” during a Christmas concert last year.

From these short anecdotes, we are unable to discern if the teachers are familiar with their own intersectionality or that of their students, or if the panel was able to offer some level of religious literacy to the private school teachers. Nonetheless, these observations do raise questions for consideration:

- In Georgia: If private or charter schools present an interest in the Project (more than that of Georgia public schools), should the focus be placed there instead?
- In America: Resegregation and white flight relates to difficult conversations related to class, race, and access to economic resources. Can training on religious literacy and the First Amendment (two difficult topics) equip teachers for these other difficult conversations?
- Internationally: How do micro initiatives, such as public school-based programs, address inequities and discrimination when macro level policies and institutional systems, such as the public school system itself, may be the promoters of inequity?

Conclusion

An evaluation of a Georgia-based project led us to observe the universal struggle that all teachers face between their personal, regional, and national identity, as socio-cultural perspectives are expressed and events unfold around them and continue to inform their conception of self and nation. For Georgia, this is a complicated time to broach the tensions regarding regional, race, religious, and class-based differences as discussions of intersectionality and identity politics stem from various groups nationally. However, the details in the emergent themes warrant further consideration as Dr. Gushee reminds us that, “the case for an expansive view of religious liberty needs to be re-made every generation.” To this, Jerry Durley, Pastor Emeritus, Providence

Missionary Baptist Church, Atlanta, adds the need to recognize religious diversity as “the world is changing” and that it is “so easy to go back to silos of comfortability.” At this juncture, we realize this controversial discussion must progress (even beyond the Project) in order to address the denunciations from Reverend King Jr. 55 years ago, while recognizing the modern and context-based sensibilities of marginalization expressed by many societal groups, including that of white evangelical Christians.

Bibliography

- Archbald, D., Hurwitz, A., & Hurwitz, F. (2018). Charter schools, parent choice, and segregation: A longitudinal study of the growth of charters and changing enrollment patterns in five school districts over 26 years. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 26(22). Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.26.2921>.
- Branch, T. (1989). *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-63*. Simon & Schuster.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*. 43(6), 1241-1299. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1229039>
- Fairlie, R. W., & Resch, A. M. (2002). Is there “white flight” into private schools? Evidence from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 84(1), 21–33. Retrieved from <https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/003465302317331892>
- Falk, W. W. & Webb, S. (2010). Southerners All?: New Northern Neighbors and the Changing Sense of Place. *Southern Cultures* 16(1), 65-85. Retrieved from <http://muse.jhu.edu/article/372255>
- Gould, J. (2017). *Otis Redding: An Unfinished Life*. Crown Archetype.
- Hill Collins, P. & Bilge, S. (2016). *Intersectionality*. Chicester, UK:Wiley.
- Jones, R. P. (2016). *The end of white Christian America*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Kruks, S. (2001). *Retrieving Experience: Subjectivity and Recognition in Feminist Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Kutner, R. (2017). Steve Bannon, Unrepentant. *The American Prospect*. Retrieved from <http://prospect.org/article/steve-bannon-unrepentant>
- Mutz, D. (2018). Status threat, not economic hardship, explains the 2016 presidential vote. *National Academy of Sciences*. Retrieved from <http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2018/04/18/1718155115.full>
- Pomeratz, G. (1997). *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn*. Penguin Books.

Turkish pupils in Dutch schools

Monique Van Dijk-Groeneboer

Tilburg University

Tilburg School of Catholic Theology

Department of Practical Theology

Coordinator RE-Teacher Academy

Nieuwegracht 61 PO Box 80101

3508TC Utrecht Netherlands

m.c.h.vandijk@uvt.nl

Özlem Atay

Ankara University

Faculty of Political Sciences

Department of Management

Head of Management and Organization Chair

Cemal Gürsel Caddesi

06590 Cebeci Ankara Turkey

ozkanli@politics.ankara.edu.tr

In this paper we want to ask attention for the position of second- and third-generation pupils from Turkish parents in Dutch secondary education. The focus will be on the role of culture related values imbued in Dutch education and their role in identity construction – from a Dutch and from a Turkish perspective. In what way contributes intercultural/interreligious education for these students to the creation of a ‘brave space’?

Turkey and the Netherlands

First we describe the general background of both countries, especially the religious and cultural backgrounds and the impact of immigration of Turkish people in the Netherlands since the 1960s. Turkey (officially the Republic of Turkey) is a transcontinental country in Eurasia, mainly in Anatolia in Western Asia with a smaller portion on the in Southeast Europe (Turkey, 2017). Turkey, geographically and culturally a blend of East and West, is a secular country in the world where approximately 98 percent of the population is Muslim.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founded the state of the Turkish Republic in 1923 after the Ottoman Empire. “Atatürk” means the father of Turkish people. Atatürk, who was Turkey’s first president, envisaged a modern Turkish state. His reforms strictly enacted and he is the central figure in all the development of modern Turkey. The secular ideology and Westernizing reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk has changed and modernized Turkey.

After 1923, civilization of the modern Turkish society was gradually put into practice. Abrogation of sultan’s rule in 1924, adoption of secularism, unification of education, acceptance of the principle of equality by the constitution have constructed the infrastructure for improving women rights. In 1928, the country was proclaimed a secular state with a Western-style constitution. The Islamic courts and religious schools were abolished and a Latin- based alphabet replaced Arabic and Persian ones. Abolition of veil under the dress reform in 1925 and the adoption of Civil Code in 1926 reinforced the egalitarian legal framework. Atatürk adopted legal codes used in Germany, Italy and Switzerland and abolished the traditional Muslim governing body, the caliphate. The Turkish Republic is founded on secular principles. In line with these, women were included in the first census in 1927. On the other hand, women were donated with equal rights and opportunities as men, in education and employment after the adoption of the new Turkish alphabet and the new education campaign. They participated to the first municipality elections in 1930 and gained the right of representation in the parliament in 1934 elections.

From a comparative perspective the right of women to vote in general elections was won by the women of Australia in 1902, Finland in 1906, Norway in 1913, Soviet Union in 1917, Great Britain in 1918, United States in 1920. Women living in the Gulf States and some Arab nations still have not been able to win this right (Sağlam, 2005). Thus, concrete steps were taken in providing social and political rights to women, as men, for ameliorating their status in the society.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk gave women equal social and political rights with men. Turkish women entered education, employment and other public domains of life increasing numbers since then (Atay and Çetin, 2015). There is a positive correlation between women's education and their employment (Özkanlı 2001, 131).

The participation of women in working life in the world determines the structure of labor markets, employment policies, education investments, legal structure that regulate working life and cultural conditions. The lack of adequate education investments in developing countries causes women to be seen as substitute labor in working life.

Those words of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in his speech in 1923 proves the determination of his policies (Atatürk, 1969:700):

“One must believe that, everything we see on the world is a work of woman...If a society satisfies with the fulfillment of one of its components' contemporaneous needs, then it is more likely that it weakens. Thus, a society must consider this as a starting point if it wants to develop and modernize...Our women will be scientists and pass through all education steps as well as men. Then, walking together with men in social life, they will help and support each other.”

Higher education right to Turkish women was first given in Constitutional Monarchy period (Kurnaz, 1996: 101-107). On February 5, 1914, Darülfünun (this word stands for University and means 'House of Science' in Turkish) started to accept girls (Ergün, 1978:441, Spuler, 1975: 428-439). In 1933, Darülfünun was closed with “University Reform” and instead Istanbul University was established. Then many universities were established in Turkey. Since 1993, there has been a significant increase in the number and share of women teaching staff (Özkanlı 2006).

Women were admitted to the academic professions for the first time in 1932, but their larger scale recruitment started in 1940s (Köker, 1988). Since 1993, there has been significant increase in the number and share of women teaching staff in Turkey. Currently, Turkey has 177 Higher Education Institutions (HEI) - 112 public and 65 foundation universities. Today, 42, 6 % of all academic personnel in the universities are women. Their representation as full professors is 31.8%, associate professors 31,7%, assistant professors 37,15 and research assistants 47% in 2018 (<http://www.dbp.gov.tr/tr-tr/istatistikler/kamu-personeli-istatistikleri> 06.09.2018).

These percentages are impressive when compared with the other countries in the world. During the Republic, women saved and developed their university education, academic promotion and appointment to managerial ranks rights.

Various historical, social and cultural factors may explain the high representation of Turkish women in academic positions; they were supported to advance to senior academia. Women entered academic employment through a set of principles-secularism, republicanism, populism, statism, reformism and nationalism- introduced by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Healy et al., 2005, p.p. 252-253). Zeytinoglu (1999) and Kandiyoti (1997) noted that academic careers were historically and socially constructed and gender typed as “safe” and “proper” choices for graduate women in Turkey. Women were encouraged to take up professional employment, as opposed to entrepreneurial or commercial careers, that was considered harmonious with the potent image of “a respectful Turkish woman”. This ideology effectively demarcated women's careers in “safe”, “secure” and “esteemed” forms of professional employment (Healy et al., 2005, p.253).

The Netherlands began to face a labor shortage by the mid-1950s, which became more serious during the early 1960s. The first Turkish immigrants arrived in the Netherlands in the beginning of the 1960s. On 19 August 1964, the Dutch government entered into a Recruitment Agreement with Turkey. Thereafter, the number of Turkish workers in the Netherlands increased rapidly. In May 1968, new European Economic Community rules forced the Netherlands to instate a travel visa system to regulate labor immigration and from then on the state recruited foreign workers. Some population figures: in 1970 20.615 Turkish laborers had a working permit in the Netherlands (amongst the entire 80.000 guest workers from Mediterranean countries).

Due to the 1973 oil crisis the Den Uyl cabinet ended labor immigration in 1974, and Turkish remigration strongly decreased. A system of family reunification had been arranged in the 1960s and gradually Turkish workers after 1974 brought over their wife and children. The latter predominantly married partners from Turkey. The initial idea in the Netherlands was that the immigrants were just temporarily in the Netherlands, to return to Turkey when the need for laborers was ending. This appeared to work out quite differently, as we will see later on. Many Turkish immigrants gained a residence permit, for instance in 1974 60.000 Turkish people resided in the Netherlands. However, due to the two oil crises the jobs for Turkish and other immigrant workers declined hugely, so many Turkish men became unemployed. The Turkish families became both nationalities so a return to Turkey was still a possibility and real opportunity, in the idea of Dutch politicians at least. In the late 90s the working conditions rise again, and therefore also the unemployment amongst Turkish immigrants declined. Then more family unification again took place. For instance, in 1996 271.500 Turkish people resided in the Netherlands (Statistics Netherlands 2016).

Realizing the Turkish and other often Islamic immigrants were going to stay in the Netherlands, a less friendly position also arises in right-wing Dutch politics. This was linked to the Christian background of the Netherlands and the Islamic background of Turkish immigrants. In the early twenty-first century the second Balkenende cabinet imposed much stricter conditions on unification, to a large extent ending Turkish marriage immigration. This coincided with a drop of birth rates, leading to a gradual leveling off in the growth of people of Turkish descent. Since 2003, there have often been years with an emigration surplus. Still the amount of Turkish people in the Netherlands is growing, in 2016 397.400 Turkish people live in the Netherlands (204.700 men and 192.700 women, 115.400 under the age of 20, 259.600 between 20 and 65, and 22.400 over 65 years old). The total population of the Netherlands is 17.066.700 in 2016, so the Turkish population is 2,3 percent.

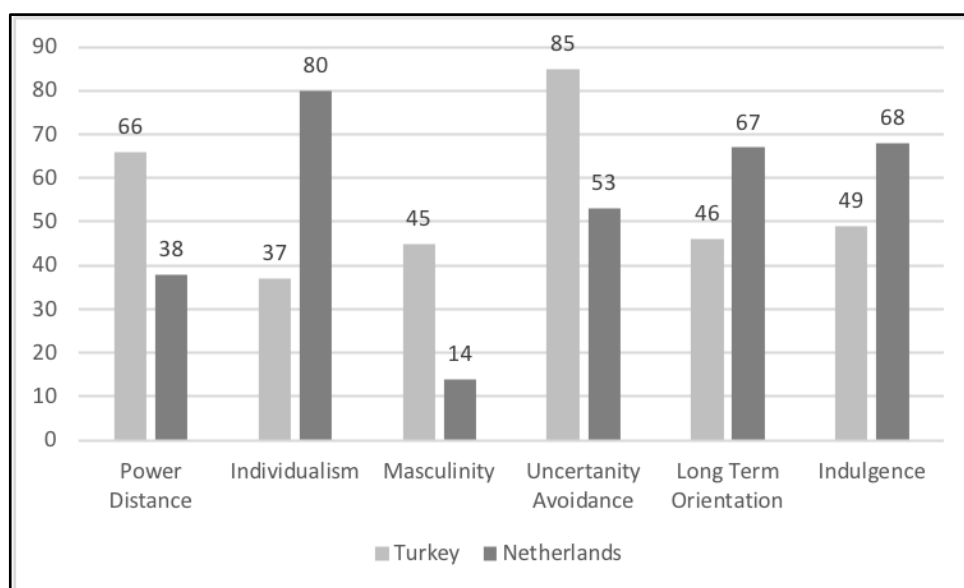
Turkish immigrants first began to settle in big cities in the Netherlands such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, as well as regions like Twente and Limburg where there was a growing demand on industrial labor. However, not only the capital cities but also medium-sized cities and small villages attracted the Turkish people. In 2018 especially in the large cities the secondary schools have a very multicultural population, and therefore we think it is important to look into the consequences of this for children of a Turkish background. Therefore, we now will focus on the values of both countries.

Cultural values in the Netherlands and in Turkey

Geert Hofstede has defined “culture” as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others” (2001). Based on this definition Hofstede focused the national values and identified dimensions of “*power distance*”, “*individualism*”, “*masculinity*”, and “*uncertainty avoidance*” for comparing cultures. Later on the

“long term orientation” and “indulgence” dimensions were added to national values (Hofstede, 2017; World Values Survey, 2017).

Power distance (Low & High) is defined as “the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally”. *Individualism* (reverse is *Collectivism*) is the “degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups”. *Masculinity* (reverse is *Femininity*) refers “a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material rewards for success”. *Uncertainty avoidance (Low & High)* is defined as “a society's tolerance for ambiguity”. *Long term orientation* (reverse is *Short Term*) links to the connection of the past with the current and future actions/challenges. *Indulgence* (reverse is *Restraint*) represents “a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun” (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, 2017; World Values Survey, 2017).



Source: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/>

Figure 1: The cultural dimension scores of Turkey & Netherlands

In 1980, Hofstede conducted a large international research on work values amongst 72 countries, and in 2001 he added ten more countries. With this study he proposed that a culture of an organization is a “collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another” (1980, p.13). He identified five universal values occurring to varying degrees in each country: individualism, masculinity, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. His study can be regarded as the dominant culture paradigm in business studies.

In our article we will use his values for the two countries we combine in our study; the Netherlands and Turkey. First, we will describe the outcomes of the values studied in the mentioned Hofstede survey. Second, we will elaborate on this national values by zooming into the specific encounter of these values in Dutch secondary schools. Especially values are regarded as basic characteristics for clashes when people of different nations, and thus different cultures, meet each other, which is the case in many schools in the Netherlands nowadays. We will describe the figures of this situation in the Netherlands and will look into the effect at value level deeper by entering our data of a qualitative pilot interview with a Turkish teacher at a Dutch secondary school. We will conclude with recommendations to focus on these value differences as a challenge to overcome

the gap between Turkish and Dutch children on secondary schools by introducing specific religious education strategies directed towards this focus.

In this part we will present the different values while comparing the Netherlands and Turkey¹. The first dimension is “Power Distance”, which deals with the fact that all individuals in societies are not equal¹, it expresses the attitude of the culture towards these inequalities amongst us. He defines it as “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. The Netherlands scores low on this dimension, which means that the following characterizes the Dutch style: being independent, hierarchy for convenience only, equal rights, superiors accessible, coaching leader, management facilitates and empowers. Power is decentralized and managers count on the experience of their team members. Employees expect to be consulted. Control is disliked and attitude towards managers are informal and on first name basis. Communication is direct and participative. Turkey scores high on this dimension which means that the following characterizes the Turkish style: Dependent, hierarchical, superiors often inaccessible and the ideal boss is a father figure. Power is centralized and managers rely on their bosses and on rules. Employees expect to be told what to do. Control is expected and attitude towards managers is formal. Communication is indirect and the information flow is selective. The same structure can be observed in the family unit, where the father is a kind of patriarch to whom others submit. Turkish and Dutch cultural differences have been extensively documented in both cross-cultural managements in the workplace (Hofstede, 1991, 2005; Adler, 2008; House et.al., 2005) “Power Distance” cultural dimension deals with the role of authority within a society, or the extent to which less powerful members of organizations accept an unequal distribution of power. This can be defined as the degree of inequality among people that the population of that country accepts as normal. In a relatively high PDI country like Turkey, people accept differences in power, or inequality, more willingly and therefore have more hierarchical tendencies. In a low PDI country such as the Netherlands, people do not accept differences in power as willingly and have more egalitarian tendencies (Hofstede, 1991). The PDI score of Turkey is 66. In Turkish culture more hierarchical workplace, less equality of gender roles, larger gaps: compensation/ authority/ respect, acquired professional status are five important dimensions of PDI. However, in Dutch culture, more egalitarian workplace, more equality of gender roles, smaller gaps: compensation/ authority/ respect, achieved professional status are the five important dimensions of PDI. The PDI score of Netherland is 38.

Individualism points to the degree of interdependence a society maintains amongst its members. It has to do with whether people’s self-image is defined in terms of ‘I’ or ‘we’. In individualist societies people are supposed to look after themselves and their direct family only. In collectivist societies people belong to ‘in groups’ that take care of them in exchange for loyalty. The Netherlands scores very high on this dimension. This means that there is a high preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families only. In Individualist societies offence causes guilt and a loss of self-esteem, the employer/employee relationship is a contract based on mutual advantage, hiring and promotion decisions are supposed to be based on merit only, and management is the management of individuals.

¹ www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison

Turkey is a collectivistic society. This means that the “We” is important, people belong to in-groups (families, clans or organizations) who look after each other in exchange for loyalty. Communication is indirect and the harmony of the group has to be maintained, open conflicts are avoided. The relationship has a moral base and this always has priority over task fulfillment. Time must be invested initially to establish a relationship of trust. Nepotism may be found more often. Feedback is always indirect, also in the business environment.

A high score on “Masculinity” indicates that the society will be driven by competition, achievement and success, with success being defined by the winner/best in field. This is a value field that starts in school and continues throughout organizational life. A low score, which means a high score on “Femininity”, means that the dominant values in society are caring for others and quality of life. A feminine society is one where equality of life is the sign of success and standing out from the crowd is not admirable. The fundamental issue here is what motivates people, wanting to be the best (masculine) or liking what you do (feminine).

The Netherlands scores low on masculinity and is therefore a feminine society. In these, it is important to keep the life/work balance and you make sure that all are included. An effective manager is supportive to his/her people, and decision making is achieved through involvement. Managers strive for consensus and people value equality, solidarity and quality in their working lives. Conflicts are resolved by compromise and negotiation and Dutch are known for their long discussions until consensus has been reached.

Turkey scores 45 and is on the Feminine side of the scale. This means that the softer aspects of culture such as leveling with others, consensus, sympathy for the underdog are valued and encouraged. Conflicts are avoided in private and work life and consensus at the end is important. Leisure time is important for Turkish people, it is the time when the whole family and friends come together to enjoy life. Status is shown, but this comes more out of the high PDI.

The dimension “Uncertainty Avoidance” has to do with the way that a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known: should we try to control the future or just let it happen? This ambiguity brings with it anxiety and different cultures have learnt to deal with this anxiety in different ways. ***The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these*** is reflected in the score on Uncertainty Avoidance.

Turkey scores 85 on this dimension and thus there is a huge need for laws and rules. In order to minimize anxiety, people make use of a lot of rituals. For foreigners they might seem religious, with the many references to “Allah”, but often they are just traditional social patterns, used in specific situations to ease tension.

The Netherlands scores 53 on this dimension and thus exhibits a slight preference for avoiding uncertainty. Countries exhibiting high Uncertainty Avoidance maintain rigid codes of belief and behavior and are intolerant of unorthodox behavior and ideas. In these cultures, there is an emotional need for rules (even if the rules never seem to work) time is money, people have an

inner urge to be busy and work hard, precision and punctuality are the norm, innovation may be resisted, security is an important element in individual motivation.

So, this fourth dimension describes *how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future*, and societies priorities these two existential goals differently. Normative societies. which score low on this dimension, for example, prefer to maintain time-honored traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion. Those with a culture which scores high, on the other hand, take a more pragmatic approach: they encourage thrift and efforts in modern education as a way to prepare for the future. Turkey's intermediate score of 46 is in the middle of the scale so no dominant cultural preference can be inferred. The Netherlands receives a high score of 67 in this dimension, which means that it has a pragmatic nature. In societies with a pragmatic orientation, people believe that truth depends very much on the situation, context and time. They show an ability to easily adapt traditions to changed conditions, a strong propensity to save and invest, thriftiness and perseverance in achieving results.

One challenge that confronts humanity, now and in the past, is the degree to which small children are socialized. Without socialization we do not become "human". This dimension is defined as *the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses*, based on the way they were raised. Relatively weak control is called "Indulgence" and relatively strong control is called "Restraint". Cultures can, therefore, be described as Indulgent or Restrained.

With an intermediate score of 49, a characteristic corresponding to this dimension cannot be determined for Turkey. With a high score of 68, the culture of the Netherlands is clearly one of "Indulgence". People in societies classified by a high score in "Indulgence" generally exhibit a willingness to realize their impulses and desires with regard to enjoying life and having fun. They possess a positive attitude and have a tendency towards optimism. In addition, they place a higher degree of importance on leisure time, act as they please and spend money as they wish.

Let us consider these differences in values between the two countries chosen. Because Turkey is a transcontinental country, its cultural values are charmed by incompatible European and Asian cultural values. Based on the Hofstede studies as described, Turkey, when comparing to the Netherlands, is categorized as high in power distance, collectivistic, masculine, high in uncertainty avoidance, and no preferences in both of orientation and indulgence dimensions of cultural values.

Schools in the Netherlands

In 2016, 1.443.100 pupils populate Dutch primary schools. 355.500 of them are foreign and 42.000 Turkish. On secondary schools, 1.472.000 pupils get their education. Of these, 351.000 are foreign and of which 50.800 are Turkish. The numbers for high schools are 442.600 students, of these 117.845 are foreign and 12.100 Turkish. At universities 261.200 students reside of which 83.900 are foreign and 4.200 Turkish.

The Netherlands has its origin in Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, but nowadays there are high percentages for the Christian religion (40%), for no religion (49%), and much lower percentages for Muslim (5%), Hindu (0.5%), Buddhist (0.5%) and 'other religion' (5%).²

When we look at the religious background of schools, most of the 655 secondary schools are confessional, being either Roman Catholic (153) or Protestant (133), with 184 public schools and 185 other non-public schools (Statistics Netherlands, 2016). These are quite remarkable figures, considering the distribution of religions amongst the population of the schools.

Empirical Research

These results from the large Hofstede survey are interesting to look into when thinking about the consequences of Turkish children in Dutch classrooms. This is not easy to conduct research on, for many reasons amongst which the accessibility of the respondents and the precarious nature of such a topic in the Netherlands in this time. So, we started with a very small pilot study that was accessible. Therefore, we have conducted an interview with a Turkish teacher who lives and works in the Netherlands to discuss these cultural values and the experience with it, being in the Netherlands as a Turkish-cultural originated person. Where do the values clash, where do they transform, where do they fit?

The teacher is a woman of 48 years old, living in the Netherlands since her 3rd. Her parents had 'worker' in their passport, her father was a labor worker. In her youth she always heard 'you will leave our country in a few years', but she herself decided quickly she was not likely going to do that. Her peers were Dutch children and she got used to the Dutch way of living, although she admits she felt unsafe because of the suggestions of others that 'they were to leave'. In her rooting in the Netherlands her faith was very important. "We is important when you enter discussions at school. In the Netherlands it is often 'every man for himself' and I miss the warmth I am used to from my family and background". Rules are more important in the Netherlands than in my family and birth-country, and also the idea to have to achieve results is something new to her, and she sees these aspects in her Turkish pupils as well when she compares them with autochthonous Dutch pupils. Dutch people, like her colleagues, are more directly in communication.

With data like this we hope to get more information on where values still differ amongst second and third generation Turkish pupils and will work on educational programs to enter especially those values into a dialogue so there grows more understanding to both sides, and hindering differences resulting in social inequality will decrease in the future.

Religious Education to Overcome the Value Clash

At the end of this article we like to reconsider the implications the described differences in the values between Turkish and Dutch people might have in the classroom of secondary schools. We will hope to overcome the gap and start a genuine intracultural dialogue in RE-classes to focus on this issue in multicultural classrooms.

Activating exercises like creating an interreligious passport or doing Bibliodrama³ helps pupils to discover their own core values and to really learn about, from, into and even through the values of

² Schmeets, H., & van Mensvoort, C. 2015. *Religieuze betrokkenheid van bevolkingsgroepen*. Den Haag/Heerlen: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek.

³ Kienstra, N., Dijk-Groeneboer, M. van, & Boelens, O. (2018). Religious-thinking-through using bibliodrama: An empirical study of student learning in classroom teaching. *Religious Education*. doi:

their fellow-pupils. This will add to overcoming the gap between the Turkish and Dutch values, and we hope to do more research on this topic in the near future.

References

- Adler, N. J., & Gundersen, A. (2002). *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior*. (5th ed.) Mason, OH: Thomson Southwestern.
- Atatürk, M.K 1969 *Nutuk* , Cilt II , Milli Eğitim Basımevi, Istanbul.
- Atay, Ö. & Çetin, F. 2015 “Empowering working women with information and communication technologies in Turkey”, International Interdisciplinary Business-Economics Advancement Conference (IIBA 2015), November 16-21 2015, Florida, USA.
- Çetin, F. & Atay, Ö. (2017). “Perceptions of Turkish Women on Success, Empowerment and Information Techniques”, International Interdisciplinary Business-Economics Advancement Conference (IIBA 2017), April 9-14 2017, Florida, USA.
- Dijk-Groeneboer, M. v. (2017a). *Leren en leven vanuit je wortels: Religieuze educatie voor iedereen*. Oratie leerstoel Religieuze educatie op 27 oktober 2017, Tilburg University.
- Dijk-Groeneboer, M. v. (2017b). Jugend und Religion in den Niederlanden. In B. Schröder, J. Hermelink, & S. Leonhard (Eds.), *Jugendliche und Religion: Analysen zur V. Kirchenmitgliedschaftsuntersuchung der EKD* (Religionpädagogik innovativ 13 ed., pp. 257-267). Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Dijk-Groeneboer, M. v. (2017c). Longitudinal Research in Religious Education. In A. Kuusisto, & L. Gearson (Eds.), *Values Learning Trajectories* (pp. 131-142). Münster/New York: Waxmann.
- Dijk-Groeneboer, M. v. (2017d). Religious Education in the secularised Netherlands. *International Studies in Catholic Education* , 9 (1), 17-28.
- Ergün, M 1978 II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Eğitim Hareketleri, Ph. D Thesis, Ankara University.
- Hofstede, G. 1980. *Culture's consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hofstede, Geert (1991). *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. London:McGraw Hill.
- Hofstede, G., & Hofstede, G.J, (2005). *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*.(2nd ed.) New York, : McGraw-Hill.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations across Nations*. 2d ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hofstede, G. (2017). What about Turkey? Retrieved on April 12, 2018, <https://geert-hofstede.com/turkey.html>

10.1080/00344087.2017.1403788, Kienstra, N., Dijk-Groeneboer, M. van, & Boelens, O. (2018). An empirical study of training for interreligious classroom teaching, *Religious Education*. in press.

House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W. & Gupta, V. (2004). *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: the GLOBE Study of 62 Societies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Healy, G., Ozbilgin, M., & Aliefendioglu, H. (2005). Academic employment and gender: A Turkish challenge to vertical sex segregation. *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 11(2), 247–264.

Kandiyoti, D. (1997). *Cariyeler, Bacılar, Yurttaşlar: Kimlikler ve Toplumsal Donusumler* [Female slaves, sisters, citizens: Identities and social changes]. Istanbul: Metis Publication Company.

Kienstra, N., Dijk-Groeneboer, M. van, & Boelens, O. (2018). Religious-thinking-through using bibliodrama: An empirical study of student learning in classroom teaching. *Religious Education*. doi: 10.1080/00344087.2017.1403788.

Kienstra, N., Dijk-Groeneboer, M. van, & Boelens, O. (2018). An empirical study of training for interreligious classroom teaching, *Religious Education*. in press.

Köker, E. 1988, ‘ Türkiye’de Kadın, Eğitim ve Siyaset: Yüksek Öğrenim Kurumlarında Kadının Durumu Üzerine Bir İnceleme’, Ph.D Thesis, Ankara University, Ankara.

Kurnaz, Ş. 1996, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Kadını*, Milli Eğitim Basımevi, İstanbul.

Özkanlı, Ö. 2001, Women’s employment in Turkey-trends and prospects. *Hacettepe University İ.İ.B.F. Journal*, 19(2), p.p. 123-141.

Özkanlı, Ö. 2006, “The Situation of Academic Women in Turkey”, *Changes, Challenges, Choices: The Inaugural International Women and Leadership Conference Proceedings Book*, Curtin University of Technology-Women in Social and Economic Research Publication, Perth.

Rothgangel, M., Jackson, R., & Jäggle, M. (Eds.). (2014). *Religious Education at Schools in Europe – Part 2: Western Europe*. Vienna: V&R unipress.

Sağlamer, G. 2005 ‘Enhancing Access of Women in Higher Education’, *IAUP XIV Triennial Conference the Challenge of Globalization and the Role of Higher Education*, Bangkok.

Spuler, B. 1975, ‘Tanzimat ve Atatürk Döneminde Türk Eğitim Sistemleri ve Mukayeseleri’ *Atatürk Devrimleri I. Milletlerarası Sempozyumu Bildirileri*, Sermet Matbaası, İstanbul, pp. 428-439.

Schmeets, H., & van Mensvoort, C. 2015. *Religieuze betrokkenheid van bevolkingsgroepen*. Den Haag/Heerlen: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek.

Turkey (2018). Wikipedia, Retrieved on April 12, 2018, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey>

Wiegers, G. (2008). The Missing Link between Religious Education and the Study of Religion: Reflections on the Role of the Study of Religions in Secondary Education. In C. Dommel, & G. Mitchell (Eds.), *Religion Education: On the Boundaries between Study of Religions, Education and Theologies: Jürgen Lott and the Bremen Approach in International Perspective* (pp. 159-171). Bremen: Kleio Humanities.

World Values Survey (2018). The World Values Survey, Retrieved on April 12, 2018, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp>

Zeytinoglu, I. U. (1999). Constructed images as employment restrictions: Determinants of Female Labor in Turkey. In Z. F. Arat (Ed.), *Deconstructing images of ‘the Turkish Women’* (pp. 183–197). New York: Palgrave.

Websites:

<https://geert-hofstede.com/turkey.html>

<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/>
<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/the-netherlands/>
<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/turkey/>
<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp>
<http://www.statisticsNetherlands2016>
<http://www.dbp.gov.tr/tr-tr/istatistikler/kamu-personeli-istatistikleri> 06.09.2018



Dr. Helena Stockinger
 Institut für Katechetik, Religionspädagogik und Pädagogik
 Katholisch-Theologische Privat-Universität Linz
 h.stockinger@ku-linz.at

**“Why have you bought a black doll?”
 How young children talk about diversity**

Abstract

The qualitative Early Childhood research project analyzes, how children, aged three to six years, talk about dimensions of diversity they recognize in their kindergarten and how two kindergartens in Austria handle diversity. The children talk about age, gender, size, language, religion, different countries of origin and colors of skin. With regard to the kindergarten organisation, there is a tendency towards normativity in dealing with some dimensions of diversity. Religious Education may contribute to develop *safe and brave spaces* where differences are allowed and discrimination against children is avoided.

1. Preface

Childhood in Europe is increasingly characterized by children growing up in diverse contexts. Kindergartens are often the first institutions where children are confronted with people who have different backgrounds, other cultures and other values.¹ Promoting the ability to deal with diversity and working towards an inclusive society are objectives of education in the kindergarten. Children have the right to "be prepared for a responsible life in a free society in a spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and indigenous peoples," as stated in Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.² Especially Early Childhood Education has an influence on the development of children and their sense of "normativity". What is considered as "normal" in kindergartens may be considered as normal by the children. Children may be discriminated against or excluded because of different characteristics, they may deal with social discrimination and biases.³ To support the development of kindergartens to spaces where discrimination wants to be avoided and where children have equal possibilities to develop their individuality, it is necessary to know about the differences children recognize, their thoughts about these differences and how kindergartens deal with diversity.

2. Early Childhood research project

The Early Childhood research project presented here is intended to provide an insight into how children talk about the dimensions of diversity that they recognize in kindergarten. The research question is: What dimensions of difference do children talk about in kindergarten and how do they talk about them? In order to understand the context, in the study that was carried out, the handling of difference in the respective kindergartens is also presented.

¹ Woodhead, Martin (2008): Identity at birth – and identity in development. In: Brooker, Liz / Woodhead, Martin (eds.): Developing Positive Identities. Diversity and Young Children. Early Childhood in Focus (3). Milton Keynes: The Open University.

² Convention on the Rights of the Child. Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989, entry into force 2 September 1990.

³ Wagner, Petra (2010): Vielfalt und Diskriminierung im Erleben von Kindern, in: Wagner, Petra: Handbuch Kinderwelten. Vielfalt als Chance – Grundlagen einer vorurteilsbewussten Bildung und Erziehung, Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder.

The tendencies described are related to the contexts of two kindergartens, a Catholic kindergarten and a Muslim kindergarten in Vienna, Austria.

3. Description of methodology

The qualitative empirical research project had an ethnographic and a multi-method approach. The research took place in one Catholic and one Muslim kindergarten in Vienna, Austria. Children with different backgrounds attend the kindergarten. Participant observations are conducted during one kindergarten year from September until June. These are supplemented by group discussions with children and the teachers as well as interviews with the heads of the kindergartens. The researcher tries to influence the environment as little as possible, so the children had the opportunity to talk about what really concerned them. The data was coded and interpreted following the fundamentals of Grounded Theory⁴ combined with Thematic Coding⁵. Results of development psychology⁶ and of Childhood Research⁷ were considered.

4. Context und description of kindergartens

In Austria usually children from the age of three until the age of six attend a kindergarten. In the two selected kindergartens the children should be three years old to be enrolled in the kindergarten, with exceptions. So the children whose voices are heard in this research project are children between the ages of three and six.

The two kindergartens welcome children from all religious and cultural traditions and with different languages. The heads assume that embracing diversity is positive. In the Catholic kindergarten, 45.7 percent of pupils are Catholic, 17.4 percent are Muslim, 17.4 percent have no religious denomination; there are also Orthodox, Sikh and Hindu children attending. 24,2 percent of the children are from Poland, 17,8 percent from Serbia, 13,3 percent from Turkey, 11,1 percent from Austria, Serbia and Croatia is the country of origin of 8.9 percent each and also children from Slovakia, India, Egypt, Kosovo, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Nepal attend the kindergarten.

In the Muslim kindergarten, 91.9 percent are Muslim and 8.1 percent are Christian. 69,9 percent came from Turkey, 10,2 percent from Egypt, 4,1 percent from Libya, 2,9 percent from Poland, 2,2 from Chechnya and there were also children from Albania, Austria, Romania, Serbia, Ghana, Jordan, Pakistan, Russia, Syria and Tunisia.

All the teachers in the Catholic kindergarten are themselves Catholic, while there are both Muslim and Christian teachers in the Muslim kindergarten.

In order to take a closer look at the context in which the child's statements were made, the following section takes a look at everyday kindergarten life, whereby the most concise points being listed. Some differences are emphasized in kindergartens, whereas other differences receive little attention. In particular, gender, age and language, and the countries of origin are dimensions of difference that play an important role in both kindergartens.

Age / Seize: The teachers often speak about the small ones and the big ones in the two kindergartens. Because of their age children in the Catholic kindergarten are divided into different groups after lunch: into the group of the big ones, the middle ones or the smaller ones and

⁴ Corbin, Juliet / Strauss, Anselm (2008): Basics of Qualitative Research. Los Angeles-London-New Delhi-Singapore: Sage Publications.

⁵ Flick, Uwe (2012): Qualitative Sozialforschung. Eine Einführung. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt.

⁶ Schneider, Wolfgang / Lindenberger, Ulman (2012): Entwicklungspsychologie. Weinheim: Beltz.

⁷ Heinzel, Friederike (Hg.) (2012): Methoden der Kindheitsforschung. Ein Überblick über Forschungszugänge zur kindlichen Perspektive. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa [2000].

depending on it different offers were made to them to arrange the time after lunch. On a wall in the group room in the Muslim kindergarten, a line is drawn for each child depending on its size.

Gender: In the Muslim kindergarten, the gender of the children plays an important role, also on the part of the teachers. Thus, the teachers often initiate games in which a competition between the two genders was led. In the reading corner there are two books to distinguish between boys and girls.

Language: Language is a dimension of difference that is often mentioned in both kindergartens. In the Muslim kindergarten, the emphasis is on speaking German in the kindergarten, with the exception of the daily Koran or religious education, in which the teacher speaks Arabic with the children for the most part and the children practiced the Suras in Arabic. Linguistically, the dominance of the German language in the Muslim kindergarten is evident, which is also due to the fact that the kindergarten wants to be a bridge to society and that German plays an important role in this context.

In the Catholic kindergarten the children in the kindergarten are allowed to speak different languages, so that situations arise in which the children speak to each other in their mother tongue and other children or teachers cannot take part in the conversations due to a lack of language skills. Teachers sometimes ask the children for words in their own language.

Country of origin: In the Koran lessons the origin of the children is thematized. Each Koran lesson begins with a round in which the Koran teacher asks each child a question, very often asking the question "From where are you?" and the children name their country of origin.

Religions: In the Catholic kindergarten, children can notice that some children eat different food, that people wear different garments (e.g. the headscarf worn by some Muslim women) and that some children are absent during the celebrations. In the Muslim kindergarten there is a room reserved exclusively for Koran education, and in the building there is also a mosque. In the Muslim kindergarten, only Muslim children attend Koran lessons.

In the kindergarten there are several forms of religious education, whereby the main religion always dominates. Although religious diversity is considered important, the forms of religious education do not take religious diversity into account. The contents of religious education are available to all children in kindergarten, but are only offered in the dominant religion.

5. Results on how children talk about difference

In the following the most important findings of the research project will be described. The quotations are intended to illustrate the statements of the children. All the original quotations were in German and were translated into English. The children's statements were anonymized. The first letter represents the first letter of the child's name. The second letter stands for the gender of the child: m for male, f for female.

The results show that children recognize different dimensions of diversity and that they talk about them. The dimensions children talk about in the contexts of the two kindergartens include age, gender, size, language, religion, different countries of origin and colors of skin and they have different explanations for these differences. Some children have biases against children that are different in some aspects. The dimension of difference that were mentioned several times by the children are listed.

5.1 Gender

Children talk about gender in everyday kindergarten life and often *classify children according to their gender*. In the morning of the day, the kindergarten teacher and the children sing a song in which they greet boys and girls separately. The classification of the children's gender is also evident from the fact that the children are irritated when they cannot identify the gender of a doll. In the Muslim kindergarten, the children often talk about gender. They have ideas about what is right for boys and what is right for girls, e.g. what a boy or a girl should draw or which colors are right for boys and which for girls. A boy says that only pictures of boys are beautiful. In the kindergarten there are *competitions between the boys' and girls' groups*. In one situation Dm sits at the table, has some cards in different colors and shapes in front of him and counts them, separating the cards into boys and girls. He decides for himself which card is a girl and which card is a boy. As he counts, he constantly changes his decision as to which card has which gender. His activity attracts two more children who discuss with him which card is a boy and which is a girl. The girls are of the opinion that the blue heart is a girl, whereas Dm thinks that blue is not for girls, but finally gives the blue heart to the girls and counts another card as a boy. At the end of the game Dm calls out loudly that today the boys win because the boys are more and goes to the building corner, where some boys play and reports also there pleased that the boys win today.

- 1 Dm: Are there more girls or more boys? One two three three four five six. Six boys.
- 2 Rw(5): This is girl (points to the blue heart)
- 3 Dm: One two three three four five six
- 4 Rw: One two three three four five
- 5 Dm: one two three three four five six
- 6 Rw points to blue heart: This is girl
- 7 Sw (5): This is girl
- 8 Dm: One two three three four five six. Blue is not for girls, is for boys. BOYS ARE MORE
- 9 Dm gives the blue heart to the two girls.
- 10 Dm: Boys have won.
- 11 He clears away the toys and goes into the building corner and announces loudly there: TODAY THE BOYS WIN.

Children *know gender stereotypes and sometimes question them*. The children talk about gender and mention whether someone is a boy or a girl and what boys or girls are allowed to do or draw. In this context, a child says that boys can also paint fairies. In another discussion, two girls talk about colors that belong to boys or girls. When Rw wears her red shoes, Ew tells her that only boys are allowed to wear this color, where Rw insists that girls also wear it.

5.2 Size and age

Size and age are often used synonymously. When children talk about the small and large, they sometimes refer to size and sometimes to age, and it has not always been possible to determine what they are referring to.

In a conversation, a name is mentioned that occurs twice in kindergarten. As a distinction between which person is spoken of, Mw explains that there is a small and a large one, with the same name. The small one means a child, the large one a kindergarten teacher.

In Catholic kindergarten, lunch breaks are arranged according to the age of the children, so they are *classified by their age*. The little ones should sleep, the middle ones can decide whether they

want to sleep or play a quiet game and a story is read to the big ones. The children know which group they belong to and classify themselves after lunch.

When *comparing their age*, it becomes clear that they assume that *older is better*. To get older and taller is seen very positively by the children. In the children's speech about age it becomes clear that children are proud of their age, very happy when they get older and higher age is considered more positive than lower age.

- 4 Lm: I am six years, but M is seven.
- 5 Bm: M is so (shows the age with the fingers)
- 6 Lm: This is seven
- 7 Bm: D is now so (shows seven fingers)
- 8 Bm: D is very big now.
- 9 Lm: And M is five or six, isn't he.

- 1 R(6): You are seven and you are small.
- 2 K(6): I am six and I am grown up.

The older children understand the younger ones, so they mention that some games are too difficult for the younger children. They also understand that smaller children are sometimes unable to speak in a way that other children can understand.

So one girl explains:

- Lw (5): She is not able to talk very well, because she is a bit small.

Another girl explains that the rules of the game are different for small children:

- Bw (5): With the small children you have to do like this.

The children sometimes *compare their size* and tell the other children or the kindergarten teacher that they are taller than another child. The children mention that there are big and small people. In the song that is sung every day in the morning, they greet young and old. In the Muslim kindergarten children often compare their size. A young boy who is the smallest of the group mentions that he is as tall as his friend. His optically taller friend proves him right, to which another child replies that one boy is bigger, to which Ym finds an explanation for the different size.

- Ym: We are both tall.
- Dm: Yes, we are both tall.
- Pw: But he is a bit taller.
- Ym: He grows a little bit faster, and I grow a little bit slower.

5.3 Appearance, especially skin color

In terms of appearance, during the participatory observation the children discuss their own eye color in contrast to other eye colors, the wearing of glasses, the robe and the number of black teeth.

The children *notice different skin colors and try to find explanations for them*. A group of children asks why a boy has black skin. A boy makes a statement that is accepted by everyone and that concludes the discussion. The boy concerned is present during the conversation and does not comment on it.

- 5 Km(5): Why is he black?
6 Lm(5): I know why he is black.
7 Km(5): Why?
8 Lm (5) Because he got sunburnt and now he is black.

Children notice that children have a different skin color than themselves and talk about the different skin color and some mention *discomfort with a different skin color*. In a group discussion, the researcher brought along a doll that had a darker skin color. This was noticed by some children and they did not like the doll.

- 8 Mw: GO AWAY, go away (the two girls quickly move away from the doll with the darker skin color)
9 Mw: He is so black.
10 P: L He is so black.
11 Mw: WHY have you bought a black doll?

Shortly afterwards they compare the color of the doll with the skin color of a boy in the group.

- 26 Pw: We celebrated the birthday of Dm
29 Mw: Dm is as black as the doll.

5.4 Languages

Children are *aware of the different languages* and many know the names of the different languages. In Catholic kindergarten, children tend to speak in their mother tongue and translate some German words into their mother tongue. They sometimes mix different languages. Some children explain that other children speak other languages.

- Mw (5): He speaks Turkish, I speak Serbian.

The children know that some children speak different languages and that they do not understand every language.

- Ym: I do not understand Turkish. I understand a bit, but I do not understand.
Fw: I understand Turkish.
Yw: But my grandmother speaks Turkish. I have two grandmother, one of my father and one of my mother. But my mother`s grandmother is far away.

One girl mentions that her name is spelled differently in different languages.

- 1 Yw (5): My name is Yasmin and Yesmin. Yesim in Chechen. I am able to write Yasmin and the teacher is able to write Yesmin.

The observed sensitivity of the children to the fact that other children speak other languages is particularly well expressed in one situation when an Arabic speaking boy cried. A Turkish speaking girl told another Arabic speaking girl that she should talk to the crying boy and that she should comfort the boy. The Arabic speaking girl started to talk Arabic to the boy and the boy stopped crying. The girl who had the idea was pleased and said that Arabic had to be spoken to the boy. Those children who could speak Arabic are particularly admired among the children.

Children sometimes *mix the country and the language*, for example:

- 1 Nw: I still learn Arabic. I am able to speak Arabic and Jordan.

Especially children in the Muslim kindergarten think that it is *normal to speak several languages*. Children often talk about the languages they speak or languages their friends speak. It is normal for them that children speak different languages.

Yw (5): They speak Turkish. And I don't understand Turkish.

Yw: Which languages do you speak?

Rw (5): German

Yw: And which languages else? Chechen, Bosnian, Turkish, English?

The child's answer to speak German was not enough for the other child, and she wanted to know which other languages her friend could speak. In several situations it became clear that especially in Muslim kindergarten multilingualism is a matter of course for the children. Sometimes children mention that they know a word in Turkish, but that they do not know it in German. In kindergarten, children sing songs in different languages.

Children and kindergarten teachers sometimes teach each other languages.

37 Fw (5): I teach the teacher Turkish. And the teacher teaches me German.

In the Muslim kindergarten children were especially proud when they were able to speak Arab.

1 Bw: I know Turkish, not Polish.

2 Dw: I know Arabic better than you do.

3 Ew: SAY

4 Dw says nothing.

5 Ew: Then you can't.

5.5 Country of origin

Especially in the Muslim kindergarten children *talk about their different countries of origin* and are interested in where the other children and the teachers come from. Most of the children in the kindergarten were born in Austria, but they name their parents' place of origin as the country they come from.

3 Mm(5): Are you Arabic?

4 I: No

5 Mm(5): Are you English or German?

6 I: German

7 Mm(5): German. You are Austria.

The topic caught the interest of the children sitting at the table.

8 Yw(5): The teacher is also Austria. Austria is also German.

9 Mw(5): I am Chechen and this is my sister.

10 Rw(5): I am five and I am Turkish.

Children often *establish a link between their language and their country of origin*. This becomes clear as they address their origin from Turkey when asked about their language.

5 I: Do you understand Arabic?

6 Ew (5): No, I am from Turkey.

7 Rw (5): Where are you from?

8 I: From Austria.

9 Rw (5): From Austria or Germany?

10 I: From Austria.

5.6 Religions⁸

Some children *mention religion and religious diversity* and they are curious about different religions. Especially in the Muslim kindergarten the children often mention their religious denomination, they talk about the Qu`ran, the mosque, the washing before prayer, the celebrations, and moral rules, Muslims should follow. They mention Christian celebrations and they ask the kindergarten teacher about them. The children understand that there are different religions. They try to *combine their own religion with the Christian religion* to understand Christian festivals. So they mention the Easterbeiram. The Muslim children in the Muslim kindergarten tend to ask about one's religious denomination and about different religious habits and they seem to be curious about that. For example, they want to know if the researcher is a Muslim and why she goes to the mosque, although she is not a Muslim. They mention that Muslims are wearing headscarves and that non Muslims are not wearing one.

They also mention the absence of some children during religious education lessons.

In the Catholic kindergarten the children talk about the church or about celebrations that take place in the kindergarten

When children in the Catholic kindergarten notice religious diversity, they *do not have any explanation* why this is the case. The children do not know, why some children should not make the sign of a cross. They do not know the reason for the absence of some pupils during celebrations.

When children do not take part in celebrations other children ask why these children haven't taken part. The children who were not at the celebration prefer to tell untruths about their presence at celebrations instead of telling the truth that they were absent at some celebrations.

The children of the non majority group in the Muslim kindergarten mention that they are no Muslims as the reason why they do not attend the Religious education lesson. But they do not mention their own religion or any religious expressions.

6 Jw: we are not a mosque. The other are mosques.

7 I: What are you?

8 Jw: Romanian and Dw is Poland.

The question that arose during a discussion about the Advent wreath in the Catholic kindergarten shows that children try to explain religious difference on the basis of other dimensions of difference. Religious differences are not addressed by the children in this context.

51 Which people do not have an Advent wreath?

52 FM: The poor

53 Lm: L The blacks

54 I: You say the poor?

55 Qm: The poor and the blacks?

56 I: Why have they none?

57 Qm: Because they are poor

58 I: Why are they poor?

59 Fm: Because they have nothing.

60 I: Who else does not have an Advent wreath?

61 Lm: The old ones

⁸ A research project has already been published which focuses on religious difference in these two kindergartens: Stockinger, Helena (2017): Umgang mit religiöser Differenz im Kindergarten. Eine ethnographische Studie an Einrichtungen in katholischer und islamischer Trägerschaft in Wien. Religious Diversity and Education in Europe. Band 35. Münster-New York: Waxmann (will be published in English in 2018).

- 62 I: The old ones. Why do the old ones not have an Advent wreath?
63 Fm: because they are also poor.
64 I: Are there other people who do not have an Advent wreath?
65 Cm: The poor

5.7 Tendencies in the kindergartens

Children notice differences and talk about them

The results show that difference is an issue for children in kindergarten and that children talk about differences in kindergarten. The children in both kindergartens talk about differences as a matter of course. In conversations among themselves, the children often refer to difference, the most frequently observed difference being gender, size, age, skin color, language and country of origin. Sometimes religious differences are also mentioned, especially in Muslim kindergartens. How often and which differences are mentioned is different in the kindergartens. In conversations it becomes clear that children connect different dimensions of difference, as can be seen in different conversations, for example in conversations about language and nationality, which are always closely linked, as well as in conversations about age and size.

Parallels between the dealing with diversity in kindergartens and children`s talk

The differences children talk about can also be found in everyday kindergarten life, either in the form of statements by the kindergarten teachers and/or in the design of the group room. Dealing with differences in the kindergarten also shows that some differences are strongly emphasised, while other differences are tried to avoid. Some of the children's statements reflect how the kindergarten deals with the difference in the kindergarten. The respective context of the kindergarten, the openness for difference lived in the kindergarten and how children deal with difference are related.

Children have different attitudes about differences

The way they talk about differences and whether they see the differences positively or negatively differs between the children and between the dimensions of difference. Children can be irritated by differences and look for explanations, but they can also be proud of differences.

In some of the children's conversations it becomes clear that differences stand next to each other value-free, in other conversations an interpretation and evaluation by the children becomes clear. This is especially apparent in the age/size of the children (older and taller is better), the language (German and Arabic), the religion (belonging to the majority group) and the skin color, as the frightening cry of a child "Why have you bought a black doll" illustrates.

Dominant attitudes

The results show that children compare each other. If there is a dominant attitude in kindergarten, they compare on the basis of that attitude. This is particularly evident in the difference between skin color and religious difference. For children, a light skin color is the normal case, as is the majority religion in the respective kindergarten. A different skin color is perceived by the children with discomfort and an explanation is mentioned which could injure the child concerned. Children absent from the festival are asked by other children about their absence. The skin color of the majority, the celebration of the majority is considered normal, while other appearances and other habits irritate the children. Without wanting this, some children's statements can hurt or dominate other children.

6. Development of *safe and brave spaces*

Educational efforts in kindergartens can be “directed to challenging different forms of discrimination and intolerance.”⁹ Children can be discriminated against because of different characteristics. It might happen that children have biases against a group of children. These biases may lead to exclusion or discrimination. The older children get the more people have influence on the moralic development and identity building of the children.¹⁰ The understanding that ignoring of differences may result in the production of inequality and confirms them, promotes the sensitivity for difference.¹¹ As difference is often silenced, replaced, excluded, devaluated and exploited, different modes of life have to be discovered, broached and recognised in their value.¹²

An essential goal of religious education is to contribute to the best possible development of children by taking their individuality seriously and accepting their difference and by contributing to a respectful living in difference. Research projects agree that children are able to recognize and talk about differences. So Religious Education that is close to what affects people¹³ should also take diversity into consideration. Thus it is an essential goal of religious education with children to contribute to a sensitive dealing with religious diversity. Kindergartens should find ways of acknowledging all the children and they should develop structures that do not discriminate against the minority as it is also codified in the children`s rights.¹⁴ It seems important to consider the kindergarten as a learning organization and to develop a culture of recognition which can be guided by the metaphor of *safe spaces* in which (religious) differences are sensitively recognized and talked about. Children “will always need safe places for learning. They will always need launching pads from which to follow their curiosity into the larger world. And they will always need places to make the transition from their childhood homes to the larger society of peers and adults.”¹⁵ The significance of a safe learning environment in which children can experience the basic principles of living together is highlighted.¹⁶ “The psychological safety research reiterates the tight links among people taking risks, creating knowledge, trusting colleagues, and exploring differences. It is through conversations that people learn whether they can trust each other and whether they feel psychologically safe.”¹⁷ Safe space is a popular metaphor for describing a climate in the classroom that allows students to feel safe, take risks, openly discuss their views, and share and explore their knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. Especially the possibility to risk statements, actions, to get involved in conflicts, to work on and with difference is made clear by

⁹ Barnes L. P. (2015). Religious Education. Teaching for Diversity. In: Barnes, L. Philip & Davis, Andrew: *Religious Education. Educating for Diversity*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 12-62, 19.

¹⁰ Wagner, Petra (2010): Vielfalt und Diskriminierung im Erleben von Kindern, in: Wagner, Petra: *Handbuch Kinderwelten. Vielfalt als Chance – Grundlagen einer vorurteilsbewussten Bildung und Erziehung*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder, 56

¹¹ Mecheril, Paul / Plöber, Melanie (2009): Differenz. In: Andresen, Sabine / Casale, Rita / Gabriel, Thomas / Horlacher, Rebekka / Larcher Klee, Sabina / Oelkers, Jürgen (Hg.): *Handwörterbuch Erziehungswissenschaft*. Weinheim-Basel: Beltz, 194-208, 197.

¹² Prengel, Annedore (32006): *Pädagogik der Vielfalt. Verschiedenheit und Gleichberechtigung in Interkultureller, Feministischer und Integrativer Pädagogik*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 182f.

¹³ Mette, Norbert (2005): *Einführung in die katholische Praktische Theologie*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 26.

¹⁴ Convention on the Rights of the Child. Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989, entry into force 2 September 1990, article 2.

¹⁵ Senge Peter M./Cambron-McCabe Nelda/Lucas Timothy/Smith Bryan/Dutton Janis/Kleiner Art (2012): *Schools that learn. A Fifth Discipline Fieldbook for Educators, Parents, and Everyone who Cares About Education*. New York: Crown Business, 4.

¹⁶ ter Avest, K.H. Ina/Miedema, Siebren (2010): *Learn Young, Learn Fair. Interreligious Encounter and Learning in Dutch Kindergarten*. In: Engebretson, Kath/de Souza, Marian/Durka, Gloria/Gearon, Liam (Hg.): *International Handbook of Inter-religious Education. Part One*. Dordrecht-Heidelberg-London-New York: Springer, 513-527.

¹⁷ Baker, Ann C.: *Catalytic Conversations. Organizational Communication and Innovation*, Armonk u.a.: M.E. Sharpe 2010, 100.

the metaphor of *brave spaces*. The use of a metaphor is one way of giving a perspective a condensed expression. As a metaphor, the term describes an ideal image that serves as orientation but cannot be completely achieved.

Safe and brave spaces can metaphorically stand for spaces of learning, spaces of belonging and spaces of recognition of difference. Due to the different understandings, the term safe space, as it is to be understood here, must be clearly distinguished from other uses: It is not based on an understanding of safe spaces, where spaces are required in which disadvantaged people are separated from other people. This understanding of safe spaces is demanded by different organizations and wants to help people to be among themselves and not to be discriminated against. However, in such spaces, fears and a clear demarcation from others often determine behaviour. Such a separation makes it difficult for educators in educational contexts to respond appropriately and constructively to cases of discrimination and insults.¹⁸

In contrast to this, the concept of safe spaces, as used here, wants to be a metaphor for spaces in which difference is permitted and in which this openness and appreciation is met. In order to enable learning with and from each other, spaces are necessary in which difference is permitted, sensitively perceived and thematized. Conflict theories have shown that it is necessary to develop places and an atmosphere of security if a constructive dialogue is to take place between people who differ from one another. The concept of safe space “can create an atmosphere where differences can be expressed without hurting ‘the Other’”. It means to provide space for equal participation, to foster self-expression, for sharing stories and for mediating conflicts.”¹⁹ In safe spaces, children feel that their differences belong to and are recognised, they are encouraged to address issues that concern them and there is a sensitive confrontation with difference.

Referring to school development²⁰, the development of kindergartens may include organizational development²¹, personal development, and content development to develop *safe and brave spaces*.

Communication is a key factor in organisational development²² and plays a key role in dealing with difference. Only differences that are recognizable in kindergarten or that are thematized can be recognized. The development of the organisation kindergarten can be supported by supervision. One important instrument can be self-evaluation²³ of each kindergarten in order to identify important fields for further development. Concepts for dealing with diversity could be drafted by the organizing institution. Personnel development should consider the reasons why teachers focus on some dimensions of differences whereas they try to avoid other dimensions of difference. Education and teacher training should integrate diversity training and focus on interreligious and intercultural aspects. Dealing with diversity should become a key competence of teachers and heads of kindergartens, including the competence of reflection. When developing content for education, account should be taken of the fact that there are situations in kindergartens that offer learning opportunities. These chances should be sensitively recognized by kindergarten teachers. Children notice differences, but sometimes they need explanations of adults to

¹⁸ Stengel, Barbara S.: The Complex case of Fear and Safe Space, in: Studies in Philosophy and Education 29/6 (2010) 523–540, 524-528.

¹⁹ Schreiner, Peter (2007): A “safe space” to foster self-expression. In: Keast, John (Hg.): Religious diversity and intercultural education: a reference book for schools. Strasbourg Cedex: Council of Europe Publishing, 57-66, 58.

²⁰ Dalin, Per/Rolff, Hans-Günter/Bucher, Herbert (⁴1998): Institutioneller Schulentwicklungs-Prozeß. Ein Handbuch. Soest: Verlag für Schule und Weiterbildung.

²¹ Schein, Edgar. H. (21992): Organizational Culture and Leadership. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

²² Doppler, Klaus (2000): Kommunikation als Schlüsselfaktor der Organisationsentwicklung. In: Trebesch, Karsten (Hg.): Organisationsentwicklung. Konzepte, Strategien, Fallstudien. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 281-307.

²³ Keast, John/Leganger-Krogstad, Heid (2007): Religious dimension of intercultural education: a whole school approach. In: Keast, John (Hg.): Religious diversity and intercultural education: a reference book for schools. Strasbourg Cedex: Council of Europe 2007, 119-121.

understand them. Children should have the possibility to talk about their thoughts about diversity and these should be heard by teachers, researchers and society.

Orientation towards the metaphor of *safe and brave spaces* can contribute to more educational justice and support learning that contributes to a difference-sensitive and respectful coexistence.

7. Bibliography

- Baker, Ann C.: Catalytic Conversations. Organizational Communication and Innovation, Armonk u.a.: M.E. Sharpe 2010.
- Barnes L. P. (2015). Religious Education. Teaching for Diversity. In: Barnes, L. Philip & Davis, Andrew: Religious Education. Educating for Diversity. Bloomsbury Publishing, 12-62.
- Boostrom, Robert: ‚Safe spaces‘: Reflections on an educational metaphor, in: Journal of Curriculum Studies 30/4 (1998) 397-408.
- Convention on the Rights of the Child. Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989, entry into force 2 September 1990.
- Corbin, Juliet / Strauss, Anselm (³2008): Basics of Qualitative Research. Los Angeles-London-New Delhi-Singapore: Sage Publications.
- Dalin, Per/Rolff, Hans-Günter/Bucher, Herbert (⁴1998): Institutioneller Schulentwicklungs-Prozeß. Ein Handbuch. Soest: Verlag für Schule und Weiterbildung.
- Doppler, Klaus (2000): Kommunikation als Schlüsselfaktor der Organisationsentwicklung. In: Trebesch, Karsten (Hg.): Organisationsentwicklung. Konzepte, Strategien, Fallstudien. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 281-307.
- Engelbreton, Kath / de Souza, Marian / Durka, Gloria / Gearon, Liam (eds.) (2010): International Handbook of Inter-religious Education. Part Two. Dordrecht-Heidelberg-London-New York: Springer.
- Flick, Uwe (⁵2012): Qualitative Sozialforschung. Eine Einführung. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt.
- Heinzel, Friederike (Hg.) (²2012): Methoden der Kindheitsforschung. Ein Überblick über Forschungszugänge zur kindlichen Perspektive. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa [2000].
- Keast, John/Leganger-Krogstad, Heid (2007): Religious dimension of intercultural education: a whole school approach. In: Keast, John (Hg.): Religious diversity and intercultural education: a reference book for schools. Strasbourg Cedex: Council of Europe 2007, 119-121.
- Mecheril, Paul / Plöber, Melanie (2009): Differenz. In: Andresen, Sabine / Casale, Rita / Gabriel, Thomas / Horlacher, Rebekka / Larcher Klee, Sabina / Oelkers, Jürgen (Hg.): Handwörterbuch Erziehungswissenschaft. Weinheim-Basel: Beltz, 194-208.
- Mette, Norbert (2005): Einführung in die katholische Praktische Theologie. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Prengel, Annedore (³2006): Pädagogik der Vielfalt. Verschiedenheit und Gleichberechtigung in Interkultureller, Feministischer und Integrativer Pädagogik. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Schein, Edgar. H. (2019): Organizational Culture and Leadership. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Schreiner, Peter (2007): A “safe space” to foster self-expression. In: Keast, John (Hg.): Religious diversity and intercultural education: a reference book for schools. Strasbourg Cedex: Council of Europe Publishing, 57-66.

- Senge Peter M./Cambron-McCabe Nelda/Lucas Timothy/Smith Bryan/Dutton Janis/Kleiner Art (2012): *Schools that learn. A Fifth Discipline Fieldbook for Educators, Parents, and Everyone who Cares About Education*. New York: Crown Business.
- Schneider, Wolfgang/Lindenberger, Ulman (2012): *Entwicklungspsychologie*. Weinheim: Beltz.
- Stengel, Barbara S.: The Complex case of Fear and Safe Space, in: *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 29/6 (2010) 523–540.
- Stockinger, Helena (2017): *Umgang mit religiöser Differenz im Kindergarten. Eine ethnographische Studie an Einrichtungen in katholischer und islamischer Trägerschaft in Wien. Religious Diversity and Education in Europe. Band 35*. Münster-New York: Waxmann 2017.
- ter Avest, K.H. Ina/Miedema, Siebren (2010): Learn Young, Learn Fair. Interreligious Encounter and Learning in Dutch Kindergarten. In: Engebretson, Kath/de Souza, Marian/Durka, Gloria/Gearon, Liam (Hg.): *International Handbook of Inter-religious Education. Part One*. Dordrecht-Heidelberg-London-New York: Springer, 513-527.
- Wagner, Petra (Hg.) (2010): *Handbuch Kinderwelten. Vielfalt als Chance – Grundlagen einer vorurteilsbewussten Bildung und Erziehung*. Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder.
- Woodhead, Martin (2008): Identity at birth – and identity in development. In: Brooker, Liz / Woodhead, Martin (eds.): *Developing Positive Identities. Diversity and Young Children. Early Childhood in Focus* (3). Milton Keynes: The Open University.



Outdoing Dewey: Wise Provincialism, Critical Race Pedagogy, and Pragmatist Theologies of Hope

John P. Falcone, Ph.D.

Abstract: Dewey's constructivist pedagogy is a powerful – but flawed – instrument for addressing racial difference. Like his argument for a “common faith,” it is too modernist and pays too little attention to key particularities. Josiah Royce's “wise provincialism” offers a more workable alternative. In this paper, I engage Pragmatist approaches to Whiteness, Womanist pedagogy, and a Pragmatist theology of hope, to sketch a vision of undergraduate classroom practice in which students can claim and explore racial identity in healthy ways.

As US young adults come of age, they and their fellow North Americans grapple with serious disagreements over critical topics including economic sustainability, the choice between liberal democracy and the politics of illiberal tribalism, and – perhaps the most challenging – the ongoing challenge of race relations. Many of the approaches which young adults bring to these problems are intellectually dubious, and undermine the construction of healthy, democratic, liberation-oriented communities:

- “Everyone is entitled to their opinion, as long as they are not hurting anyone else” (which only begs the question, “What is injurious to me and to others?”).
- “I have discovered the one true answer (the Bible, the Qur'an, Ayn Rand, etc.): why can't everyone see it as well?”
- “You are not Black / Female / Queer / White / etc.” or “I am the child of a police officer / from a hard-working middle-class family / etc.” – “I guess we just can't see eye to eye.”

Dewey's approach to “reconstructing experience” can be a powerful teaching tool in these situations; but on its own it only provides a partially effective approach. While Dewey's analysis of individual experience, shared inquiry, and large-scale community politics is often rich and insightful, his approach to intermediate communities – the church, the local culture, the province, the race – lacks nuance and sophistication. (Roman Catholics might call this a deficiency in his

understanding of “subsidiarity.”) His fellow Pragmatist, Josiah Royce, however, addresses these communal dynamics in much greater detail. Royce’s proposal for developing a “wise provincialism” does what Dewey’s reconstructivist model does not: it offers a vision and a roadmap for constructing communities in which particular traditions are preserved, adapted, and integrated into larger, more universal social dynamics.

In this essay, I speak from the perspective of a White person seeking to use critical race theory for the liberation, humanization, and healing of all people: both the White “tribes of Europe”¹ and the peoples of the global majority. My primary goal is to transform Whiteness into an antiracist identity in ways that White people will embrace and employ. To this end, I employ Shannon Sullivan’s work, which takes Royce’s wise provincialism and applies it to critical race theory. Although the category “race” has no biological basis, it is real enough from a Pragmatist perspective: it has “a powerful impact on the habits and institutions that determine human interaction.”² Sullivan argues that the racial category of “Whiteness,” like healthy provincialism, must be cultivated by White people if we Whites hope to live in solidarity with peoples of the global majority.

Holding this all together for me is a foundational theology with strong links to the Process tradition but distinct enough from Whitehead’s theology to be recognizable to traditional Christians: a Classical Pragmatist theology rooted in the philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce. Pragmatist theology, like Pragmatist philosophy, directs our attention always back to evidence, to experimentation, and to concrete practice. As Sullivan notes,

If the question of how to transform whiteness cannot be answered in some practical detail – if it is not a difference that makes a difference – then [the project of reconstructing

¹ A phrase often used by my own teacher, Beverly Wildung Harrison. See her *Justice in the Making: Feminist Social Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 116.

² Terrance MacMullan, “Beyond the Pale: A Pragmatist Approach to Whiteness Studies.” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 31 no. 3 (2005): 281.

Whiteness rather than erasing it altogether] would amount to a hopeful, but ultimately harmful abstraction that makes no difference in lived experience and that damages anti-racist movements.³

I close the essay by suggesting some specific frameworks and practices that can be used to help White students build healthy forms of intra-racial and inter-racial solidarity.

Preliminary Reflections: On the Nature of Identity

As I have worked to address and transform White identity, I have found it useful to clarify my own thinking about the dynamics of identity in general. My understanding of identity and identity formation is rooted in two traditions. The first is Classical American Pragmatism as it has been mediated by Charles Sanders Peirce, Josiah Royce, and the scholarship around “social construction of reality.” The second is my experience in Re-evaluation Counseling (also known as Co-Counseling), a grass-roots, liberation oriented, international peer-counseling community.⁴ Classical Pragmatism and Co-Counseling share several key premises: the power of habit; the reality of human qualities like resilience, creativity, intelligence; the reality of health, truth, and other human norms; the power of critical inquiry to ignite transformative practice. All these play a part in my understanding of human identity.

There are three key points here to consider: first, that identities are constructed; second, that identities have real effects; third, that identities can possess both neurotic and health-giving dimensions. These points are hardly groundbreaking, but they are worth underlining; when White people broach the topic of race, when guilt and other feelings start to fare, it becomes particularly important to remember our best thinking.

³ Shannon Sullivan, “Whiteness as Wise Provincialism: Royce and the Rehabilitation of a Racial Category,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 44 no. 2 (2008): 237.

⁴ Katie Kauffman and Caroline New, *Co-Counselling : The Theory and Practice of Re-Evaluation Counselling* (Hove and New York: Routledge, 2004); on identity in Re-evaluation Counseling, see Caroline New, *Agency, Health, and Social Survival: The Ecopolitics of Rival Psychologies* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1996), 134-139.

To parse “identity,” I explore my own sense of what it means for me to be “Italian”. I was born in the US as the child of two Italian immigrants; my first language at home was my parents’ hometown Central Italian dialect; today I consider myself a “native” speaker of English – though I am still fluent in my hometown dialect (so long as conversation remains restricted to household matters and farmyard animals); I was brought up with Italian food, music, and family values; in my 20’s I applied for and received an Italian passport.

My Italian identity is constructed: it does not represent an unchanging “essence,” its boundary with other identities is neither sharp nor hard. As the child of Central Italians, am I “more” Italian than my friend from the southern island of Sicily? than my colleague from the Austro-Italian region of Tyrol in the north? Am I “less” Italian than my parents? My Italianness is a product of culture and nurture, even of the way others have treated me as an Italian (American). If I decided to “work on” my Italianness – say, to explore my persistent feelings that I am an outsider and to “clean up” their roots in my peasant, immigrant background – I would need to do (1) “own” my Italianness; (2) decide to transform those outsider feelings which presently seem such a “reflexive” and an integral part of my identity; (3) gather enough inner strength and outer resource to do so; and (4) work at – probably for a very long time. On the other hand, if I decided simply to suppress or reject these unwanted feelings, the repressed (as Freud notes) would most surely return – in ways that are less manageable, and probably even more ugly, than the identity as I currently hold it today.

Identities are habits. As Dewey says, a habit is

that kind of human activity which is influenced by prior activity and in that sense acquired: which contains within itself a certain ordering or systematization of minor elements of action; which is projective, dynamic in quality, ready for overt manifestation and which is operative in some subdued subordinate form even when not obviously dominating activity.”⁵

Habits shape us, not least by organizing the world around us to make their repetition more routine and “normal.”

Like any habit, identity produces effects which are real, persistent, and self-reinforcing; as a deep-seated habit, identity is hard to transform. My Italian identity is inscribed on my mind and my body; it shapes the way that I think and express myself (language, accent, diction, habits of thought); it shapes how I move, what I value, how I perceive and execute style and taste (i.e., it is a social *habitus*). Especially when I was younger, before I entered the intelligentsia, it determined what resources were available to me, and what avenues were foreclosed; and the repercussions continue to shape my life and work even today.

Finally, my Italian identity has both health-giving and neurotic potential. Its salutary dimensions open up possibilities for action which is more richly expressive, more responsible, even more loving. I am proud of my Italian culture and sensibility: emotional expressiveness; ready shows of affection; love of good food and song; appreciation for extended family. These are by no means unique to Italians; but they are easily embraced (even normative) in Italian settings. I am proud of my Italian heritage. Though this heritage is mainly imagined (“Italy” has only existed as a nation-state since 1861), my Italian identity allows me ready access to emotional connections with art, literature, history, and religion; it gives me heroes to emulate, object lessons in villainy to abjure, and other rich cultural tropes. Of course, I can develop deep appreciation for other cultures, just as others can fall in love with all things Italian; but exploring

⁵ John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, in *Middle Works*, Vol. 14, ed. by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983[1922]), 31. Cited in MacMullen, “Beyond the Pale,” 283.

my “own” identity provides a compelling place to begin filling out my own humane development.

Along with these salutary dimensions of identity, there is a set of unhealthy and neurotic tendencies, as I’ve already suggested. Identity gone wrong can foreclose expression and loving commitment; it can instill irrational fears and rigidities; it can even lead to trauma, illness, and premature death.

Race and Identity

I have shown out how ethnicity demonstrates three points about *identity in general*: it is constructed; it has real effects; it can possess both neurotic and health-giving dimensions. I have suggested that it is unhealthy to reject one’s identity; that the better path is to own it, to identify and embrace its healthy dimensions, to locate and reform its neurotic, unhealthy components.

My argument is that, *mutatis mutandis*, this same framework applies to *racial identities*. It is not hard, for example, to imagine how non-White identities can be read in much the same way as Italian identity: historically and socially constructed; vaguely bounded; facilitating access to some resources, but not to others; capable of opening up possibilities for rich expression, cultural celebration, and loving action; marred by trauma, oppression, and complex neuroses; self-reinforcing but amenable to change.

It is more difficult to imagine the salutary dimensions of White identity, because White identity was born to benefit the beneficiaries of racist oppression. Books like *A People’s History of the United States* trace the construction of Whiteness as tool for “dividing and conquering”; the author, Howard Zinn, shows how elites used skin color to construct laws and *mores* that could rupture the solidarity between poor European-Americans and poor people of “color.” Like any distinction born to further oppression, White identity also harms and twists its own

“beneficiaries.” For immigrants like my parents, there were a clear set of bereavements associated with the process of “becoming” proper Whites in this country. As Terrance MacMullan notes, great “damage” was “done to those people who were convinced to break their ties to their past in order to better pass as white Americans.” He quotes the critical theorist Adrienne Rich:

The pressure to assimilate says different things to different people; change your name, your accent, your nose; straighten or dye your hair, stay in the closet; pretend the Pilgrims were your fathers; become baptized as a christian, wear dangerously high heels, and starve yourself to look young, thin, and feminine; . . . value elite European culture above all others; laugh at jokes about your own people; don’t make trouble; defer to white men; . . . be ashamed of who you are.”⁶

To Rich’s analysis, I add this imaginative passage by the modern fantasy writer, Lynn Flewelling. In her universe of sword and sorcery, the wicked god Seriamaius plays a prominent role:

[They] brought the worship of the Empty God back from somewhere over the seas. . . . [Human sacrifice,] all kinds of nasty ceremonies. [Seriamaius] was said to feed off the living energy of the world. He did grant uncanny powers to the faithful, but always at a terrible price. Still, there are always those who will seek such power, whatever the risk.⁷

It is not too much to see Whiteness reflected in this fictional passage. In sketching the history of Seriamaius, Flewelling gives us a cipher for the guiding spirit of Whiteness – an ever-hungry, empty ethnicity made in the image of its soul-eating, false, Empty God.

White identity is more deeply problematic than most other ethnic racial and ethnic identities because Whiteness is so closely connected to domination and assimilation – both in its origins, and in the ways that it continues to function today. Those of us who are marked with a White identity find it difficult to undo the habits of Whiteness. The inscriptions of privilege,

⁶ MacMullan, “Beyond the Pale,” 287; citing Adrienne Rich, “Resisting Amnesia: History and Personal Life,” in *Blood, Bread and Poetry* (New York: Norton, 1983), 142.

⁷ Lynn Flewelling, *Luck in the Shadows* (New York: Penguin Random House, 1996), 84.

pretense, guilt, and self-abjection cannot be erased by simply repressing or rejecting our White identities. We cannot escape race, because race is a habit and habits constitute the very stuff of the self.

Because habit is transactional, in a raced and racist world, the self necessarily will be racially constituted. Race is not a veneer lacquered over a nonracial core. It composes the very beings that humans are and the particular ways by which humans engage the world. In that sense, race is ontological.⁸

Like all habits, Whiteness is constructed, and for this reason it can be reconstructed: not simply with words, but with other habits. We White people can reconstruct our own Whiteness if we own it, decide to transform it, gather up tools and resources, and work on it for a long time.

Dewey's Reconstructivist Approach: In Need of Further Reconstruction

As an American religious educator, and especially as an American Pragmatist, my first impulse is to look to John Dewey for insight in a project aimed toward the critical *reconstruction* of Whiteness. Reconstruction is a central theme in Dewey's corpus, and a key element in the presentation of Dewey's work to teachers in training. But Dewey's work provides only the broadest outline for the work of reconstructing *racial* identity; indeed, some of the key themes in his work can undercut the work of reconstructing identities such as race and ethnicity (not to mention religion).

A recent textbook paints the following picture of Deweyan approaches to education.⁹ For Dewey, to learn is to "reconstruct" past information into new and creative solutions. True learning flows from the "Complete Act of Thought," a version of the scientific method: encounter a problematic situation; identify the problem; search past experience and collective

⁸ Shannon Sullivan, "(Re)construction Zone: Beware of Falling Statues." In *In Dewey's Wake : Unfinished Work of Pragmatic Reconstruction*, edited by William J. Gavin (State University of New York Press, 2003), 112-113.

⁹ Allan C. Ornstein, Daniel U. Levine, Gerry Gutek, David E. Vocke , *Foundations of Education*, 13th edition (Independence, KY: Cengage Learning, 2016), 104-106.

knowledge for relevant data; construct solutions; and test those solutions. The overall goal is to “grow”: to increase self-possession, coping capacity, and individuality.

Dewey believed that democratic schooling should introduce students to “past ideas, discoveries, and inventions,” that it should “encourage people to share their experiences, ... [to] access their cultural heritage, and [to] learn [how] to use it” in order to meet present needs. For this reason, Dewey “oppos[ed] separat[ing] people from each other because of ethnicity, race, gender, or economic class.”¹⁰

A key text frequently included in Dewey anthologies is Chapter Seven of *Democracy and Education*. There Dewey identifies two “criteria” that define a healthy, democratic society; first, developing a common goal or “interest;” second, “interacting and cooperating ... with other groups”.¹¹ Dewey also links certain cultures with anti-democratic and miseducative practices:

That savage tribes regard aliens and enemies as synonymous is not accidental. It springs from the fact that they have identified their experience with rigid adherence to their past customs., ... [I]ntercourse with others might dissolve custom ... [and] would certainly occasion reconstruction.”¹²

A careful study of Dewey and of Deweyan scholarship can help us identify the deeper currents that move his thoughts about reconstruction, education, and cultural change.

For example, elsewhere in *Democracy and Education*, Dewey presents his “technical definition” of educational practice. Education “is that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience.”¹³ To reconstruct is not to abandon previous ways of thinking, but to reshape them so that they work once more to meet exigent needs.

¹⁰ Ornstein et al, *Foundations of Education*, 105-106.

¹¹ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, in *Middle Works*, Vol. 9, ed. by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980 [1916]), 83.

¹² Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 86.

¹³ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 82.

Jim Garrison explains that

for Dewey, we engage in reconstruction whenever we find ourselves in a disrupted situation. ... These situations often arise when the existing cultural constructions fail an individual, a community of inquiry, or perhaps even the culture as a whole.”¹⁴

Even habits as pernicious as racism must be “reconstructed” – albeit in radical ways. As

MacMullen writes

unfit habits of action (whiteness, I will argue, being one example) cannot simply be jettisoned; they must instead be reconstructed into more fortuitous patterns that place people and communities in greater harmony internally, with each other, and their environment.”¹⁵

But while Dewey puts great emphasis on reconstruction, he lacks the conceptual tools to detail the process of reconstructing group identity. There are at least two reasons for this shortfall: first, Dewey’s modernist-evolutionist tendencies in viewing human culture; second, his attention to the ways in which group identity can be the enemy of individual growth.

In his earlier writings, as Thomas Fallace has shown, Dewey expressed the belief that “all the communities and cultures of the world could be placed on a single continuum of social progress leading through the stages of savagery to barbarianism to civilization.”¹⁶ Fallace argues that Dewey’s views developed over time from this “linear historicism” to a more modernist instrumentalist outlook. In his later works, Dewey shows an appreciation of how cultural particulars can shape our possibilities and can more richly fund our experiments. In 1915, Dewey rejected “the theory of the melting pot”; arguing instead that American society should resemble an “orchestra” in which each “cultural section ... maintain[ed] its distinctive literary and artistic

¹⁴ Jim Garrison, Stephan Neubert, and Kersten Reich, *John Dewey's Philosophy of Education: An Introduction and Recontextualization for Our Times* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 71.

¹⁵ MacMullen, “Beyond the Pale,” 269, citing John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*.

¹⁶ Thomas Fallace, “Race, Culture, and Pluralism: The Evolution of Dewey’s Vision for a Democratic Curriculum,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 44 no. 1 (2012): 15.

traditions ... in order that it might have the more to contribute to others.”¹⁷ But in 1916 and 1918, he also insisted that “it is the business of the school environment” to “transmit and conserve” only what “make[s] for a better future society”, to “eliminate ... dead wood from the past,”¹⁸ and to undo the “antisocial ... isolation” and “exclusiveness” of “gangs,” “cliques,” “nationalities,” “churches,” “cultural traditions” and other identity groups.¹⁹ In his late works on religion (*A Common Faith*, 1934; “One Current Religious Problem,” 1936), Dewey criticized those who cling to a parochial religious viewpoint and advocates the reconstruction of religiosity in a universalist vein. He called for a kind of common spirituality in which people draw from different cultural sources – religious, artistic, literary, scientific, and so on.

So Dewey wants to *use* cultural diversity, but he says little about *supporting* the survival of particular cultures. This lack of attention is linked to a second, unresolved issue in Dewey’s thinking: the tendency to see individuality and inherited group identity as discontinuous. While Dewey insists that all of reality is continuous, he tends to see individuality and certain types identity as strongly opposed. As Ana Martínez Alemán explains, Dewey was adamant that “restrict[ing] individual contribution to the common project and the common good by a “prior principle” such as “family and birth or race and color or family or possession of material wealth” ... infuse[s] democracy with an illiberal authoritarianism [which] is contradictory to “the democratic faith in equality.””

¹⁷ John Dewey. [31 March 1915] Letter from Dewey to Horace Kallen (rec. 003222). In L. Hickman (ed.), *The Correspondence of John Dewey, Vol 1: 1871–1918*, Third edition CD-ROM version (Carbondale, IL: Center for Dewey Studies, Southern Illinois University, 2005).

¹⁸ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 24.

¹⁹ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 85; idem, “America in the World,” in *Middle Works*, Vol. 11, ed. by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008 [1918]), 71.

Beyond Dewey: Communal Dynamics according to Royce

Teachers and activists who intend to reconstruct Whiteness instead of abolishing it must reach beyond the limited toolbox and unresolved frameworks that Dewey offers. To pursue Dewey's project of reconstruction in a way that preserves *group* identity, I turn to the writings of his older contemporary, the Pragmatist Josiah Royce.

Josiah Royce was born in 1855 in California, of a gold-rush family from the American East; he went on to teach philosophy at Harvard University from 1882 until his death in 1916. After 1900, he turned his attention to American Pragmatism and the philosophy of lived experience. His 1908 essay on "Provincialism" provides Pragmatist insights on the process of reconstructing group identity. I will use these insights to inform my reflections on the anti-racist reconstruction of White identity

Royce defines a province as a "domain" which is "sufficiently unified to have a true consciousness of its own unity, to feel a pride in its own ideals and customs, and to possess a sense of its distinction from other" regions of a nation.²⁰ He goes on:

By the term 'provincialism' I shall mean, first, the tendency of such a province to possess its own customs and ideals; secondly, the totality of these customs and ideals themselves; and thirdly, the love and pride which leads the inhabitants of a province to cherish as their own these traditions, beliefs, and aspirations.²¹

Deeply influenced by the echoes of America's Civil War,²² Royce draws a sharp distinction between regional factionalism and healthy provincialism. Regional factionalism pits one part of the broader community against every other; but a healthy provincialism enriches and strengthens the larger nation or group. Royce condemns "the ancient narrowness from which small

²⁰ Josiah Royce, "Provincialism," in *Race Questions, Provincialism, and Other American Problems* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1967 [1908]), 1069.

²¹ Royce, "Provincialism," 1069.

²² Mathew A. Foust, *Loyalty to Loyalty: Josiah Royce and the Genuine Moral Life* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 28-31.

communities were so long struggling to escape” and calls for a “higher provincialism,” a “wise” or “wholesome provincialism”²³ which is “loyally patriotic, and yet preserve[s] our consciousness of the peculiar and unique dignity of our own community.”²⁴

The wise province is “proud of its own traditions, not unwilling indeed to learn, but also quite ready to teach the stranger its own wisdom.”²⁵ Royce identifies three main dangers or “evils” that such a wise provincialism can overcome.²⁶ The first is lack of solidarity, which he attributes to geographic mobility: newcomers necessarily have little sense of history, values, culture and social networks that make up the new region in which they are settling. The second is assimilation: mass communications eliminate diversity, a key social resource, by homogenizing culture and crushing individuality. The third is “mob mentality”: the tendency of contemporary mass societies towards moral panics and irrational passions – what we might identify today as the precursors to fascism.²⁷

A wise provincialism cultivates both individuality and common local identity: “the province will not serve the nation best by forgetting itself, but by loyally emphasizing its own duty to the nation and therefore its right to attain and to cultivate its own unique wisdom.”²⁸ Specifically,

- (1) wise provincials hold local pride as an ideal to be achieved (not as a present accomplishment to be vaunted);
- (2) wise provincials “learn freely from abroad, but ... insist upon our own interpretation of the common good,” or to put it another way, “Provincialism does not mean a lack of

²³ Royce, “Provincialism,” 1070, 1074, 1084.

²⁴ Royce, “Provincialism,” 1084.

²⁵ Royce, “Provincialism,” 1076.

²⁶ Royce, “Provincialism,” 1076-1081.

²⁷ Royce published “Provincialism” in 1908 and died in 1916; Benito Mussolini and his colleagues first began using the term “fascism” around 1915.

²⁸ Royce, “Provincialism,” 1084.

plasticity, an unteachable spirit; it means a determination to use the spiritual gifts that come to us from abroad in our own way and with reference to the ideals of our own social order.”²⁹

(3) wise provincials cultivate solidarity; they encourage people to bring new learning home – not just to up-skill and leave the community;

(4) wise provincials pay attention to nature and public space; they “let the province more and more seek its own adornment.”³⁰

These practices are honed and perfected through the comity of small group deliberation, taking as a model “a really successful town hall meeting in a comparatively small community.”³¹ With wise provincials, deliberation becomes a tradition and eventually a social institution that embodies the group’s collective wisdom (for example, a framework of religious or secular jurisprudence).³²

Whiteness as a Form of Wise Provincialism

Feminist philosopher Shannon Sullivan takes Royce’s wise provincialism and applies it to critical race theory: she argues that White people who hope to live in solidarity with the peoples of the global majority must cultivate and reconstruct their White identity in the same types of ways that wise provincials cultivate local identity.

Anti-racist Whites would certainly seek to avoid Royce’s first “evil” – disconnection, lack of solidarity. Sullivan argues that they can only do so by cultivating “conscious or deliberate

²⁹ Royce, “Provincialism,” 1086.

³⁰ Royce, “Provincialism,” 1087.

³¹ Royce, “Provincialism,” 1080.

³² Cf. Royce, “*Provincialism*”, 1079-1081.

affiliation *with their [own] whiteness.*” Otherwise, “the meaning and effect of whiteness is left to happenstance,” or – what is more likely – determined by our ubiquitous and systemic racism.³³ Unless White people choose to cultivate anti-racist forms of White identity, our Whiteness will take on racist structures and oppressive habits by default. Sullivan particularly calls on White people to *teach our children* a wise awareness of their own Whiteness. (Children are, after all, the quintessential “new arrivals” to any social and cultural scene).

Anti-racist Whites must also avoid Royce’s second “evil:” assimilation. Sullivan argues that White people who hope to work on anti-racist projects should resist the temptation to erase their own Whiteness, or the pull to assimilate their Whiteness to other identities. Whiteness is ensconced deeply within us, such that true “color-blindness” can only be pretense at this point in our history. Meanwhile, the Empty God remains devious, turning White people into hungry consumers and non-White identities into comestible products. Any modern identity that hopes to survive must resist the homogenizing dynamics of the market and of popular culture.

When applied to subaltern identities (regional, cultural, religious, even racial), the call to resist assimilation is welcome advice. When applied to Whiteness, it is the most dangerous of Royce’s counsels, because it echoes the fears stoked by racist White cultural politics: that the White race is under siege demographically, that it must fight tooth and nail for its cultural and politics to survive. But as Sullivan argues, “Royce’s advice that people should attempt to become more, rather than less self-conscious in their provincialism” applies even more to White people involved in anti-racist identity-building.³⁴ Anti-racism requires anti-assimilation.

Given that distance from racial identification tends to be the covert *modus operandi* for contemporary forms of white privilege, white people who wish to fight racism need to become more intimately acquainted with their whiteness. Rather than ignore their whiteness, which allows unconscious habits of white privilege to proliferate unchecked,

³³ Sullivan, “Whiteness as Wise Provincialism,” 246; my emphasis.

³⁴ Sullivan, “Whiteness as Wise Provincialism,” 241.

white people need to bring their whiteness to as much conscious awareness as possible (while also realizing that complete self-transparency is never achievable) so that they can try to change what it means [to be white].³⁵

MacMullan puts it even more bluntly:

in a climate where more and more white people are dodging the issue of how we have benefited [and continue to benefit] from our whiteness, people who are now considered white need to affirm their whiteness as part of their *democratic responsibility*.³⁶

While it is not possible to erase our White privileges; it *is* possible to turn them to anti-racist advantage.

Finally, anti-racist Whites would seek to Royce's third "evil" – mob mentality and moral panic. This evil might bring to mind images of Jim Crow and of race conflicts from the 1960's (although recent right wing populisms across the "Western" democracies demonstrate that irrational outpourings of ethnic- and race-based feeling are hardly a thing of the past). For Sullivan, this is less about dodging fascism than about claiming individual reconstruction as a personal project. Identity for Royce (he would call it "individualism") is a project: "Be and individual, he insists, "[b]ut for Heaven's sake, set about the task."³⁷

This kind of individual project is the first of the four tasks that Royce lays out for wise provincials; and it applies just as readily to the work of shaping a wise form of White identity: White "pride" must always be an ideal under critical scrutiny, always under watchful and thoughtful reconstruction.

The next two tasks that Royce lays out – commingling gratefully with others, and thoughtfully applying what we have borrowed to our own contexts – are particularly helpful in building anti-racist White identities. As Sullivan argues, White people should avoid the kinds of

³⁵ Sullivan, "Whiteness as Wise Provincialism," 241-2.

³⁶ MacMullan: *Beyond the Pale*, 281 emphasis added.

³⁷ Josiah Royce, *The Philosophy of Loyalty* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1995 [1916]), 47, in Sullivan, "Whiteness as Wise Provincialism," 248.

segregation we have practiced in the past: “physically, mentally, economically, and even sexually isolating [ourselves] from people of color”.³⁸ This means making conscious decisions to step out of our “comfort” zones and move towards real relationships with non-White people. For example, White people might consider a decision to make new friends who are – specifically – people of color. This is not to seek out token friendships, but to identify people of color with whom we might indeed share common interests or undertake common projects. These may be neighbors or colleagues; fellow churchgoers, fellow students, or fellow teachers. For many White people, waiting for such friendships with people of color to develop “organically” means allowing such opportunities to pass by, to wither away on the vine. This is, after all, the nature of racism: it creates a preponderance of structures, habits, and ostensible reasons for White people to avoid contact with members of “other” races who might be upsetting or somehow unsettling to us. In other words, White folks who wait for deep, meaningful friendships with non-White folks to develop organically, will likely be waiting a very long time. Being more proactive in cultivating non-White relationships means facing the discomfort that will inevitably come up, including the racists “foot-in-mouth” moments and all the other missteps that we Whites will inevitably make. It means taking the time to work on that discomfort with counselors, friends, colleagues, and mentors.

For Sullivan, Royce’s third task translates to learning gratefully from non-White people and cultures. This too is a worthy practice to incorporate into a reconstructed, anti-racist White practice. It is good for us to cultivate a kind of humility that celebrates non-White cultural achievements as exemplars of excellence from which White folks can only “watch and learn.” One danger with this kind of humility has already been mentioned: the temptation to reject

³⁸ Sullivan, “Whiteness as Wise Provincialism,” 254.

Whiteness altogether in favor of the subaltern culture. Its twin danger is that of “appropriation” – meaning, resorting to acts of spying or of cultural “borrowing” that amount to unethical, uncompensated, or scantily compensated cultural theft.³⁹ Royce’s vision of wise provincialism militates against both these dangers by highlighting the importance of solidarity (toward the fellow White person) and gratitude (toward the outside culture or person of color). A wise Whiteness directs us to apply what we learn to projects for the conversion and humanization of ourselves and our race-soaked White habits.

Royce’s final insistence is that a wise Provincialism pay attention to the “adornment” of homes, towns, cities, and natural settings. Sullivan applies this mandate spiritually and metaphorically (she says, “psychologically”) to adorning “the souls of white folks[, which] are fairly ugly and in need of beautification.” On this topic, she aptly quotes W.E.B. Du Bois, who was himself a student of Royce:

I see these souls undressed and from the back and side. I see the working of their entrails ... as they preach and strut and shout and threaten, crouching as they clutch at rags of facts and fancies to hide their nakedness, they go twisting ... ever stripped,—ugly, human.⁴⁰

But the dimension of provincialism that touches on local spaces also highlights the particular role that *place* must play in anti-racist White practice. It is difficult for White people to act with solidarity towards local communities (e.g., neighborhoods, classrooms), unless we decide to become aware of the racial histories and the racial dynamics involved in those places. As White people, we need to consider the habits, patterns, and social privileges that relate to our own Whiteness as it plays out in spaces where we work, live, learn and do sabbath. (After all, it is

³⁹ Cf. Sullivan, “Whiteness as Wise Provincialism,” 255.

⁴⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dark Water: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999), 17, in Sullivan, “Whiteness as Wise Provincialism,” 257.

certainly true that people of the global majority take racial factors into consideration whenever *they* move in White dominated spaces.)

Royce reminds us that places do matter. How should I live out my Whiteness in this particular place and time? Each place has its own cultures and conflicts, its own stories and histories, its own heroes and villains. Thus it is often useful for White people to direct our attention to local heritage elements of our North American context. As Sullivan argues, forms of “hyphenated Whiteness” such as “lesbian-working-class-whiteness” or “Southern-woman-whiteness” can be valuable “sources of consciously felt unity, shared customs, and memory.”

The value of Royce’s wise provincialism is the way that it can encompass yet push beyond Dewey’s modernist, universal visions of human formation. A wise Provincialism redirects our attention to the dynamics of the local and the particular. Each region of anglophone North America has its history of racialization: its story of how dominant elites cultivated White racial consciousness by dividing poor “White” settlers, workers, and proletarians from indigenous peoples, “Blacks,” and other dispossessed peoples. Each region also has its stories of resistance to this divisive process: cross-racial romances, multi-racial resistance, and other acts of solidarity that crossed shifting yet ever hardening racial boundaries of the time. When and which of our “White” forebears understand themselves as being essentially, or primarily, “White”? On one level, it does not matter: *we* see them as we have been trained to see them: as “White” people like us, and thus as part of our usable history. Through critical study and creative interpretation, they can become for us anti-racist White heroes, or cautionary figures who could not escape from the ravages of racialization, or – probably most often – both.

Religious Educational Implications and Theological Groundings

Catie Cannon's proposals for Womanist pedagogical practice illustrate how this kind of activism can shape religious and theological education. Cannon outlines three pillars of Womanist theological teaching: historical ethos, embodied pathos, and communal logos. By historical ethos, she means "historical memory as cultural resistance":⁴¹ what is the heritage of Black women and other women of color as cultural heroes and liberationist teachers? By embodied pathos, she means structuring our teaching in ways that are concretely situated in the bodies, stories, and struggles of classroom participants: what can students learn from their own experience, while (with humility and gratitude) seeking also the wisdom of women of color? By communal logos, she means discussions that are "organized so that questions and answers are continually reformulated": how do we practice critical social and ideological analysis not as "territory to be covered but with a compass" in our hands?⁴²

Using Cannon's pillars to shape syllabi and individual lessons would introduce powerful heroes and eye-opening perspectives to White and non-White students alike. For younger students, introducing non-White people and stories across all parts of the curriculum, and introducing heroes and stories of White anti-racism, can open up powerful conversations and plant powerful seeds. Undergrads can take the historical ethos, embodied pathos, and communal logos of Womanist subject matter and teaching even further in writing, projects, and conversation. In mixed race settings, allowing White and non-White students to reflect and write privately on these topics (journaling, free writing, conversations with the teacher through short

⁴¹ Katie G. Cannon, "Pedagogical Praxis in African American Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology*, ed. by Katie G. Cannon and Anthony B. Pinn (New York : Oxford University Press, 2014), 321.

⁴² Cannon, "Pedagogical Praxis," 325.

and long essays) can give White students the space to start owning, sorting, and reconstructing their White identities.

How to ground this approach to anti-racist practice and theological education? What kind of vision can keep such anti-racist reconstruction moving forward? A pragmatist theology of hope, evidence, and experimentation would be congruent with this kind of pedagogy. As Anette Ejsing argues, a Classical Pragmatist theology rooted in the philosophy of C.S. Peirce identifies hope as an integral part of human thinking and human experimentation.⁴³ We would not seek knowledge, wisdom, or practical skill unless we had some hope of actually finding them; and that hope is based on a history of finding something of what we have sought; receiving something of what we have asked; entering into something where we have knocked.

This is a pragmatic theology, not a transcendental one. Transcendental arguments establish what *must* be true in light of the structures of human thought and understanding. Pragmatist arguments suggest what *may* be true: true to the evidence, and true to the best hopes, values, and dreams of participants. The hope that a new, anti-racist Whiteness can be constructed must be rooted in evidence, and such evidence already exists: for example, in diligently negotiated relationships of interracial friendships and family units, in the work of anti-racist womanist/feminist scholars,⁴⁴ and in the ongoing anti-racist work of communities like Re-Evaluation counseling.

My reflections on identity in the first part of this article are drawn from my own experience as a co-counselor. As religious educators, we need to “research” these kinds of data and make them accessible to our students. We do this by surfacing and sharing stories of racial

⁴³ Anette Ejsing, *Theology of Anticipation: A Constructive Study of C.S. Peirce* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006).

⁴⁴ See for example Katie G. Cannon and Carter Heyward, with a Response by Sung Min Kim, “Alienation and Anger: A Black and a White Woman’s Struggle for Mutuality in an Unjust World,” Work in Progress Paper No. 54, Stone Center, Wellesley College, 1992.

reconstruction with all of our students, and we do this with White students in particular by inviting them to take the first steps toward owning, sorting through, and making distinctions between the healthy and the twisted elements of their (our) own White heritage and identities.

Bibliography

- Cannon, Katie G. "Pedagogical Praxis in African American Theology." In *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology*, edited by Katie G. Cannon and Anthony B. Pinn. New York : Oxford University Press, 2014. 319-330.
- Cannon, Katie G. and Carter Heyward, with a Response by Sung Min Kim. "Alienation and Anger: A Black and a White Woman's Struggle for Mutuality in an Unjust World." Work in Progress Paper No. 54, Stone Center, Wellesley College, 1992.
- Dewey, John. Letter from Dewey to Horace Kallen (rec. 003222). In L. Hickman (ed.), *The Correspondence of John Dewey, Vol 1: 1871–1918*, Third edition CD-ROM version (Carbondale, IL: Center for Dewey Studies, Southern Illinois University, 2005 [31 March 1915]).
- , *Democracy and Education. Middle Works*, Vol. 9. Edited by Jo Ann Boydston. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980 [1916].
- , "America in the World." *Middle Works*, Vol. 11. Edited by Jo Ann Boydston. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008 [1918].
- , *Human Nature and Conduct. Middle Works*, Vol. 14. Edited by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983[1922].
- Du Bois, W.E.B. *Dark Water: Voices from Within the Veil*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999 [1920].
- Ejsing, Anette. *Theology of Anticipation: A Constructive Study of C.S. Peirce*. Princeton Theological Monograph Series. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006.
- Fallace, Thomas. "Race, Culture, and Pluralism: The Evolution of Dewey's Vision for a Democratic Curriculum," *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 44 no. 1 (2012): 13–35.
- Foust, Mathew A. *Loyalty to Loyalty: Josiah Royce and the Genuine Moral Life*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2012.
- Garrison, Jim, Stephan Neubert, and Kersten Reich. *John Dewey's Philosophy of Education: An Introduction and Recontextualization for Our Times*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Harrison, Beverly Wildung. *Justice in the Making: Feminist Social Ethics*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004.
- Kauffman, Katie and Caroline New. *Co-Counselling : The Theory and Practice of Re-Evaluation Counselling*. Hove and New York: Routledge, 2004.

- MacMullan, Terrance. "Beyond the Pale: A Pragmatist Approach to Whiteness Studies." *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 31 no. 3 (2005): 267–292.
- New, Caroline. *Agency, Health, and Social Survival: The Ecopolitics of Rival Psychologies*. London: Taylor and Francis, 1996.
- Ornstein, Allan C., Daniel U. Levine, Gerry Gutek, and David E. Vocke. *Foundations of Education*, 13th edition. Independence, KY: Cengage Learning, 2016.
- Rich, Adrienne. "Resisting Amnesia: History and Personal Life." In *Blood, Bread and Poetry*. New York: Norton, 1983.
- Royce, Josiah. "Provincialism." In *Race Questions, Provincialism, and Other American Problems*. Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1967 [1908].
- , *The Philosophy of Loyalty*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1995 [1916].
- Sullivan, Shannon. "Whiteness as Wise Provincialism: Royce and the Rehabilitation of a Racial Category." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 44 no. 2 (2008): 236-262.
- , "(Re)construction Zone: Beware of Falling Statues." In *In Dewey's Wake : Unfinished Work of Pragmatic Reconstruction*, edited by William J. Gavin, State University of New York Press, 2003. 109-127

Virginia A. Lee
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
virginia.lee@Garrett.edu
REA Annual Meeting 2018

Something Inside So Strong: Learning from the Freedom Schools Movement

Abstract:

Freedom Schools, historically and currently, show what is possible when one moves beyond white normativity and embraces a liberative or emancipatory pedagogy. This paper examines the history, philosophy, pedagogy, and contributions of the Freedom Schools movement from 1964 until today.

Paper

Setting the stage

Imagine this scene:

It is 8:00am on a warm, summer morning, and forty children in grades three, four, and five, stream through the doors of Friendship Baptist Church in Evanston, IL. It is the first day of the 2016 Garrett-Evanston CDF Freedom Schools program, and the children are expecting a “normal summer school” experience. Instead, they are offered breakfast in their classrooms and then they gather in the multi-purpose room for Harambee. ¹ It is a loud, high-energy event that includes Cheers and Chants, Morning Read Aloud (by an outside guest), recognitions, motivational song, moment of silence, and announcements. While the scholars (what the children are called at Freedom Schools programs) do not know the cheers, chants, or songs the first day, they will quickly learn them and will soon be leading them!

While this morning activity allows children to move and express themselves, it also empowers them and helps them to recognize their own agency and ability to make changes. The motivational song is “Something Inside So Strong” written by Libi Siffre. ²

¹ A Kiswahili word that means “let’s pull together.”

² One version of the song with printed lyrics and music, “Something Inside So Strong,” accessed September 13, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcKoYGNj0BU>
Another version of the song, “Something Inside So Strong,” by Lira, accessed September 14, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZrIGQ_b9EY

Children not only sing the words, but they also have actions for the words. The lyrics are powerful and the children appear to internalize them as they sing.

Something Inside So Strong

The higher you build your barriers, the taller I become
The farther you take my rights away, the faster I will run
You can deny me, you can decide to turn your face away
No matter 'cause there's

Something inside so strong
I know that I can make it
Though you're doing me wrong, so wrong
You thought that my pride was gone
Oh, no, something inside so strong
Something inside so strong

The more you refuse to hear my voice, the louder I will sing
You hide behind walls of Jericho, your lies will come tumbling
Deny my place in time, you squander wealth that's mine
My light will shine so brightly, it will blind you, 'cause there's

Something inside so strong, so strong
I know that I can make it
Though you're doing me wrong, so wrong
You thought that my pride was gone
Oh, no, something inside so strong
Something inside so strong

Brothers and sisters
When they insist we're just not good enough
When we know better
Just look 'em in the eyes and say

We're gonna do it anyway
We're gonna do it anyway

Something inside so strong, so strong
I know that I can make it
Though you're doing me wrong, so wrong
You thought that my pride was gone
Oh, no, something inside so strong
Something inside so strong
(Repeat Bold Section)

After this time of Harambee, the scholars are ready to go to their classrooms where their Servant Leader Intern (SLI), who is a college or graduate student, leads them in the Integrated Reading Curriculum (IRC). The classroom library, on which the IRC is based, is culturally relevant and allows the scholars to see themselves reflected in the texts. Each week, scholars will take home one book from that week's curriculum. The Integrated Reading Curriculum is based on "Common Core Standards," and uses Bloom's taxonomy of educational standards.³ IRC includes book discussions, critical thinking, cooperative group activities, and group roles/teamwork. The themes for the six-weeks include I can make a difference in my self, my family, my community, my country, my world, and with hope, education, and action.

Before lunch, everyone in the program participates in DEAR time, which stands for "drop everything and read." Scholars may choose a book from their classroom library, the resource library, or the read-aloud books.

After lunch, scholars are engaged with afternoon activities that might include photography classes, art or music or dance classes, sports, scavenger hunts, or field trips. The day ends for scholars at 3pm.

The program lasts for six weeks and the culminating event is a finale presented by the scholars for their families and the community showcasing their accomplishments. Each year, we are amazed at the difference that the program makes in the lives of so many children. It is obvious that the program is liberative, but what makes it so? That question led me to the topic of this paper: to examine the history, philosophy, pedagogy, and contributions of the Freedom Schools movement from 1964 until today.

Background to beginning a Garrett-Evanston CDF Freedom Schools Program

When Dr. Lallene Rector was installed as the new president of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in 2014, she was charged and challenged to help the seminary become more visible in the Evanston community. One of the ways in which she approached this challenge was through an emphasis on public theology. As noted on the seminary website:

...we want our graduates to thrive as public theologians in their communities. Being a public theologian means being able to bring the resources of our faith to the public square with concern for "the common good." It means being mindful about where God is at work—or not—in certain circumstances. It means explicitly using the language of our faith—sometimes. And, sometimes it means simply caring enough, across the otherness we encounter in the public square, to participate with those of different faiths, or no faith, in a set of shared ethics and in the actions that ensue from these commitments. This kind of collaboration with others for the wellbeing of all

³ *Summer Integrated Reading Curriculum Guide, Vol. 20*, (Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund, 2018), vii-x, 2-3, 74-75, 142-143, 212-213, 295.

increases our impact on issues of homelessness, violence in our communities, poverty, hunger, unemployment, immigration justice, health care, sustainability of our environment, access to quality education, and more. ⁴

One of the ways in which Garrett-Evangelical participates in the life of the community is through sponsoring a Children's Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom Schools program. This program is a partnership between Garrett-Evangelical, Evanston-Skokie School District 65, the City of Evanston, Evanston Cradle to Career, and numerous community partners including faith-based groups. The summer 2019 program will be the fourth year of operation.

My colleague, Dr. Reginald Blount, and I serve as the Executive Directors of the Garrett-Evanston CDF Freedom Schools program. The program is housed in the Fifth Ward of Evanston,⁵ the only ward that does not have a school within its geographic boundaries. The Foster elementary school was closed during the 1960's following the desegregation of the city schools. The old Foster school is now the home of Evanston Family Focus. ⁶

Elementary school children who live in the Fifth Ward attend school at one of five elementary schools (Willard, Lincolnwood, Kingsley, Orrington, and Dewey) in neighboring wards. ⁷ While there are numerous after school and summer programs for children in Evanston, many of those programs are funded through Title I funds which are directly tied to schools. The five schools that the children of the Fifth Ward attend are not eligible for Title I funds because they are located in affluent areas of the city and the majority of children in those schools do not qualify for free or reduced lunches which is the basis for Title I funds. The children of the Fifth Ward are an underserved population of students in a school system that has a large achievement gap. ⁸

⁴ "Public Theology: Serving for the Common Good," Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, accessed September 12, 2018.
<https://www.garrett.edu/public-theology>

⁵ "City of Evanston Wards," City of Evanston, accessed September 12, 2018,
<https://www.cityofevanston.org/home/showdocument?id=4>

⁶ Family Focus Evanston, accessed September 12, 2018
<http://www.family-focus.org/centers/evanston/>

⁷ "Elementary Schools Attendance Area Maps," Attendance Area Maps for Evanston/Skokie School District 65,
<https://www.district65.net/cms/lib/IL01906289/Centricity/Domain/38/Elementary%20Schools%20Attendance%20Area%20Map.pdf>

⁸ "District 65, community members take closer look at racial achievement gap," The Daily Northwestern, accessed September 13, 2018,
<https://dailynorthwestern.com/2018/02/15/city/district-65-community-members-take-closer-look-racial-achievement-gap/>

We also discovered that while there was a thriving summer program for children in grades kindergarten through second, there were few affordable summer programs for children in grades three through five or for middle school students in grades six through eight. We decided to focus on grades three through five for our program during the first summer.

History of the Freedom Schools Movement

Marian Wright Edelman, the first Black woman admitted to the Mississippi Bar, founded the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) in 1973. For forty-five years, she and CDF have been a "loud and persistent voice for every child."⁹

The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) is a ...child advocacy organization that has worked relentlessly for more than forty years to ensure a level playing field for all children. [They] champion policies and programs that lift children out of poverty; protect them from abuse and neglect; and ensure their access to health care, quality education and a moral and spiritual foundation. Supported by foundation and corporate grants and individual donations, CDF advocates nationwide on behalf of children to ensure children are always a priority.¹⁰

Children's Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom Schools programs are summer literacy programs that provide a multicultural reading curriculum that boosts students motivation to read, generates positive attitudes to learning, helps to reduce summer learning loss, and connects the needs of underserved children/families to resources in their communities. They also serve to help children discover their agency and ability to make changes in themselves and their communities.

During the summer of 2018, 11,830 scholars attended CDF Freedom Schools programs at one hundred eight-three sites in eighty-seven cities in twenty-eight states. One hundred fifteen organizations sponsored the programs for their community, and one thousand three hundred fifty-six staff persons were trained to operate the programs.¹¹

⁹ "Who We Are: Our History," Children's Defense Fund, accessed September 6, 2018, <https://www.childrensdefense.org/about/who-we-are/our-history/>

¹⁰ "Who We Are: Our Mission," Children's Defense Fund, accessed September 6, 2018, <https://www.childrensdefense.org/about/who-we-are/our-mission/>

¹¹ "2018 Fast Facts," CDF Freedom Schools, Children's Defense Fund, accessed September 10, 2018, <https://www.childrensdefense.org/programs/cdf-freedom-schools/>

Marian Wright Edelman was one of the participants in Freedom Summer 1964 and her experience that summer influenced what would become her life's work for children.¹²

The *CDF Freedom Schools* program has its origins in the Mississippi Freedom Summer project of 1964, which brought college students from around the country to Mississippi to secure justice and voting rights for Black citizens. These early Freedom Schools aimed at keeping Black children and youth safe and giving them rich educational experiences that were not offered to them in Mississippi's public schools. In a variety of makeshift settings, college student volunteers provided instruction in reading, writing, humanities, mathematics, and science along with subjects not taught in Mississippi public schools, such as Black history and constitutional rights. All of their instruction was tailored to encourage children and youth to become independent thinkers, problem solvers, and agents of change in their own communities.¹³

One of the forerunners of the freedom schools movement was the Citizenship Schools, first sponsored by Highlander Folk School in 1957. Myles Horton, Septima Clark, and Bernice Robinson were the major architects. In 1962, the program was passed from Highlander to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).¹⁴

There were three crucial components of the Citizenship Schools:

1. "a sustained focus on overcoming illiteracy to strengthen Black electoral power,
2. an interactive pedagogy that built upon the experience and culture of the students, and
3. an explicitly political approach to education that assertively linked the acquisition of knowledge with collective efforts to overcome racism."¹⁵

Horton, Clark and Robinson "believed that the best teachers would be the peers of the students, rather than credentialed educators who might consider themselves superior to their pupils."¹⁶ They all shared a commitment to "student-centered education" and

¹² For more information about Marian Wright Edelman and the mentors who influenced her, see Marian Wright Edelman, *Lanterns: A Memoir of Mentors*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1999).

¹³ *CDF Freedom Schools Program Background and Details: Mission of the Children's Defense Fund and Freedom Schools Background*. Document from CDF Executive Director Training, 2018.

¹⁴ David Levine, "The Birth of the Citizenship Schools: Entwining the Struggles for Literacy and Freedom," in *Teach Freedom: Education for Liberation in the African American Tradition*, ed. Charles M. Payne and Carol Sills Strickland (New York: Teachers College Press, 2008), 25.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

“consistently emphasized the need to focus on skills and topics of intense interest to the students, and to allow student voices to emerge within the educational process.”¹⁷

Embedded in this pedagogy was a “fundamental belief in the dignity, life knowledge, intellectual competence, and capacity for growth possessed by these adult learners, even when they were illiterate or struggling on the edge of literacy.”¹⁸

Also influential in the development and philosophy of the Freedom Schools movement was Ella Baker and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

During the tumultuous and decisive years of the early 1960’s, SNCC played a leading role in the Black Freedom Movement in Mississippi. Young field organizers put the principles that Ella Baker had taught them into practice by working alongside poor and working class black people in rural communities where white supremacy had seemed impossible to change. As a result the organizers found themselves at the center of a mass uprising that overturned old stereotypes of downtrodden, passive, and terrorized black folk...In Freedom Schools that were founded on the radically democratic pedagogy that Baker espoused and exemplified within SNCC, organizers taught literacy skills and academic subject to young blacks and, in turn, learned about the underlying economic structures of white supremacy from their students.¹⁹

Ella Baker’s philosophy and pedagogy are also reflected in “Ella’s Song,” written by Bernice Johnson Reagan and sung by Sweet Honey in the Rock.

We who believe in freedom cannot rest
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes

Until the killing of black men, black mothers' sons
Is as important as the killing of white men, white mothers' sons

We who believe in freedom cannot rest
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes

The older I get the better I know that the secret of my going on
Is when the reins are in the hands of the young, who dare to run against the storm

To me young people come first, they have the courage where we fail
And if I can but shed some light as they carry us through the gale

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Version*, (The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 299-300.

We who believe in freedom cannot rest
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes

Struggling myself don't mean a whole lot, I've come to realize
That teaching others to stand up and fight is the only way my struggle survives

I'm a woman who speaks in a voice and I must be heard
At times I can be quite difficult, I'll bow to no man's word

We who believe in freedom cannot rest
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes

Not needing to clutch for power, not needing the light just to shine on me
I need to be one in the number as we stand against tyranny

We who believe in freedom cannot rest
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes

While Ella Baker was the guiding force of SNCC and the Freedom Movement, Charlie Cobb has been acknowledged as the inventor of the Mississippi Freedom Schools. He was a Howard University student who had been in Mississippi since 1962. He “proposed that the Summer Project do something to address the impoverished nature of the education typically offered to Black students in Mississippi.”²⁰ Important to Cobb was that fact that “as with the voter registration drive and all other organizing in the state, the essence of the schools was that Black people could begin to think in their own terms the ways and means of shaping and controlling their own destiny.”²¹

From the chapters in *Teach Freedom: Education for Liberation in the African-American Tradition*, Charles M. Payne identifies several themes or characteristics of liberative or emancipatory education. These include:

- radical affirmation of student’s dignity
- students involved in decision making
- willingness to really listen to poor people (Septima Clark)
- insistence on a structural analysis of society
- explicitly encourage more supportive patterns of interaction (Like scholars “recognizing” each other during Harambee.)²²

²⁰ Payne, p.5.

²¹ Charles E. Cobb, Jr., “Organizing Freedom Schools,” in *Teach Freedom: Education for Liberation in the African American Tradition*, ed. Charles M. Payne and Carol Sills Strickland (New York: Teachers College Press, 2008), p.73.

²² Charles M. Payne, “Introduction,” in *Teach Freedom: Education for Liberation in the African American Tradition*, ed. Charles M. Payne and Carol Sills Strickland (New York: Teachers College Press, 2008), p. 3-9.

- participatory learning – dialogue, debate, interaction (Ella Baker)²³
- “profound confidence in the capacity of ordinary people to grow and develop” – was true of Baker and Clark.²⁴

The following characteristics of CDF Freedom Schools seem to follow in the tradition of the earlier Freedom Schools movement:

- A focus on literacy
- An emphasis on cultural heritage
- Parent engagement
- Intergenerational servant leadership of young adults
- Civic engagement
- Encourages children to believe that they can make a difference in the world
- Beginning each day with “Harambee” where scholars can celebrate themselves and each other
- Connects the needs of children and families to the rich resources of the local community²⁵

Our goal for the Garrett-Evanston CDF Freedom Schools program was for at least seventy-five percent of the scholars to maintain or increase their instructional reading levels. Our average for the two years that we have results indicate that seventy-seven percent of our scholars maintained or increased their instructional reading levels. By this measure of success, we achieved our goal. We also saw an increase in self-esteem and purpose. Scholars believed that they could make a difference!

²³ Charles M. Payne, “Give Light and the People Will Find A Way: Ella Baker and Teaching as Politics,” in *Teach Freedom: Education for Liberation in the African American Tradition*, ed. Charles M. Payne and Carol Sills Strickland (New York: Teachers College Press, 2008), page 59.

²⁴ Ibid., page 62.

²⁵ “What Makes the CDF Freedom Schools Program Unique,” Document from CDF Executive Director Training, 2018.



HyeRan Kim-Cragg

St. Andrew's College

Saskatoon, Canada

hyeran.kimcragg@usask.ca

2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4

The Emperor Has No Clothes! Exposing Whiteness as Explicit, Implicit, and Null Curriculum

Abstract

This paper examines the term “whiteness,” providing a historical review for context. It uncovers whiteness using educational theory that identifies three aspects of curriculum, explicit, implicit, and null. A particularly unexamined biblical interpretation itself illustrates the explicit curriculum. Visual images that permeate the culture provide examples of implicit indicators of whiteness. Finally, episodes in our history that are not taught create a null curriculum that reveals whiteness by what is not talked about. Dismantling whiteness as a visible and invisible system of power is an urgent agenda for religious education. The paper, finally, suggests three educational steps with examples to expose whiteness.

Examining Whiteness

Whiteness as a hegemony, a structure of power is most effective when those who benefit by it believe and behave as if it does not exist. White identity exists by virtue of the fact that it is not known. This invisible white identity assumes a universal and normative state of being. Whiteness “is a discourse, a language, marked more by its invisibility to white people than its presence” (Hess, 1998: 124). White people gain power by denying whiteness. This is something that children pick up at an early age. By the sixth grade, for example, white students often have difficulty identifying their racial identity as “white” (Harvey, 1—2). When the mask of whiteness is unveiled, however, it is met with denial, discomfort, resistance, and anger. In order to dismantle structures of racism white people must find opportunity and understand the urgency of self-examination, interrogating their own historical and everyday account of cultural norms and economic dominance (Beaudoin and Turpin, 251).

The discourse on whiteness emerged from within North American contexts. Whiteness is a category rooted in North American colonial history. That is why it may be difficult to understand the term “whiteness” outside North America.¹ It does not mean, however, that the white hegemonic apparatus does not exist in other places. In fact, growing body of scholarship is showing how “whiteness circulates as an axis of power and identity around the world.” (Brander et al., 3). Everywhere people have experienced whiteness, though the nature of this reality many

¹ When the board of the Religious Education Association pondered upon the theme for the annual meeting scheduled on November 2-4, 2018, members from Europe had a difficulty understanding the meaning of whiteness and raised a concern for its translation. Therefore, the term “whiteness” was modified to “white normativity.”

vary from place to place. Korea, for example, “whiteness” is commercialized through cosmetics such as “whitening” products that encourage consumers to believe that white skin is more beautiful.² There are more examples of nonwhites who “believe they are white,” participating in economic and cultural hegemony over other less-privileged groups regarded as “dark skinned” (López, 17). Whiteness is not only a concept and an ideological socio-historical construct, but also a material reality, permeating such economic spheres as the cosmetics industry.

In the Canadian context, whiteness as a concept promoted a British model of civility and was naturalized as the norm for English Canadian cultural identity. Whiteness originated as a colonial settler construct and contributed to the process of nation building. This whiteness-linked notion of Christian civilization and naturalization have been apparent not just in literature and politics but in education from public school through to higher education. It has been also present in Christian outreach. For example, such various sporting and social clubs as the Rugby School, Boy Scouts, and the Religious Tract Society in late 1800s were used to serve the mission of “the advancement of Christ’s Kingdom among Boys and the promotion of habits of Obedience, Reverence, Discipline, and Self-Respect *and all that tends towards a true Christian manliness*” (Coleman, 135). Here the desirable and naturalized norm of being Christian is associated with that of Canadian civility. Even today, it occupies a position of normalcy, as long as whiteness is conflated with civility. This civility as a national norm is ambivalent because, on one hand, it professes to accord equality to all and to promote care for the less advantaged, upholding high and noble moral codes. On the other hand, however, it requires the existence of outsiders (e. g., non-white females) who are seen as morally weak, thus needing “the muscular Christian’s help” (Coleman, 136).

In the US context, whiteness was created to grant a special status to people of European descent as a way of distinguishing them from Africans and American Indians as a legal category in Virginia in the late 1600s (Thandeka, 42-55). Whiteness as a legal status grew to encompass other privileges, including economic rights to own property and freely move to other locations in the early 1900s (Beaudoin and Turpin, 253). Cultural imperialism was strong at this time in order to cope with anxiety and fear of encountering those immigrants from non-European countries who looked different. Many Sunday School materials reflect these anxieties through expressing their desire to assimilate immigrants into the White Anglo Saxon Protestant norm. For example, church curriculum resources published in 1923 portray that the immigrant child is a “*desirable guest*” to the new land because she is “*clean, happy, and ready to work*”...As guests they are to be “*quiet, well-mannered, and ready to be helpful*” (Foster, 1991: 152).

In both Canadian and US contexts, whiteness was connected to the process of settler colonialism, a product of the civilizing mission, as well as the development of the immigration policy based on racial hierarchy, justifying white supremacy and white privilege. Whiteness, in short, is an overarching hegemonic marker of political, economic, cultural, educational and religious power.

² I wrote an essay on whiteness in Korean for the Korean speaking readers.
<http://minjungtheology.tistory.com/search/whiteness> (accessed July 25, 2018)

Notes on Curriculum

Curriculum in this paper is understood as the entirety of the teaching and learning process. It is not to be understood merely as the textbooks or printed syllabi at school or to a church's particular educational program. In the area of religious education Maria Harris defined curriculum as "the entire course of the church's life" (63). However, I suggest that the curriculum on whiteness should be examined beyond the scope of the church. It encompasses every aspect of our social life that encompasses a whole range of public places, including homes, schools, hospitals, prisons and parliaments.

All educational institutions, argues Elliot Eisner, deploy not one curriculum only but three curricula: explicit, implicit and null (87—108). The explicit curriculum refers to what is actually presented. It involves deliberate, conscious, and intentional efforts to teach something. Often the explicit curriculum is associated with content and concrete teaching methods. The implicit curriculum, on the other hand, refers to the things that impact and influence teaching and learning. It is not intentional. It is not obvious. That is why this curriculum is called a hidden curriculum. Teaching (through habitual practices and attitudes) happens but often goes unnoticed. The null curriculum is perhaps even harder to identify. It refers not to what we teach but to what we don't teach, to what is not presented. It is the opposite of the explicit curriculum. It is teaching that is left out. This, too, is often an unconscious decision. Teaching as a null curriculum takes place in the form of erasure of memory or language. It is done through omitting and excluding certain contents and certain people and certain events.

Explicit Curriculum of Whiteness: The Power of Biblical Interpretation and Teaching

In the colonial conquest context, teaching the Bible as written word is often associated with as an explicit curriculum. The use of the Bible as a teaching tool of Christian mission was already power-laden in the colonial process. A popular saying, "when the white man came to various places to colonize, he said, 'let us pray.' After the prayer, the white man had the land and the colonized had the Bible," vividly reveals how teaching the Bible was used in the form of civilizing mission and colonization (Dube, 3). The Bible as the book of the colonizers, despite its translation into vernacular languages, was and used to support the colonization of Africa, Asia and the Americas (North, South, and Central). The imposition of teaching the Bible is forced upon the oral cultures of the colonized with the explicit claim that the Bible is superior because it is written. In short, the notion of the literary knowledge as superior to the oral knowledge was explicitly taught to reinforce Christian supremacy, which is also connected to whiteness and the colonial project.

The explicit curriculum of whiteness contained in the teaching of the Bible is most effectively operative through the overt interpretations that justified racial hierarchy and stigmatization of the racialized people. When the Bible has been taught literally, taken out of context, it may generate "a scriptural violence (Tran, 63). An explicit teaching of biblical genealogy based on the names of Noah is one such example of scriptural violence that was used to justify slavery. The interpretation goes that Shem is associated with the ancestor of Asian people, while Ham is identified to have black skin because Noah had cursed him, thus he is said

to be the ancestor of Africans; this curse was used to justify slavery (Goldenberg). This kind of biased interpretation fails to read the Bible on its own terms because the Bible actually does not say what these interpreters claim it says (Beavis and Kim-Cragg).

Evelyn Parker suggests three explicit pedagogical strategies of biblical interpretation to dismantle white supremacy. The first pedagogy is learning to question. Those who are used to a banking education approach where it is imagined that students are empty vessels in which knowledge from outside must be deposited may feel uncomfortable questioning preexisting knowledge about the Bible, knowledge they take to be authoritative even if oppressive. The second pedagogy mirrors hard realities in the present context and invites students to dig deeply and discover ways the Bible speaks in new and different ways to contemporary events. The third pedagogy of resistance to whiteness (in terms of the purity of whiteness) includes teaching about miscegenation through interethnic and interracial marriage in the Bible, which contests the essentialization of skin color and the hierarchization of the tone of the skin where light skin is regarded as superior (34—43).

Just as it is important to challenge unexamined and biased interpretations of the Bible as an example of the explicit curriculum, it is also important to challenge the metaphorical language in much of our liturgy. The explicit curriculum in worship often makes use of metaphors. Here a metaphor is understood as “a way of speaking that gives insight by juxtaposing two realities that are both like and unlike one another” (Duck, 99). When the words “Black” and “dark” are used in worship to speak of evil and sin, we must examine what is being communicated metaphorically in these cases, questioning whether the metaphor ‘black’ points to black people, and ‘dark’ refers to non-white people. Identification of skin color with social hierarchies happens implicitly thus teaching by using the language must expose this implied meanings and prejudices explicitly. Metaphorical language used in Scripture and hymnals that is used to stigmatize some while privileging others must be replaced with expansive and emancipatory languages that offer alternative metaphors (Procter-Smith, 63).

Implicit Curriculum on Whiteness: The Power of the Visual Image

Visual images can be a subtle but power conveyor of information, values and attitudes. The presentation of visual images can serve to reinforce negative learnings or, conversely, can be a powerful tool for critical learning and teaching in general. Culture, which is often reflected in visual images, shapes our thinking and our actions as well as our knowing (Foster, 1991: 146). In the 21st century we are bombarded by visual images. Highly sensitized and stimulating visual environments created by such things as the internet, for example, are places with the power to create an influential implicit curriculum in the world we inhabit. What we see has the power to inform, misinform, and transform our perceptions. Seeing is particularly critical to implicit teachings about whiteness. Whiteness portrayed in visual images on social media or in advertising product, for example, becomes a normalized space of habitual seeing. Images that uncritically convey whiteness can create a racially toxic environment that is hard to escape.

The implicit curriculum of whiteness is taught through visible images including art and commercial advertisement, where white people become normalized. Himani Bannerji tells a

story of a daughter and a mother of a South Asian descent living in Toronto, Canada. One day a daughter showed a picture of her family that she drew at school. The mother was shocked to see the picture and said to her daughter, “Listen. This is not your family.... I don’t have a blond wig... do you have a white skin, a button nose with freckles, blue eyes, and blond hair tied into a pony tail?” The daughter replied, ‘I drew it from a book... all our books have this same picture of the family... And everyone else drew it too’ (141—45). This ubiquitous implicit curriculum of teaching whiteness meant the daughter learned not to see her own family as they were. This example is telling; it shows the degree to which whiteness is normalized and white innocence is universalized in our contemporary curricula in public schools.

Researching the church school curricula of the US in the early 20th century, Charles Foster examines a picture presented in *Picture Story Paper* written for elementary school age children of the Methodist Episcopal Church (1914). It portrays “a small Euro-American boy dressed in a sailor suit and holding a large copy of the Bible...he is seated on a small rug surrounded by four children dressed in costumes identifiably Japanese, Arabian, Eskimo, and Native American” (1987: 454). The picture centering the white boy, holding the Bible, implicitly teaches white Christian centrism. This curriculum embedded in the picture also exposes how children in the US locally were implicitly but uncritically supporting the global Christian mission, sailing to spread the Bible in the non-biblical world in the era of colonial expansion.

Visual representation of whiteness are widespread in academic institutions even in our age of multiculturalism. Michele Elam has researched the visual content of educational materials and explored the way mixed-race people are portrayed. Her work includes a study of covers on education textbooks that are used for courses at college and university. While they have “real” people on the book cover, she notes, they “conceal as well as reveal” the reality of mixed-face people and their family (32). Privileged racialized groups (i. e., successful middle-class professionals) are chosen to be seen. The images often omit the marginalized and minoritized within the racialized community (e. g., people with disability, in poverty, who are queer). There seems to be some connection between success and uniformity that participates in whiteness, namely, being white means success, being part of a dominant norm. As pointed out elsewhere, “when only a certain kind of mixed-face family is being seen (explicitly) in the public arena and social media, other kinds of the family are viewed as insignificant or undesirable by implication and by their absence” (Kim-Cragg, 2018, 52).

One of the most obvious examples of whiteness as an implicit curriculum through the visual image in churches is the paintings of the blonde-haired, blue-eyed, white-skinned, and able-bodied Jesus (Kim-Cragg, 2012, 18). This unhistorical face of Jesus is presented “under the guise of scientific and rational objectivity,” as Randall Bailey warns that this ubiquitous image can unintentionally promote self-hatred or low-self-esteem for non-white Christians (74). In fact, some alarming studies have made links between some of the most popular images of the white Jesus and systematic racism and discrimination. Shawn Kelly, for example, examines how modern European scientists, philosophers, theologians and American biblical scholars were involved in this theorizing a racialized white Jesus (2002).

Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey examine paintings of the white Jesus from the 1600s when Christ in painting crossed the Atlantic with the Puritans to North American all the way up to Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. They show how Americans imagined and depicted Jesus Christ's body, skin tone, eye color, brow shape, and hairstyle as they explore how the image of the white Jesus was made and how he rose to become a contested icon of white supremacy.

The most well-known painting of Jesus today is the "Head of Christ," created in 1941 by Warner Salzman (Blum and Harvey, 7). The original sketch was done in the 1920s congruent with the period in which the US government decided to restrict non-white immigrants from entering the country. Salzman was asked to draw this Jesus by Fundamentalist Christians who were against Communism in the Cold War. The painting was consumed by millions and the message of the white Jesus spread like wild fire. By 1944, it had sold more than 14 million prints and became the most recognizable face of Jesus in the world. It was parents and Sunday School teachers who made Salzman's white Jesus ubiquitous (Blum and Harvey, 208—210).

Seeing is powerful because "the way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe.... We are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves" (Berger, 8—9). Many Christians in the US carried this painting in their wallet because of the familiarity of its image, the identification of Jesus with themselves through this art. They saw themselves in Salzman's portrait of Jesus. Many knew that what Salzman had painted was not a factual depiction of Jesus, but in searching for an image to comfort them, it did not matter. "I thank Mr. Salzman for giving me this image to hang onto," as one person expressed (Blum and Harvey, 201). The intimate attachment people felt to this painting may have been functioned as a security blanket, something to help with anxieties of 20th century. It was indeed an unsettling time when the Great Depression and two World Wars devastated communities and Communist countries were on the rise, as they perceived as a threat to American capitalism and democracy. This painting is an example of an implicit curriculum of whiteness created by the material culture of North American Christianity, forming a faith aligned itself with anti-communist, consumeristic capitalism.

Null Curriculum on Whiteness: The Violence of Structural Forgetting of History

Maria Harris calls null curriculum a paradox: it exists because it does not exist (1989, 69). It teaches by not teaching. Whiteness as null curriculum is not a surprise, then, given whiteness exists by virtue of its invisibility. The construction of racial hierarchy during the period of colonialization has not been sufficiently taught. Willful neglect of history is a form of "strategic forgetting" (Sharp, 86). Or using James Baldwin's famous phrase, "ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have," Henry Giroux coined the phrase "organized forgetting" to describe a form of weaponized refusal to acknowledge the violence of the past (2014). An interrogation of this forgetting and this ignorance addresses how null curriculum can be a convenient or even deliberate erasure of memory. The act of not teaching can be shown to sustain the colonial domination of white supremacy.

An example of null curriculum in both Canada and US is residential/boarding schools for Indigenous Native American children that Christian educators (from the Catholic, Anglican,

United, and Presbyterian churches) were involved. The residential schools ran for more than a century and over 150,000 children were educated in these institutions. While we recognize that some were willingly sent and studied at these schools while living at home, the goal of this education was seen by some as a means “to kill the Indian in the child” (*Speaking My Truth*, 235). This killing meant the erasure of indigenous identity by assimilating indigenous children into the white world. The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate who ran the residential schools, in their apology makes this point: “implicitly and explicitly, these schools operated out of the premise that European languages, traditions, and religious practices were superior to Native languages, traditions, and religious practices. The residential schools were an attempt to assimilate aboriginal Peoples and we played an important role in the unfolding of this design” (*Speaking My Truth*, 240).

In a similar way, US Congress in collaboration of churches established boarding schools for Native American children in order to make it easier to eliminate their “Indian identity” by not teaching anything related to their cultural heritage. Attending this school was not an option but in some cases militarily enforced (Foster, 1991:146). Such a pattern of institutionalized teaching was supported by the earlier eugenics movements that spread the notion of the cultural, racial, and linguistic superiority of white people. For example, in 1895, the academic journal *American Anthropologist* published an article in which the following was stated: “Possibly Anglo-Saxon blood is more potent than that of other races; it is to be remembered that the Anglo-Saxon language is the simplest, the most perfectly and simply symbolic that the world has ever seen” (Heller and McElhinny, 78). This kind of ideology supported notions of white supremacy.

The Emperor’s New Clothes: Steps to Dismantle Structural and Systematic Whiteness

The story, “The Emperor’s New Clothes,” created by Hans Christian Andersen is not just an entertaining tale but a powerful story depicting the subversive wisdom of the lower class who mocks the Emperor. It is a child who exposes the stupidity of the Emperor, and revealed the complicity of his servants and the unjust, stupid and absurd system. The story points to the structural and systematic power within which we are all complicit, and from which some benefit far more than others. Ultimately, this story is about all of us. We are all encouraged to empathize with the disenfranchised and to speak with the honesty of a child.

What are steps that religious educators can take to dismantle whiteness? I would like to suggest three. First, we need to name the problem of “whiteness,” set a goal to rid our faith communities’ of racism and make this an explicit curriculum. Second, we need to contest the implicit messages about the normativity of whiteness, which pervade our religious communities and culture. Third, we need to dig up the untold stories from our past that expose the injustices that have been perpetuated because of racist systems of power and privilege and thereby challenge the null curriculum.

The first step is to name that whiteness exists. “White” people and those whose skin is “whiter” must own white privilege and self-examine how whiteness has benefitted each personally (Kujawa-Holbrook, 141—48). Even non-white people must own internalized whiteness, the real temptation to become white, and the complacency sustaining white privilege.

“Coercive mimeticism” is something that can be practiced by non-white people who “replicate the very banal preconceptions that have been appended to them, a process in which they are expected to objectify themselves in accordance with the already seen” (Goto, 2016, 114).

To name the existence of whiteness is to unlearn its erasure. “History does not repeat but it does instruct” (Snyder, 9). When we as educators diligently teach our history, especially our alarming, violent and un-sanitized history, we are empowered to resist when authoritarianism raises its ugly head as it has been doing around the world. With a fuller history we are equipped to respond and bring about positive change when we know the history of whiteness. But when we do not teach our history, says Jennifer Welsh, “it returns, with a twist” who delineates four problems (barbarism, mass flight, cold war, and inequality) which have appeared on the global scene in the 21st century, problems history can help us to solve (36). Both historians Snyder and Welsh, are responding to the recent resurgence of right wing populist movements and make compelling cases for regarding the role of educators as urgent and critical. Hannah Arendt writes, “there remains also the truth that every end in history necessarily contains a new beginning; this beginning is the promise” (479). Teaching the history as a way of naming that whiteness existed and still exists is not just about learning the past but also about shaping the present in order to ignite the promise for the future.

William Jennings offers a great model of explicit curriculum for confronting notions of whiteness by teaching how they are inseparably connected to the history of Christian supremacy. His work traces Spain’s expulsion of Muslims and Jews from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492. At the same time Christians were subjugating and colonializing different people around the world (1—64). In short, European Christian imperialism went hand and hand with a divinely sanctioned notion of white supremacy that endorsed both the African slave trade and the conquest of the indigenous people in South America (Andrews, 405—6). That is why it is futile to teach by separating Christianity from racism and colonialism. A more robust pedagogical effort is warranted when we as religious educators successfully probe how gender, religion, race, and colonialism are intricately enmeshed with one another (Kwok, 6).

The second step is to reveal whiteness as a structural oppression beyond the realm of personal agency. Whiteness is not the choice or the personal problem of any one individual. While it affects individuals personally, and each individual has a personal responsibility, whiteness as a hegemony is a structural power that produces assimilation, color-blindness, discrimination, liberal guilt, race to innocence, and willful ignorance. Education about whiteness as something structural helps us to pay attention to the implicit and null curricula.

To focus on the structural nature of whiteness is also critical because it helps us not to get stuck at an emotional level. Often people have a hard time moving out of their anger, guilt, blame, hurt, denial, shame and powerlessness when engaging with anti-racism and culturally-conscious education. The so-called “white fragility” is a related phenomenon “in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves” (DiAngelo, 1). White fragility can be confronted with a theological practice of *habitus*, which can be refused with the *habitus* of the Christian life centered on the Incarnation. When we refuse whiteness as the *habitus* of the Christian life, “dismantling racism becomes the heart of Christian

religious education for White people” (Hess, 2016: 53). To change the *habitus* and center it on Incarnation is to recognize our brokenness. It is natural and human to have emotional triggers. It is even sometimes necessary to share honest and visceral feelings. However, my caution around highlighting emotions too much is two folds: when white fragility is given too much space it may dismiss the emotional and psychological burden carried by racialized people. The key is neither to feel stuck there nor to blame ourselves or others because such reactions may become a hindrance to collectively combating systematic racism related to whiteness. Because whiteness is structural and historically systematized, we need a critical mass, which includes any of us who benefit and suffer from white supremacy, to learn and stand up together in opposition to it.

The third step is to ask and entertain questions. “Q and W” standing for questioning and wrestling, as Carol Lakey Hess calls it, is the heart of religious education. Biblical teaching can supply references of theological knowledge that evoke big questions (Ps 13:1, Mic 6:8, John 9:2) (301). In this regard, “knowledge begins with asking questions” (Freire and Faundez, 35).

Naming and revealing whiteness is an exhausting process. One may feel overwhelmed and be unsure where to start. It is simply not an easy task to teach what we have not been taught. Because we have not been taught at all or have been taught improperly we may not know even what we do not know, let alone how to teach it. That is precisely why we need to learn to ask questions. Asking questions fosters curiosity, which motivates genuine learning. Asking questions assumes humility, acknowledging that we do not know everything. Humility ensures the mistakes we make will usher in positive learning. It states the pressure off the feeling we need to know everything and relieves the teaching authority of the responsibility to answer everything. Humility also evokes wonder and ignites imagination. To cultivate wonder and imagination is imperative if whiteness is to be dismantled. We have neither seen nor touched that reality in a full sense, even if we may have glimpsed a world without whiteness in a dream. The work of relearning and unlearning history requires of wonder and imagination as well because history is open to the path the current generation has not taken. Finally asking questions invites us to take risks and trust the Spirit, the wisdom for guidance and transformation.

These three steps, just as the three aspects of curriculum, are correcting, correlating, and complimenting one another, asking, echoing, naming, doubting, digging, evoking and wondering and imagining. In a way, dismantling whiteness asks basic yet fundamental questions of life: “Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?” (*Speaking My Truth*, 5). These are ontological questions. These are relational questions. These are public questions. These are eschatological questions. Therefore, these are religious and theological questions.

Concrete Examples instead of a Conclusion

There are multiple ways to engage whiteness as a central subject matter of religious education. I will name the three following examples. Engaging the Bible or Holy Scriptures is foundational for religious education. Even if the Bible and sacred texts explicitly teach certain values which are problematic and oppressive, religious educators are called to discern conflicting voices within the text and within the interpretive community. Thus, explicit curriculum on whiteness as far as teaching the Bible is concerned is to approach it with a “multiaxial frame of

reference” (Donaldson, 8). It is critical to recognize “a multiplicity of meanings” (Sugirtharajah, 24) embedded in the text, exposing threads of racial hierarchy and colonial domination embedded in the texts themselves and in subsequent interpretations of those texts, exemplified in the story of Noah’s sons (Travis, 113). Furthermore, it may be possible to teach the sacred stories of our tradition in a way that frees them from the text and the normativity the text imposes. The promotion of oral telling of faith stories is one approach that may be tried.

In terms of interrogating metaphorical languages used in worship, The United Church of Christ (UCC-USA) provides some good material to work with. The committee in charge of the *New Century Hymnal* (1994) studied the *Pilgrim Hymnal* (1954) and found 131 uses of “dark” in the hymns, which were almost exclusively used negatively (Duck, 102). The story of the UCC’s discovery can serve as a good teaching example of the legacy of whiteness. Furthermore, once this story is told, ways to correct the problem could be explored. New metaphorical imagery such as that in Brian Wren’s hymn “Joyful is the Dark” can provide examples of the positive biblical symbolism of darkness: the darkness of mystery and creation, the darkness of womb and tomb.³ Audre Lorde also provides alternative symbolism: “The woman’s place of power within each of us is neither white nor surface; it is dark, it is ancient, and it is deep” (Lorde, 37).

A suggestion engaging the implicit curriculum is to dig into visual images captured in our faith communities and religious school curricular resources, examining how major biblical figures (e. g., Moses, David, Mary) are portrayed. In a similar way, we should self-critically examine our use of visual images in class. We know that visual medium is powerful for sustaining memory and evoking perceptions. Thus a critical engagement of visual images as a teaching tool, from painting to sculpture, stained glass to banners, interrogating religious traditions is important, while envisioning the traditions that are “still in the making” (Hess, 2012, 300). Through introducing examples of innovative, intriguing cutting-edge images, beyond whiteness, our teaching serves to proclaim the message that each of us is created in God’s image.

Other social markers that are invisible should be also looked at. As far as we are clear about whiteness as structural, the systems of implicit curriculum that are operative are not difficult to find. For whiteness is pervasive, “from the rates of disease and infant mortality, to wealth, to financing and housing patterns, to the differences in frequency and method of discipline used with white schoolkids and those of colour, to patterns of incarceration, to the way we embody faith practices” (Fulkerson and Shoop, 7). The key is to connect these social issues with whiteness in our religious education classrooms.

A suggestion addressing the null curriculum is to find some ways to teach about ignored histories. For example, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report in Canada along with participating in Calls for Action⁴ is an important resource to include teaching about residential/Indian boarding schools a part of the religious curriculum. A substantial, not tokenistic, Black religious education that includes Black history and Black experiences and

³ Voices United #284, for his commitment to inclusive and race-conscious language, see <https://www.reformedworship.org/article/september-1990/poet-faith-interview-brian-wren>. Accessed August 8, 2018.

⁴ <https://www.united-church.ca/news/united-church-updates-response-trc-calls-action>, accessed August 8, 2018.

culture, full of “struggle, resistance, spiritual determination, and hope” is another example (Wimberly, 185). The challenge before us as religious educators is to humbly acknowledge how little we know of our own history and how much untold and hidden history is buried that we have to unearth. Without thoroughly interrogating structural and systematic whiteness by way of widely and deeply learning our history, transformative teaching may be impossible.

Finally, I suggest that we all look at our own course syllabi or our religious community and school curricula to ask how many, if any, materials written by non-white scholars we include as core readings for the course without tokenizing them or leaving the materials as elective readings. Once these materials are included, other generative themes arising from them, should be adequately taught as essential rather than decorative or additional topics.

Despite the growing numbers of racialized scholars, we have not paid sufficient attention to their work. When the academy as a space of whiteness functions as a status quo, it is easy to cite white authors exclusively without consciously and explicitly recognizing them as white. (Beaudoin and Turpin, 258). Sometimes scholarly publications seek legitimacy by “parceling out chapters to scholars of color” without addressing “the racialized intellectual hierarchy of the academy” (Goto, 2014, 31).

What is needed is to make whiteness visible, while also properly recognizing non-white scholars’ presence and contributions. To do this, we do not necessarily reinvent the wheel but can draw the insights from our elders, honored scholars of religious education who played their part in dismantling whiteness more than 30 years ago. Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng recalls an event in the mid 1980s where Charles Foster explicitly and equally wrote the ethnic identities of the four panelists participating in a panel discussion: African American, Anglo American, Asian American, and Native American. This act exposed and made explicit the social stating of each and was a lesson to Ng about how crucial visibly naming white people racial identity is, and identity which is often hidden (169). The torch is passed on. We continue to run the course! Dismantling whiteness will take a long time. It is a product of modern colonialism, a process which operated for over 500 years and has not yet completely stopped. Old patterns do not change easily (Foster, 1987: 464). Resilience and perseverance are in order. After all, we as educators are committed to our curriculum, which literally means “a course to run.” While deeply “breathing in a moving world” (Moore, 156), let us set a steady pace and take hold of each other. We cannot and will not run alone.

References

- Andrews, Dale P. “Race and Racism.” In *The Willey-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*. Edited by Bonnie Miller-McLemore, 201—21. Chichester: Blackwell, 2012.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1968. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, new ed. Orlando: Harcourt Press.
- Bailey, Randall C. 1998. “In Danger of Ignoring One’s Own Cultural Bias in Interpreting the

- Text.” In *The Postcolonial Bible: The Bible and Postcolonialism*, edited by R. S. Sugirtharajah, 66—90. London: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Bannerji, Himani. 1990. *Other Solitude: Canadian Multicultural Fictions*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Beaudoin Tom and Katherine Turpin. 2014. “What Practical Theology.” In *Opening Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*. Edited by Kathleen A. Cahalan and Gordon S. Mikoski, 251—69. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Beavis, Mary Ann and HyeRan Kim-Cragg. 2017. *What Does the Bible Say? A Critical Conversation with Popular Culture*. Eugene: Cascade.
- Berger, John. 1972. *Ways of Seeing*. London: BBC and Penguin.
- Blum, Edward J. and Paul Harvey. 2012. *The color of Christ the Son of God & the saga of race in America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Brander Rasmussen, Birgit and Eric Klingenberg, Irene J. Nexica, and Matt Wary, eds. 2001. *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Coleman, Daniel. 2006. *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- DiAngelo, R. 2011. “White Fragility.” *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3 (3): 54—70.
- Donaldson, Laura. 1996. “Postcolonialism and Bible Reading,” *Semeia* 75 (1996): 1—14.
- Dube, Musa. 2000. *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. St. Louis: Chalice.
- Duck, Ruth. 2013. *Worship for the Whole People of God: Vital Worship for the 21st Century*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.
- Eisner, Elliot. 1985. *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*. New York: Macmillan.
- Elam, Michele. 2011. *The Souls of Mixed Race: Race, Politics, and Aesthetics in the New Millennium*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Foster, Charles. 1987. “Double Message: Ethnocentrism in the Church’s Education.” *Religious Education* 82 (3): 447—68.
- _____. 1991. “Imperialism in the Religious Education of Cultural Minority.” *Religious Education* 89 (1): 145—55.
- Freire, Paulo and Antonio Faundez. 1985. *Learning to Question: A Pedagogy of Liberation*.

- New York: Continuum.
- Fulkerson, Mary McClintock and Marcia W. Mount Shoop. 2015. *A Body Broken, A Body Betrayed: Race, Memory and Eucharist in White-Dominant Churches*. Eugene: Cascade, 2015.
- Giroux, Henry. 2014. *The Violence of Organized Forgetting: Thinking Beyond America's Disimagination Machine*. San Francisco: City Lights Books.
- Goto, Courtney T. 2014. "Asian American Practical Theologies." In *Opening the Field of Practical Theology*. Edited by Kathleen A. Cahalan and Gordon S. Mikoski, 31—44. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- _____. 2016. "Writing in Compliance with the Racialized 'Zoo' of Practical Theology." In *Conundrums in Practical Theology*. Edited by Joyce Ann Mercer and Bonnie J. Miller McLemore, 110—34. Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Goldenberg, David M. 2005. *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Harris, Maria. 1989. *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
- Harvey, Jennifer. 2007. *Whiteness and Morality: Pursuing Racial Justice through Reparations and Sovereignty*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Heller, Monica and Bonnie McElhinny. 2017. *Language, Capitalism, Colonialism: Toward a Critical History*. Toronto: University of Toronto.
- Hess, Carol Lakey. 2012. In *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, edited by Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, 299—307. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hess, Mary E. 1998. "White Religious Educators and Unlearning Racism: Can We Find a Way?" *Religious Education* 93 (1): 114—29.
- Hess, Mary E. 2017. "White Religious Educators Resisting White Fragility: Lessons From Mystics." *Religious Education* 112 (1): 46—57.
- Jennings, William. 2010. *The Christian Imagination: Theology and The Origin of Race*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Kelly, Shawn. 2002. *Racializing Jesus: Race, Ideology, and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship*. New York: Routledge.
- Kim-Cragg, HyeRan. 2012. *Story and Song: A Postcolonial Interplay between Christian Education and Worship*. New York: Peter Lang.

- _____. 2018. *Interdependence: A Postcolonial Feminist Practical Theology*. Eugene: Pickwick.
- Kim-Cragg, HyeRan and Don Schweitzer. 2016. *The Authority and Interpretation of Scripture in The United Church of Canada*. Daejeon: Daejeon.
- Kujawa-Holbrook, Sheryl. 2002. "Beyond Diversity: Cultural Competence, White Racism Awareness, and European American Theological Students." *Teaching Theology and Religion*. 5:3: 141—48.
- Kwok, Pui-lan. 2005. *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
- Lorde, A. 1984. *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press.
- López, Alfred. 2005. *Postcolonial Whiteness: A Critical Reader on Race and Empire*. New York: SUNY.
- Moore, Mary Elizabeth. 2018. "Deep Breathing in a Moving World." *Religious Education*. 113 (2): 156—164.
- Ng, Greer Anne Wenh-In. 2018. "My Religious Education Sangha and Dharma: Learning-Teaching as an Asian in the North American Diaspora." *Religious Education*. 113 (2): 165—172.
- Parker, Evelyn. 2009. "Teaching for Color Consciousness." In *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*. Edited by Randall C. Bailey, Tat-siong Benny Liew, and Fernando F. Segovia, 331—46. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- Procter-Smith, Marjorie. 1990. *In Her Own Rite*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Sharp, Melinda McGarrah. 2013. *Misunderstanding Stories: Toward a Postcolonial Pastoral Theology*. Eugene: Pickwick.
- Snyder, Timothy. 2017. *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*. New York: Tim Duggan Books.
- Sugirthajah, R. S. 1996. "From Orientalist to Postcolonial: Notes on Reading Practices," *Asia Journal of Theology* 10: 20—27.
- Thandeka. 2013. *Learning to be White: Race, Money and God in America*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Tran, Mai-Anh Le. 2017. *Reset the Heart: Unlearning Violence, Relearning Hope*. Nashville: Abingdon.

Travis, Sarah. 2014. *Decolonizing Preaching: The Pulpit as Postcolonial Space*. Eugene: Cascade.

Welsh, Jennifer. 2016. *The Return of History: Conflict, Migration, and Geopolitics in the 21st Century*. Toronto: Anansi Press.

Wimberly, Anne E. S. 2018. "A Memoir Informed by Story, Guided by Faith and Hope," *Religious Education* 113 (2): 180—190.

Speaking My Truth: Reflections on Reconciliation & Residential School. Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Fund, 2012.



SARAH REUTER
 RHEINISCHE FRIEDRICH-WILHELMS-UNIVERSITÄT BONN
 SEMINAR FÜR RELIGIONSPÄDAGOGIK, RELIGIÖSE
 ERWACHSENENBILDUNG UND HOMILETIK
 KATHOLISCH-THEOLOGISCHE FAKULTÄT
 AM HOF 1
 53113 BONN
 S.REUTER@UNI-BONN.DE
 2018 REA ANNUAL MEETING, NOV 2-4

Between Utopia and Reality – Can We Make Inclusion in Society Happen?

Abstract

As an idea centered around the benefits of diversity, plurality, and the heterogeneous nature of humanity, inclusion radically cuts ties with the belief that there is a way of being, a way of thinking or living perhaps, that is “normal” or “normative” for everyone or anyone. But it brings with it the problem of bridging the gap between a utopian idea and reality: how can society become inclusive without assuming an in/out binary? How can we implement an idea we have to think of as already in place? And how could this lead to a society devoid of supremacist thinking and negative normativity? This article offers a biographical approach to inclusion that is reflected in a practical theological way to promote an inclusive epistemology.

Laying out the Problem

“Between Utopia and Reality – Can we Make Inclusion in Society Happen?” seems to be a straightforward question. It is answerable in three possible ways: yes, no, and maybe.¹ On closer inspection, however, it gets exponentially more difficult, as its answer has many layers. There are few questions that touch on so many disciplines, topics and issues like inclusion does: heterogeneity, diversity and integration, intersectionality, interconnectedness and interdependence², egoism and altruism, narrativity, violence, sociology and law, minority, embodiment, dis-ability, feminism, and the consequences of all the insights these can offer about inclusion for (religious) education and pedagogy. It seems difficult to figure out where to begin, how to sensibly sort through it all, not forget anything important and write something substantial, while also producing something readable. Still, I would strongly argue that this task is worth it, as I agree with HyeRan Kim-Cragg’s premise that thinking outside your own academical box is good practice and a way to facilitate development in the practical theological field.³ So maybe we should start with a breakdown of the fundamentals. What do I mean when I say inclusion, should I of all people talk about it and if so, in what way can I talk about it to further its discourse?

1 “Yes, no, maybe, I don’t know. Can you repeat the question?” – Malcolm in the Middle.

2 On the problems and chances of interconnectedness and interdependence, see HyeRan Kim-Cragg, *Interdependence. A Postcolonial Feminist Practical Theology* (Eugene, OR 2018).

3 See Kim-Cragg, *Interdependence*, 3: “A more robust interdependent multi-disciplinary engagement is necessary for the good of academia, but is also much needed for current theological education and ecclesial realities.”

A Biographical Detour

Not knowing what I was reflecting on was actually inclusion, I first came in contact with the issue when my grandmother had an accident. She slipped and hit her head on a bathroom sink while recovering from an emergency surgery at the hospital. I still don't know who gave her permission to leave the bed and how she ended up hurt and alone on the floor with no nurse in sight. Bleeding intracranially and fading in and out of consciousness, she was rushed into surgery to relieve the pressure on her brain. After nine weeks in an artificially induced coma to help her heal, she could not regain consciousness on her own and was diagnosed with having Unresponsive Wakefulness Syndrome (UWS).⁴

During those first weeks there was no chance to take a breath and think. It was hectic and chaotic and life and death all the time, and we, my family and I, were swept away by the events. This was probably one reason why we never actively decided anything about her care or if we wanted to, euphemistically spoken, help her "go". The other was that nobody asked us about it. There was nothing to unplug and nobody saw any of the consequences coming. Her heart and lungs worked fine and she was being cared for by professionals. In hindsight I am very grateful: we were overwhelmed by a situation that took us off guard and we were not equipped to understand any of it fully. Even if we had made a life ending decision, which I assume we would not have, it would not have been an informed and well reflected one.

After her hospital stay and a very short rehabilitation phase, we tried to figure out the best way to look after her, so we started a shared apartment with two other persons affected by UWS, splitting the rent and the cost for around the clock care and therapy for all three with the other families. I learned about UWS and how to attend to my grandmother from her care professionals, who were specially trained nurses. I visited her every day for a few hours and discovered a completely different, but also a joyful and fulfilling new relationship with her.

While I think this was the best way for her and the others to live, be happy and be active to the best of their abilities, this was my first close contact with persons with multiple and severe disabilities. I naively thought having these kinds of challenges in a country equipped with a sturdy and well functioning social system⁵ would pose no bigger problem. Instead, I encountered a kind of covert systemic discrimination I had not noticed in my country before – maybe because I was privileged in a way or because I came upon it in a situation where I felt a new responsibility, standing in the stead of another person who needed me to fight her battles: battles against properly trained doctors and nurses in hospitals who, despite their extensive medical training, did

4 Most people know this condition under PVS, Persistent/Permanent Vegetative State. I use Unresponsive Wakefulness Syndrome instead, because I think this name is problematic at best, as the persons affected by it are wakeful, if not conscious, can sometimes regain their full consciousness (and are, thus, not affected permanently) and have more than just vegetative brain functions. They are not "vegetables", as some people in the medical field are calling them. Naming something properly and with care matters immensely and makes a huge difference in public perception – see, for example, Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative* (New York, NY/London 1997) or Nancy Eiesland, *The Disabled God. Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville, TN 1994), 25-29.

5 Germany mandates all its citizens to have health and care insurance. Simply put, half is paid by your employer and the other half is deducted together with your monthly income tax. The insurance companies get the bills directly from physicians, care product suppliers, outpatient and home care professionals, etc. and pay them. There is a nationwide list of what has to be covered by insurance, but there is also a gray area in which the insurers can make decisions on the go, based on eligibility, the severity of your condition and your social and financial situation.

not know how to attend to her properly and who communicated that in their eyes her life was not worth living any more and that she was a waste of their effort. Battles against insurance companies that sent out a “declined” notice as a standard first reaction every time you needed something that was not on their approved list. And battles against family members who spoke openly about how my grandmother had better died after her accident, all of this while she was in the room, hearing them and visibly registering what they said.

Every time we left the house we were confronted with newfound accessibility issues or with bewildered, nosy and disapproving stares by people willing to give their unwarranted and unwanted opinion about us and the situation we were in. One of the big disappointments was the pastoral care system: my grandmother’s parish had no room for her presence or any of her (quite simple) needs. Apart from offering her the last rites, which we declined to not confuse her with the (wrong) impression that she was seriously ill or dying, they had no idea how to support a previously very active catholic woman, who happened to be impaired in some ways.

I would definitely not describe her life as normal or easy, or “just different”. If I could make a wish, I would, like Nancy Mairs similarly wrote about her Multiple Sclerosis⁶, change it all in a heartbeat. But, being deeply involved in her care and discovering what she was still able to do, I would not have dared to judge if she was better off dead or called her a burden to society. It angered me deeply when I discovered how unprepared my community was to provide for all of its members and to perceive them as equally important. My grandmother had been (and stayed) a person whom I loved unconditionally and she was not some kind of ethical dilemma to be solved one way or the other. I wish society and church had thought and acted a lot more in this way.

It wasn’t until some years later, during my first semester as a research assistant, that I was confronted with inclusion as a practical theological topic. I had to co-teach a university course entitled “Inclusive Religious Education” and during my preparation I came upon the first book that connected my previous experiences with a theological side to them: Nancy Eiesland’s “The Disabled God”.

Aside from its great theological concepts, what was new to me was how Eiesland conveyed and also reflected her personal experiences to gain theological insight. This brings me to my first conclusion: while the narration of a biographical and thus personal approach to inclusion can hopefully also provide other people with an access to the topic and with an idea about its pitfalls, these experiences and how they are disclosed have to be consciously reflected to have further scientific and practical theological value. This is what I try to achieve with the second part of this article, which will provide a look at Nancy Eiesland’s liberatory theology of disability, a contextualization of inclusion in Germany, an analysis of inclusion as a primarily utopian idea that still has the ability to become a reality, and my practical theological thoughts on an inclusive epistemology.

6 Nancy Mairs, *On being a Cripple* (Tucson, AZ/London 1986), 13: “All the same, if a cure were found, would I take it? In a minute. I may be a cripple, but I’m only occasionally a loony and never a saint. Anyway, in my brand of theology God doesn’t give bonus points for a limp. I’d take a cure; I just don’t need one. A friend who also has MS startled me once by asking, ‘Do you ever say to yourself, ‘Why me, Lord?’ ‘No, Michael, I don’t,’ I told him, ‘because whenever I try, the only response I can think of is ‘Why not?’” If I could make a cosmic deal, whom would I put in my place? What in my life would I give up in exchange for sound limbs and a thrilling rush of energy? No one. Nothing. I might as well do the job myself. Now that I’m getting the hang of it.”

A Liberatory Theology of Disability

Nancy Eiesland categorizes her work as a stepping stone toward a liberatory theology of disability. Recognizing her own unique role as a theologian, woman and person with disabilities⁷ she feels compelled to talk about these experiences. She writes about how the christological re-symbolization of the resurrected Christ as disabled God is something very powerful. It means a different way of representation for all of humankind and in particular for persons with disabilities. The resurrected Christ is only recognized because he is “damaged” and not perfect anymore. This systematical and biblical theological discovery brings practical (and practical theological) consequences and challenges with it, namely “to acknowledge our complicity with the inhumane views and treatment related to people with disabilities, and to uncover this hidden history and to make it available for contemporary reflection.”⁸

Eiesland’s book is an example of the transformative impact liberation theology had on theological thinking after the seventies. The idea behind liberation theology was that to identify and reverse cycles of fatality and passivity and to gain empowerment, you had to look at the concrete and personal experiences behind these structures and reflect on them.⁹ This is what Eiesland does in her book: she uses her own experience and the experience of people in similar situations,¹⁰ narrates them and offers a speaking center, reflects them, develops her own theology based on her newfound insights, and ultimately tries to bring about necessary changes in church and society. This is not surprising, as she studied theology at Candler School of Theology at Emory university and one of her teachers was Rebecca Chopp. She got her into advocating for the disabled, after Eiesland remarked that for all Christianity’s professed concern for the poor and oppressed, the disabled were ignored.¹¹ “Rebecca Chopp brought feminist perspectives into dialogue with liberation theology [...]. She noted that narrative practices (focused storytelling using a range of resources) were the ones that seemed most able to spark intellectual engagement, generate theological competencies and evidence the social relevance of Christian believing.”¹²

7 Nancy Eiesland, *Encountering the Disabled God*, Bible in Transmission Spring (2004), 4: “[H]aving been disabled from birth, I came to believe that in heaven I would be absolutely unknown to myself and perhaps to God. My disability has taught me who I am and who God is. What would it mean to be without this knowledge? [...] The theology that I heard was inadequate to my experience.”

8 Ibid., 4.

9 This is as short a description of liberation theory I could provide, which cannot do this subject fully justice. Hopefully, it still provides enough context for this article. For the connection between liberation theology and its impact on the theological writing process see Heather Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection* (London 2014), xviii-xx.

10 Especially Dianne DeVries, a woman born without limbs, and Nancy Mairs, an author who has Multiple Sclerosis. Both have a very special and interesting understanding of their own bodies. For more see Eiesland, *The Disabled God*, 31-46.

11 See Douglas Martin, *Nancy Eiesland is Dead at 44. Wrote of a Disabled God*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/22/us/22eiesland.html>: “She became a student at Candler, where she studied theology under Ms. Chopp. Ms. Chopp remembered Ms. Eiesland’s complaining that for all Christianity’s professed concern for the poor and oppressed, the disabled were ignored. I looked at her and said, ‘That is your work,’ Ms. Chopp said. After a stunned silence, Ms. Eiesland accepted the challenge as fodder for a master’s thesis, which evolved into ‘The Disabled God.’ She earned her master’s degree in 1991 and her Ph.D. in 1995, both from Emory.”

12 Walton, *Writing Methods*, xviii-xix.

After setting the ground rules about her research method and the term “disability”, Nancy Eiesland writes about the historical development of the disability rights movement in the USA, the relationship between the church and people with disabilities and the “disabling theology”¹³ at its core, and she imagines a new understanding of body and embodiment. The second chapter, “Bodies of Knowledge”, is about the experiences of Dianne DeVries and Nancy Mairs. Here, Eiesland tries to provide their insider’s perspective. How they talked about themselves and their bodies especially stands out:

Tugging at the fringes of my consciousness always is the terror that people are kind to me only because I’m a cripple. My mother almost shattered me once, with that instinct mothers have blind, I think, in this case, but unerring nonetheless – for striking blows along the fault-lines of their children’s hearts, by telling me, in an attack on my selfishness, ‘We all have to make allowances for you, of course, because of the way you are.’ [...] I felt my worst fear, suddenly realized. I could bear being called selfish: I am. But I couldn’t bear the corroboration that those around me were doing in fact what I’d always suspected them of doing, professing fondness while silently putting up with me because of the way I am. A cripple. [...] Along with this fear that people are secretly accepting shoddy goods comes a relentless pressure to please – to prove myself worth the burdens I impose, I guess, or to build a substantial account of goodwill against which I may write drafts in times of need. Part of the pressure arises from social expectations. In our society, anyone who deviates from the norm had better find some way to compensate. Like fat people, who are expected to be jolly, cripples must bear their lot meekly and cheerfully. A grumpy cripple isn’t playing by the rules. And much of the pressure is self-generated. Early on I vowed that, if I had to have MS, by God I was going to do it well. This is a class act, ladies and gentlemen. No tears, no recriminations, no faintheartedness.¹⁴

What I found most interesting is the fact that all three of them, Nancy Eiesland as the author of the book and her two witnesses, Dianne DeVries and Nancy Mairs, are truly “*bodies as testimony* – bodies practicing marturia, the bearing of public witness, even at risky costs.”¹⁵ They use their voice and especially their bodies to reveal their situation. They lay claim to the right to speak out, and they show how their own view on things takes precedence over any outside view on them. They demand the change they need, and if they are not heard or if language fails in their accounting of suffering and salvation, they let their bodies speak by simply being.¹⁶ This is what I would call the essence of inclusion: Speaking out and being seen, practicing marturia, is enough to bring about existential change and make a difference for yourself and others.

13 Eiesland, *The Disabled God*, 70.

14 Mairs, *On being a Cripple*, 8.

15 Mai-Anh Le Tran, *Reset the Heart. Unlearning Violence, Relearning Hope* (Nashville, TN 2017), 16. Emphasis in original text, contains Footnote 35: “For religious education, we consider bodies as public paedagogies – bodies as means of explicit and implicit public instruction.”

16 See *Ibid.*, 19.

Inclusion in Germany

Following this premise, an inclusive society would be one equipped to provide for all of its members, one that actually considers them to be equal. This does sometimes mean treating all of them exactly in the same way and other times considering what they need beyond that equal treatment and providing them with it. When people (and by extension, society as a whole) start measuring the worth of one citizen against another by some sort of standard, you have a humanitarian problem on your hands. It does not matter which standard: in the case of my grandmother, it was her lacking productivity for society. She was worth nothing because she could produce nothing. Worse, she was also costing society money, resources, time and labor, as society had to care for her and she had seemingly nothing to offer in return. But this obscure standard could as well be a different one, like the superiority of one race over another, or one religion over another. As a theologian I would argue that we cannot connect a person's worth or dignity to his/her productiveness, race or religion. One human being cannot be worth more than, or be superior to, another. What makes us human and therefore equal has to be something different, something non-negotiable you cannot attach any kind of value to or size up.

Still, we Germans know this mindset all too well and the consequences in our nation's history were devastating for the whole of humanity. White normativity may not be a term frequently used in German mainstream media. I would also venture a guess and say that it is not a term widely used by the German population, as it has no colloquial German counterpart and there is no good and short translation. Nevertheless, the idea behind it is not unknown in this country: right-wing nationalist tendencies, xenophobia, an undefined fear of the other, the unknown, the unfamiliar, are not only a phenomenon of the thirties and forties and therefore of times long past, they are also present to this day and part of an ongoing and existential debate in our society.¹⁷ I absolutely agree that we have an "intractable problem of white normativity, white privilege, and intolerance of 'the other'".¹⁸

Inclusion is my idea of loosening especially the systemic aspect behind this and introducing a new system of tolerance, that enjoys, values and celebrates diversity. Spread the "privilege" equally among all human beings by creating and nurturing the ability to relate to everyone's narrative. This is why I am relieved that inclusion is also heavily discussed in Germany at the moment.¹⁹ In the way the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) demands it especially for the educational field but also for society as a whole, it is a new idea centered around the benefits of diversity, plurality, and the overall heterogeneous nature of humanity. It radically cuts ties with the belief that there is something – a way of being, a way of thinking, a way of living perhaps – that is "normal" or "normative" for everyone or anyone. This is the main ambition of inclusion in Germany and this is expressed in the German phrase: Es ist normal, anders zu sein.²⁰

17 As I am writing this article there is a big discussion on the national news about a right-wing mob in Chemnitz that supposedly chased refugees down the street and threw stones on a Jewish restaurant owner. This caused a nationwide counter movement, rallied under #wirsindmehr [#wearemore – SR], that organized a charity concert and demonstrations to protest against the nationalists. Unfortunately, the situation is far from over as feelings on all sides run high.

18 See <https://religiouseducation.net/rea2018/>.

19 This was mainly fueled by a debate about the inclusiveness of our school system that, in most German federal states, separates kids with special educational needs into special schools with mixed ability classes. Since then, it has developed into a much broader discussion.

20 It is normal to be different.

Maybe not the chronological beginning, but definitely the start for a particularly German debate about inclusion are our societal basics. The foundations for it are already there, written down in the German constitution, which states in its first article that “[h]uman dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority. The German people therefore acknowledge inviolable and inalienable human rights as the basis of every community, of peace and of justice in the world.”²¹ In short: every human being has the same dignity, which guarantees them all the basic fundamental rights (listed in article 2-19) as inviolable and inalienable human rights. These are, for example, the right to free development of personality, the right to life and physical integrity, the right to be equal before the law, the right to freedom of faith and of conscience, of expression, arts and sciences, the right of assembly, of association and of movement, the right to property and the inviolability of the home. All these are founded on article one. Especially interesting to note for the context of inclusion is article three: “All persons shall be equal before the law. Men and women shall have equal rights. The state shall promote the actual implementation of equal rights for women and men and take steps to eliminate disadvantages that now exist. No person shall be favored or disfavored because of sex, parentage, race, language, homeland and origin, faith, or religious or political opinions. No person shall be disfavored because of disability.”²²

The Gap Between Utopia and Reality

From the way these most fundamental laws are drafted one can deduce their inherent cardinal problem: if what was written down here was a positive reality, nobody would bother making them into law. In contrast to this utopian (and inclusive) ideal, where everybody participates maybe not in the same way but by the same degree, the reality is different. People are treated and considered differently especially because of their gender, parentage, race, language, home country, origin, faith, religious or political view, or because of their dis-abilities. We have a society that puts up boundaries inside of itself and lets certain people participate and be heard, while others are silenced and frequently ignored in the societal narrative. A just society would instead promote the equal opportunity for everybody to participate.

Germany tried to enforce closing this gap between reality and utopia by ratifying and implementing the UN-CRPD, accompanied by a complete overhaul of its code of social law.²³ This was a necessary step, because if a society is based on a constitutional right that grants everyone the same human dignity, it has to see to it that everyone has equivalent conditions and chances in life. Such a society has what I would call “inclusive roots” and would indeed be a society devoid of supremacist thinking or any kind of negative normativity.

As good as such an inclusive society sounds, its implementation does not come without problems. One critique, for instance, is that you have these well-intentioned acts that are supposed to help people participate. Imagine, for example, the building a ramp at the entrance of a government building, or the translation of a TV program into sign language. Do these acts make society more inclusive? Yes and no: while these are all good things to do as they break down physical, communicational and clearly separative barriers (and thus help with participation and diversity), I would debate whether a theoretical guy in a wheelchair participates more in

21 Art. 1, §1-2 GG, <http://germanlawarchive.iuscomp.org/?p=212>. The German constitution is called “Grundgesetz”, which roughly translates as “Basic Law” or “Fundamental Law”.

22 Art. 3, §1-3 GG, <http://germanlawarchive.iuscomp.org/?p=212>.

23 Especially book 9, entitled “Rehabilitation and Participation of Persons with Disabilities”.

society just because he can physically be where he could not be before. Especially if this is a scenario where nobody asked him what he needed, and just guessed.

Again, ramps and translators are a good thing, but this is not enough to be inclusive, as it offers no remedy against questions like: “How much help is too much? Is this too expensive? How many people must benefit from this help for it to be worth it? Who will get help and who will not?” Ultimately, who gets to say what is done to help the theoretical guy in a wheelchair is really not the guy in the wheelchair. In a truly inclusive society, he would be. He would be the expert to ask and he would be in the (also theoretical) “ramp committee”. His opinion would matter over that of people not in wheelchairs. This is the difference between outside help, charity and real participation: participation gives you the right to such things while help and charity offer you no say in the matter.

By that definition you are excluded from society and unable to truly participate if you are invisible and/or unable to speak; if you are not seen and heard. Think back to wheelchair guy for a moment: he truly participates, if someone recognizes him as a person whose needs matter, and asks him about them. If he says he needs a ramp, he should then be asked how steep it has to be built and if it should have a railing to use it more comfortably.²⁴ Better yet: he is able to initiate this process himself and then gets what he needs. He is a vital part of the decision making process. If others decide for him and his opinion doesn’t matter, he is excluded. He is out.

In an inclusive society, this has to be impossible. It has to be guaranteed that nobody can fall through the cracks that way. Everybody has the right to speak (active) and be heard (passive) and be there (active) and be seen (passive). It is evident, even on a grammatical level, that inclusion has to be relational. It is not enough to be the voice in the wilderness and declare: “Here I am, I matter!” There has to be someone who hears and supports you. The unconditional acknowledgment of the other, who is not just different, but different in a different way and still the same in dignity, is the key concept.

Take #metoo as an example. The movement tried to overcome the challenge that women and men who have suffered sexual violence or abuse, often (and for good reason) don’t feel secure enough to talk about what happened to them. Since October of 2017, #metoo has gained much support and acknowledgment. The hashtag has even been elected Time Magazine’s person of the Year 2017. An unbelievable lot of people have posted their personal stories and created attention for a problem that normally isn’t discussed and is kept quiet about. The sheer mass of postings has shown that sexual violence and abuse is a much bigger and more acute problem as commonly assumed. It has remedied the feelings of isolation many victims had and has gained much earned approval for this.

The reactions to #metoo (and a surprisingly large amount of postings) are not always positive and show a different problem: there are those who won’t leave it to the victims to narrate their lived realities and interpret them. Relatively often the experiences of victims are belittled (“It could not have been that bad.”/“Others have suffered worse than you.”), negated (“You are telling lies.”/“What you experienced was nothing.”) or ridiculed through exaggeration (“You

24 Functioning wheelchair accessibility is an issue. See, for example, Cara Liebowitz, *Stop Lying to Me about Accessibility*, <http://thatcrazycrippledchick.blogspot.com/2017/05/stop-lying-to-me-about-accessibility.html>: “Let me make something very, very clear. If you have accessible doors that you lock after a certain time, it’s not accessibility. If it’s ‘only one step’, it’s not accessibility. If your solution is to carry wheelchair users down the steps, it’s not accessibility. If wheelchair users are literally trapped in your restaurant until other diners finish their meal, it’s not accessibility. If your accessibility is conditional, it’s not accessibility.”

can't complement anyone anymore without instantly being accused of sexual harassment.”). The victims are not taken seriously: instead of viewing them as experts for their own stories and experiences, and giving them a platform precisely because of that, they are deliberately denied that right. Worse, they are again victimized by another kind of attacker. In these situations, more often than not, attention is demanded by the stereotypical “white straight cisgender christian man in his forties”, who is used to being the one to speak in society and to have the lone interpretive power. This interpretive power starts with naming and defining the world, which has to be reconquered.²⁵

All of this leaves one conclusion: the active verb “include” does not work. Indistinguishable to “integrate” it would presuppose someone who can include someone else into society. In this relationship (and grammatical sentence) someone is the passive object and someone is the active subject with the sovereignty to do all the including and excluding. This in/out binary (“we must include them”) does not work. Inclusion in the literal, grammatical, perfect and passive sense of the Latin participle *inclusus/a* (as opposed to the present active root the verb “to include” is based on) is more than that, it is a state and a mindset.

The Practical Theological Side to Inclusion

The first thing that theologically comes to mind is the *basileia tou theou*, the Kingdom of God. Similar to inclusion it describes a utopia everyone is supposed to benefit from. It is a state of worldly and heavenly perfection, while inclusion could be described as societal or relational perfection. Both of them are “already begun and actually present, but somehow at the same time not finished and under construction”, so they have to be thought of as already in place and, with the help of humankind, are able to call themselves into their own existence. This makes it difficult: how can we cope with the implementation of an idea we have to think of as already in place?

You could argue that inclusion is not something that concerns us and that it is an idea destined to fail and therefore not worth any effort. I would instead describe it as a part of “the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time”²⁶. *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution resulting from the Second Vatican Council, describes this in its preface. Like recognizing

25 Mairs, *On being a Cripple*, 1-2: “First, the matter of semantics. I am a cripple. I choose this word to name me. I choose from among several possibilities, the most common of which are “handicapped” and “disabled.” [...] People – crippled or not – wince at the word “cripple,” as they do not at “handicapped” or “disabled.”[...] These words seem to me to be moving away from my condition, to be widening the gap between word and reality. Most remote is the recently coined euphemism “differently abled,” which partakes of the same semantic hopefulness that transformed countries from “undeveloped” to “underdeveloped,” then to “less developed,” and finally to “developing” nations. People have continued to starve in those countries during the shift. Some realities do not obey the dictates of language. Mine is one of them. Whatever you call me, I remain crippled. But I don't care what you call me, so long as it isn't “differently abled,” which strikes me as pure verbal garbage designed by its ability to describe anyone, to describe no one. [...] Society is no readier to accept crippledness than to accept death, war, sex, sweat, or wrinkles. I would never refer to another person as a cripple. It is the word I use to name only myself.”

26 *Gaudium et Spes* 1,1: *Gaudium et spes, luctus et angor hominum huius temporis, pauperum praesertim et quorumvis afflictorum, gaudium sunt et spes, luctus et angor etiam Christi discipulorum, nihilque vere humanum invenitur, quod in corde eorum non resonet. Ipsorum enim communitas ex hominibus coalescit.* [The joy and the hope, the grief and the anguish of the people of our time, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the grief and the anguish of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of people. - SR]

diversity and heterogeneity, I categorize inclusion as one of the *signa temporum*, one of the signs of the times, and a *locus theologicus*, a godly and theological place we have to recognize and work on, with concrete consequences for christian practice and christian theology. This is why, for the next few passages, I will rely heavily on the work of Mai-Anh Le Tran²⁷, who tackles the connection of faith and violence in the world in regards to the events in Ferguson: “However, as improvisational efforts continued to rally and organize churches toward the enduring work of confronting the insidious violence of systemic social injustices in their own backyard, these [local lay and clergy] leaders ran head-on into a familiar yet perplexing wall: *the incapacity and unwillingness of their faith communities to respond with some form of faith-driven action.*”²⁸

The events in Ferguson have been triggered by a spontaneous incident. They also have a systemic aspect leading up to them: exclusion is an issue that goes on silently. Discrimination is most effective when it happens unseen. Nevertheless, one would think that faith communities are at the forefront against any kind of injustices or discrimination in the world. Why is faith-driven action so difficult? And “[w]hat does it mean to be a person of faith in a violent world? What does it even mean to ‘have faith’ in this world that is so violent? What does it mean for vulnerable bodies – victims of systemic and systematic abuse, neglect, and indifference – to continue believing that this world exists for them, for their future, for their flourishing?”²⁹ Is this something we recognize and reflect enough on, that every human is *imago dei*, born in the image of God, whoever they are, which gender they have, where they are from, if they are able-bodied or not?

We sometimes forget, as Mai-Anh Le Tran analyzes, that “the lifelong and lifewide *processes* of forging, fashioning, nurturing, and exercising our faith require relational, evolving, and even revolutionary commitment to our surrounding *contexts*. We neglect the Christian tradition’s long-held reverence to *phronesis* – or, as Don Browning defines it, the ‘wisdom that attends to lived experience, is transformative and change-seeking and *always* interprets the lived context in the light of the values and virtues of sacred tradition.’”³⁰ We cannot live our faith without considering the realities of our lives, existing in a religious “bubble” that is influenced by nothing. So we have to carry our faith into our lives and spring into action and bring about change based on our changed mindset. “[But i]f God is on the side of the [oppressed] – why don’t they win?”³¹ Because we all are called to shape our existence in the world and that of others and work on the realization of His Kingdom. An implementation solely from “above” is unfortunately not in the cards, we have to do it.

“What if religious educators were also to imagine themselves endowed, not so much with the extraordinary prototypical charisma to singularly elevated from the rest, but rather with the charism to facilitate the ecstatic reenchantment, resacralization of lives “cut dead” by society?”³² That would be a unique task for religious education, if we assume that inclusion is something genuinely religious and educational and maybe the biggest stepping stone towards the Kingdom

27 Le Tran, *Reset the Heart*.

28 Ibid., 3. Emphasis in original text.

29 Ibid., 4.

30 Ibid., 6. Emphasis in original text. Contains the citation of Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology. Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis, MN 1991), 47.

31 Walton, *Writing Methods*, 150.

32 Le Tran, *Reset the Heart*, 9. Emphasis in original text.

of God. To facilitate that, we have to look anew on how we conduct practical theological research and how we can perceive reality.

An Inclusive Epistemology

I first encountered Heather Walton's method of reflective theological writing³³ in Mai-Anh Le Tran's book. It brought me to the idea that for inclusion to work, you have to make room for narratives, let the stories of people (and the people themselves) be present, and welcome their subjectiveness. Heather Walton calls this a reflexive approach.

"A major contribution to this reflexive approach has come from the development of feminist theory over the past half-century. One of the founding principles of feminism is that the world looks different according to the place from which it is viewed. [...] Sandra Harding (1991), for example, advocates an approach to objectivity that does not assume a neutral perspective. She argues that those most painfully affected by an issue gain a privileged understanding of its parameters – she who wears the shoe best understands how it pinches!"³⁴ This is not only true for women's perspectives, but also for every issue a society can encounter: there is always a group of people more affected we should listen to. We often forget to ask ourselves if an issue really concerns us and who the experts of the situation are, and stop ourselves talking over them. We should value their expertise.

Heather Walton's method corresponds with the extra step Reinhold Boschki introduced to expand the epistemological three-step method in practical theology and religious education, (see – judge – act). He states that this step of orientation is exceptionally important, as it gets the point across that religious education cannot rightfully claim to talk about reality objectively. Instead, we have to very carefully and deliberately lay open the subjectiveness behind it all, behind every content, structure or connection we produce. After this additional but vital step, you can then see, judge and act accordingly.³⁵

With this change in method, he puts reflexivity into a structured practical theological use: "It [the concept of reflexivity – SR] is an important concept within current debates about epistemology (ways of knowing), where it is used to highlight the role that the self plays in the generation of all forms of knowledge about the world. It is now widely acknowledged that the knower is not related to knowledge as a coherent bounded subject to a separate object. A much more complex interplay takes place between the observer and the observed that changes both of them and challenges views of reasoning as a process of rational and unbiased observation. [...] However, this experiential knowledge should be tried and tested through dialogue with others who view the same problem from a different location. Through such dialogical processes a 'stronger' objectivity emerges which in turn can inform action – action that is both appropriate and transforming."³⁶ For inclusion, this means that those people get to speak, and speak first, who are affected the most by an issue. It also means that the rest of the community is supposed to listen properly before responding, and respect the fact that the voice of the affected takes precedent over their own. It is about respect owed and respect given, but also about locating yourself and your unique perspective in your research.

33 Walton, *Writing Methods*.

34 Ibid., xvii.

35 Reinhold Boschki, *Einführung in die Religionspädagogik*, Darmstadt 2017, 84.

36 Walton, *Writing Methods*, xvi-xvii.

“Even researchers who have a realist understanding of the social world and are seeking “hard evidence” to support their theoretical perspectives now frequently “locate” themselves within their research findings as a widely recognized mark of good practice.”³⁷ This is what Boschki tried to broaden the method with – locating yourself, your unique perspective on things, that changes your understanding of reality and truth as a researcher, by incorporating it as a fundamental step in the epistemological method – as the first and most important step, as it changes the outcome of all others and gives account about what influences them.

Our modern way to do research frequently overlooks this important step. You can even guess this by the language used in publications. An objective truth is suggested by using predicates in passive forms instead of using active ones, by avoiding the first and second person or verbs that express emotion or doubt. Researchers who instead accept, like Boschki would argue, that religious education (and the epistemology of religious education) happens in the area of intersection between mediation (contents), appropriation (subjects and their experiences) and communication (relationships)³⁸ cannot just look at the contents and ignore the subjects and the communicational processes in their work. In other words: they have to convey their underlying positions, thoughts, and premises, as well as their results. Even more so if they write about a topic like inclusion.

Inclusion can become a reality, but only if everyone has a right to their experiences and their own interpretation, a right to their own narrative and life stories and their own insights and conclusions.

37 Ibid., xvii.

38 See Boschki, *Einführung*, 103.

Lindsay M. Radice Ph.D.
The Catholic University of America
Radice@cua.edu
2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4

Searching for Meaning in the Wake of Gun Violence in Schools: One Catholic High School's Response

Abstract:

On March 14th, 2018, the 19th anniversary of massacre at Columbine High School, students across the U.S. walked out of their schools to protest Congress' inaction in response to gun violence. While the walk out was organized to target public schools, some within Catholic school communities felt compelled to respond. This essay explores how one Catholic high school community responded to the March 14th walkout and discusses the role Catholic education plays in helping students to contextualize difficult realities through the lens of Terence H. McLaughlin's distinctive features of Catholic education.

Introduction:

Catholic schools serve an important role in U.S. society. They seek to provide an environment in which young people can flourish in faith, academics, social interactions, fine arts, and athletics. For many students, they provide stability and a place outside of their immediate family where they can find understanding and support. Because of the many roles it fulfills, a Catholic school has a responsibility to its students in times of crisis. In the days that followed the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida there was an outcry from students across the nation for Congressional action. While much attention has been given to how related events were handled in public school settings, little attention has been given to their impact on Catholic schools. This study serves to illustrate one such response.

Methodology

This study takes a qualitative ethnographic approach. An ethnographic study "...involves understanding the social world or culture- the shared behaviors, beliefs and values- of particular groups, typically via immersion in their community."¹ The research process by which information was gathered follows the procedures as detailed by Wilson and included 1. first establishing oneself as a member of the community 2. collecting data (including, "form and content of verbal interaction between participants, form and content of verbal interaction with the researcher, nonverbal behavior, patterns of action and non-action and traces, archival records, artifacts, and documents) and 3. approaching the data through a lens of disciplined subjectivity.² The purpose of this study is therefore two-fold. First, the study aims to provide a "thick description" of the way in which one co-educational Catholic high school in the mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. responded to the reality of gun violence. Second, this study aims to initiate a dialogue on the importance within all Catholic schools of responding to the needs of their

¹ *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students* eds. Jane Ritchie, Jane Lewis, Professor of Social Policy Jane Lewis, Carol McNaughton Nicholls, Rachel Ormston (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2014), 13.

² Stephen Wilson. "The Use of Ethnographic Techniques in Educational Research." *Review of Educational Research* Vol. 47, No. 1 (Winter 1977): 245-265.

communities, especially considering the increasingly complex society in which young people are educated.

Defining terms:

To analyze the events that took at St. Vincent Pallotti High school. It is also necessary to clarify a few important terms which will be drawn upon within this study's analysis. The first of these terms is *Catholic school*. Per the Congregation for Catholic Education, Catholic schools may be defined as, "...educational institutions of whatever type, devoted to the formation of young people at all preuniversity levels, dependent on ecclesiastical authority..."³ This definition is noticeably ambiguous. The definition may reflect the fact that Catholic schools range in size, population, location and charism.⁴

While Catholic schools vary in many ways, McLaughlin identifies three "general features" that characterize Catholic education. These features include: 1. the embodiment of a view about the meaning of human persons and human life 2. an aspiration of holistic influence and 3. religious and moral formation.⁵ McLaughlin argues that these features emerge from a review of the following Catholic educational documents: *Gravissimum educationis*, the *General Catechetical Directory*, *Catechesis Tradendae*, the Congregation for Catholic Education's *The Catholic School*, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, *The Religious Dimension in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal* and the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education's *Educational Guidance on Human Love: Outlines for sex education*. According the author, the three distinctive features of Catholic education can be viewed in the "...pedagogical, curricular, and institutional processes..." found within Catholic schools.⁶ McLaughlin's attention to the daily practices found among Catholic schools provides a useful lens through which to examine the events that took place at St. Vincent Pallotti High School preceding and including the student walk out on March 14, 2018.

Description of Events

It is February 14, 2018 and seventeen high school students have been murdered at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

At St. Vincent Pallotti High School, located in Laurel, Maryland, there is a mixture of emotions as the community learns news of the high school shooting. Saint Vincent Pallotti, or it is affectionately known, "Pallotti," is a co-educational high school, located in the Archdiocese of Washington with a focus on holistic education and a reputation for its familial atmosphere. Its

³ Congregation for Catholic Education. *Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*. In *The Catechetical Documents: A Parish Resource*, edited by Martin Connell, 491-529, no.4.

⁴ Timothy J. Cook. *Architects of Catholic Culture: Designing & Building Catholic Culture in Catholic Schools*. Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 2001.

⁵ McLaughlin, Terence. Distinctiveness of Catholic Education in "The Contemporary Catholic School: Context, Identity, and Diversity," edited by Brother Terence McLaughlin, Terence H. McLaughlin, Joseph O'Keefe, Bernadette O'Keefe (London: The Falkner Press, 1996) 140-143.

⁶ McLaughlin, 139.

identity is rooted in the Pallottine tradition and those within the community share a clear vision to form students in faith while also providing high quality college preparatory academics. The co-educational student body is made up of approximately 460 students, including over forty students from international programs. A distinguishing feature of St. Vincent Pallotti is its “Student Union of the Catholic Apostolate:” a group of approximately 50 select students who commit themselves to modeling the values of the school’s founder and volunteer their time to projects of faith development and service to others.

As the faculty, staff and students of St. Vincent Pallotti discuss the recent school violence it is apparent how many of the students are impacted by the tragedy. Many of these students find support from the school’s counselors. The overall atmosphere however, remains saturated with grief, helplessness, and anger in the days that follow. In response, a faculty and staff in-service day is called during which all employees are trained in new techniques for lock down procedures. Simultaneously news of the #Enough! National School Walkout begins to stir among the student body.⁷ Students begin to talk about participating in the walk out protest and uniting their voices with the many other student activists across the nation.

On February 27th, the faculty meet in a forum setting and discuss the best ways to support students who are considering participating in the protests. A few days later the administration at St. Vincent Pallotti calls a faculty meeting to continue the discussion. Emotions at the meeting run high on how to handle the situation. Interestingly, the polarizing political opinions regarding the right to bear arms is noticeably absent from the discussion. Instead, the focus remains on the safety of students. Discussion arises around the best way to balance between empowering students to act, while also adhering to local authorities’ safety guidelines to remain inside during the time of the scheduled protest.

After much conversation and one additional meeting, the administration and faculty come to a consensus. Instead of a walk out, Campus ministry and religion teachers will plan a prayer service during the time of the protest. The prayer service will take place in the school gymnasium and all students will be required to attend. In addition, topics relating to gun violence will be discussed in classrooms throughout the day. The religion department agrees to spend the day’s class examining Catholic social teaching related to violence in society, and exploring ways to create a more inclusive community for all students at Pallotti. The science department plans to examine bullying and mental health issues related to mass shootings. The social studies department decides to discuss public policy proposals under consideration and exploring the arguments for and against each. The English department agrees to help interested students write a persuasive letter to elected officials to express concerns and opinions on public policy.⁸

After the meeting the Principal sends an email detailing the curricular changes to students’ parents and guardians. He also includes in the email is a clear statement of school policy that anyone who chooses to walk out will face disciplinary action.

⁷ The #Enough National School Walkout website describes that the purpose of the protest was to call attention to the inaction of congress on issues relating to gun control. https://www.actionnetwork.org/event_campaigns/enough-national-school-walkout

⁸ It is noteworthy that no English class required students to write a letter to congress. Students who were not motivated to do so were given an alternative writing assignment.

As news of the plan for March 14th 2018 spreads, many students and several teachers feel that the alternative plan to participating in the walk out protest does not go far enough. They argue that there is room for protest within the school community and that any effort to organize should be student-led. In response to the critiques, the Student Union of the Catholic Apostolate is placed in charge of planning the prayer service.

Finally, March 14th arrives. Prior to the start of the prayer service, several members of the Student Union of the Catholic Apostolate approach the Director of Campus Ministry and express their concerns that the prayer service will not have the same impact as participating in the walk out. They express frustration that participation in the walk out will result in disciplinary action. They reiterate a desire to join their voices with the hundreds of other protesters around the country to send a clear message that gun violence has no place within their school. Nonetheless, the prayer service begins.

Located in the center of the gym is a single podium lit from above and surrounded by four-hundred and thirty-eight candles. “These candles represent the four-hundred and thirty-eight victims of gun violence in schools since 2012,” explains a female student in the opening prayer. The student body sits facing the podium in chairs and bleachers located on the far side of the gym. The dreary March weather lends itself to the atmosphere, and students sit in near darkness as the prayer service continues.

Three students, chosen from among their peers, take turns speaking at the podium and offering their perspective on the issue of gun violence and its impact on high school students. The first student offers a personal anecdote describing his experience of watching a friend become involved in gang violence. The second student describes frustration with the political climate and the third student offers a faith perspective, drawing from the teachings of the Catholic Church. Students then read from the book of Jeremiah and the Gospel of John. A final student approaches the podium and shares an excerpt from Pope Francis’ *Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace*.⁹

At 10:00 am, the time of the nationally scheduled walk out, the names of the 17 victims are read aloud. After each name is read a student tolls a bell and a moment of silence follows. While each name is read, a member of the Student Union of the Catholic Apostolate rises from within their seats. They are followed by other students and after all seventeen victims’ names are read, the students who have stood up walk out of the gymnasium. About fifty additional members of the student body follow them to the exit. A few faculty and staff members trail the group and follow the protesters to an outdoor courtyard. Student protesters gather in a circle. They join hands, hug, pray, and cry. As their prayers conclude students also discuss the possibility of disciplinary action.

Inside the prayer service continues for those community members that remain. One of members of the Student Union of the Catholic Apostolate sings a gospel meditation hymn and the service concludes with the prayer of St. Francis. After the students have finished, the Principal addresses the community and articulates the importance of educating oneself to create meaningful change in society.

⁹ While students wrote their own speeches, and chose the general format of the prayer service, they were supported by the staff in the office of Campus Ministry.

Meanwhile, the students in the courtyard are brought into the chapel to meet with the administration. The Principal and members of the administration use the opportunity to conduct a meaningful discussion. Students are surprised to find that the administration is commending them for their bravery and conviction. For breaking school rules however, all student protesters must serve one in-school lunch detention.

The walkout has ended. Interestingly however, several students' activism continues. In the weeks that follow, Pallotti's students mail their letters to congress. They make a banner expressing their love and support for the community at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and a few students travel to Parkland, Florida to hand-delivered the banner. Two members of the Student Union of the Catholic Apostolate spend the following weeks researching the victims and creating a memorial within the foyers of the building.

Analysis

The following section examines the role administration and staff at Pallotti played in helping its students to contextualize gun violence. McLaughlin's distinctive features of Catholic education are used as a lens for examining the specific response of administration and faculty and brought into dialogue with the teachings and guidance of the Catholic Church pertaining to Catholic schools' religious education programs and overall mission.

The embodiment of a view about the meaning of human persons and of human life

McLaughlin's first distinctive feature of Catholic education, "the embodiment of a view about the meaning of human persons and of human life," refers to shared goal among Catholic schools to assist pupils to achieve a synthesis of faith culture and their lived experience.¹⁰ Pallotti exemplified this distinctive feature of Catholic education in two important ways. First, evidence of the utmost value on human life is reflected in the immediacy of the administration's response to safety protocols. Efforts to review lockdown procedures and retrain its employees occurred within days of the news of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. During the training the administrative leaders made a concerted effort to insure faculty felt prepared to respond and could then pass on any changes to the student body.

Second, the school was responsive to the mental health of students. Those who were identified as at risk were immediately referred to trained school counselor and provided with proper support. McLaughlin argues that "...every system of education teaches (implicitly or explicitly) a philosophy of man."¹¹ Throughout all the chaos surrounding the tragedy, the Catholic philosophy that life itself is valuable and of God's creation was at the origin of all responses.¹²

¹⁰ Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. *The Catholic School*. 1977.
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_catheduc_doc_19770319_catholic-school_en.html (accessed June 17, 2018).no. 37; Congregation for Catholic Education. "Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School." In *The Catechetical Documents: A Parish Resource*, edited by Martin Connell, 491-529. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1996, no. 34

¹¹ McLaughlin, 140.

¹² John, Paul II. *The Gospel of Life: Evangelium Vitae*. New York: Random House, 1995.

An aspiration to holistic influence

McLaughlin's second distinctive feature of Catholic education, an aspiration to holistic influence refers to how Catholic education seeks to offer, "...a kind of integral formation in which there is a synthesis of culture and faith; an integration of all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught in the light of the Gospel."¹³ The organic nature in which the various academic departments responded to address the complexity of gun violence within their classrooms is consistent with McLaughlin's description. In this instance, what made the collaboration between so many different individual teachers and departments possible under such circumstances was what Dawson refers to as "a unified Christian vision."¹⁴ If administrators and faculty were not able to put political differences aside and work toward a solution that would educate and empower students on the topic, the entire effort would have faltered. This cooperation also reflects a unique character of the Catholic school, which per Dawson is responsible to society at large to "exert a transformative influence through culture."¹⁵

In a related vein, McLaughlin argues that teachers are essential to cultivating a holistic influence. "A teacher who is full of Christian wisdom, well prepared in his own subject, does more than convey the sense of what he is teaching to his pupils.... he guides his pupils beyond his mere words the heart of total Truth."¹⁶ In the days leading up to March 14th, no description more accurately describes the faculty at Pallotti. These teachers put in additional hours after school discussing aspects of the news with their students and preparing themselves to teach new content related to the tragedy. For many of these teachers, the topic was personal and important and clearly reflected the need to find Christ amid the chaos.

Religious and Moral Formation

McLaughlin's final feature of distinctive Catholic education is religious and moral formation. He describes "Catholic education seeks to bring about a distinctive and moral formation of students. This formation is extending beyond the transmission of beliefs to the shaping of religious and moral personhood and character."¹⁷ He elaborates on this, pointing out that the overall goal of catechesis is to help form mature apostles; individuals who can participate fully in the spiritual, sacramental and liturgical aspects of the faith.¹⁸

There are a few important examples in which religious and moral formation are exemplified at Pallotti. First, in the initial choice of administration and faculty to contextualize the events within a larger Catholic framework. Throughout the weeks leading up to the walk out, those involved in the discussions focused on providing students with a mature understanding of

¹³ McLaughlin, 141.

¹⁴ McLaughlin, 142.

¹⁵ Christopher Dawson. *The Crisis of Western Education* (Sheed and Ward, New York, NY: 1961): 133.

¹⁶ McLaughlin, 142.

¹⁷ McLaughlin, 143.

¹⁸ McLaughlin, 144.

the events and how to respond to social injustice in a way that is both consistent with Catholic teaching and effective. While many faculty members contributed to this effort, those naturally at the forefront were the religion teachers. During religion class, all religion teachers followed a similar format: they began with a conversation related to previously held assumptions of gun violence, showed a video of a man claiming to have contemplated a mass shooting, performed a short catechesis on Catholic social teaching, discussed the impact of bullying, and concluded with prayer. This approach reflected a clear focus within the department to cultivate compassionate understanding while also empowering students to make the sorts of changes in their own behavior that might improve the overall school culture.

A second example of religious and moral formation can be seen within the administration and faculty's decision to empower student leaders to conduct the prayer service and lead the walk out. Creating spaces where students could lead prayer and express their feelings while also being supported was a crucial aspect of how events unfolded. While students responded in many ways to the crisis, the fact that prayer was at the center of the events in both the gymnasium and the courtyard indicates that Pallotti's students view prayer as an important part of their social action and an appropriate response to gun violence in the world.

While this analysis has focused on how the distinctive features of Catholic education were modeled by Pallotti in its effort to respond to gun violence, that is not to say that the approach was flawless. Like any other educational institution, the day of the walk out, Pallotti's administration, teachers, and students faced many obstacles throughout the day and were challenged by the event. Overall, however, the day was a success- not because it was perfect- but because it succeeded in raising awareness, discussion, and inciting action among its students. March 14, 2018 will forever be remembered as a painful, difficult and glorious day at St. Vincent Pallotti High school because it was then that Christ could be clearly be seen within it.

Conclusion

This study may have important implications for those in the field of Catholic education because of the increasingly complex society in which U.S. Catholic schools find themselves. If Dawson's assertion that is the responsibility of Catholic educational institutions to improve the culture in which they function, then instances of gun violence are only one of the many injustices that must be addressed by modern Catholic educators. It is only through honestly assessing the modern culture that those who dedicate themselves to Catholic Schools can begin to formulate meaningful responses to the moral crisis and injustices that its students encounter.

Bibliography

Congregation for Catholic Education. *The Catechetical Documents: A Parish Resource*, edited by Martin Connell. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1996.

_____. "Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School." *The Catechetical Documents: A Parish Resource*, edited by Martin Connell, 491-529. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1996.

Lindsay M. Radice Ph.D.
The Catholic University of America
Radice@cua.edu
2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4

Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, Edited by United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Washington, DC: United Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998.

Cook, Timothy, J. *Architects of Catholic Culture: Designing & Building Catholic Culture in Catholic Schools*. Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 2001.

Creswell, John W. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* 2nd Edition. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA: 2007.

Dawson, Christopher. *The Crisis of Western Education*. Sheed and Ward: New York, NY, 1961.

John Paul II. *Address of John Paul II to the Bishops of the Provinces of Portland in Oregon, Seattle and Anchorage on their 'Ad Limina' Visit*. June 24 2004.
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/2004/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20040624_usa-bishops_en.html. (accessed May 31, 2014).

_____. *Catechesi Tradendae*, "On Catechesis in our Time." In *The Catechetical Documents: A Parish Resource*, edited by Martin Connell, 375-416. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1996.

_____. *The Gospel of Life: Evangelium Vitae*. New York: Random House, 1995.

National Conference of Catholic Bishops. *To Teach as Jesus Did: A Pastoral Message on Catholic Education*. In *The Catechetical Documents: A Parish Resource*, edited by Martin Connell, 87-116. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1996.

Paul VI, *Declaration on Christian Education: Gravissimum Educationis*. Vatican City: October 28, 1965. Accessed August 4, 2014. <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist>

Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students eds. Jane Ritchie, Jane Lewis, Professor of Social Policy Jane Lewis, Carol McNaughton Nicholls, Rachel Ormston. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2014.

Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. *The Catholic School*. 1977.
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19770319_catholic-school_en.html (accessed June 17, 2018).

_____. *Educational Guidance on Human Love: Outlines for Sex Education*. London: Catholic Truth Society, 1983.

_____. *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*. 2007
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rccon_ccatheduc_doc_19821015_lay-catholics_en.html (accessed May 16, 2018).

Lindsay M. Radice Ph.D.
The Catholic University of America
Radice@cua.edu
2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4

Wilson, Stephen. "The Use of Ethnographic Techniques in Educational Research." *Review of Educational Research* Vol. 47, No. 1 (Winter 1977): 245-265.



“Our Divided Society-A Challenge to Religious Education”: REA’s 1969 National Convention and the Opening-up of Brave Conversations about Race and Religion

Abstract

The REA’s 1969 National Convention chose as its theme, “Our Divided Society-A Challenge to Religious Education,” addressing among other topics, issues of race and racism. Previously, the REA presented a mixed legacy in addressing racial injustice, remaining largely silent on such issues during the Civil Rights Era of the 1950’s and 1960’s, unlike the National Council of Churches which had taken a prophetic stance early on. Thus, the 1969 convention’s theme opened-up brave new spaces for the REA to address issues of race and racism in American society.

Introduction

In 1969, just one year after the assassination of civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr., James Cone published *Black Theology and Black Power* which made the argument that liberation is at the heart of the Gospel and that “blackness is the primary mode of God’s presence,” revealed through the history of an oppressed people who offer a counternarrative to the dominant story of white normativity in American religiosity (1969). That same year, the Religious Education Association chose at its theme for its National Convention in Chicago: “Our Divided Society-A Challenge to Religious Education.” Among the divisions that the convention sought to address were issues of race and racism in American society, alongside the generation gap, poverty, and “American Military-Economic Power versus Vietnam.” The theme, which REA’s General Secretary Herman Wornom originally proposed as “Religious Education-A Unifying Force in a Divided Society,” struck a hopeful tone for the transformative power of religious education to work toward healing societal divisions. As the pre-conference issue of *Religious Education* observes:

Our society is divided into conflicting groups —black and white, poor and affluent, the “now” and the “other” generations, the have and have-not nations, etc. Sometimes these groups ignore one another; increasingly they become polarized in confrontation and conflict, sometimes violent, their relations distorted by hate and prejudice. . . Religious education, by influencing the social understanding and attitudes of children and youth, may play a significant role in healing divisions. Conflicting groups may be brought together as part of the religious education process (Wornom 1969, 162).

Yet, despite its hopeful tone, the convention itself offered a challenging message to religious educators concerning issues of race and racism in American religious experience. To be sure, the REA began as an all-white, male-led, predominantly Protestant organization in 1903. By the time of the 1969 convention the REA’s complexion had changed and included more previously underrepresented groups, mostly Jews and Catholics, thanks in large part to Wornom’s efforts. However, the association was still largely white and no African-Americans occupied major positions of leadership within the organization. More pointedly, unlike the National Council of Churches which took a leading role in Civil Rights issues in the 1950’s and 1960’s, the REA remained largely silent on issues of racial injustice, devoting only one issue of the journal to the topic in a twenty-year span. Therefore, as Stephen Schmidt observes, the 1969 Convention shook the foundations of the REA (1983, 181). Several key figures in the Civil Rights Movement addressed the convention, including Alvin Pitcher, National Urban League President Whitney Young, and minister and civil rights activist Jesse Jackson, whose talk, “Christianity, The Church, and

Racism,” excoriated the complicity of mainline American churches in perpetuating racial inequality (1970, 98). On the one hand, the 1969 convention was the largest and most inclusive convention the REA had ever held with over 1,500 in attendance representing various religious traditions. On the other hand, as Schmidt notes, it “served as a public judgmental word to the association,” highlighting its failures to address key social issues, especially issues of race (1983, 186).

This paper analyzes the treatment of the topics of race and racism at the REA’s 1969 National Convention. It seeks to contextualize those discussions in the broader trajectory of the REA’s own history and to locate the convention within the wider currents of American life and thought in the late 1960’s. And, it explores the convention’s legacy in opening-up brave spaces in the REA for meaningful conversations about race and racism in our society today. Utilizing a historical methodology, this research draws on archival material from the REA Archives at the Yale University Divinity School Library as well as material from the historical archives of the journal *Religious Education*. The paper examines 1969 convention themes concerning race through an analysis of primary source materials, including planning committee reports, convention and symposia programs, and convention speeches and papers. It also explores the treatment of race and racism in the REA’s official journal in the two decades prior to and after the 1969 convention. Overall, this research seeks to uncover clues from the past that might offer lessons for the present, recognizing that the REA’s choice of a convention theme almost fifty years ago is as timely today as it was then.

REA and Race

In a letter dated November 13, 1897, six years before he founded the REA, William Rainey Harper, wrote a response to Booker T. Washington who had requested help with a project for educating impoverished African-American children in the Jim Crow South (Harper Papers, Box 3, Folder 19). Two years earlier, Washington received national attention as a prominent African-American leader when he gave a speech at the Atlanta Exposition of 1895 arguing for the progress of African-Americans through education rather than directly challenging Jim Crow laws. As President of the University of Chicago, Harper was one of the most influential educational leaders in the country, who counted among his acquaintances President William McKinley and future president Theodore Roosevelt (See Harper Papers). In response to Washington’s request Harper simply replied that “I wish very much indeed that I could help you. The difficulty is that I find myself in the same condition with yourself; hundreds of boys and girls to help and very little with which to do it. We have a very heavy work of this kind and I am compelled to limit my energies in this direction to the work at home,” in other words, Chicago (Harper Papers, Box 3, Folder 19). To be sure, Harper was, in fact, very involved in the work of educating immigrant children and families in Chicago, having taken a special interest in Jane Adams’ Hull House, which the University of Chicago sponsored. Yet, Harpers’ energies, were, in reality, more vast and far reaching than he appeared to indicate in his letter to Washington, energies that would soon be directed to the founding of the REA as a national organization. That is not to suggest that Harper, in any way held racist views, of which there is no evidence; but rather, it does suggest that Harper was largely unconcerned about or, at best, indifferent to questions of racial injustice in American society at a time when the lynching of African-Americans was at its peak in the Jim Crow South. Harper’s apparent attitude of indifference toward issues of race and racial injustice appears to also have been reflected in

his founding vision for the REA, which while not intentionally excluding African-Americans from the REA, he did not seek to include representatives of black churches (See REA Archives, Box 1, File 12).

Planning for the 1969 Convention

Herman Wornom proposed that “Our society is divided into conflicting groups —black and white, poor and affluent, the "now" and the "other" generations, the have and have-not nations, etc. Sometimes these groups ignore one another; increasingly they become polarized in confrontation and conflict, sometimes violent, their relations distorted by hate and prejudice. The brotherhood of mankind is denied or held to be Utopian. In contrast, Christianity, Judaism and other great religions have believed in the unity of mankind and have preached good will and brotherhood. Denominations which have been in conflict are now working for unity. Religions that differ in doctrine are cooperating in social action for human welfare. Religious education, by influencing the social understanding and attitudes of children and youth, may play a significant role in healing divisions. Conflicting groups may be brought together as part of the religious education process. R.E.A.'s convention will explore the potential of religious education to deal with social divisions and to play a unifying role. The five assemblies of the convention can deal with only a few of the major social divisions. A wider range of problems will be covered in the 20 or more workshops and seminars. The assembly themes will be: Our Divided Society—Black versus White, Youth Culture and the Generation Gap, American Military-Economic Power versus Vietnam, Korea and other nations, Religious Learning through Involvement in Social Conflict and Service, Model Programs for Religious Education in a Divided Society, Living and Teaching the Brotherhood of Man” (1968).

1969 Convention

In his address to the convention, “Christianity, the Church, and Racism,” Jesse Jackson argued, “The black community demands reparations. We are not asking for reverse racism or reverse discrimination. Compensation, though, is the answer to discrimination, and compensation is a very positive term. There is no need in saying you or your generation is not guilty because you have not discriminated against anybody. For you live off the prerogatives of those who did discriminate and exploit, and if you have inherited their comfortable state of living, if you have inherited the plantation and yet now you no longer run the plantation, you're just as guilty, just as wrong as the one who owned it. However, is the capacity to cut off our supply the adversary's need? We relate to God and bow to him because he's power. If God didn't have power, we would disregard him. It is precisely because God is the maker and the giver of every good and perfect gift and the Creator and the sustainer, the one who made the valleys and made the mountains and made all of the resources and who controls them and who can apply justice and who can grant mercy or grant grace” (1970). He further argued “The white church with all of its theology and its great seminaries and great religious education programs and great Sunday school buildings and gymnasiums on the corners cannot really say that it has majored either in hope or fulfillment. It has, by and large, been the sanctuary for America's economic status quo who could get some pabulum from the preacher and some justification to continue their scheming. For, by and large, there has been very little demand put upon the one who joined the Christian church. Actually the American flag flies higher than the Christian cross in the bulk of our churches, and our commitment is greater to the nation than to the Christ. So we stand at attention in the face of the flag and seldom bow or pick up that cross. Often we put it around our necks but never really around our backs for Christ's sake. And you can call it fundamentalist if you want to but fundamentally if you are a Christian you must

give your allegiance to Christ. You can cut it any way you want" (1970). He concluded his talk with "We have a moral mandate to resist evil, as strong as the mandate to cooperate with the good. And we will become powerful enough through organization to have the Christian young men of the nation to resist war and the ministers to declare it evil. Then the presidents would have no choice but to study war no more" (1970).

Whitney Young Jr, president of the Urban League, whose book *Beyond Racism* was published the same year as his talk at the REA argued "For over half a century, a succession of great Black leaders has led a crescendo of voices calling for the emancipation of their people from their position of servitude and degradation. An increasing number of whites has joined them in their struggle" (1970). He went on to say "The Civil Rights movement has resulted in some notable advances in the recognition and definition of Black rights in the areas of freedom and equality with other Americans. The Supreme Court, in a series of school segregation cases, 1953 to 1955, established the principle that state-imposed segregation is unconstitutional under the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The Court held that separate schools are inherently inferior and ruled that the schools must be desegregated "with all deliberate speed." The Civil Rights Act of 1957 established a nonpartisan Civil Rights Commission, empowered to gather evidence on voting violations, and authorized the Justice Department to initiate action to counter irregularities in federal elections. The Act of 1964 was structured to insure maximum rights for Blacks in many areas of public life: voting, public accommodations, public facilities, education, and fair employment practices. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 provided for the assignment of federal examiners to observe voting in states or counties where patterns of discrimination existed. Thus, at long last, the rights of Blacks as full citizens seemed to have firm foundations in statutory and judicial provisions, however, the efforts on the part of the Department of Justice to change some of these provisions are disturbing to the Black community" (1970).

Rosemary Radford Ruether in her address "Black Theology and Black Church" argued "The church is usually the Johnny-come-lately to social movements, and so it is not surprising that the black church and the black seminary would be late and ambivalent in responding to the cry of "black power" and relating themselves to this movement. Yet, in another sense, the black church itself is the earliest institution of black power. In the days of slavery and through the dark period of reaction after Reconstruction, the black church was the one institution owned and run by the black community. Black autonomy was pioneered by the black church when it broke from white Christianity to form autonomous churches and denominations. The church building was often the only building owned by the black community independently, and so it naturally became the center of the social and political life as well. In Mississippi, when I was there in the summer of 1965, almost all the Head Start programs sponsored by the independent Child Development Group of Mississippi were in black churches. It was in black churches that the rallies and meetings were held, and from black churches that the demonstrators marched out to confrontations in the streets and court houses, singing the "soul" anthems of black Christianity. When Stokely Carmichael proudly boasts that the black community is the only place in America where people greet each other as "brother" and "sister," he is pointing to a heritage of black Christianity derived from the communitarian tradition of the Radical Reformation" (1970). She further argued, "In what sense is a black theology a possible form of theology as a whole? How does one combat the ready cry that such an idea must necessarily be the reverse form of a racist theology that has all too long been practiced in the white churches to assure their members that the separation and superiority of the white race over the black race is "in the Bible" and expresses the "will of God"? Is black theology just a new form of racial

propaganda, making Christ in the image of black exclusivism, as the Caucasians made Christ in the image of white exclusivism?" (1970). She added, "The oppressor is also dehumanized by the false relationship, for he receives no true human communication in the oppressive relationship, but receives back only a mask donned by the oppressed to reflect the demands of the oppressor. So the act of rebellion is also a breaking of silence between man and man, and the initiation of true communication for the first time, based on two fully autonomous human selfhoods that can stand as "I" and "Thou" for each other" (1970). She concludes, quoting Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "I have a dream that one day men will rise up and come to see that they are made to live together as brothers. I still have a dream this morning that one day every Negro in this country, every colored person in the world, will be judged by the content of his character rather than the color of his skin. I still have a dream today that one day the idle industries of Appalachia will be revitalized and the empty stomachs of Mississippi will be filled, and brotherhood will be more than a few words at the end of a prayer, but rather the first order of business on every legislative agenda.... I still have a dream today that one day every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill will be made low, the rough places will be made smooth and the crooked places straight, and the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all flesh shall see it together" (1970).

Educationally, in a panel to counter racism, the argument was made "For over 100 years the frame of reference in the American race problem has been the inferiority of the Black man. During slavery he was defined as essentially inferior, after slavery accidentally inferior. Americans in viewing the race issue as a Black problem, focused the spotlight on the man with the arrow in his chest. With the advent of Black Power, the victim began to say, "I will heal myself! Concerned white Americans, go talk to the Bowman." Both Reverend Jesse Jackson and Dr. Alvin Pitcher in their keynote addresses to the national convention placed the burden of responsibility on white America. Consequently, Seminar 22, "Education to Counter Racism," addressed itself to the task of examining: 1. Problems in recognizing the nature and pervasiveness of racism. 2. Problems in identifying areas where change is necessary and possible. 3. Patterns or strategies for these changes. Since the group was small (24-28 participants), a seminar technique was used throughout with every member having ample opportunity to express his concerns and respond to the ideas and experiences of the other participants. In fact, the four sessions were conducted as a living experience in one of the suggested patterns for change, a training program focused on personal growth for organizational adaptation to change. 1-2 The discussion tone was informal, directed to the real but very diverse life experiences of the participants and aimed at seeking to understand how each participant perceived the problem and what they were doing about it. The four seminar sessions were somewhat unique in that twenty odd white persons succeeded in concentrating on the white aspect of the race issue with only two minority representatives, a Spanish-American participant and a Black resource person, present. Frequently, white people seem helpless in such discussions without the motivation of Black anger or white guilt. Yet as Lerone Bennett has said, "It is in the heart of the white man himself in his peculiarities, in his mental attitudes, in his need for freedom from suspicion, fear, anxiety, doubt, unrest, hate, contempt disgust, that we must situate the racial problem. For too long now, we have focused attention on the Negro, forgetting that the Negro is who he is because white people are what they are" (1970).

Models for Outreach

"More than any other thing, it is a great character that makes a literary classic. More than plot or any special literary device or technique it is the character in his suffering, in his humanity, in his victory, or in his dying. Holden Caulfield is such a character — a sensitive, confused adolescent searching for identity

and purpose for his life. But more than Holden's misdirection catches our eye; it is his suffering and youthful idealism that brings the challenge. Is this youngster, after all, a Christ-type? Christ comes to us in many forms but always with the same ingredients for redemption: suffering, self-resignation, and hope. For author Salinger he came in Holden and the fat lady of Fanny and Zooey, sitting on a porch, flies flying about her body, dying of some incurable disease. In the Vision of Sir Launjal, he came as a beggar" (1970). America he comes as the burdened black brother. Holden, too, is a brother of the black experience, as is anyone who is forced to sit on the sidelines of life because of rejection, alienation or racism while the establishment plays its game. Although Holden never experienced the special pains that his black brothers have in America, he does serve as a viable model of the Christ-type.

Symposium on Convention Topics

The 1969 Convention of the REA, to be held at the Palmer House, Chicago, on November 23-26, is full of exciting and provocative possibilities. Members of the REA have received the full program in a separate mailing. Our Pre-Convention Issue of September-October 1969 covered many of the topics in a stimulating manner, and we have been fortunate in obtaining some more background articles. This symposium begins with a discussion of the movement toward identity for blacks and the potentialities for the future, by Bishop Johnson.

C. D. Coleman outlines what the black church should do, and Andrew White looks at the church's responsibility to black youth. Thomas Brown provides an important report on what happens to sex education in the black ghetto. Then we shift our attention to the universities with an article by Langdon Gilkey. This is followed by a report of a teacher of youth in the inner city as they deal with the book of Revelation. Against this background, Allen Moore turns our attention to the possibilities of renewal through education.

Beyondness is a unique dimension of the human spirit. It expresses a reaching beyond the point of arrival; a pull toward some mysterious future which has been born out of the womb of today; a call to some strange destiny to which and for which God has prepared a people. Our theme is "Beyond Blackness to Destiny." But, why beyond blackness? Have we arrived at the point of blackness? And what is the newfound meaning of blackness which has emerged out of the black experience? What were the events, the causes, the circumstances that have thrown us into Religious Education Vol. LXIV No. 6 Nov.-Dec. 1969

this present period of blackness? Why do we assume that beyond blackness there is a destiny and what is the nature of that destiny? In order to interpret the theme correctly we will consider the following: (1) the new thrust for freedom and dignity; (2) interpretation of the meaning of the black experience, and (3) the black experience and the new destiny.

White Racism

James Baldwin indicated "Slowly but surely the leaders in church and synagogue life are seeking to understand the issues of a divided society. The problems simply refuse to go away. No matter who asks us to speak softly and to listen to each other, strident voices continue to call for confrontation without dialogue. As a result, conferences and conventions on the issues of racism, poverty, housing, youth culture, and militarism are being held with great frequency, sometimes resulting in more heat than light.

The Religious Education Association, with its broad base of membership among Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, and Jews, is seeking to be sufficiently analytical to grasp the basic questions and to be sufficiently constructive to move toward some ways out of the morass that threatens us" (1970). He concluded, "Finally, the mandate of this body is not merely good will, not merely paper resolutions. If one believes in the Prince of Peace one must stop committing crimes in the name of the Prince of Peace. The Christian Church still rules this world, it still has the power to change the structure of South Africa. It has the power if it will, to prevent the death of another Martin Luther King, Junior. It has the power, if it will, to force my Government to cease dropping bombs in South-East Asia. There are crimes committed in the name of the Christian Church, and no more than we have absolved the Germans for saying "I didn't know it," "I didn't know what it was about," "I knew of people having been taken away in the night, but it has nothing to do with me." We were very hard on the Germans about that. But Germany is also a Christian nation, and what the Germans did in the Second World War, since they are human and we are human too, there is no guarantee that we are not doing that, right now. When a structure, a State or a Church or a country, becomes too expensive for the world to afford, when it is no longer responsive to the needs of the world, that structure is doomed. If the Christian faith does not recover its Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we shall discover the meaning of what he meant when he said, "Insofar as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto me" (1970).

To counter racism, it was suggested, "Then, around tables of eight to ten persons — Black and White, Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish, young and old, urban and rural, affluent and poor — they discuss the topic for an hour. The final session is given to linking participants to channels of further action in solving the underlying problems which cause the gulf between Black and White. Project Commitment has been presented to representative groups of leaders since April in fifteen cities in the thirteen economic regions of Indiana. A series is now going on or is planned in ten of those fifteen cities and has been approved in principle in four more" (1970).

A Model for Outreach

At the same time, it was suggested, "For eight weeks in the summer of 1969, the staff of the New Lots Reformed Church Day Camp in the East New York section of Brooklyn tried to capture the youthful idealism of Holden Caulfield — a dedication of ourselves and our program to our 165 boys and girls, grades one to eight. A look at our attendance records will reveal that most of our youngsters were in camp day after day, rain or shine. We think that our boys and girls got the message — our commitment to education for responsible freedom and liberation from the burden of racism. The campers understood from the beginning day that the camp existed because they were there. Their presence and their various needs had made the camp possible. This was their world. They were the stars. Therefore, they had to learn to live responsibly and securely in a life situation that was not only for them but of them. This was a vital message for children with the black experience in America.

This approach was not easy for the staff to understand, those who were themselves victims of racism. Such an approach speaks to freedom that they had not experienced themselves: a freedom of action and movement, a freedom to choose your own lifestyle and select those options that are most meaningful for your life. The average black man in the street does not understand this kind of freedom. The average black professional does not understand this kind of freedom. The black man has been chained to his blackness so long that he has forgotten those peaceful shores of Africa and the serenity, security and freedom of tribal life. But the hope of Black Power is restoring this mood of freedom. Black

Power from a Christian stance means, in the words of James Cone, author of *Black Theology and Black Power*, the task to "analyze the black man's condition in the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ with the purpose of creating a new understanding of black dignity among black people, and providing the necessary soul in that people, to destroy white racism." The task is just that simple and just that complex. But this is what any education in a black community must be about whether it's in a summer day camp or a church school" (1970).

As Bill Mason suggested, "In Ernest Harrison's *A Church Without God*, mother church dies. It is a risky business to have the church acting as a parental surrogate for her people. The church is the body of Christ. Christ is its head. But more important than this, Christ is our brother. The church, then, is a community of brothers and not one of parent-child relationships. What a challenge for parents and church leaders: to give back to the church and the world, in the spirit of brotherhood, children who are just on loan to us for a very short season. It is the recognition of the shortness of this season that will lead us to educate our boys and girls in an atmosphere of greater freedom and trust. We think that even Holden Caulfield might have benefited from his own dream if he had spent a summer as a junior counselor at the New Lots Reformed Church Day Camp" (1970).

A New Agenda for the Black Church

Coleman indicated a new agenda for the Black Church: "At this moment in history, the black church has the unprecedented opportunity to become God's new "Messiah" to a society that badly needs redemption and regeneration. The opportunity is to take hold of this generation of Black Americans, whom God has equipped to fulfill a destiny, to lift them above the seeds of self-destruction and with their newly found self-pride and the genius of the "Black Tradition" give new birth to the American society. The question is not whether the black church has the sagacity to reintegrate a people against impossible odds; history leaves no doubt of this ability. But the question is whether the black church can cease being preoccupied with its institutional status and image, and seize the opportunity to formulate an agenda which will bring the black community to its divine destiny of redeeming and remaking a spiritually denuded society. Our nation is in deep trouble with all the configurations which a racist mentality and a materialistic motivation can generate. Three hundred years of ministering to the needs of a people who were victims of every conceivable form of debasement gave the black church a genius for saving the unsavable and revivifying the destitute. At this point in the confrontation of black and white, the black church has the key which will unlock and mobilize the imagination, commitment and resources of those black and white who are seeking a breakthrough to the new millenium. If the black church can come to a knowledge of itself and the many splended gifts of its own tradition; if it can take seriously the thought that the current crises in the social order, and the current ferment within the religious order are acts of God and a challenge to its own genius; and if the black church can believe that this is its moment in history, then, it will move with dispatch to begin fulfilling its destiny" (1970).

Bibliography

- Ahlstrom, Sydney. 2004. *A Religious History of the American People*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Baldwin, James. 1969. "White Racism or World Community?" *Religious Education* (64) 5: 342-346.
- Blum, Edward J., and Paul Harvey. 2012. *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

- Blum, Edward J., Tracy Fessenden, Prema Kurien, and Judith Weisenfeld. 2009. "Forum: American Religion and 'Whiteness.'" *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* (19) 1: 1–35
- Coleman, C. D. 1969. "Agenda for the Black Church, *Religious Education*." (64) 6: 441-446.
- Cone, James. 1997. *Black Theology and Black Power*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press.
- Evans, Curtis. 2008. *The Burden of Black Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, Paul, and Kathryn Gin Lum, eds. 2018. *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Race in American History*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jackson, Jesse. 1970. "Christianity, The Church, and Racism." *Religious Education* (65) 2: 90-98,
- Mason, Bill. 1970. "A Model for Christian Outreach and Black and White Liberation in a Racist Society." *Religious Education* (65) 3: 272-275.
- Pitcher, Alvin. 1970. "White Racism and Black Development." *Religious Education* (65) 2: 84-89.
- Reuther, Rosemary. 1969. "Black Theology and Black Church." *Religious Education* (64) 5: 347-351.
- Schmidt, Stephen. *A History of the Religious Education Association*. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1983.
- Wornom, Herman. 1969. "The National Convention of The Religious Education Association." *Religious Education* (64) 4: 258-260.



Charles S. Chesnavage, PhD
Unification Theological Seminary
cchuck60@aol.com
2018 REA Annual Meeting, November 2-4, 2018

The White Supremacist Worldview of Horace Bushnell and the Null Curriculum in Religious Education

Abstract

Horace Bushnell (1802-1876) and his classic book *Christian Nurture* (1847) contains a white supremacist worldview that is part of the null curriculum of religious education. After exploring the writings of Bushnell, additional articles and resources will be shared that address the topic of racism and will conclude with the importance of movements like Black Lives Matter, and the Poor People's Campaign, started by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and revived today on the fiftieth anniversary of the Campaign, which identified the three moral evils of poverty, racism, and militarism.

The Prominence of Horace Bushnell in the field of Religious Education

It is a common experience to learn about Horace Bushnell (1802-1876) and his classic book *Christian Nurture* (1847) in many courses that are part of a Religious Education curriculum. Some of these courses include: Foundations of Religious Education, Teaching Methods for Children and Adolescents, Teaching Methods for Adults and others. He is known as one of the Fathers of religious education (Moy 2000), the “father of the Christian education movement,” (Mulder), and, according to Mary Boys, the field of “religious education as a *classic expression* begins with Bushnell” (Boys 1989, 40). Boardman Kathan considered the book, “one of the most influential books ever published in America” (1981) and Edwards, a biographer of Bushnell, called it “a kernel of an American classic” (Edwards 1992 in Massey 2001, 6). In 1979, a poll among Christian educators called *Christian Nurture* a book indispensable to their field (Hudson 1981, 177 in Massey 2001, 16).

The Discovery of the White Supremacist Worldview of Horace Bushnell

For this author, the glowing reputation of Horace Bushnell suddenly changed when his white supremacist worldview was mentioned by Russell G. Moy in his article “American Racism: The Null Curriculum in Religious Education,” (*Religious Education, Vol 95, No. 2, Spring 2000*). Until reading this article, no Professor or book, that mentioned Bushnell, made a connection to this part of Bushnell’s worldview found primarily in chapter VIII of *Christian Nurture* entitled “The Out-Populating Power of the Christian Stock,” which is the final chapter of Part I entitled, The Doctrine.

Moy mentions how Bushnell “was influenced by the prevailing notion of white superiority,” (2000, 127) in chapter VIII, in *Christian Nurture*. A second document from Bushnell, that will be explored in this article, bears a resemblance to the views expressed in *Christian Nurture* in a lecture entitled “A discourse on the slavery question: delivered in the North Church, Hartford, Thursday evening, January 10, 1839.” North Congregational Church in Hartford, Connecticut, was Bushnell’s home church.

This article will begin with providing a context to the worldview of Bushnell that laid the groundwork for his white supremacist worldview and the question of slavery among the churches in his time. A speech by Frederick Douglass, in Belfast, Ireland, will serve as an excellent juxtaposition to the writings of Bushnell on the response of churches, and the Congregational churches to which Bushnell belonged in New England, to the question of slavery. Further background information will explore the history of the First Church of Cambridge between the years 1636-1873 that provides examples of the racist and discriminatory practices of the church and abolitionists during a period which would include the life of Bushnell, who would share similar racist and white supremacist thinking. Early explorers and missionaries looked upon Africa as the Dark Continent, and racial theories of superiority and inferiority would have been further factors influencing the thinking of Bushnell.

After establishing a context, the two main documents of Bushnell will be explored revealing his views of white supremacy that this author finds eerily similar to the writings of Samuel P. Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996), and the French novel *The Camp of Saints*, by Jean Raspail (1973) that is described as "A chilling novel of the end of the white world." It is a book that was said to have influenced Steve Bannon and the Trump Administration.

Following the exploration of the primary documents of Bushnell, the null curriculum as described by Elliot W. Eisner (2002, 97-107) will serve as a transition into a lecture by Fr. Bryan Massingale, Fordham University, and the excellent article by Russell Moy that led this author to the current topic of this article. The absence of Bushnell's white supremacist worldview in religious education courses associated with *Christian Nurture*, clearly serves as an example of the null curriculum. It is hard to find an introduction to *Christian Nurture*, or a scholarly work on Bushnell that critiques his white supremacist worldview that was a product of his day and continues to be a product of our contemporary society under the current administration of President Donald Trump, especially considering the events that occurred in Charlottesville, Virginia. The question that needs to be asked of all Religious Educators who mention Bushnell and *Christian Nurture* is why or why not mention his white supremacist worldview? To do so allows for an opportunity to bring the discussion of race, racism, and white supremacy into the classroom discussion that is needed more than ever today to at least raise awareness about the ongoing problem of racism in our world today.

The death of James H. Cone on April 28, 2018, one of the greatest black theologians of our time, who shed light on the white supremacist worldview of Christianity influences this article and offers resources for addressing this discussion in his books *A Black Theology of Liberation* (1990), *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church: Where have we been and where are we going?* (1987), and *God of the Oppressed* (1975). The article will conclude with the importance of movements like Black Lives Matter, the fatal police shootings of African Americans and people of color, and the Poor People's Campaign, started by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., which identified the three moral evils of poverty/materialism, racism, and militarism just before his assassination April 4, 1968. On the fiftieth anniversary of the Poor People's Campaign Rev. William Barber is organizing a new campaign that is calling attention to the three evils identified by Dr. King while adding ecological devastation to the triune evils of Dr. King's Poor People's Campaign.

Methodology

The article will use a literature-based review and analysis of the writings of Horace Bushnell, and other writers who address issues of race and the null curriculum. It will also provide a historical perspective that includes the world of slavery and white supremacy at the time of Bushnell, through the present day with movements like Black Lives Matter, and the Poor People's Campaign attempting to address matters of racism and the related evils of poverty and militarism.

Frederick Douglas and the Baptists, Congregationalists, the Free Church and Slavery

In a speech in Belfast, Ireland, 1845, Frederick Douglas (c. 1818-1895) expressed “the corruption and sinful position of the American Churches” regarding slavery. In particular, he speaks about the Baptists, Congregationalists, and the Free Church. Horace Bushnell was a member and minister of the Congregational North Church, in Hartford, Connecticut (Bratti Cheney-Bushnell 1984, 3). Douglas points out the hypocrisy of Christian slave owners with the teachings of Christianity and the preaching of the Gospel by equating the concept of Christian slave-holders with someone who is a sober-drunkard (Douglas 1845).

He points out the ministers who have difficulty getting rid of their slaves because they are afraid of getting rid of their “fat salaries.” He states, “It is curious, that the higher we go in ecclesiastical rank, in the churches, the colder we find the ministers in the cause of freedom.” He specifically addresses the Congregationalists in New England, which would be the location of Horace Bushnell. The leading ministers took the side of slavery and the higher the ecclesiastical office the stronger the defender of the slaveholder. He used the Good Samaritan parable to demonstrate the lowly status of the Samaritan who has compassion on the injured person.¹ He points out the people in Belfast on the side of the slave and the higher, or upper classes in Belfast — the class of “Civis” — that had difficulty speaking up on behalf of the slaves (Ibid.).

Douglas condemns the leading Doctor’s of Divinity in America and the Professors in colleges who were in favor of slavery. He points out a Professor Stewart at Andover Seminary who instructed a large portion of congregational ministers and was himself an advocate for slavery. While Bushnell was not mentioned by Douglas, he would fit the profile as a graduate of Yale Divinity School, and a high-ranking ecclesiastical minister in the North Congregational Church in Hartford, Connecticut.

The History of the First Church in Cambridge, 1636-1873 and the Racist Inclinations of the Abolitionist Movement

The document, “Owning Our History: First Church and Race 1636-1873” and the website for the First Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, provides additional context to the world of Bushnell. Slavery remained legal in Connecticut and Rhode Island into the 1830’s. The increasing number of freed persons of color led to new legal restrictions, mob actions against communities of color, and the founding of the American Colonization Society to encourage freed black persons to emigrate to Africa. The efforts of Abolitionists supporting the American Colonization Society sought a vision of New England as a society that was free of people of color (Melish 1998 in Kidder 2011, 7). Like today’s immigration policies, laws were passed

¹ Like Frederick Douglas, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would also challenge the silent liberal white clergy in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail, and also referenced the Good Samaritan parable in one of his speeches.

https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=geX-a5PqxaY> (YouTube recording Dr. King and Good Samaritan parable.)

targeting people of color as undesirables and taxing their presence. In 1788, a law was passed that all African Americans not citizens of the state would be expelled from the state.

The zeal of abolitionists to abolish slavery did not eliminate their racist views which included: not advocating for black voting rights, or the promotion of social integration of people of color. Wendall Phillips confessed to being uncomfortable sharing a room with a black abolitionist, Abbot Lawrence refused to shake the hand of a black man, and Edmund Quincy was known to tell racist jokes at antislavery meetings (Horton and Horton 1997 in Kidder 2011, 9).

Two speakers express Christian white supremacists' statements that are like those of Bushnell found in *Christian Nurture*. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) opposed slavery, but confidently predicted "the dark man, the black man will only be destined for museums like the Dodo." And Theodore Parker, a prominent Boston minister and abolitionist preached how "the Anglo-Saxon people...as the best specimen of mankind which has ever attained great power in the world ..." (Melish 1998, in Kidder 2011, 9).

The concluding paragraph by David Kidder in "Owning Our History, First Church in Cambridge," sums up the position of not only First Church and many other Congregational churches, but also those of Horace Bushnell in chapter eight of *Christian Nurture*. The Congregational churches, and Bushnell, "did little or nothing to stem the rising tide of racism and prejudice towards persons of color that emerged in the north, after northern emancipation. Discernment of the boundaries between "we" of the covenanting community and "they" — increasingly defined in racial terms — became more rather than less restrictive over this period" (Kidder 2011, 13).

Africa as the Dark Continent

One of the terms used by Bushnell in *Christian Nurture* is "savage race" (Bushnell 1876, 203). It is not completely clear whether he is referring to Native Americans in the United States, or the slaves and all inhabitants of Africa, or both. This section will explore the views towards Africa that were prevalent among missionaries and explorers during the lifetime of Bushnell.

Henry Morton Stanley, was born in Wales in 1841, as John Rowland. He came to the United States as a teen and would fight on both sides of the Civil War, first for the South, and after being captured, for the North. Stanley would become one of many white explorers that would refer to Africa as the "Dark Continent." Part of this designation was due to the maps that the explorers would make of the lakes and mountains they "discovered". These maps would help erase the pre-colonial history of Africa. Stanley wrote two articles entitled "Through the Dark Continent," and "In the Darkest Africa." He was known for his brutal treatment and punishment of the black porters helping him and the "discovery" of the Scottish missionary and explorer named David Livingston. He died at age of 63, in 1904, from various illnesses he had gotten in Africa (McNamara 2017; Thompson 2018)

The Imperialistic interests in Africa were fueled by three purposes: "the spirit of adventure, the desire to support good work of civilizing the natives, and the hope of stamping out the slave trade" (Thompson 2018). While slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1833, it

continued within Africa. Missionaries began traveling to Africa and those who did not find success and few converts gave the reason for it being the “African people’s hearts were locked in darkness.” The label of Dark Continent “referred to the savagery Europeans said was endemic to Africa.” A geographer named Lucy Jarosz shared thoughts regarding the negative, savage qualities of Africa and the salvation Christianity would bring as “a primeval, bestial, reptilian or female entity to be tamed, enlightened, guided, opened and pierced by white European males through western science, Christianity, civilization, commerce, and colonialism” (Thompson 2018). These thoughts would be shared by Bushnell and expressed in *Christian Nurture*.

Horace Bushnell and the White Supremacist World View of *Christian Nurture*, Chapter VIII, The out-populating power of the Christian stock

According to the daughter of Horace Bushnell, it was not a “system of thought” he wanted to leave behind, but “a living, growing, harmonious conception of truth, which should be seed thought to others...” (Cheney-Bushnell 1902, 542 in Bratti Cheney-Bushnell 1984, 3). Given charges of heresy and controversy over his writings, Bushnell understood how his writings could be misunderstood, “I know what it is to have the purest motives, most fervent prayers, and most incessant labors misapprehended and misrepresented. I know what the moral whipping post means” (Cheney-Bushnell 1902, 518 in Bratti Cheney-Bushnell 1983, 8). I begin this section on chapter eight of *Christian Nurture* with an appreciation for the “system of thought” and “seed thought” that this research has provided for my own understanding of Horace Bushnell and his white supremacist beliefs that were a product of his times and ours as well. This research is being offered as a “recontextualization” of *Christian Nurture* with the hope that it creates further conversation and activism confronting the racism and white supremacist ideology of today within the field and classrooms of Religious Education, and other academic and theological disciplines.

Christian Nurture is divided into two parts. Part I is entitled The Doctrine, and Part II, The Mode. Chapter VIII will be the focus of this paper. It begins with a passage from the Prophet Malachi, “And did he not make one? Yet had he the residue of the Spirit, And Wherefore one? That he might have a godly seed” (Malachi 2:15). The New American Bible translation is “Did he not make one being, with flesh and spirit; and what does that one require but godly offspring?” Bushnell interprets Malachi’s passage as a “strict observance of marriage” (1876, 195). This passage from Malachi describes the intermarriage that was taking place between the people of Israel and foreigners during and after the exile. It was especially reprehensible when a husband would divorce his Israelite wife, or “the wife of your youth” for a non-Israelite, which constituted a violation of the covenant.

This passage supporting the purity of marriage and the condemnation of intermarriage between Israelites and foreigners supports Bushnell’s vision of the Christian family producing godly seed or godly offspring to over-populate the world. It also implies concepts of racial and religious purity that become the hallmarks of white supremacist ideologies.

Bushnell offers two principle ways the Kingdom of God is to be extended throughout the world. One is the process of conversion, and the other through family propagation and the

reproducing of godly offspring. The conversion of the world by the preaching of the Gospel and piety and the populating of the world with Christians fulfills the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20. He provides the reasons for the overpopulating of the world with Christians to spread the Kingdom of God.

First, God frames the order of the church's economy by creating the family and the organic unity in the family and of the family to help propagate the Christian religion around the world. This is done not by conversion alone but the populating force and presence of the family as "the most majestic and silently creative force in history" (198).

Second, Abraham is given as an example of God's promise to make him a blessing for humanity through his countless descendants. He will be the father of many nations and all nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. That Jesus came out of these descendants as the Savior of the world further confirms the inclusion of Gentiles as part of the seed of Abraham (199).

Third, the spreading of Christianity and the Kingdom of God will not come about merely by adults' conversions, but by the populating force of the family, which can only take place "through the gate of a sanctified infancy and childhood" (202).

Fourth, Bushnell makes a comparison of the predisposition of Christian purity in the Christian family, with the predisposition found in domestic animals, based on their function in the world. This function in the world is passed down to the offspring of the animals, making them more trainable. This idea is central to the thought of Bushnell who begins *Christian Nurture*, Chapter I, entitled "What Christian nurture is" with this passage, "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The more complete text from the New American Bible is "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord" (9, Ephesians 6:4). On the following page Bushnell answers the question What is the true idea of Christian education? He states the familiar passage "*That the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise.*" He continues,

"In other words, the aim, effort, and expectation should be, not, as is commonly assumed, that the child is to grow up in sin, to be converted after he comes to a mature age; but that he is to open on the world as one that is spiritually renewed, not remembering the time when he went through a technical experience, but seeming rather to have loved what is good from his earliest years. I do not affirm that every child may, in fact and without exception, be so trained that he will certainly grow a Christian" (10).

Unfortunately, as Bushnell develops his thought, it becomes equally apparent that a person can "grow up racist, based on the worldview that surrounds them, and never know themselves as being otherwise." In this section, Bushnell moves from the example of domestic animals having an innate predisposition for a purpose to using the term "a savage race" that he describes as "a race bred into low living, and a faithless, bloody character" (203). This reference would likely refer to Africans, Native Americans, and in general, people of color, given the context and worldview established in the previous section. Bushnell will later include the Irish

and Muslims into this category, further expanding his views from white supremacy into Islamophobia.

Bushnell moves from a “savage race” to a “race of slaves” who become physiologically servile, which continue as one civilization progresses from one generation to the next. He proposes a civilization that is a result of an inbred civility. He includes the Jewish race and his own anti-Semitic bias, making a distinction between the “old Jewish stock of the Scripture times, who “were not marked by any such miserably sordid, usurious, garbage-vending propensity, as now distinguishes this race”. His reference to the suffering of Jews under Christian ownerships, in other countries, only highlights the negative stereotypes of Jews which justifies the Jewish “character we so commonly speak of with contempt”. Bushnell concludes that if Christians were treated the same way as Jews, over the centuries, they too would “reveal the marks of their wrongs in the same sordid and miserly ways” (203).

Bushnell’s fifth and final point, regarding the spreading of the Kingdom of God by the overpopulating of Christians includes “Mohammedans” or Muslims. He states the well-known fact, with scientific precision suggesting racial theories of his day, that a particular race, or stock of people is increased “according to the degree of personal and religious character to which it has attained.” He adds other criteria to creating a master race that includes: “good principles and habits, intellectual culture, domestic virtue, industry, order, law and faith” (209). The only thing that can save an inferior race is “a ready and pliant assimilation.” For Bushnell, this would imply the superior, white, Christian race. Bushnell’s thoughts on racial superiority, and racial theory would have been influenced by Thomas Jefferson who proposed in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, (1776), ... “blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind.”²

In this section, Bushnell compares the Christian and Mohammedan races by making the distinction of Christians propagating their message and people by moral and religious influences, “at least in part,” and the Mohammedan race propagating by military force (209). He implies the superior stock of Christianity would “completely expurgate the world of it” (Mohammedanism) and despite the inability of crusade after crusade to defeat the Mohammedans “the majestic populating force of Christian faith and virtue can even push it out of the world, as in the silence of a dew-fall” (210).

Bushnell continues his theory of white supremacy comparing the population forces of the Puritan stock in the United States with “the inferior, superstitious, half Christian stock and nurture of the South American states.” The reason for the white, Christian, supremacy is “having a larger, fuller, more creating force in one,” making it more superior (210).

² These ideas would not only influence Bushnell, but scientists who developed their own thoughts on race supporting racial theories of white superiority and black inferiority. The original racial theory of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) did not validate racial superiority or inferiority.

http://www.understandingrace.org/history/history_trans.html

Bushnell adds two additional benefits to the white supremacy of Christianity, better health and wealth. The Christian life contains the virtue of temperance, control of the passions, courage, and the “whole dimension of the soul” kept closer to God’s order. Regarding Christian wealth, that predates the prosperity gospel of today, he speaks of New England and the distribution of wealth that is as evenly distributed as the piety. This Christian wealth accrues “in every direction, power in production, enterprise, education, colonization, influence, and consequent popular increase (211). The church is viewed as God’s university and school of spiritual life, “to energize all capacity, and make her sons a talented and powerful race” (212).

Bushnell continues extolling the virtues of the white, Christian race by comparing the advanced race of the Saxons “with the feebler, wilder races like the Aborigines of our continent; having so much power of every kind that it puts them in shadow, weakens them, brings them down, rolling its over-populating tides across them, and sweeping them away as by a kind of doom” (213). He raises the question and prospect of survival of the “feebler and more abject races” and whether or not they “are going to be regenerated and raised up.” “What if it should be God’s plan to people the world with better and finer material?” In fact the overpopulating power of white, Christianity “will inevitably submerge and bury them forever” if the inferior races do not rise up to a higher capacity. His reference here is the colonization by Christian countries around the world fulfilling the mandate of spreading the Kingdom of God.

Ultimately, for Bushnell, it is up to God as to what races are submerged or lost, but in the meantime, the Christian race is to try to win over and save as many people as possible by conversion, and “hasten the day of promise” (214). The views of Bushnell on slavery, in a second document, will further confirm his white supremacist worldview.

On the Slavery Question, January 10, 1839

The second major document of Horace Bushnell was delivered on January 10, 1839 at his North Congregational Church in Hartford, Connecticut, “On the Slavery Question.” In this lecture Bushnell presents two questions related to the question of the abolition of slavery. The first is whether such abolition is possible, or a duty obligatory on the Southern Legislatures. The second is what is our duty in reference to the subject; what measures, if any, ought we to adopt with a view to hasten the result.

At the beginning of his lecture, Bushnell shows his hand completely that is consistent with the congregationalist thoughts of the day among prominent clergy mentioned by Frederick Douglass in his Belfast speech. He disagrees with Anti-Slavery advocates who hold that a person who holds another in legal bondage is in a state of sin “in all cases, and in every moment of its countenance; — no matter what the circumstances, no matter what the laws of the state” (Bushnell 1839, 5). It is interesting from the start that Bushnell upholds the law that justifies slavery and downplays “the temporary holding of slaves” as a crime, and the euphemism for slavery as “legal bondage.”

He disputes the labels put on slave owners used by Frederick Douglass in his Belfast lecture which calls white slave owners “pirates, man-stealers, and the like,” which “is a mere

indiscriminate raving, entitled to no respect, and having no apology but ignorance.” He refers to those who use these terms, like Frederick Douglass, “petty reformers” who reason with a “small logic” (5). He expresses his sympathy for those who charge slave owners as criminals. “If there was ever a people on earth involved in crime, who yet deserve sympathy and gentleness at the hands of the good, it’s the slave-holding portion of the country” (6).

The Three Features of Slavery that make it abhorrent

Bushnell identifies three features in American slavery that should be abhorrent to all and produce feelings of “pity, disgust, and shame” (6). The first is the failure to permit the family state among slaves by the denial of marriage rites among the slaves. This includes the separation of husbands and wives, and stripping their children away from them, which pre-dates the current immigration policies in the United States under our current administration and the policies of ICE. He refers to this feature of slavery as “the cattle-state imported into humanity” (6).

His second feature is the lack of protection and “absence of any real protection to the body of the slave, in respect to limb, life, or chastity.” He continues by giving reasons for slave owners to abuse their slaves due to the slave being prevented from testifying against their master’s, which Bushnell deems is “(necessary, perhaps, as a part of the institution)”, and also the rights of slave owners to take revenge on slaves, who “can do nothing, but bow their body to fury and lust and vent their griefs in tears, which none but God will notice or regard.” He concludes this section with an admission that no law can protect slaves under white, Christian bondage. “I blush also to say, that, in a certain high point of civilized honor and humanity, not even the form of a law exists, to maintain the show of protection” (7).

The third feature of slavery is that, as a legal institution, it does not recognize a slave having a moral or intellectual nature. He is not considered human or a man, but only exists for another as property. “As a creature of conscience, a creature of immortal wants, a creature in God’s image, he has no legal existence” (7). Bushnell concludes this section by saying that doing away with this feature is for him “the abolition of slavery.” Ultimately, Bushnell upholds or defers to the power of the laws of slavery that prevent these features from taking place (8).

While repeating his objections to these three features he says to the South, “this institution is your own, not ours.” It is up to the South to modify slavery as they see fit, but as long as they uphold these three features, they will continue to face condemnation. He makes a distinction between these three objectionable features of slavery with the “institution induced or licensed, under the name of bondage, in the law of Moses” (8).

Bushnell further speaks of the benefits to slave owners even after emancipation. Slave owners will lose nothing by emancipation, because slaves will still exist on their soil, and represent the wealth of the slave owners. The labor-power will remain and the wages to the former slaves will remain at the same rate as when they were slaves. The political payoff from emancipation will result in “ten or twenty representatives in Congress, above their present number” (9).

What is to become of the emancipated slaves?

Bushnell responds to the question of what is to become of the emancipated slaves. His answer reflects his views in *Christian Nature*. “I am obliged to say that I do not anticipate any such bright destiny opening on the African race, in this country, as seems to occupy the vision of our Anti-slavery brethren.” A positive view of emancipated slaves “has too slender a support in the sober facts of history and the laws of population ascertained in political science. There is no example in history, where an uncultivated and barbarous stock has been elevated in the midst of a cultivated and civilized stock; and I have no expectation that there even will be” (12).

He gives the example of Aborigines in North and South America heading towards extinction to justify this theory of racial superiority over the uncivilized, barbarous, people of color. He openly states that the African race in this country will “soon begin to dwindle towards extinction, in the same way, if emancipated” (12).

He compares the law of population to a herd of cattle that dwindles after the herdsman stops taking care of them. The same fate awaits the Africans in the United States along with the vices that taint their blood, and within fifty years will result in a premature extinction (12).

Bushnell offers “facts” to further predict the extinction of people of color in the United States by using the example of the Irish, who were also considered non-white citizens of the United States. He predicts the extinction of the Irish due to early mortality rates and intemperance and poor living sweeping away the young and the old (13). He notes the absence of Irish names from the catalogues of colleges, legislatures, and advertisements of merchants and mechanics, thus proving that they cannot rise to the rank of others in our country. But you will find plenty of Irish names in “the catalogues of alms-houses, and prisons, and potter’s fields, there you will find their names in thick order” (13).³ His words echo the stereotypical tweets and fearmongering comments towards Mexican immigrants, when President Trump spoke of Mexicans as rapists and murderers that are refuted by actual statistics.⁴

Because of the future extinction, slave owners in the south have nothing to fear after emancipation. In fact, Bushnell gives the future extinction of the former slaves as reason to abolish the institution of slavery, while maintaining the institution will lead to the ongoing addition of the number of slaves in the south (13-14).

The second question Bushnell raises in the document is that if the South abolishes slavery, what is the duty of the North, in reference to this subject; what measures, if any ought we to adopt” (15).

³ Moy (2000) points out the social and legal construction of race in the United States. The colonists did not see themselves as white, more as English and free. After 1680, the term white was used given the number of slaves in the country. Excluded from the definition of white were: Jews, the Irish, and southern Europeans (121).

⁴ Michelle Yee Hee Lee wrote an article on President Trump’s false comments connecting Mexican immigrants and crime. *The Washington Post*, July 8, 2015. The Congressional Research Service found the vast majority of unauthorized immigrants do not fit in the category that fits Trump’s description.

Bushnell accuses the anti-slavery movement of committing the first sin of “ill manners.” It is evident that Bushnell fall on the side of a gradual abolition of slavery versus the immediate abolition sought by the abolitionists (17). He makes it clear that the abolition of slavery is too inflammatory a subject to handle given the strong hold it has on one’s passions, for it “to be safely entrusted to associations.” He further states that there is no one individual within the Anti-Slavery Society who can address “the ethical questions involved in the subject” (20). It seems the eloquence of Frederick Douglas on the subject was not acceptable to Bushnell.

Bushnell addresses three classes of people in his audience on the subject of slavery (22). The first group of members is the Anti-Slavery Society. He disagrees with their strategy and calls for them to disband and unite with those who favor a gradual abolition of slavery (23). He openly states his inability or those of others to join with the Anti-Slavery movement.

The second class were those listening to Bushnell who he encourages to take his position, and the third class are those who fully support slavery and have no concern to change it.

While there is no denying the contribution of Horace Bushnell’s *Christian Nurture* book to the field of Christian and Religious Education, this paper unveils the darker side of Bushnell’s worldview that is not fully addressed in the coverage of *Christian Nurture*. The influences of theories of racial superiority, white supremacy, and the sin of racism not only impacted the life of Horace Bushnell but continue to influence our current Administration, immigration policies, deportations, the Muslim travel ban, and ongoing international conflicts. Any class that deals with *Christian Nurture*, or Horace Bushnell has an excellent opportunity to learn about the null curriculum.

The Null Curriculum in Religious Education

Elliot W. Eisner (2002) describes the three curricula that schools teach: the explicit, implicit and null curriculum. The null curriculum is what schools and teachers do not teach. This paper argues that if issues of racism and white supremacy are not discussed when studying Horace Bushnell and *Christian Nurture*, a major opportunity is lost to deal with a topic that permeates our country and world today. Eisner proposes that “what schools do not teach may be as important as what they do teach.” He continues:

“I argue this position because ignorance is not simply a neutral void; it has important effects on the kinds of options one is able to consider, the alternatives that one can examine, and the perspectives from which one can view a situation or problems. The absence of a set of considerations or perspectives or the inability to use certain processes for appraising a context biases the evidence one is able to take into account. A parochial perspective or simplistic analysis is the inevitable progeny of ignorance” (97).

Ignorance is the result of a null curriculum. “Unawareness” is a term used by Fr. Bryan Massingale, S.T.D., Fordham University’s James and Nancy Buckman Chair in Applied Ethics, who delivered a lecture entitled “They Do Not Know It and Do Not Want to Know it: Racial Ignorance, James Baldwin, and the Authenticity of Christian Ethics” (Verel 2018, 1). Patrick Verel unknowingly references the null curriculum when he begins an article with the crux of

Massingale's lecture, "If you cannot recognize profound injustice around you, you cannot act upon it." In keeping with Horace Bushnell's collusion with white supremacy, Massingale states, "Systemic, collective insensitivity and unawareness is the most theologically involved problem at the core of Christianity's collusion with white supremacy (Ibid.). He follows this up with the question, "How could so many well-meaning and well-educated people be unaware of the racial terrors that unfolded and still unfold around them?"

Fr. Massingale's parents had to flee from Belzoni, Mississippi because of the threats of white supremacists who were harassing them "with seeming impunity and even committing murder" (Ibid.). He describes the racism that impacted his family's migration to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. "My family's story was a response to a state-sponsored and nationally sanctioned regime of racial terror, a response to a Jim Crow that did not mark the end of slavery but rather marked its evolution" (Ibid.). He addressed the silence of white theologians at the time, and used James Baldwin to further express what is considered the null curriculum. James Baldwin 'described American society as characterized by "a cultivated lack of knowing that enables the majority to live at peace with the horror that inflicts so many." Massingale added, "Baldwin describes a society as being defined not only by what they know, but also by what they ignore" (Ibid.). It should be noted that all of the issues mentioned by Bushnell, including slavery and racism were state-sponsored and nationally sanctioned.

Charles H. Mills, author of *The Racial Contract* (1997) 'described the desire to ignore the reality of racism as "an ignorance that is not merely a lack of knowledge, but the active presentation of itself as real;" 'and thus akin to a "consensual hallucination." "This leads to ethical blind spots, affective callousness, and a refusal to recognize the impact of the past" (Verel 2018). This form of ignorance, expressed by Baldwin and Mills, "is more than simply the absence of knowledge, but is in an "active evasion of knowledge passed off as truth" (Ibid.) In the beginning of Charles Mills book is a black American folk aphorism that sums up the white supremacist worldview expressed by Horace Bushnell and others: "When white people say "justice," they mean "just us."

Russell G. Moy's article "American Racism: The Null Curriculum in Religious Education" (2000), is an excellent article that this author would recommend when studying or discussing the null curriculum. In the same way that Horace Bushnell called slavery an "institution," and "legal bondage," so has racism itself become institutionalized and ingrained in American history: past, present, and future. Moy states, "People from non-European ancestry were judged inferior and were stereotyped because of their skin color. Racism is in the air we breathe; it infects everyone, even newly arrived immigrants. Thus, a "shadow" follows racial-ethnic minorities because of their skin pigmentation" (2000, 120). Moy critiques the field of religious education as inadequately responding to this dilemma. While race is commonly viewed as biologically fixed, and unchangeable, this fails to appreciate how definitions of race are socially and legally constructed. Racial theorists have shown how categories of race have been "formed, transformed, or destroyed through social, economic, and political forces (Omi and Winant 1986, 61 in Moy 2000, 121). Legal construction of race can have someone born one race

and die another. Children of interracial parents were considered legally black in some states and legally white in others (Moy 2000, 121-122).

For slaves, biblical and theological teaching was intentionally distorted, or ignored regarding freedom, baptism, and the church as the body of Christ that taught a unity and equality among black and white Christians and all people (Moy 2000, 123). The fact that the white supremacist worldview of Horace Bushnell is as present today as it was in his day confirms the inherency of white Christianity and white supremacy. “Brothers and Sisters to Us” (1979) is a Pastoral Letter on racism put out by the United States Catholic Bishops. Part of the null curriculum in Catholicism is the failure to teach and preach this document over the years. A research report in 2004 was published marking the 25th Anniversary of the document. It still was not properly taught thoroughly, or preached from the pulpit, especially in white Catholic churches.

In 2017, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops formed an ad hoc committee on racism and are planning a new document on racism. This author fears the same lack of preaching and teaching about the document will occur, creating another example of the null curriculum.

The Melting Pot Myth

Moy sheds light on the topic of assimilation, which “has historically been the dominant ideology in American society” (Moy 2000, 124). He points out that people of color were outside of the “melting pot” along with Asians and Native Americans. Assimilation came to mean the ‘Americanizing,’ of other immigrant groups, the civilizing of “uncivilized” groups like Native Americans, African Americans, the Irish, and other immigrant groups. “As a result, Anglo-Saxon values and cultural norms were institutionalized and, to subsequent generations of European immigrants, became the acceptable standards of behavior” (Ibid.).

While moderate tolerance of European ethnic diversity was found in the United States it was not so for racial diversity. African Americans, Native Americans, Chinese, Japanese have all been victims placed on plantations, reservations, prisons, and concentration camps in the United States (Ibid. 124-125). The 1790 Naturalization Law, passed by the First Continental Congress only accepted free white immigrants as American citizens. The McCarran-Walter Act, passed in 1952 finally allowed non-Europeans to be eligible for naturalized citizenship, having been denied this opportunity prior to 1952. The Labor-movement denied membership to various ethnic groups (Ibid.).

The history of institutionalized racism presented in this paper contradicts and even trumps the American ideals of justice and equality and trumps the same religious values along with love of God and neighbor. “Without understanding the hidden “racial history” of the United States, religious educators can implicitly accept the image of America as a melting pot which excluded racial-ethnic minorities. This can be seen in how Sunday School material has been historically constructed” (Moy 2000, 126). Moy adds one last quote to his section on Horace

Bushnell from G.M. Fredrickson (1971), “American racism and American Christianity had at last been thoroughly reconciled” (Moy 2000, 127).

Horace Bushnell, Islamophobia and the Null Curriculum

One of the groups mentioned by Horace Bushnell that were targeted with extinction were “Mohammedans,” or Muslims. The inclusion, by Bushnell, of Muslims among people of color, and other groups like Native Americans and the Irish is very important for another discussion of the null curriculum in many fields and disciplines. The very mention of Muslims, by Bushnell, helps give historical background to how far back Islamophobia goes, with Islam paired with violence and the sword. 9/11 forever changed a contemporary understanding of Islam and serves as a perfect date and opportunity to talk about the correct teachings of Islam and promote dialogue and understanding through guest speakers and mutual visits to mosques, churches, synagogues, temples, and other interfaith/interreligious events. The fears of 9/11 have led to the anti-immigration policies of the Trump Administration, the travel ban and promises of building a wall separating Mexico and the United States.

In Khaled A. Beydoun’s book, *American Islamophobia: Understanding The Roots and Rise of Fear* (2018), he mentions the four words that went through the mind of every Muslim on 9/11 and every terrorist event afterwards, “Please don’t be Muslims” (Beydoun 2018, 6). Beydoun makes an important point of framing Islamophobia by highlighting the relationship between state sanctioned law and individual actors who commit acts of hate against Muslims, immigrants, and other minorities. Muslims fall into the wide net of institutionalized racism, and if one is an African American Muslim, the hateful repercussions can be two-fold (Ibid., 19).

The Writings of James H. Cone

On April 28, 2018, Dr. James H. Cone died leaving behind a legacy of writings on Black Theology that need to be made available to students to appreciate Cone’s indictment of white theology and society. Any other readings from multi-cultural perspectives will challenge the Eurocentric norm that provides the context for a white supremacist worldview.

While James Cone has made his voice heard through his writings and books, Frederick Douglass, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Dr. Bryan Massingale, James Baldwin, Charles W. Mills, and Russell Moy have commented on the silence from the white churches, white theologians, and white religious educators. Dr. King’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” is a classic document for addressing the null curriculum on racism and the silence of white, liberal, clergy at that time. The rise of white supremacist groups and the Charlottesville, Virginia incident seemed to be motivated by the dread and fear of the “end of white America,” based on studies that project people of color will outnumber whites by 2044, and half the babies being born in the United States are minorities. This led Trump to promote nativism, scapegoating and racism to win his election (Beydoun 2018, 12). As a result other civil rights and activists groups have formed on grassroots levels. Two of these groups are #Black Lives Matter and the Poor People’s Campaign.

#Black Lives Matter and the Poor People's Campaign

In 2013, three black activists, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi formed a grassroots group in response to the murder of Trayvon Martin and the acquittal of George Zimmerman, the man who shot and killed Trayvon under the Florida Stand your Ground statute. The project and movement called #BlackLivesMatter (#BLM) is a global network of over forty chapters. The attention given to various shootings and deaths of unarmed black men, women, and children has brought examples of institutionalized racism and violence to our attention. A growing list of names continues to be added including Trayvon Martin, Rekia Boyd, Mike Brown, Tamir Rice, Philando Castille, Sandra Bland, Freddie Gray, and many more (Beydoun 2018, 10).

Guiding Principles of #BLM include: Diversity, Restorative Justice, Globalism, Queer Affirming, Unapologetically Black, Collective Value, Empathy, Loving Engagement, Transgender Affirming, Black Villages, Black Women, Black Families, and Intergenerational. Further details can be gotten from their website. They will not be the last grassroots movement to respond to the institutionalized anti-black racism and state-sanctioned violence in our country and world.⁵

The Poor People's Campaign, A National Call for Moral Revival, was formed in the last two years, with grass root groups forming in thirty states. They have a set of demands which include: Declaration of Moral Rights and Poor People's Moral Agenda: Systemic Racism, with emphasis on voting rights; Poverty and Inequality; Ecological Devastation; War Economy, Militarism; and National Morality. It is a revival of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Poor Peoples Campaign that started just before his assassination. The information in the campaign is not for the faint of heart and calls for advocacy on behalf of the Poor People's agenda and opportunities for acts of nonviolent civil disobedience. It is led by the Rev. William Barber of North Carolina and Liz Theoharis. The website offers a wealth of information. Some statistics include:

Since 2010, 23 states have passed racist voter suppression laws;

6.1 million people have been disenfranchised due to felony conviction, including 1 in 13 black adults;

In 2017, the 400 wealthiest Americans owned more wealth than the bottom 64% of the entire U.S. population, or 204 million people. Just three individuals possessed a combined wealth of \$248.5 billion dollars, an equal amount of wealth as the bottom 50% of the country.

#BlackLivesMatter and the Poor People's Campaign are just two of many social justice groups seeking to restore right relationships and confront the evils of institutionalized,

⁵ In 2015, The Guardian newspaper reported 1,134 black youth killed by police in the U.S. 5 x's higher than white youth of the same age. 1 in very 65 deaths of black youth is due to police. 1,010 by gunshot, 49 by taser, 41 death in custody, 33 struck by vehicle and 1 other. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/31/the-counted-police-killings-2015-young-black-men>

state-sanctioned racism and white supremacy. It's important that the worldview of Horace Bushnell found in chapter VIII of *Christian Nurture* not be the last word.

Conclusion

This research paper sought to bring to light the white supremacist worldview of Horace Bushnell for the REA Conference/2018, whose theme is Beyond White Normativity, Creating Brave Spaces. It does not lessen the contribution of *Christian Nurture*, and the importance of children and youth being important members of the church who should be included as fully as possible through intergenerational worship and learning. It is hard to look back historically at the institutionalized racism and white supremacy of Bushnell's day and see it as very different from our own time in history that continues to have state-sanctioned, institutionalized racism, white supremacy, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and other hate crimes against the LGBTQ community, immigrants, and other minorities. This author hopes new things were learned about Horace Bushnell, the hypocrisy of some Abolitionist who sought to abolish slavery while still being racist, and the need to fill the void of the null curriculum with readings, and activities brought to the attention of the reader. I hope many more ideas of books and authors to read, movies to see, songs to sing, miles to march, protests to attend, will be offered by readers, with a vision for a better future that is found in our present activities and the decisions we make each day. Just remember to breathe.

Bibliography

- American Anthropological Association. "The Story of Race Transcript" from The Race Project: Are we so different? www.americananthro.org ; www.understandingRACE.org; http://www.understandingrace.org/history/history_trans.html
- Beydoun, Khaled, A. 2018. *American Islamophobia: Understanding The Roots and Rise of Fear*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- #Black Lives Matter. 2013. <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/herstory/>
- Boys, Mary. C. 1989. *Educating in Faith: Maps and Visions*. Lima, Ohio: Academic Renewal Press.
- Bratti, Cheney Bushnell, Mary. 1984. *Horace Bushnell: Heretic, Liberal, or Orthodox?* Master's Thesis Unification Theological Seminary.
- Bushnell, Horace. 1876. *Christian Nurture*. New York: Scribner, Armstrong, & Co. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moa/afz0908.0001.001/1?rgn=full+text;view=image>
- Bushnell, Horace. 1839. *A discourse on the slavery question: delivered in the North Church, Hartford, Thursday evening, January 10, 1839*. Hartford: Case, Tiffany and Co. <https://archive.org/stream/ASPC0001905300#page/n0/mode/2up>.
- Cheney, Bushnell, Mary. 1902. *Life and Letters of Horace Bushnell*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Cone, James, H. 1990. *A Black Theology of Liberation: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.
- , 1987. *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church: Where have we been and where are we going?* Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.
- , 1975. *God of the Oppressed*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.
- Douglas, Frederick, 1845. "Baptists, Congregationalists, the Free Church, and Slavery: An Address Delivered in Belfast, Ireland, on December 23, 1845." Belfast News Letter, December 26, 1845 and Belfast Northern Whig, December 25, 1845. Blessingame, John. (et. el. Eds.). *The Frederick Douglas Papers: Series One-Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1979. Vol. 1.
- Edwards, Robert, L. *Of Singular Genius, of Singular Grace: A Biography of Horace Bushnell*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1992.
- Eisner, Elliot, W. 2000. *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Merrill, Prentice Hall.
- Fredrickson, G.M. 1971. *The black image in the white mind: The debate on African-American*

- character and destiny, 1817-1914*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Horton, James Oliver, and Lois E. Horton. In *Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks. 1700-1860*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1997.
- Hudson, Winthrop, S. 1981. *Religion In America, 1965*. New York: Scribners.
- Kidder, David. 2011. *Owning Our History: First Church and Race 1636-1873*.
https://www.firstchurchcambridge.org/sites/default/files/file-uploads/FCC_Race_History_Paper.doc
https://www.firstchurchcambridge.org/sites/default/.../FCC_Race_History_Paper.doc
<https://www.firstchurchcambridge.org/first-church-in-the-world/owning-our-history-first-church-and-race-1636-1873>
- Lee, Yee Hee, Michelle, “Donald Trump’s false comments connecting Mexican immigrants and crime,” *The Washington Post*, July 8, 2015.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2015/07/08/donald-trumps-false-comments-connecting-mexican-immigrants-and-crime/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.7c38a4417199
- Massey, Lesly, F. 2001. *Horace Bushnell and the Christian Nurture of Children*. Essay: Brite Divinity School. <http://leslyfmassey.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Bushnell-Nurture-Children.pdf>.
- Massingale, Bryan. 2018. “They Do Not Know It and Do Not Want to Know It: Racial Ignorance, James Baldwin, and the Authenticity of Christian Ethics.” 2/27/18.
<https://news.fordham.edu/faith-and-service/end-racism-rethink-catholic-perspective-morals-says-theologian/> (YouTube video link to lecture.)
- Mills, Charles, W. 1997. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- McNamara, Robert. 2017. “Who Was Henry Morton Stanley: Explorer Who Found Livingston in Africa.” Thoughtco. September 8, 2017. <https://www.thoughtco.com/henry-morton-stanley-1773821>
- Melish, Joanne Pope. 1998. *Disowning Slavery: Global Emancipation and “Race” in New England. 1780-1860*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 1998.
- Moy, Russell G. 2000. “American Racism: The Null Curriculum in Religious Education.” *Religious Education*, Vol. 95, No. 2, Spring, 120-133.
- Omi, M. and H. Winant. 1986. *Racial formation in the United States from the 1960’s to the 1980’s*. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Poor People's Campaign: A Call for Moral Revival. <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/> .

Special Issue on Race, Racism, Anti-Racism, and Religious Education. 2017. *Religious Education*, Vol. 112, Number 1, January-February.

Swaine, Jon, Laughland, Oliver, et. el. "Young black men killed by U.S. police at highest rate in year of 1,134." *The Guardian*. 12/31/2015.
<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/31/the-counted-police-killings-2015-young-black-men>

Thompson, Angela. 2018. "Why Was Africa Called the Dark Continent? Victorian Era Adventurers, Missionaries, and Imperialism." Thoughtco. Updated August 9, 2018.
<https://thoughtco.com/why-africa-called-the-dark-continent-43310>

United States Catholic Conference. 1999. "Brothers and Sisters to Us." A Pastoral Letter on Racism. Washington D.C.

Verel, Patrick. 2018. "To End Racism, Rethink Catholic Perspective on Morals, Says Theologian." *Fordham News*. 2/28/18

Janiqua Green

Fordham University's Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education

jacodri@gmail.com

2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4

We Will Never Be White as Snow

The Implicit Curriculum of White Normativity and Null Curriculum of Black Liberation Theology in the Hymnody of the Baptist Tradition

Abstract: While hymnody is the primary source of sacred song in the Baptist Tradition, strands of White normativity and Black domestication are woven through its fabric. The hymns contain linguistic imagery that inaccurately hone into the purity of white and evil of dark. These ideals pose a potential identity crisis because hymnal “darkness” is repeatedly viewed as unpleasant or stops the light the shining. This paper will explore the hymnal language that neglects to affirm black bodies, address social ills and embrace the “other.”

The innocent sound of children singing “this little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine” captured my heart at the age of five years old. Curious, eager and excited I wanted “a little light” as well and I wanted to “let it shine” everywhere I went. This was my introduction to God. This initial encounter came by way of hymnody within the Black Baptist tradition. The melody captivated me and drifted me to a place of refuge where life’s struggles dissipated. This was the sanctity of the hymnal experience. My appreciation remained this way for years, until I intently heard the stanza in Howard Lowry’s hymn “What Can Wash Away My Sin” that reads “O precious is the flow that makes me white as snow” (Lowry 1876). Gazing upon the faces in the room, full of hues that ranged from almond brown to deep chocolate, I was certain that it was impossible for anyone in the room to be washed white as snow. Unable to articulate the incongruity of the hymnal metaphor to the dark-skinned people, hymnody became a place of inquiry in addition to worship. Like one stream flowing in two different directions, my critical reflection initiated a liturgical eddy. Hymns that I deeply appreciated as part of my liturgical experience in the Baptist tradition were now held with a hermeneutic of suspicion because I questioned if the hymns spoke to and affirmed the Black skin represented my body.

While hymnody is a primary component of the liturgical experience in the traditional Baptist tradition, there lies an implicit curriculum¹ of white normativity that has gone unnoticed. The historical context that undergirds the majority of Baptist hymns reflect the ideals of older White men. These hymns emerged during a time when Black people were disregarded, maligned as abnormal and *forced* to sing a new song in a foreign land through indentured servitude. A plethora of hymnal stanzas give a negative connotation to darkness, partiality to men or serve as pardon for former slave owners who participated in the American Slave Trade. Yet, Baptist congregants *still* manage to worship using these hymns today. With minimal inclusion of ideals that reflect Black liberation in America, there is a null curriculum of Black Liberation. However, hymnody remains a common part of the Baptist liturgical experience and this needs to be revised.

¹ Elliot Eisner’s form of implicit curriculum has a significant impact on the learner than the explicit curriculum. The implicit curriculum is based on the culture, standards, patterns and setting that informs the learned material or behavior. The dominant components are rarely announced, but they are recognized by the recipients because they emphasize an unspoken behavior. See (Eisner 1979, 76)

Henriot and Holland's "circle of praxis" uses a systematic approach for reflecting to bring about action (Holland and Henriot, S.J. 1980, 8). This paper will employ this methodology to conduct a full analysis.

Historically, African Americans were stripped of their identity, removed from their country, enslaved, oppressed, marginalized, and exploited by the very people who introduced them to Christianity. The colonizers considered the Africans to be "barbaric heathens" and therefore imposed a skewed Christianity that encouraged them to be "saved" and become "good" slaves (Costen 1993, 16). Major contributors to Euro-American hymnody, pardoned themselves for participating in the oppressive hand of slavery because they felt slaves were "inherited" and not purchased. The slave owning hymnal composers were not held accountable for their actions because they "allowed the slaves to express their spiritual insights" (Norton 2004, 50). African Americans had to find a means of affirming themselves, while simultaneously being dehumanized and forced into human servitude (Cone, *God of the Oppressed* 1975, 11). From the onset of the African American Christian experience, there were a unique set of questions that needed to be raised, primarily because they speculated how a God who ostensibly loved them, allowed them to suffer beyond measure.

History shows that there has been a challenge for Black people to find themselves in the Biblical story of hope. For Black people, the question was not 'did God exist' but rather was God present in their struggle. They grappled with the question of whether or not God actually supported them in their quest for liberation. Based on their reality which was steeped in pain and despair, they wanted to know if God was with them in their struggle for freedom. This unique experience of being an African in America, necessitates a unique critique that speaks to those who were stripped of their identity and muted at the hand of their oppressor who introduced them to Jesus.

African American Christians began to create secret songs as a means of survival in a foreign land. As a means of endurance, slaves created songs known as Spirituals (or Negro Spirituals) and language that helped them navigate a horrific experience (Cone, *God of the Oppressed* 1975, 56). Spirituals emerged and were birthed from the slave period in America. They contained the central theme of yearning for freedom and liberation from their circumstance. They served as a surreptitious form of resistance that was rooted in the eschatological hope that God would deliver the slaves from the hand of the oppressor (Costen 1993, 84). Woven between scripture, slave code and imagery, spirituals were a means of survival that emerged from a labor of faith. They served as the foundation of the slaves' faith formation which rested upon a future that they could not see but found an inner hope to believe that it was on the horizon (Omo-Osagie II 2007, 36).

The first published liturgical documents compiled by and for African American worshippers was a hymnal. This was developed by Richard Allen, founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1801 titled, *A Collection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs from Various Authors by Richard Allen, Minister of the African American Episcopal Church*. The hymnal contained fifty-four hymns (Blumhofer, Edith L. 2004, 43). A selection of these hymns was included in some of the early southern hymnals that existed during slave antebellum. The first Baptist Hymnal was created in 1903 (Costen 1993, 81-82). In 1977, "The New National Baptist Hymnal" was created and includes Post-Civil Rights Movement social awakening ideals. This is the current and primary hymnal used by the Baptist Church today. Twenty-seven Spirituals and several Civil Rights favorites were added to the 500 plus hymns (Spencer 1992, 93). With roughly 5% of the hymnal including African American experiences, it's understood that some people were not satisfied with the content of "The New National Baptist Hymnal." Those who recognized that

the hymnal content lacked the experiences of a people committed to overcoming the ills of inequality, sought to create a hymnal that included experiences that were previously ignored. In 2001, the “African American Heritage Hymnal” was created to include the African American experience in the Protestant religious tradition. The hymnal features 586 traditional, gospel, and modern worship compositions. However, even with an existing hymnal that speaks to the African American experience, the New National Baptist Hymnal remains the dominant hymnal in the Baptist tradition. It is necessary to assert that the Baptist tradition is autonomous to the local church and authority is housed with the local congregation. A Baptist governing body is not in place to determine which Bible translations to source or which hymnals to use, this is the discretion of the local church. Furthermore, the Black Baptist Church adjusted the meter of Euro-American hymns in the New National Baptist Hymnal so that the melody was unique to the Black Experience. Conversely, it’s quite interesting that the worshippers sought to alter the tune but failed to revise the text. The Black Baptist tradition held to the primarily Euro-American hymnal content with streams of White normativity and Black domestication flowing through its deep waters.

These Euro-American hymns contain linguistic imagery that inaccurately hones into the purity of white and evil of dark. These ideals pose a potential identity crisis because hymnal “darkness” is repeatedly aligned with evil, sin or stops the light from shining. The first hymn listed in “The New National Baptist Hymnal” is “Holy, Holy, Holy” which includes a meter that reads “Though darkness hides thee” (National Baptist Publishing Board 1977, 1). In the same way, the hymn “One Day” includes a meter that reads “One day when sin was black as can be” (Ibid, 68). The hymn “Do You Really Care?” mentions “people grope in darkness searching for a way” (Ibid, 420). “O Zion, Haste” asserts that many are “bound in the darksome prison house of sin” (Ibid, 408). “Lead Me, Guide Me” includes a meter that proclaims “Let me through the darkness, thy face to see” (Ibid, 355). African Americans will see darkness every time they face a mirror because this is the hue of our sacred bodies. Understanding the historical trauma associated with African American identity one would suggest that we avoid language that maligns blackness as “bad,” especially living in a nation where many have fought and died to be accepted as equal.

This image of “darkness” has tainted the perception of what it means to have Black skin in America while it implicitly highlights the goodness of white. It is not that the hymnal compilers lack information, but rather they fall victim to accepting misinformation. They have embraced inventions of distorted reality and personified collective amnesia (Masingale 2018). “We soak up propaganda and ideology whose intention is to *prevent* thought” (quoted in Wink 1988, 288). It is not that hymnal compilers are ignorant to the prejudice that permeates hymnal language, but rather they choose to see what they were trained to see. The National Baptist tradition has consistently associated darkness with evil through Euro-American hymnal repetition and imagery and the Baptist tradition has been trained to accept it without significant critique. Religious institutions have blinded themselves to the horrors that align with this language and have not sought to rectify the misappropriation of “darkness.”

African American denominational churches have done a poor job of critically interpreting the Biblical text (Williams 1993, 150). For centuries, these churches have ascribed to the scriptures without critical engagement. They neglected to raise questions that would liberate and affirm their congregants. They have ignored the violent acts of God in the struggle for liberation (Ibid). In order for change to become a lasting reality, congregations must begin to raise questions that have been previously ignored. The church has a responsibility to speak from the angle of the African American experience which is full of a struggle for an identity in a world that has taken extreme measures to omit their experience. When we fail to raise the difficult questions, we domesticate

the liturgical experience by merely accepting what has been provided. This critique is applicable to hymnody as well. An exploration of hymns needs to take place that works to revise the language and does the work of liberating the hearers of hymnal liturgy. Liberating liturgies empower people to embrace the struggle and emerge with a praxis that initiates faith-based action (Hessel 1992, 81).

The null curriculum² of Black liberation addresses the paradoxical nature of God. While God loves humanity, one must wrestle with the concepts of slavery, oppression, and injustice that continues to plague Black lives across the nation. Traditional Baptist hymnody does not explain why God allows those whom God loves to experience great calamity. Additionally, it neglects to question why oppressed groups endure a life of humiliation and suffering (Cone, *A Theology of Black Liberation*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition 1990, 17).

Though America has made significant changes to improve the experience of being Black in America, Black lives and bodies still need to be affirmed. In fact, the Millennial lead Black Lives Matter Movement emerged at the height of repeated incidents of police brutality on Black people in America. Black Lives matter exists to answer the question of how can white America learn to see Black people as human beings? It is deplorable that this question remains pertinent to a people who were forced to migrate to a place where their lives were considered disposable. In a world where political leaders of influence label police misconduct "a significant exception" and wonder why society was not talking about "black on black crime" there is a systemic issue in place on a national level (Coates 2014). Ironically, there was an uproar in the use of the notable hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, because people believed that there was an omission of other groups of people. As a result, other hashtags emerged as a means of resistance against the Black solidarity which included #AllLivesMatter, #BlueLivesMatter and even #WhiteLivesMatter. Isn't it interesting that we easily seek to find issue with the use of language when it is most convenient? The hashtag, Black Lives Matter caused pandemonium among groups of people who did not identify with Black lives. Consistent with American history, they found it offensive to assert that Black Lives had value. These people consistently believe that there is something fundamentally wrong with being Black. For this reason, there is something profoundly wrong with associating Black with darkness or evil in hymnody semantics. These metaphors are heightening a disconnect with the black beauty that rests among God's creation.

Organizations affiliated with the Black Lives Matter movement compiled "A Movement for Black Lives," a detailed and ambitious agenda separated into six components that includes a list of demands that address pertinent issues relevant to the African American community. The list includes restructuring policing and prison, jobs and healthcare, tax code revisions that will "ensure a radical and sustainable redistribution of wealth," expanded rights to clean air, fair housing and union organizing, and greater community control over police and schools. Additionally, the BLM movement has expanded to include trans, queer and poor people (Joseph 2017, 19). Somewhere along the journey of development BLM leaders realized that racism, sexism and homophobia are conjoined. When the oppressive dialogue is limited to a particular group, minimal change will occur (Lorde 1984, 1).

The Movement shows that young people are interested in seeing a better way of life for marginalized groups of people and they are willing to participate in bringing justice to fruition.

² Elliot Eisner's form of null curriculum is the curriculum that does not exist. "the options students are not afforded, the perspectives they may never know about, much less be able to use, the concepts and skills that are not part of their intellectual repertoire" See (Eisner 1979, 92)

The pressing question is, for the sake of revised liturgy, what does hymnody say to these issues? Does Baptist hymnody contain language that seeks to affirm black bodies or alleviate the ills that are pertinent to its community? With the exception of a few notable Black churches, why has the influential Baptist tradition sought to remain silent instead of affirming Black lives? Now more than ever, there is a need to offer liturgy that speaks to the plight of oppressed groups. Holding acts of justice and liturgical experiences in creative tension, liturgy can produce action to participate in just causes (Hessel 1992, 82).

From a theological perspective, God has always sought the liberation of humanity and recognized that a struggle always exists. Genesis tells the story of a man named Jacob who wrestled with God until daybreak. It was not that Jacob defeated God, but God was overtaken by Jacob's unrelenting persistence in obtaining a blessing. At the conclusion of the fight, Jacob's name was changed to Israel because he struggled with God and humans and prevailed (Genesis 32, NRSV). Israel eventually became the name of God's chosen people. With this in mind, the people of Israel were identified as people who struggle *with God and humans and prevail*. The re-naming of Jacob established a new relationship between God and humanity. The concept of struggle was a mode of identification for God's people. To participate in God's inauguration of divine righteousness involves the willingness to suffer in the struggle of freedom (Cone, *A Theology of Black Liberation*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition 1990, 172). God's people struggle so that they can be reconciled to God through liberation. "This reconciliation comes through the restored humanity that can only be implemented through the reign of justice and love" (quoted in Hessel 1992, 60). In order to achieve this mission, there is a requirement to live in hopes of a future that does not yet exist. Maltbie Babcock wrote in the famous hymn *Be Strong!*, "Shun not the struggle, face it, 'tis God's gift. Be strong, be strong, be strong!" (Babcock 1901). The partial language used in hymns within the Baptist tradition is an injustice that needs to be addressed. Rectifying the prejudice can serve as a means of religiously educating the community to develop inclusive language.

It is critical that this affirmation in hymnody should come from those who are impacted by the Baptist liturgical experience. Paulo Freire notes that the historical task of the oppressed is to liberate themselves and the oppressor (Freire 2016, 44). As a precursor to liberation, the participants, both oppressor and oppressed, must reimagine the participatory roles. Only power that comes from weakness can be strong enough to liberate the oppressor. This is a sensitive place for the oppressed because they are faced with the responsibility to restore humanity, rather than reversing roles and oppressing the oppressor (Ibid). This kind of liberation can only come from the power of God. The oppressed "must bear witness to humanity's liberation by freeing the present from the past and for the future" (Cone, *God of the Oppressed* 1975, 151). This is a call to see creation in the eyes of the creator thus forging a divine connection that unveils a mirror, enabling one to see a reflection of oneself. That reflection should cross the boundaries of male supremacy, white supremacy, economic supremacy, denominational differences, and homophobia (Irvin 1996, 177).

Jesus' social standing; a poor Jewish member of a minority group in the midst of the dominant and powerful Roman Empire, included him in the oppressed group. He stood among the world's disinherited. Despite his social standing, the driving question for Jesus was: "under what terms is survival possible" (Thurman 1976, 20)? The religion of Jesus sought the survival of His people against the hardships they faced, and the key to that survival was maintaining their spiritual connection to God. He created a spiritual model for us to emulate; a connection to God as

Father/Mother and to seek justice and liberation for the oppressed. Similarly, the Catholic Social Teachings of Pope John XXII speak to the equality of men [and women].

45. When society is formed on a basis of rights and duties, men have an immediate grasp of spiritual and intellectual values, and have no difficulty in understanding what is meant by truth, justice, charity and freedom. They become, moreover, conscious of being members of such a society. And that is not all. Inspired by such principles, they attain to a better knowledge of the true God—a personal God transcending human nature. They recognize that their relationship with God forms the very foundation of their life—the interior life of the spirit, and the life which they live in the society of their fellows (Pope John XXIII 1963).

This teaching affirms that we have a social responsibility to participate in bringing about justice and liberation in the world. In fact, when we fail to act justly we are committing a social sin. To be conscious is to face the present realities that contain injustice, poverty, economic despair, discrimination, male dominance, and environmental ruin and be moved to action. When we ignore hymnal stanza's that are steeped in injustice, we fail to embrace the equality of men [and women] alike.

Since hymnal propensity of the Baptist liturgical experience is an essential element of worship, it can serve as the vehicle for liberation. Nullifying the implicit curriculum of white normativity in Baptist hymnody will be best approached through the lens of Religious Education. There is a tremendous opportunity to educate young people to live justly in the world. While many have ascribed to hymnody that domesticates, there is still the possibility of creating hymns that are inclusive so that the next generation can sing a new song full of inclusion and hope. Religious educators have an opportunity to re-imagine traditional hymnal elements in conversation with the unique experience of Black Americans. This creative tension presents a valuable opportunity to allow the hymnal tradition to take shape as practical theology through lived experience. It creates an opportunity to refresh and retain while simultaneously looking back in order to self-reflect.

Hymnal composers have an opportunity to broaden the liturgical experience by revitalizing hymnody, enhancing what already exists and placing it in context with personal experience. This calls for a renewed hymnal pedagogy in efforts to understand what the hymns have to say to us today. In order to bring about this change, hymnody must reflect the socioreligious experiences of **all** people in America and use language that affirms all (Cone, *God of the Oppressed* 1975, 16). In seeking to correct the injustice and offer a renewed view of darkness, the hymnal compilers have to affirm darkness by offering new insight. It would be counterproductive to use language to reduce “whiteness” to evil, but rather hymnody should affirm beauty in all hues (Freire 2016, 44). In fact, hymnody should highlight some of God’s great work that was done in darkness. Hymnody must call to remembrance, God creating the earth out of a dark formless void. In order to bring about sustainable liberation with a lasting impact, this praxis must be a model for all people in the struggle (Freire 2016, 54). Most importantly it ought to reduce the partiality to self-serving agendas and renounce the bondage of injustice (Hessel 1992, 44).

In a perfect world, the National Baptist Association would do an open call for Pastors, Theologians, Musicians, Gospel Artist and Religious Educators from African American, European American, Hispanic American, Native American, LGBTQ, Feminist and Womanist communities across America to gather and participate in revising “The New National Baptist Hymnal” which

has not been revised since 1977. In addition, the conveners should invite other denominations to the gathering and honor plurality by exploring differences. Once the community gathers to review the current hymnals and determine which hymns should be revised or replaced, they should develop a curriculum that guides the new hymnal language and addresses the social ills that impact the community. The curriculum should be executed in small groups. To ensure that people are moved to action, the curriculum should include an assignment that encourages the small group to develop a ministry project that addresses a social issue identified in the new hymnody. This would serve as an example of continuing God's work through human hands (Hessel 1992, 83).

Bibliography

- Babcock, Maltbie D. 1901. "Be Strong!" *Hymn Time*. Accessed March 10, 2013.
<http://www.hymntime.com/tch/htm/b/e/bestrong.htm>.
- Blumhofer, Edith L. 2004. *Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land: Hymnody in the History of North American Protestantism*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- Coates, Ta-Nehesi. 2014. "Blue Lives Matter." *The Atlantic*. December 22. Accessed May 8, 2018. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/12/blue-lives-matter-nypd-shooting/383977/>.
- Cone, James H. 1990. *A Theology of Black Liberation, Twentieth Anniversary Edition*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- . 1975. *God of the Oppressed*. New York: Orbis Books.
- Coogan, Michael D. 2001. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*. Third. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Costen, Melva Wilson. 1993. *African American Christian Worship*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Eisner, Elliot W. 1979. *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*. 3rd Edition. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.
- Freire, Paulo. 2016. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Hessel, Dieter T. 1992. *Social Ministry*. Louisville: Westminster/Jon Knox Press.
- Holland, Joe, and Peter Henriot, S.J. 1980. *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*. Washington, DC: Dove Communications and Orbis Books.
- Irvin, Dale T. 1996. "The Mission of Hospitality: To Open the Universe a Little more." In *The Aggitated Mind of God*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Joseph, Peniel E. 2017. "Why Black Lives Matter Still Matters." *New Republic* Vol. 248, Issue 5: 16-19.

- Lorde, Audre. 1984. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Crossing Press) 110-114.
- Lowry, Robert. 1876. *Hymnary.org*. Accessed May 12, 2018.
https://hymnary.org/text/what_can_wash_away_my_sin.
- Masingale, Rev. Bryan N. 2018. "'They Do Not Know It and Do Not Want to Know It': Racial Ignorance, James Baldwin, and the Authenticity of Christian Ethics." *James and Nancy Buckman Chair Lecture and Installation Lecture*. Bronx, NY: Fordham University Rose Hill Campus, February 27.
- Moran, Gabriel. 1989. *Religious Education As A Second Language*. Alabama: Religious Education Press.
- National Baptist Publishing Board. 1977. *New National Baptist Hymnal*. Nashville: Triad Publications.
- Norton, Kay. 2004. "Reading Between the Lines: Slaves, Women and Native Americans Reflected in a Southern Hymnal of 1810." In *Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land: Hymnody in the History of North American Protestantism*, by Edith L. Blumhofer and Mark A Noll, 39-63. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- Omo-Osagie II, Solomon Iyobosa. 2007. "'Their Souls Made Them Whole': Negro Spirituals and Lessons in Healing and Atonement." *The Western Journal of Black Studies* Vol. 31, No. 2: 34-41.
- Pope John XXIII. 1963. "Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth)." Par. 1-77, 147-150, 167.
- Spencer, Jon Michael. 1992. *Black Hymnody: A Hymnological History of the African-American Church*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press.
- Thurman, Howard. 1976. *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Williams, Delores S. 1993. *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*. New York: Orbis Books.
- Wink, Walter. 1988. "The Education of the Apostles: Mark's View of Human Transformation." *Religious Education* 83, no. 2: 277-290.

Dr. Jong Soo Park, University of Divinity, joshuahoju@gmail.com
"2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4"

Language Ideology and White Normativity in the Church: A Story of the Uniting Church in Australia

Abstract:

In this article I explored the correlation between language ideology behind linguistic inequality and white normativity in the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA). For this, I undertook literature review as a theoretical study and conducted in-depth written interviews with sixteen respondents who had been involved with the UCA at least for more than ten years. And then, I analyzed the UCA's identity as *the church as a pilgrim people* described in two significant documents from a socio-linguistic perspective to investigate how its language has been used within the church. As a result, I found that the language ideology of the UCA is still white-European centered, and suggested a comprehensive identity, *Second Peoples as migrants (gērîm)*, as a way to (re)fashion its language ideology to be more inclusive and multicultural.

Introduction

The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) is a Protestant denomination in Australia. According to the latest Australian Census held in 2016, the UCA is the third largest Christian denomination following the Catholic Church and the Anglican Church, and is the largest non-government provider of community and health services in Australia. The UCA was established in 1977 when three denominations came together: the Methodist Church of Australia, the Presbyterian Church of Australia, and the Congregational Union of Australia. The ecumenical spirit of the UCA was directly related to its policy of inclusion and anti-discrimination. The *Basis of Union*, the document that set the foundation of the union, declares, "It believes that Christians in Australia are called to bear witness to a unity of faith and life in Christ which transcends cultural and economic, national and racial boundaries, and to this end the Uniting Church commits itself to seek special relationship with Churches in Asia and the Pacific."¹

In 1985, the 4th Assembly of the UCA declared, "We are a multicultural church,"² and since then, it has endeavored to create an equal space for all culturally and linguistically

¹ *Basis of Union: Being the Final Revision Prepared by the Joint Commission on Church Union of the Congregational Union of Australia, the Methodist Church of Australia and the Presbyterian Church of Australia*, (Melbourne, Australia: Uniting Church in Australia, 1972; revised in 1992), paragraph 2.

² Uniting Church in Australia, "Multicultural and Cross Cultural Ministry ",

diverse groups and made efforts to provide non-English speaking people with opportunities to work in its congregations or agencies as ministers, deacons, or staff. However, when it comes to its higher leadership such as the president of the national assembly, the moderator of each state Synod, or the general secretary of the assembly and each Synod, it seems hard to say the UCA is a multicultural church. Since its establishment in 1977, there have been 16 presidents of the national assembly including the president-elect whose term will commence in July 2021, but there has not been a president with a non-Anglo or non-European background. The situation of the moderators of the six Synods is no different. For example, in the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, there has been only one non-Anglo moderator in its history. The Synod of South Australia has not had any non-White moderator while electing 19 moderators until the present. The cases of general secretary of the national assembly and each Synod are almost the same. How should we understand this white-dominance in the higher leadership of the UCA?

In relation to this matter, Swee-Ann Koh, Coordinator of Intercultural Community Development in the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, mentions racism in the church. He states, "Is there racism in the church? . . . I have witnessed – and heard from members of the minority groups within the UCA – that they have experienced racism and racial prejudice in our church."³ He insists that racism in the church is not personal but systemic; racism is like "a web of interlocking and reinforcing institutions that continue to privilege the dominant culture."⁴ For him, this systemic prejudice is a core reason for the white-dominance in the UCA. As an example of the structural intolerance, he shared his experiences of linguistic inequality within the church; he was rejected by some congregations due to his foreign accent. He reckons that such accent discrimination still occurs in the church consciously or unconsciously, and he claims that the UCA must be 'a multi accents church', in which various non-native accents should not be disadvantaged in anyway.

Linguistic inequality has been one of the primary forms of discrimination around the world.⁵ It happens subtly as a way of racial subordination or reinforcing majority privilege. Given that language has been used as an instrument of power,⁶ the language barrier seems to be closely related to the white normativity of the Uniting Church.⁷ However, until now there has been little research carried out on linguistic discrimination in the UCA. This paper will examine the correlation between language inequality and Anglo-dominance in the UCA. For

Uniting Church in Australia <https://assembly.uca.org.au/mcm/resources/assembly-resolutions-and-statements/item/1688-we-are-a-multicultural-church> (accessed August 28, 2015).

³ SweeAnn Koh, "Racism in the Church?", *Crosslight* <https://crosslight.org.au/2017/03/03/racism-in-the-church/> (accessed March 11, 2017).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Alexandre Duchêne, Melissa Moyer, and Celia Roberts, *Language, Migration and Social Inequalities: A Critical Sociolinguistic Perspective on Institutions and Work* (Bristol, UK: Language Mobility Institutions, 2013), 12.

⁶ Reginald Oh, "Discrimination and Distrust: A Critical Linguistic Analysis of the Discrimination Concept," *Journal of Constitutional Law* 7:3, (February, 2005): 837.

⁷ Douglas A. Kibbee, *Language and the Law: Linguistic Inequality in America* (Cambridge, UK: University Printing House, 2016), 3.

this, I will focus on language ideology behind linguistic discrimination and analyze the way language is used within the church, through investigating the meaning of the UCA's identity, *the church as a pilgrim people*, in two critical documents: the Basis of Union and the Vision Statement (2016-2022) of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (the Vic/Tas Synod). Through this analysis, I will provide clues about the language ideology of the UCA, and suggest how to make a step further in creating a brave space in the UCA beyond its white normativity.

Methodology

I undertook a literature review as a theoretical study and conducted in-depth written interviews as qualitative research. I selected sixteen respondents, fourteen ministers and two ordination candidates, to listen to their voices about the matter of language and equality in the UCA, using as criteria: gender, age, ethnicity, and duration of service. Considering the limited scope of this paper, I chose the Vic/Tas Synod as the research site.⁸ I conducted written interviews with all participants, and when necessary, had additional conversations for clarification of their interview answers. All names of participants mentioned in this paper are pseudonyms. To improve the validity and credibility of the data I used two strategies: the constant comparative method and member-checking. First, I analysed coded materials in detail by using the constant comparative method that focuses on explicit coding and repeated readings within and across coded materials not only for collecting data, but also for discovering insights and implications through deep analysis of the data. I also examined the adequacy and accuracy of my data interpretation through member-checking, through which each respondent could confirm whether my analysis and interpretation of their interviews accorded with their original sharing.

Literature Review on Language and Equality

According to a UN report in 2013, more than 232 million people live or work in a country where they were not born, which shows that we live in a global village.⁹ Australia is one of the most multicultural societies in the world. The 2016 Australian Census reports that 26 % of all Australians were born overseas. This dynamic cultural mix is directly connected

⁸ Among sixteen respondents, thirteen were the UCA ministers involved with the Vic/Tas Synod, two were the UCA ordination candidates, and one had served the UCA for a long time and recently transferred to another denomination. Nine were congregational ministers at the time of interview, and five institutional ministers working in the Presbytery, Synod, or Assembly. Ten were males and six females; two was older than 60, seven between 51-60 years old, six between 41-50 years old, and one younger than 40. Eleven were non-native English speakers and five native English speakers; among eleven non-native speakers, seven migrated from Asian countries such as China, Indonesia, Korea, Singapore and Sri Lanka, while four came from the islands of Polynesia such as Tonga and Samoa. All sixteen participants had long been involved with the UCA; six had served the UCA more than 30 years, six more than 20 years and four more than 10 years.

⁹ Marcello Russo, Gazi Islam, and Burak Koyuncu, "Non-Native Accents and Stigma: How Self-Fulfilling Prophecies Can Affect Career Outcomes," *Human Resource Management Review* 30, (December 2016): 1.

to using diverse languages in Australia. More than one in five Australians (21 %) speak languages other than English at home, and the number of non-native English speakers has steadily increased.¹⁰ In this multilingual context within an English-dominant country, the matter of language inequality has been highlighted as a critical issue of discrimination as in other multicultural nations.

Douglas Kibbee claims that language is a critical barrier to equality and justice; he says “we judge others by their language and through our language. Language is a fundamental inequality of any society. This is all the more so in a multi-ethnic society at a time of mass migrations.”¹¹ Language has been a primary means for oppressing the marginalized and perpetuating discriminatory situations.¹² For, as Reginald Oh claims, language is directly related to power. Oh argues that “whoever controls the linguistic terms of the debate also controls and frames the debate according to terms more favorable to his or her substantive position.”¹³ However, the way linguistic discrimination occurs is ambiguous.¹⁴ Linguistic inequality is regarded as illegitimate and irrational, but it tends to be accepted as *inevitable* in the name of efficiency. Jonathan Pool argues that this ambivalence is (re)made due to vagueness. He says that when notions like equality and discrimination are applied to language, those concepts tend to be used ambiguously and inconsistently because they are entangled with the matter of vested interests.¹⁵ Kibbee clarifies the matter of ambiguity by dividing discriminatory treatments into two categories: *disparate treatment* and *disparate impact*. Disparate treatment is done with discriminatory intent, while disparate impact is a discriminatory effect resulting from some practice or policy seemingly unrelated to

¹⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Cultural Diversity: Who We Are Now", *Australian Bureau of Statistics* <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/2024.0Main%20Features22016> (accessed August 11, 2017).

¹¹ Kibbee, *Language and the Law*, 183.

¹² The UN Human Rights Committee makes it clear that language is one of the primary bases of discrimination as follows: “[T]he term ‘discrimination’ as used in the Covenant should be understood to imply any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference which is based on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, and which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by all persons, on an equal footing, of all rights and freedoms.” See UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), "CCPR General Comment No. 18: Non-Discrimination", *UN Human Rights Committee (HRC)* <http://www.refworld.org/docid/453883fa8.html> (accessed July 21, 1989).

¹³ Oh: 837.

¹⁴ Babatola Oyetayo, "An Appraisal of Language Discrimination on Accommodation in Ibadan," *Studies in Literature and Language* 13, 6 (2016): 15.

¹⁵ Jonathan Pool, "Thinking About Linguistic Discrimination," *Language Problems and Language Planning* 11, (1987): 4.

discrimination.¹⁶ He insists that the range of discriminatory acts in both intent and/or impact is broad and infinite, and it is extremely hard to prove when language is involved.¹⁷

The difference in the dominant language is often recognized by the way people speak, that is, their accent or manner of speaking. Historically, discrimination based on accent has occurred in diverse forms. We can find examples even in the Bible. The narrative in Judges 12 is one of them. In the scripture Jephthah, a Judge, called the men of Gilead and fought against the Ephraimite due to the debate regarding the war against the Ammonites. The army of Jephthah struck down the men of Ephraim, and killed even runaway troops. The Gileadites singled out Ephraimite fugitives by their accent. The passage records the situation like this: "Whenever one of the fugitives of Ephraim said, 'Let me go over,' the men of Gilead would say to him . . . 'Then say Shibboleth,' and he said, 'Sibboleth,' for he could not pronounce it right. Then they seized him and killed him."¹⁸ This story is an example illustrating how difference of accent has been used as a means for discrimination, oppression, or even genocide for a long time.

In today's multicultural societies formed by massive migration, the non-native accent is still the target of various stereotypes, depreciation, and unfairness. For instance, people might assume that non-native speakers are less educated, less competent, less professional and less attractive.¹⁹ As a result, those with foreign accents tend to be easily underestimated and disadvantaged especially when they seek a job or a promotion.²⁰ Beatrice Bich-Dao Nguyen researched the matter of accent discrimination at work in the US. She maintains that many non-native English speaking migrants, white-collar professionals or blue-collar laborers, have suffered from overt or covert adverse treatment based on their accents, which had a bad influence on their psychological and/or occupational well-being in the new land.²¹ The research of Anne-Sophie Deprez-Sims and Scott Morris also reveals how important applicants' accents are in job interviews in America.²² Stephanie Lindemann studied native English speakers' perception of foreign accent and her research shows that foreign English accents are hierarchised by the majority's judgement on race, culture or region. For example, Western European accents were regarded as more friendly and pleasant to listen to than Asian

¹⁶ Kibbee, *Language and the Law*, 165-166.

¹⁷ Ibid., 6.

¹⁸ Judges 12:5-6 (New Revised Standard Version).

¹⁹ Alexandra Kozlowski, "The Influence of Accents on Social Perception," *Inkblot* 4, (September 2015): 13-14.

²⁰ Laura Cerrato, "Accent Discrimination in the US: A Hindrance to Your Employment and Career Development?" (Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, 2017), 3.

²¹ Beatrice Bich-Dao Nguyen, "Accent Discrimination and the Test of Spoken English: A Call for an Objective Assessment of the Comprehensibility of Nonnative Speakers," *California Law Review* 81, 5 (October 1993): 1325-1329.

²² Anne-Sophie Deprez-Sims and Scott Morris, "Accents in the Workplace: Their Effects During a Job Interview," *International Journal of Psychology* 45, 6 (December 2010): 417-426.

or Eastern European ones.²³ Lindemann reports that those responses were closely connected to participants' bias toward race, country, region, or culture.²⁴ Likewise, language inequality is a very complicated issue and intertwined with other discriminatory stereotypes and prejudices.

Alexander Duchêne, Melissa Moyer and Celia Roberts made a further step in investigating the dynamic relationship between language and equality focusing on the language ideology of institutions and workplaces. Language ideologies are conceptions about language that speakers have in the society or community.²⁵ For them, institutions and workplaces are "realms where the daily lives of migrants are regimented and controlled."²⁶ They argue that language is used as a means of power across and beyond workplaces for selection, control and manipulation of non-native English speakers. In this process, the operation of language is closely intertwined with institutional ideologies or identity. The processes of exclusion are based on a person's linguistic competence, but they are greatly influenced by the linguistic ideology of institutions and workplaces.²⁷ They claim that linguistic discriminations that occurred in institutions and workplaces are *ideological practices* as follows:

This is carried out through the economic value and exchange or the commodification of language and identity, the hierarchisation of languages or the (non)-recognition of crucial multilingual practices. So, these environments can be called 'ideological sites' – 'institutional sites of social practice as both object and modality of ideological

²³ Stephanie Lindemann, "Who Speaks 'Broken English'? US Undergraduates' Perceptions of Non-Native English," *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 15, 2 (2005): 192, 194.

²⁴ Ibid., 210-211. Rahul Chakraborty, Amy Louise Schwarz, and Prasiddh Chakraborty also studied of perception of non-native accent with people in area of speech language pathology (SLP). They found that even SLP professionals had diverse stereotypes against those speaking English as the second language. See Rahul Chakraborty, Amy Louise Schwarz, and Prasiddh Chakraborty, "Perception of Nonnative Accent: A Cross-Sectional Perspective Pilot Survey," *International Journal of Society, Culture and Language* 5, 2 (2017): 27-34.

²⁵ Ingrid Piller defines language ideology like this: "Language ideologies are best understood as beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language that are socially shared and relate language and society in a dialectical fashion." See *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2015), s.v. "Language Ideologies." Natalia Ganuza and Christina Hedman proved that language ideologies are easily reproduced by educators through explicit, hidden, or null curricula. See Natalia Ganuza and Christina Hedman, "Ideology vs. Practice: Is There a Space for Translanguaging in Mother Tongue Instruction?," in *New Perspectives on Translanguaging and Education*, ed. BethAnne Paulsruud et al. (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2017), 209.

²⁶ Churches are one of those institutions/workplaces that control and regiment newcomers in many ways. Duchêne, Moyer, and Roberts, *Language, Migration and Social Inequalities*, 1.

²⁷ Ibid., 2-4.

expression. In such sites, for example, the job selection interview, the talk and text is both ideologically framed and also functions to defend and (re)produce existing ideologies of power.²⁸

Their insights reveal clearly that linguistic discrimination is a matter of structural and ideological inequality and exclusion, which is the essence of the problem. However, in many cases, ethnic minorities are easily demanded to regard the language issue as a personal problem and to focus on the self to improve their linguistic abilities such as fluency and accent. They are also normally expected to make their attitude and behavior fit the norms of particular institutions. This advice or criticism is most likely to perpetuate the discriminatory culture and legitimate the privileges of native speakers.²⁹ Of course, improving linguistic competence and understanding institutional norms are crucial for individual migrants to work properly and contribute fruitfully in their workplaces, but if the dynamic is limited only to personal dimension, the problem of linguistic inequality will remain a blind spot hidden by its taken-for-grantedness and transparency. Thus, conceptualizing the structures and ideologies of language inequality within particular organizations should be the first step in overcoming the invisible injustice. Pool contends, “Conceptualizing an injustice helps measure it; measuring it helps prove it; and proving it helps redress it. So, clarifying ‘linguistic inequality’ may make linguistic equality easier to achieve.”³⁰

Language and Equality within the Uniting Church in Australia

How do UCA people think or feel about the matter of language and fairness within the church? At the question of the level of linguistic inequality within the UCA, eleven respondents said that they had felt the level of linguistic inequality within the UCA is serious (7-10 out of 10), and five answered that we need continual attention to the issue (5-6 out of 10). Rachel, a 39-year-old non-native speaker, said that the English-only culture in the church has sometimes made her feel incompetent or inferior.³¹ Matthew, a 59-year-old non-native speaker, maintained that language discrimination within the church still happens in a very subtle way.³² Ron, a 55-year-old native speaker, experienced that many of non-English-speaking people are suffering from feelings of disempowerment, uncertainty and discomfort.³³ Michael, a 52-year-old non-native speaker, had also experienced linguistic inequality within the UCA, but he felt it was not necessarily a problem nor a barrier because the language was never designed for equality. For better communication, he argued, ethnic minorities as well as native speakers must have willingness to listen and understand each other.³⁴

²⁸ Ibid., 8.

²⁹ Ibid., 10-11.

³⁰ Pool: 6.

³¹ Rachel, interviewed by author, Victoria, Australia, July 26, 2018.

³² Matthew, interviewed by author, Victoria, Australia, Aug 1, 2018.

³³ Ron, interviewed by author, Victoria, Australia, July 27, 2018.

³⁴ Michael, interviewed by author, Victoria, Melbourne, August 4, 2018.

It is noted that many interview participants connected the issue of language to the current white-dominant leadership in the church. Jenny, a 60-year-old native speaker, reckoned that linguistic inequality exists in the UCA especially when it comes to leadership and decision making processes.³⁵ Ian, a 56-year-old non-native speaker, claimed that English proficiency has been as a significant gatekeeper in the selection of the UCA leadership.³⁶ Ted, a 49-year-old native speaker, argued that people with a non-mainstream use of English had been excluded from policy-making groups and denominational leadership.³⁷ However, Michael asserted that it is not only the problem of language, but also the inability of migrants to fulfill the tasks that the position demands.³⁸ Robert, a 64-year-old non-native speaker, mentioned the indifference of the CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) communities to the governance and polity of the UCA as another reason for the white-led leadership.³⁹ Jenny said that language proficiency is inevitable in the selection of church leaders, but a countermeasure is needed for a certain number of non-native English speakers to join and be a voice in the leadership group.⁴⁰

Most respondents thought that linguistic inequality is directly connected to other discriminations and prejudices within the Anglo-European centered culture. Dianne, a 58-year-old non-native speaker, claimed that linguistic inequality is not only about the matter of language but also about the white-dominant culture.⁴¹ Ian argued that the real issue behind linguistic inequality is race discrimination within the church.⁴² Steve, a 45-year-old native speaker, agreed that linguistic inequality is far more complicated than just language. He claimed that “the deeper issues are around entitlement, institutional structure and power given to people who understand management, governance and polity.”⁴³ Ted’s sharing of his linguistic inequality experience was surprising to me. Ted is a native English-speaking person, but he thought that he was discriminated against his use of Aboriginal English. He said, “My language is what you might call ‘low-registered’ Aboriginal English. I think my use of it has excluded me from many ministry opportunities.”⁴⁴ Ted’s story reveals that linguistic inequality within the UCA is not just the matter of accents or limited expressions, but seems to be intertwined with the white normativity of the church.⁴⁵

³⁵ Jenny, interviewed by author, Victoria, Australia, July 27, 2018.

³⁶ Ian, interviewed by author, Victoria, Australia, July 27, 2018.

³⁷ Ted, interviewed by author, Victoria, Australia, July 20, 2018.

³⁸ Michael, interview.

³⁹ Robert, interviewed by author, Victoria, Australia, August 1 2018.

⁴⁰ Jenny, interview.

⁴¹ Dianne, interviewed by author, Victoria, Australia, August 6, 2018.

⁴² Ian, interview.

⁴³ Steve, interviewed by author, Victoria, Australia, July 28, 2018.

⁴⁴ Ted, interview.

⁴⁵ About discrimination within the UCA, some of the interview participants shared their experiences of disparate treatment or impact, and others told stories of their friends or colleagues. For instance, James, a 48-year-old non-native speaker, shared his story about

The experiences of the two candidate respondents about language and equality at the UCA's theological school might be another example showing the correlation between linguistic inequality and white normativity within the church.⁴⁶ One of them (Cand.A) provided a story that a professor told ethnic candidates not to use their ethnic languages at school as it could exclude English-speaking people. However, Cand.A said that it would be native speakers who exclude ethnic candidates by speaking too fast, using unfamiliar slang or idioms, showing an impatient attitude toward broken English or easily ignoring different theological perspectives.⁴⁷ Another candidate (Cand.B) has felt uncomfortable whenever talking to other English-speaking candidates due to her language incompetence; for Cand.B it was hard to feel a sense of companionship from native speakers.⁴⁸ Their experiences were not new; other ethnic ministers who completed the candidate course shared similar feelings that they had at school. We cannot generalize their feelings, but their experiences could be significant indicators to the English-only and white-European dominant culture of the UCA's theological training, in which the white-centered structure and leadership of the UCA seem to begin to form.

Many respondents believed that the white dominance and normativity of the UCA is a by-product of its white-centered theology. It is noted that some connected its Anglo-European theology to colonial theology. Margaret, a 55-year-old native speaker, diagnosed that many linguistic or cultural prejudices and stereotypes found in the church seem to be related to white colonial ideology.⁴⁹ As an example of the colonial theological marks in the UCA, Judy, a 58-year-old non-native speaker, mentioned that there are still theological stereotypes or generalization toward ethnic migrants in the church; for instance, many Anglo-European leaders and members tend to view migrant communities as conservative or fundamental.⁵⁰ Peter, a 58 year-old non-native speaker, also insisted that one of the key factors for the UCA's white-dominant culture is its Anglo-European theological approach. He thought it urgent to change its white-centered theology to facilitate multiculturalism within the church.⁵¹

The issue of colonial theology in the UCA is a controversial topic. There would be huge disagreement about whether its theological approach is still colonial or how its colonial theological marks have been expressed in the church life. To address those issues is beyond

the experience he had in his placement regarding his cultural costume; one member said to him that he should wear Australian clothes in Australia. Judy shared a story of one of her ethnic colleagues who was excluded from leading a church member's funeral service in the church by the deceased's family. For Rachel, ethnic ministers are vulnerable to discrimination by the local community where their churches are located. See James, interviewed by author, Victoria, Australia, July 24, 2018.; Judy, interviewed by author, Victoria, Australia, July 27, 2018.; Rachel, interview.

⁴⁶ To protect privacy, I will not use the candidate respondents' gender, age, and even their pseudonyms in this paper.

⁴⁷ Cand.A, interviewed by author, Victoria, Australia, July 20-31, 2018.

⁴⁸ Cand.B, interviewed by author, Victoria, Australia, July 20-31, 2018.

⁴⁹ Margaret, interviewed by author, Victoria, Australia, July 28, 2018.

⁵⁰ Judy, interview.

⁵¹ Peter, interviewed by author, Victoria, Australia, July 26, 2018.

the limits of this paper. However, what is remarkable is that mentions of colonial theology in interviews seem to be connected to the matter of language ideology. A considerable number of participants believed that beliefs, feelings or ideologies about languages used in the UCA are still colonial or white-centered; for them, colonial or westernized theological concepts, languages, or ideologies are a crucial factor for white-dominant culture of the church. Their arguments are supported by Kathryn Woolard's thinking of language ideology. She explains that language ideology is *a mediating link* between the beliefs about language and social/cultural systems.⁵² From the same vein, as we mentioned earlier, Duchêne, Moyer and Roberts analyzed language inequality as ideological practices.⁵³

This seems a primary reason that many interviewees said that the UCA has a long way to go to be multicultural as it has declared since 1985. Margaret said that we are only just beginning to learn and name our dominant white colonial approach.⁵⁴ Dianne contended that most influential positions are still held mainly by the dominant group in the UCA, so there are many things to progress.⁵⁵ Steve argued that the multiculturalism of the UCA does not seem to accord with its language ideology. As a result, many different terms regarding multicultural ministry, such as 'multicultural,' 'crosscultural,' and 'intercultural,' have been used inconsistently, which have confused the church. He asserted, "Multicultural ministry in the UCA is still seen as tokenism rather than an essential part of the witness and life of the church."⁵⁶ From the same perspective, Ted defined the UCA as a *rhetorical church* that means that its practices are different from its statements. For him, its language ideology about equality, justice, or inclusivity is still white-European.⁵⁷

Language Ideology of the Uniting Church in Australia

Then, how can the UCA be a culturally and linguistically equal community rather than being a *rhetorical church*? How can its multiculturalism be a channel for creating a brave space, not just a political slogan? These are big questions and there are lots of things to be discussed. Considering the limits of this article, I will focus on exploring the language ideology of the UCA behind its white-dominant culture and structure causing linguistic inequality. Conceptualizing its language ideology could be a significant step for developing the church to be more inclusive and multicultural. For this, I will investigate the UCA's identity described in two important documents from a socio-linguistic perspective.

First, we need to explore the *Basis of Union (BoU)*, the platform for the historic union of the three different denominations – the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. The document is still the pivot of the UCA's identity, governance and polity. Then,

⁵² Kathryn A. Woolard, "Language Ideology: Issues and Approaches," *International Pragmatics Association* 2, 3 (2010): 235.

⁵³ Duchêne, Moyer, and Roberts, *Language, Migration and Social Inequalities*, 7-9.

⁵⁴ Margaret, interview.

⁵⁵ Dianne, interview.

⁵⁶ Steve, interview.

⁵⁷ Ted, interview.

how does the *Basis of Union* define the UCA? The BoU makes it clear that the UCA pursues “living and working within the faith and unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.”⁵⁸ And, it defines the church as “a pilgrim people (who) are on the way towards a promised goal.”⁵⁹ In the last paragraph, the BoU equates the pilgrim people with the people of God on the journey of faith.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, except for these mentions, there is no further explanation of who the pilgrim people are in the document. However, considering that the BoU was written on the rich heritages of the three Anglo-Celtic Churches, it would not be hard to assume that the church as a pilgrim people here means the Anglo-European. For its theological concepts and languages are deeply rooted in Anglo-European thoughts, which have formed a certain ideology and identity for the UCA.⁶¹

We can take what Davis McCaughey mentioned on the BoU as an example of it. In 1994 at a lecture of the formation of the document McCaughey, the first president of the UCA and a principal author of the BoU, revisited the document focusing on its language. He argued that the BoU “invites us to learn a certain language, the language or languages in which faith has been passed on from generation to generation.”⁶² For an instance of that language, he talked about the literate tradition of the church emphasized in the document, in which religious experience is little mentioned.⁶³ At this, the literate tradition Davis referred to is the Anglo-European literate tradition based on the early creeds of the church. Investigating the whole document from the perspective of language ideology is beyond the scope of this article, but the fact that its concepts and languages are based on the Anglo-European heritages provides us a significant clue to the language ideology of the UCA.

Furthermore, given that the text was written and finalized during the period of the White Australia Policy,⁶⁴ a revision of the BoU should be seriously considered to clarify its

⁵⁸ Basis of Union: Being the Final Revision Prepared by the Joint Commission on Church Union of the Congregational Union of Australia, the Methodist Church of Australia and the Presbyterian Church of Australia, paragraph 2.

⁵⁹ Ibid., paragraph 3.

⁶⁰ Ibid., paragraph 18.

⁶¹ Kari Gibson has provided a critical analysis of how language and identity are related. For her, identity formation cannot be separated from language use. She argued that “Language – both code and content – is a complicated dance between internal and external interpretations of our identity.” See Kari Gibson, “English Only Court Cases Involving the U.S. Workplace: The Myths of Language Use and the Homogenization of Bilingual Workers’ Identities,” *Second Language Studies* 22(2), Spring 2004 (2004): 1.

⁶² Davis McCaughey, “The Formation of the Basis of Union,” in *Fresh Words and Deeds: The McCaughey Papers*, ed. P. Matheson and C. Mostert (Melbourne, AUS: David Lovell, 2004), 14.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ The *White Australian Policy* means the Australian government’s policies and laws to exclude non-European people from immigrating to Australia. Those policies were progressively dismantled from 1949 by the Menzies Government and finally ended by the Whitlam Government in 1973. See Neville Meaney, “The End of ‘White Australia’ and Australia’s Changing Perceptions of Asia, 1945-1990,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 49, 2 (1995): 172-182.

identity as a multicultural church. The first revision was made in 1992 with the desire of incorporating gender-inclusive language,⁶⁵ while a second revision looks necessary for using culture-inclusive language and developing its own multicultural theology. The revision of the document would need lots of researches and discussions, but it is in the spirit of the BoU to keep revising the document to be suitable for the changing church. McCaughey said that the BoU ends “with a prayer for correction,” which means that it is always open to being reassessed and reshaped.⁶⁶ He even claimed that being a member of the UCA is to raise questions of the *Basis of Union* continually with the eyes of an insider as well as an outsider; an insider’s question would be ‘*What did it and what does it mean?*,’ while ‘*Is it true?*’ is from an outsider’s perspective.⁶⁷

In this respect, the new vision of the Vic/Tas Synod of the UCA is remarkable in that it made a further step to provide a clearer identity of the church as a pilgrim people. The vision statement adopted by the Vic/Tas Synod in 2016 is as follows:

Following Christ,
walking together
as First and Second Peoples,
seeking community, compassion
and justice for all creation.⁶⁸

This statement highlights the nomadic life and vocation of a pilgrim people through three verbs, ‘following,’ ‘walking,’ and ‘seeking,’ which again confirm the UCA’s identity as a pilgrim people. Especially, the expression, ‘walking together as First and Second Peoples,’ is noteworthy. It acknowledges the right and sovereignty of the Indigenous peoples – Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders – through the terminology *First Peoples*. By focusing on the act, *walking together*, the vision emphasizes reconciliation with one another.⁶⁹ However, unfortunately, there is no further account of Second Peoples; who are they? The paper of theological reflection on the vision also does not explain exactly who Second Peoples are. The reflection seems to equate Second Peoples with Anglo-European settlers and their descendants. It says, “We feel the weight of history and injustice between First and

⁶⁵ Norman Young, "The Theological Convictions of the Basis of Union of the Uniting Church," *PACIFICA* 25, (2012): 288.

⁶⁶ McCaughey, 13.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 18-19. Norman Young also maintained that the church must be ready to be regenerated in the changing contexts constantly asking questions like, “Are we facing the world or just facing one another?; Are those who value the traditions of the past and cherish them equally prepared to confess the Faith afresh in the present?” See Young: 294-5.

⁶⁸ Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, *Introducing the Vision and Mission Principles: Information and Exercises to Help Focus on God's Mission* (Melbourne, AUS: Uniting Church in Australia, 2017), 4.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 10.

Second Peoples crying out for attention,”⁷⁰ and it looks to be written from the Anglo-European perspective. For the relationship between the Indigenous people and ethnic migrants and/or refugees is entirely different. At this point, we can find another clue to the language ideology of the UCA.

In that vision, where can migrants and refugees stand? How would ethnic minority people walk together with First Peoples? How would they voice the journey of reconciliation in this land with their particular status? The new vision statement, and its information and theological reflection are silent on these questions as if ethnic communities do not exist within the church. In this regard, Judy criticized the notion of Second Peoples in the vision as follows:

The linguistically diverse communities are placed together with the Anglo (dominant culture) to confess and lament the burden of Australian History – the colonisation of the past, the stolen generation, the lack of recognition of First People as citizens, the Sovereignty of the First People, the Covenant with the First People; yet I believe new and emerging migrants know little the fullness of the Australian history. I believe the migrant communities walking with First People may look different, because we know what it is like to be colonised. . . .

How would the migrant communities have a voice in what it means to walk together with the First People? The Second People for me lumps everyone – Historical colonizers with recent migrants (different lived experiences); yet appears to be ‘pained’ with the same brush. Although the vision may look great on paper, the reality is the migrant voices are limited or never enacted.⁷¹

Peter also mentioned that the concept of Second Peoples in the vision statement disadvantages migrants and refugees. From his point of view, the terminology should be revisited and clarified more holistically, so that the culturally and linguistically diverse communities within the church may also be recognized and properly voiced.⁷² Then, how should we define the term *Second Peoples*? Finding a right meaning is not just the matter of definition, but a significant step for overcoming the white-dominant culture and structure of the UCA. For the way the words are used might perpetuate white normativity or weaken it within the church. For this, I propose a biblical concept, *gēr / gērîm*, to describe the concept of Second Peoples inclusively.

A Comprehensive Identity: Second Peoples as *gēr / gērîm*

In the Old Testament the term *gēr* (singular form) and *gērîm* (plural form) are found in various books. These concepts signify migrant(s), refugee(s), sojourner(s) or outsider(s) leaving or being uprooted from their hometowns. According to Sungjae Kim, *gēr* and *gērîm*

⁷⁰ Geoff Thompson and John Flett, *Theological Reflections on the Vision and Mission Principles* (Melbourne, AUS: Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, 2016), 2, Meeting paper at Major Strategic Review.

⁷¹ Judy, interview.

⁷² Peter, interview.

were used 92 times and *gûr*, their verbal form, was used 81 times in the Hebrew Bible.⁷³ Kim analyzed how these notions were related to the identity of the Israelite people and their traditions of social justice through a story from the Hezekian regime. According to historical and archaeological research findings, the population in Jerusalem rapidly expanded during the reign of Hezekiah in the late 8th century due to the mass immigration caused by the Assyrian invasion. As a result, there were social tensions and conflicts between native people and newcomers in the city of Jerusalem. King Hezekiah faced a big problem in how to deal with it, and finally decided to accept all migrants and refugees by declaring in Exodus 22:21: “You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.”⁷⁴

At this sentence, the Hebrew word translated into ‘a resident alien’ is *gēr*, while the original word translated into ‘aliens’ is *gērîm*. It is remarkable that there are two different usages of *you* in the text. The first ‘you’ is singular along with *gēr* and the second ‘you’ is plural like *gērîm*, which shows the expansion of the first ‘you.’ The first ‘you’ means native Israelites living in Jerusalem, and in the second ‘you’ native people are connected with strangers as migrants (*gērîm*).⁷⁵ What made this identity extension? From the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Israelite people were migrants or sojourners in the land of Canaan and Egypt; this fact made “a comprehensive identity” to embrace strangers as their neighbours.⁷⁶ Kim interpreted this story as follows:

[The *gēr* / *gērîm*] text articulates a theological paradigm to encouraging ethic of co-habitation between natives and aliens on the same space through prompting remembrance of historical and existential memory as *gēr* / *gērîm* inscribed in self-selves. Remembrance of self/selves as *gēr* / *gērîm* leads to ethic of loving aliens like self/selves. In other words, it is the concept of *gēr* / *gērîm* that transforms land into cohabitant space for people within and without border.⁷⁷

Likewise, identity as *gēr* / *gērîm* of the Israel people was a channel for creating a space of co-habitation or co-existence in which reconciliation between natives and strangers took place. This story gives us an insight into how to overcome the white-dominant culture within the church; as the Israel people did, we must remember we were/are all migrants, refugees, or sojourners. Historically, except for the Indigenous Peoples, all Second Peoples in Australia are migrants or migrants’ descendants whether they are in the majority or minority. Thus, the passage of Exodus 22:21 is not only applied to the Israelites, but also for us all. This scripture shows well our identity and responsibility that we must remember. So, I suggest that the concept of Second Peoples in the vision of the Vic/Tas Synod needs to contain that comprehensive identity as migrants (*gērîm*).

The information booklet for the Vision and Mission Principles published by the Vic/Tas Synod explains the part of ‘Walking Together as First and Second Peoples’ as

⁷³ Sungjae Kim, "God of Migrants and Migrants with God Towards Peace-Making," *CTC Bulletin* 22, 3 (2006): 36.

⁷⁴ Exodus 22:21 (New Revised Standard Version).

⁷⁵ Kim: 41-42.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 37-42.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 42.

follows: “Walking together speaks of the hope we have for reconciliation with God, and with one another, that we might experience fullness of life lived in companionship.”⁷⁸ It says that ‘experiencing fullness of life lived in companionship’ is a result or a purpose in walking together. However, a sense of companionship is a critical condition for walking together and reconciliation. How can we walk together or be reconciled to each other without a sense of companionship? And, how can we develop a sense of friendship if we are segregated or categorized racially, culturally, or linguistically? If we cannot share a comprehensive identity, it will be extremely hard to walk together with a sense of companionship. As a result, the vision might become another rhetorical statement. Thus, to confess that we were/are all migrants is essential. When we walk together as Second Peoples as migrants (*gērīm*), true friendship and reconciliation might occur between all Second Peoples. Then, all Second Peoples can be connected rather than being segregated or hierarchised; and then, ethnic minorities can nurture a sense of companionship and find a space to collaborate together. This reconciliation between Second Peoples will have a positive impact on the relationship with First Peoples.

What is remarkable is that forming a comprehensive identity as migrants needs an intentional effort to depart from our own culture and re-define the self. Miroslav Volf accounts for this effort as the process of *de-centering* and *re-centering*.⁷⁹ What is the process of de-centering and re-centering? He takes Galatians 2:19-20 as an example showing the process: “For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.”⁸⁰ Here, the Apostle Paul is trying to re-centre himself in Christ so as to have a new center by being de-centered through being crucified with Christ. In this process, de-centering happens first, that is, being nailed to the cross, and then re-centering will follow and create a new centre. Volf names this new centre as “*a de-centered center*.”⁸¹ For him, the process of de-centering and re-centering is the way to accept others, which is the core mission of Christians. Identifying ourselves as migrants (*gērīm*) is a de-centering act, through which we can find a de-centered center, a space in which we are equal, respected, and recognized in Christ.

At this point, we must remember that not only the majority but also minorities should de-center and re-center themselves constantly as many ethnic people have also been colonized historically or socially and have tended to judge others from that perspective. For example, Matthew shared that he grew up in a colonized society, in which people were likely to rate others according to their skin colour or English competency. He had to train himself to break the colonial mindset.⁸² The de-centering and re-centering acts will provide us with a

⁷⁸ Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, *Introducing the Vision and Mission Principles*, 10.

⁷⁹ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 69-71.

⁸⁰ Galatians 2:19-20 (New Revised Standard Version).

⁸¹ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 70-71. Volf argues that the de-centering is the flip side of re-centering.

⁸² Matthew, interview. A number of non-Anglo respondents also said that sometimes they feel superior to those speaking English poorly. Michael’s sharing was an example of it. He said that he received more unfair and discriminatory treatment from his non-English speaking colleagues than Anglo ones. His experiences looked to be an effect

catholic cultural identity. For Volf, catholic cultural identity is recognition that a stable cultural ‘we’ is intertwined with a stable cultural ‘them’ by a common destiny, so should cooperate for creating a space to walk and thrive together.⁸³ He explains catholic cultural identity as follows:

The distance from our own culture [de-centering] . . . loosen the grip of our culture on us and enable us to live with its fluidity and affirm its hybridity. Other cultures are not a threat to the pristine purity of our cultural identity, but a potential source of its enrichment. Inhabited by people who are courageous enough not simply to belong, intersecting and overlapping cultures can mutually contribute to the dynamic vitality of each.⁸⁴

Conclusion

Linguistic inequality is far more complex than just the matter of language; it is ideological expressions directly intertwined with institutional identity. The white dominance and normativity found in the UCA cannot be separated from its identity and language ideology. In this article I have explored the UCA’s identity, *the church as a pilgrim people*, with a socio-linguistic perspective, and found that its language use is still Anglo-European dominant. This white-centered identity and language ideology, whether they are still colonial as some respondents argued or not, have made diverse barriers to equality and fairness within the church consciously or unconsciously. If we keep regarding this structural and ideological issue just as personal and linguistic problems, a real multicultural space cannot be created in us. Thus, we must recognize how language is used within the UCA and try to transform its language usage to be more intercultural and inclusive. As a concrete way we need to comprehensively expand our identity to embrace all races and cultures. For this, I suggested the concept of *Second Peoples as migrants (gērīm)*.

It is extremely hard to change the structure and system of an institution and it is even harder to transform its culture and the way it has operated. However, as Robert claimed, we should keep raising our voices and making efforts together to (re)fashion the UCA to be braver and safer for all people before God.⁸⁵ I hope this paper will be pump-priming for further research for this challenging journey. In this process, the role of religious education seems critical as it should continually educate people to recognize invisible inequality within the church, to form a comprehensive identity as migrants, and to encourage people to develop multicultural ways of theology and ministry.

of colonisation in which ethnic minorities underestimate other ethnic groups due to race, region, or language proficiency. Michael, interview.

⁸³ On the contrary, cultural identity is to divide ‘we’ and ‘them.’ As a result, in spite of their mutual relationship, it is so difficult to feel a sense of belonging and companionship from each other. See Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 51-52.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 52.

⁸⁵ Robert, interview.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Cultural Diversity: Who We Are Now", Australian Bureau of Statistics <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/2024.0Main%20Features22016> (accessed August 11 2018).
- Basis of Union: Being the Final Revision Prepared by the Joint Commission on Church Union of the Congregational Union of Australia, the Methodist Church of Australia and the Presbyterian Church of Australia.* Melbourne, Australia: Uniting Church in Australia, 1972; revised in 1992.
- Cerrato, Laura. "Accent Discrimination in the US: A Hindrance to Your Employment and Career Development?" Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, 2017.
- Chakraborty, Rahul, Amy Louise Schwarz, and Prasiddh Chakraborty. "Perception of Nonnative Accent: A Cross-Sectional Perspective Pilot Survey." *International Journal of Society, Culture and Language* 5, no. 2 (2017): 26-36.
- Deprez-Sims, Anne-Sophie, and Scott Morris. "Accents in the Workplace: Their Effects During a Job Interview." *International Journal of Psychology* 45, no. 6 (December 2010): 417-426.
- Duchêne, Alexandre, Melissa Moyer, and Celia Roberts. *Language, Migration and Social Inequalities: A Critical Sociolinguistic Perspective on Institutions and Work.* Bristol, UK: Language Mobility Institutions, 2013.
- Ganuza, Natalia, and Christina Hedman. "Ideology vs. Practice: Is There a Space for Translanguaging in Mother Tongue Instruction?" In *New Perspectives on Translanguaging and Education*, edited by BethAnne Paulsrud, Jenny Rosén, Boglárka Straszer and Åsa Wedin, 208-226. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2017.
- Gibson, Kari. "English Only Court Cases Involving the U.S. Workplace: The Myths of Language Use and the Homogenization of Bilingual Workers' Identities." *Second Language Studies* 22(2), no. Spring 2004 (2004): 1-60.
- Kibbee, Douglas A. *Language and the Law: Linguistic Inequality in America.* Cambridge, UK: University Printing House, 2016.
- Kim, Sungjae. "God of Migrants and Migrants with God Towards Peace-Making." *CTC Bulletin* 22, no. 3 (2006): 34-48.
- Koh, SweeAnn, "Racism in the Church?", Crosslight <https://crosslight.org.au/2017/03/03/racism-in-the-church/> (accessed March 11 2018).
- Kozlowski, Alexandra. "The Influence of Accents on Social Perception." *Inkblot* 4 (September 2015): 12-16.

- Lindemann, Stephanie. "Who Speaks 'Broken English'? US Undergraduates' Perceptions of Non-Native English." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 15, no. 2 (2005): 187-212.
- McCaughey, Davis. "The Formation of the Basis of Union." In *Fresh Words and Deeds: The McCaughey Papers*, edited by P. Matheson and C. Mostert, 11-21. Melbourne, AUS: David Lovell, 2004.
- Meaney, Neville. "The End of 'White Australia' and Australia's Changing Perceptions of Asia, 1945-1990." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 49, no. 2 (1995): 171-189.
- Nguyen, Beatrice Bich-Dao. "Accent Discrimination and the Test of Spoken English: A Call for an Objective Assessment of the Comprehensibility of Nonnative Speakers." *California Law Review* 81, no. 5 (October 1993): 1325-1361.
- Oh, Reginald. "Discrimination and Distrust: A Critical Linguistic Analysis of the Discrimination Concept." *Journal of Constitutional Law* 7:3 (February, 2005): 837-66.
- Oyetayo, Babatola. "An Appraisal of Language Discrimination on Accommodation in Ibadan." *Studies in Literature and Language* 13, no. 6 (2016): 14-19.
- Piller, Ingrid, *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2015.
- Pool, Jonathan. "Thinking About Linguistic Discrimination." *Language Problems and Language Planning* 11 (1987): 3-21.
- Russo, Marcello, Gazi Islam, and Burak Koyuncu. "Non-Native Accents and Stigma: How Self-Fulfilling Prophecies Can Affect Career Outcomes." *Human Resource Management Review* 30 (December 2016): 1-14.
- Thompson, Geoff, and John Flett. *Theological Reflections on the Vision and Mission Principles*. Melbourne, AUS: Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, 2016. Meeting paper at Major Strategic Review.
- UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), "CCPR General Comment No. 18: Non-Discrimination", UN Human Rights Committee (HRC) <http://www.refworld.org/docid/453883fa8.html> (accessed July 21 2018).
- Uniting Church in Australia, "Multicultural and Cross Cultural Ministry ", Uniting Church in Australia <https://assembly.uca.org.au/mcm/resources/assembly-resolutions-and-statements/item/1688-we-are-a-multicultural-church> (accessed August 28 2018).

Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania. *Introducing the Vision and Mission Principles: Information and Exercises to Help Focus on God's Mission*. Melbourne, AUS: Uniting Church in Australia, 2017.

Volf, Miroslav. *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Nashville: TN: Abingdon Press, 1996.

Woolard, Kathryn A. "Language Ideology: Issues and Approaches." *International Pragmatics Association* 2, no. 3 (2010): 235-249.

Young, Norman. "The Theological Convictions of the Basis of Union of the Uniting Church." *PACIFICA* 25 (2012): 288-95.



Choi, Moon Jung
Knox College, University of Toronto
moon.choi@mail.utoronto.ca
2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov. 2-4

Conscientization of Resilient/Transformative Agency: a Postcolonial Feminist Pedagogical Remedy to Women's Sin

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to imagine Paulo Freire's conscientization process as a modified pedagogy¹ based on a new understanding of hybridity of agency in the context of Korean Canadian Christian women². My quest in this paper is to understand why this body of women support and contribute to oppressive and sinful narratives of patriarchy³ and white supremacy⁴ and suggest how religious educators might approach such context. It is my priority in this paper to argue that pedagogy and curricula shape and re-shape the identities in power dynamics between oppressors and the oppressed, especially in the context of Korean Canadian Christian women. There is an intertwined, not static, classification of the oppressed and oppressors, and, thus, the women contribute to oppression as much as being oppressed. Then, I argue that it is important to approach these women as those who are both oppressed and culpable (i.e., hybrid), not just oppressed and innocent. The basis of my argument stems in a new understanding of hybridity of agency. My work concentrates on connecting various poststructural and postcolonial understandings of agency (both sinful and resilient/transformative) in power dynamics involving women and its pedagogical implications.

¹ In this modified pedagogy, an educator will begin pedagogical process in a group but will encourage mutual learning to conscientize each other. Therefore, the line between an educator and an educatee is blurred. My assumed pedagogical or educational approach is inquiry-based and organic. In the context of Confucian cultures, hierarchy may act as a deterrent to my assumption of pedagogy, and yet Confucius himself carried very organic and inquiry-based educational method. Furthermore, Paulo Freire also desires and demonstrates inquiry-based and organic interactions at the core of his pedagogy. In this paper, based on my previous readings of contemporary educational theories and also based on how Confucius conducted his classes, such inquiry-based and organic pedagogy is still desirable in and applicable to the context of Korean Canadian Christian women.

² In this paper, I define Korean Canadian women as the first-generation Korean Canadian women who were born and raised in Korea and immigrated to Canada as adults. Furthermore, Korean Canadian Christian women are defined within my conservative Presbyterian context, which is the majority of Korean Christian women. I do recognize that there are other denominations and different understandings of Korean Canadian Christian women. Yet, this specific group of women as defined here is assumed to represent the majority of Korean Canadian Christian women

³ Patriarchy in itself may not be oppressive, but patriarchal teachings in Neo-Confucianism, as it will be described in detail later, are very oppressive and discriminatory narratives towards Korean women. Patriarchy in turn acts as a discursive power among Koreans all over the world, including Korean Canadian Christian women.

⁴ By 'white supremacy', I mean extreme racial discrimination of coloured people through socio-cultural-political sphere of influence. The term identifies subtle and yet extreme attitude towards other coloured races by European North Americans. Also, it attempts to point to unfair struggles of immigrants in predominantly Eurocentric traditions and social norms. White supremacy, in the eyes of immigrants such as Korean Canadian Christian women, is seen as a discursive power due to its strong influence on how the immigrants learn to think and behave in the new environment. The term may be quite inflammatory outside of the academic settings. Yet, scholars such as Joe T. Darden, in his book in 2004, *The Significance of White Supremacy in the Canadian Metropolis of Toronto* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 2004) have identified its influence and power among Canadians, especially in Toronto, the most ethnically diverse city in Canada.

In recognition of this hybridity, I would like to suggest that a conscientization process aimed towards resilient/transformational agency for the context can be an impactful pedagogical process to not only recognize their sinfulness and sinful agency, but, more importantly, appeal to their resilient/transformational agency in light of the awareness of their hybridity.

*It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors.*⁵

Opening Thoughts

Many feminist theologians struggle with the word 'sin' because it performs an act of branding.⁶ There are many words that carry 'sinful' connotations in many religious communities including my own Christian denomination. Mary Daly may be the first feminist theologian who has criticized traditional theological link between women and sin.⁷ Therefore, women, Christian or not, have been subject to such negative branding in the Western culture. In other words, women occupy the same footing with male species and all other species, and yet, it seems, women carry much of theological and socio-cultural burden of negative connotation including the notion of original sin in Christian theology. The quest that many feminist theologians might take is to dissociate such branding of sinfulness away from women, especially because, in my opinion, such association hinders the women from opportunities that our male counterparts have access to. One such area of disparity where women do not have equal footing is education. Especially women may be outstripped from being educated to be resilient from doing sinful things and be active in transformational processes to bring about positive and constructive changes to our world. My quest as a Korean Canadian Christian woman begins with the idea that although I may be sinful, I also retain the necessary agency to choose my path. My hybrid nature is where my thoughts in this presentation begin.

The hybrid nature of women's agency forms the basis for pedagogical engagement (i.e., learning and teaching interaction) for my postcolonial context of Korean Canadian Christian women. I draw on Margaret Kamitsuka's notion of sin. Kamitsuka's argument connects women's agency in their cooperation with oppressive discursive power. She argues that women are both oppressed and sinful, rather than being oppressed and innocent. This role of agency is expanded in this paper to establish a concrete connection to implied choice/choicelessness and pedagogy from the perspective of agency. By extending the definition of agency, I propose to help Korean Canadian Christian women not only to recognize their sinfulness but also to empower agency to be more resilient/transformational in light of the awareness of their hybridity.

Kamitsuka argues that agency facilitates choice on the basis of women's role in undue and underdeveloped cooperation with discursive power. Sin, as undue cooperation with discursive power, means that one maximizes one's pleasure by playing one's role imposed on

⁵ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th anniversary ed. (New York: Continuum, 2000), 56.

⁶ Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1973), 44-68; Darby Kathleen Ray, *Deceiving the Devil: Atonement, Abuse, and Ransom* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1998), 22-23; Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 4-5.

⁷ Daly, 45.

one.⁸ Sin, as underdeveloped cooperation with discursive power, means that one avoids the conditions for resistance by being silent and leaving relations with discursive power.⁹ By recognizing their agency, Kamitsuka separates identifying qualifiers such as ‘the oppressed’ or gendered ‘women’ from the group of people and presents a clear vision for female agency. Also, in so doing, I argue that Kamitsuka exposes a dynamic of observers-observees by separating all involved agents from the imposed and/or presupposed identities and interactions. If agency survives power struggles and if there is to be a transformation of identities beyond oppressors and the oppressed, as Kamitsuka observes, then I argue that identities and roles are mere lenses of observers (both the oppressed and oppressors). From my perspective, Kamitsuka’s argument for agency clearly emphasizes free motivated choice. In other words, women can stand dissociated from imposed and/or presupposed identities under Kamitsuka’s poststructural and postcolonial view and can either be a part of the discursive power or resist it.

The identification of such lenses of observers, furthermore, modifies Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity. Bhabha suggests the concept of hybridity as reshaping cultural identity through mimicry (i.e., rewriting and overlapping the culture of colonizers on that of the colonized).¹⁰ However, I would take Kamitsuka’s poststructural and postcolonial understanding of agency to argue that Bhabha’s hybridity be viewed as a hybridity of lenses in order to distance identifying qualifiers or markers from agency, thereby preserving the agential nature of both observer(s) and observee(s). The rediscovery of female agency distances identities placed on observees such as Korean Canadian Christian women. For example, qualifiers such as “Korean,” “Canadian,” “Christian,” and “women” are viewed as particular lenses and specific viewing angles of observers. Identifying qualifiers such as those mentioned previously can be argued to be the identifying lenses, rather than identities themselves because, as I will argue, based on insight from Kamitsuka and Bhabha, agency empowers agents to choose their identity either as an active or passive actor/actress. So, I define hybridity as multiple perspectives/lenses of performative and identifying qualifiers, especially in women. Therefore, my argument follows that a group of people or a person shapes one’s hybrid identity in accordance with one’s agential choices and positionality. In other words, one can align oneself with pre-existing perspectives, or stand in the line of sight of observer(s) as precisely where the observer(s) want one to be, or actively and passively reshape/choose an assortment of lenses to be viewed. This notion of lens, rather than identity tagged on to a subject, allows a modification of Bhabha’s hybridity in accordance with poststructuralism and postcolonialism. Also, such modification of hybridity allows for pedagogical intervention of subjects, both oppressors and the oppressed, by a conscientized party.

Subsequently, I argue that my notion of hybridity of agency carries a strong mandate to engage the Korean Canadian Christian women in almost all aspect of curricula in church and society. As agents are dissociated from socio-cultural, historical and political identities and oppression, women, as I will demonstrate in the context of Korean Canadian Christian women, can be particularly influenced through pedagogical means. When such women become conscientious of their agency, their search for their place in the world can take shape in a pedagogical sense as they consciously explore learning about those lenses and about who they are in relation to their observers/oppressors. In other words, they will attempt to learn about their

⁸ Margaret D. Kamitsuka, “Toward a Feminist Postmodern and Postcolonial Interpretation of Sin,” *The Journal of Religion* 84, no. 2 (2004): 193.

⁹ Ibid., 195.

¹⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), 125-126

choices in a way that is outside of ethno-cultural branding. Women who develop the awareness that their identities and roles are shaped through socio-cultural, historical, and political pedagogical forces¹¹, would be able to fully engage most, if not all, aspects of curricula of those pedagogical forces. In addition, they would be able to view the curricula as particular lenses that can be swapped, modified or improved. This will be demonstrated in detail in later sections of the paper.

Pedagogical Discursive Powers in the Context of Korean Canadian Christian Women

Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng states that Asian North American Christians are enculturated in three cultural settings: the heritage culture, the dominant culture, and the culture of the Christian faith community.¹² In this sense, Korean Canadian Christians are pedagogically inducted in the patriarchal Korean Confucian culture, European-centered Canadian culture, and the patriarchal culture of Korean Canadian immigrant churches. It is my assumption that these cultures are pedagogical because people in any culture are not only inducted into their cultures but also disciplined and indoctrinated by the cultures they are born and raised in. These people include those who are currently identified in postcolonialism as the oppressed and, most particularly, oppressors. That is to say, oppressors are as indoctrinated as the oppressed. Thus, discursive powers are viewed in this paper as indoctrinating pedagogies that impose a particular relationship such as the oppressed-oppressors. In subsequent sections, I would like to discuss women's roles in the discursive powers (i.e., patriarchy and white supremacy). Women's roles in the discursive powers are further investigated in two ways: one, postcolonial feminist notion of Korean Canadian Christian women's sin (i.e., sin as submerged undue and underdeveloped cooperation with discursive power), and, the other, resiliency and transformation. I will argue that these two different roles of the women give rise to hybridity of agency (i.e., resilient/transformational and sinful agency) from a postcolonial perspective.

A. Discursive Powers in Korean Canadian Culture

1. Patriarchy in the Korean Confucian Culture

When Korean immigrants came to Canada, they brought the Korean Neo-Confucian culture which has functioned as patriarchal discourse.¹³ Patriarchy traces back to the first kingdom (i.e., Ancient Chosun, B.C.E. 2,333-B.C.E. 108) in Korea, but with the introduction of Neo-Confucianism¹⁴ in Chosun Dynasty (1392-1910), numerous strict gender roles were reinforced on women.¹⁵ Since then, patriarchy through the establishment of Neo-Confucianism

¹¹ This socio-cultural, historical, and political pedagogy is meant to indicate that society, culture, history, and politics are all sources of teaching and learning.

¹² Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng, "Family and Education from an Asian North-American Perspective: Implications for the Church's Educational Ministry," *Religious Education* 87, no. 1 (1992): 57.

¹³ Grace Ji-Sun Kim, *The Grace of Sophia: A Korean North American Women's Christology* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2002), 62.

¹⁴ According to William Theodore de Bary, an East Asian literary scholar, Neo-Confucianism arose as the Confucian revival in the Sung period (960-1279) in China and was adopted as the state ideology, the social norm, and the state religion by Chosun Dynasty with commonly understood purpose of bringing social order and build statehood. Neo-Confucianism embraces traditional Confucian thoughts in general but adds new elements in later thought. See William Theodore de Bary, "Introduction," in *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*, ed., William Theodore de Bary and JaHyun Kim Haboush, 4-6, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

¹⁵ Kwok, Pui-lan, *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 48.

has become molded into Koreans' consciousness and has become a major discursive power in Korean Canadian immigrant culture.

Classical Confucianism seeks for a harmonious relationship among Heaven, human beings, and nature.¹⁶ A harmonious and reciprocal relationship happens by respecting hierarchy and avoiding conflict in five relationships (i.e., ruler/subject, father/son, husband/wife, older brother/younger brother, friend/friend). However, Confucian teachings on a harmonious relationship became calcified in Neo-Confucianism and demanded "unquestioning obedience from the younger, weaker, and female members to the older, stronger, and male members"¹⁷. In particular, family is the place where social harmony happens and where Koreans have learned core Neo-Confucian values such as filial piety, respect for elders, and proper gender roles.¹⁸ Thus, there is a very strong implication of patriarchy through Neo-Confucian pedagogy.

More specifically, the knowledge of women's status in Confucianism is summarized in three principles: *namjonyobi* (男尊女卑), *samjongjiui* (三從之義), and *chilgeojiach* (七去之惡). *Namjonyobi* means that men should be respected, and women should be lowered.¹⁹ *Samjongjiui* means that a woman should obey her father when she is young, obey her husband when she is married, and obey her son when she is widowed. In addition, *chilgeojiach* means that a husband can expel his wife based on seven conditions²⁰. Simply put, the patriarchal teachings that women should selflessly sacrifice themselves and obey their husbands was enculturated into Korean women.

With westernization, Korean culture has undergone changes in its understandings of women's status. But, the Neo-Confucian principles are still relevant in Korean culture, and cultural teachings on gender roles still dictate the relationship between Korean women and men even in Korean Canadian immigrant families and churches. And thus, Confucianism is still the predominant discursive power and still teaches how women are treated less than men in the Korean Canadian culture.

2. White supremacy in Canadian multiculturalism

White supremacy, embedded in Canadian multiculturalism, has also been a major discursive power in Korean Canadian immigrant culture. Multiculturalism encloses 'implicit white supremacy' in Canadian culture and has contributed to the segregation of Korean immigrant churches. The act of enclosing implicit white supremacy (Evelyn Kallen uses the phrase, "racial discrimination"²¹ which parallels the phrase "white supremacy") in Canada has been documented and studied extensively by Kallen. In October 8, 1971, as an official response to the discontent of non-English and non-French ethnic minorities toward the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism which relegated ethnic groups other than the two founding

¹⁶ Tu Wei-Ming, "Confucianism," in *Our Religions: The Seven World Religions Introduced by Preeminent Scholars from Each Tradition*, ed. Arvind Sharma, 141-145, (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993).

¹⁷ Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng, "From Confucian Master Teacher to Freirian Mutual Learner: Challenges in Pedagogical Practice and Religious Education," *Religious Education* 95, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 315.

¹⁸ Boyung Lee, "A Philosophical Anthropology of the Communal Person: A Postcolonial Feminist Critique of Confucian Communalism and Western Individualism in Korean Protestant Education," Ph.D. diss., Boston College, 2004, 52.

¹⁹ Ibid., 56-57.

²⁰ The seven conditions are disobedience to parents-in-laws, inability to give birth to a son, adultery, jealousy, stealing, having serious diseases, and chatteriness.

²¹ Evelyn Kallen, "Multiculturalism: Ideology, Policy and Reality," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 59.

peoples (i.e., English and French settlers) to minority status, the Government of Canada declared multiculturalism as an official policy.²² The government policy statement describes the purposes of multiculturalism including offering funding for the development of ethnic groups and assisting immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada's official languages, English or French.²³ Although multiculturalism seems to show racial egalitarianism, Kallen avers that it contains implicit racial discrimination with regards to three aspects.

First, multiculturalism leads ethnic groups to eschew the issue of racial discrimination by focusing on expression of ethno-cultural diversity primarily and being silent on existing racial/ethnic inequality in Canada.²⁴ Second, multiculturalism fosters ethnic separation by drawing a clear division between the public and private sectors. In public institutions, immigrants are expected to acculturate into one of Canada's two official languages. In contrast, it is mostly in the private lives, immigrants are free to sing their ethnic songs, speak their ethnic languages, and eat their ethnic food.²⁵ In this way, immigrant communities are prone to be segregated into private spheres while having little influence on mainstream society. Third, what seems to be implied in the multiculturalism policy is that Canadians are ranked into three classes: Canada's founding peoples as the first class, immigrant groups as the second class, and First Nations people as the third class.²⁶ Therefore, through the eyes of the influential Canadian scholar, I was able to demonstrate that multiculturalism as the major Canadian political and institutionalized policy has adopted in part how the immigrants may be viewed and framed. At least from the perspective of the official Canadian policy, the immigrants have been placed in inferior position to the two white founding peoples of Canada. White supremacy, therefore, may be sufficient to describe such socio-political arrangement in Canada under multiculturalism.

3. Patriarchy and white supremacy in Korean Canadian immigrant churches

In subsequence, white supremacy distances Korean Canadians from the dominant society and yet, at the same time, strengthens patriarchal structure in Korean Canadian churches. Partly influenced by the cunning segregation of ethnic communities by the multiculturalism policy and partly by silence and ignorance of Korean Canadian immigrant churches toward white supremacy, social and civic capital in the mainstream society cannot flow into Korean Canadian immigrant churches. In this way, Korean Canadian immigrant churches remain as privatized ethno-religious institutions and as a segregated island or "little Korea" within dominant society. Consequently, the disconnection of social and civic capital from the mainstream society reinforces hierarchical strata between the Canadian culture (prominently display white supremacy in racial relations) and Korean immigrants. Then, the reinforced hierarchy of white supremacy in Canadian society flaunts Neo-Confucian patriarchy which promotes hierarchical order. When the immigrants are faced with differing culture, language, food, and peoples, they, especially the immigrants exposed in Neo-Confucian culture and society, would be inclined towards strict enforcement of roles to bring order and provide a platform for livelihood.

In addition to the strong presence of dominant patriarchal Eurocentric tradition in Canadian culture, Korean Canadian immigrant churches have committed to patriarchal norms. When Korean Christian immigrants came to Canada – the nation, just like

²² Ibid., 57.

²³ Ibid., 54.

²⁴ Ibid., 60.

²⁵ Ibid., 56.

²⁶ Ibid., 56.

America, that brought the Gospel to Korea, they embraced oppressive forms of Canadian social agenda (i.e., white supremacy and patriarchy) to be binding to their faith and organization of their churches. In Canada, the first two Korean Presbyterian churches were founded in Toronto in 1967, and the first Korean Catholic Church was established in 1969.²⁷ Since then, as a community, Korean Canadian immigrant churches have become extremely crucial for Korean immigrants. On the one hand, they have provided psychological and spiritual support and have offered venues for sociocultural integration.²⁸ On the other hand, they have also reinforced the patriarchal rigidity of neo-Confucianism to be Christian.

The knowledge of women's status in a structural and functional dimension is disciplined and regulated by patriarchy within Korean Canadian immigrant churches. Patriarchal structures within Korean North American immigrant churches is well analyzed and has been broken down into two dimensions by Jung Ha Kim: namely, structural and functional dimensions. In a structural dimension, "there are no official and legitimate channels for women's leadership to become more visible and empowering"²⁹ in Korean North American immigrant churches. For example, Korean North American Christian women have limited access to perform worship services, and there are no women represented on decision-making committees.³⁰ In a functional dimension, women's ministry is "relegated to all kitchen-related responsibilities," and women's work is considered less important to men's work in churches.³¹ As a result, the Korean Canadian Christian women have been instructed to align themselves to the oppressive discursive powers. And yet, certain elements and examples of their resistance and resiliency in such conditions can attest to their collusion, rather than being compelled. This is the aspect I will explore with Kamitsuka's discussion of women's sin.

Korean Canadian Christian Women's Sin as Alignment with the Discursive Powers

Despite the pedagogical influence on Korean Canadian Christian women from discursive powers inherent in Neo-Confucianism in Korean socio-cultural sphere and the dominant Canadian social sphere, Korean Canadian Christian women are also agential to sin (i.e., sinful agency). Here, I would like to describe postcolonial feminist understandings of Korean Canadian Christian women's sin by utilizing Kamitsuka's perspective.

First, sin as submerged undue cooperation with discursive power such as Christianity in Korean Canadian Christian women means that Korean Canadian Christian women un/subconsciously maximize their pleasure in absolute agreement and compliance with Christian teachings in Korean Canadian immigrant churches. Because Korean Canadian immigrant churches are crucial for Korean immigrants in meeting psychological and spiritual needs and offering venues for sociocultural integration³², Korean women un/subconsciously become active in participation in various worship services, Revival meetings, Bible studies, prayer meetings, church picnics, etc. even to the point that they become religious fanatics. Korean Canadian

²⁷ Grace Ji-Sun Kim, 70.

²⁸ Jung Ha Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers: Korean-American Women and the Church* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 1. I utilize Korean American scholars' works in this paper with the assumption that Korean Canadian women's and Korean American women's experiences are similar. I leave the differences between the two contexts to a future inquiry.

²⁹ Ibid., 54.

³⁰ Ibid., 54.

³¹ Ibid., 55.

³² Ibid., 1.

Christian women's submerged undue cooperation with Christianity and teachings in Korean immigrant churches is an agential choice that results in sin against oneself for inadequate consideration of one's own identity, sin against one's family and neighbors for insufficient care, and sin against God for hindered relationship with God.

Second, sin as submerged underdeveloped cooperation with discursive power such as patriarchy in Korean Canadian immigrant churches and white supremacy in Canadian multiculturalism means that Korean Canadian Christian women un/subconsciously avoid the conditions for resistance by being silent and leaving relations with patriarchy and white supremacy. For example, Korean Canadian Christian women un/subconsciously generalize gender differences and inadvertently acquiesce to patriarchal demands in their churches by saying, "That's just the way it is" or "Whether the work is unfair or not, I don't think that people should complain about their jobs"³³ As a minority group, they portray a combination of collective silence toward white supremacy and spiritualize everyday suffering as "the high price for the chosen people".³⁴ As an ethnic minority, they feel inferior, alienated, and lonely in the dominant Eurocentric culture of Canada.³⁵ As a result, Korean Canadian Christian women frequently manifest the un/subconscious feelings of depression, self-contempt, deep regret, and helplessness. Because these women internalize the patriarchal norms in their churches as well as white supremacy in the Eurocentric Canadian culture, they end up cooperating with the very institutions that oppress them. In accordance with Kamitsuka's notion, the said internalization results in sin against oneself for inadequate development of one's own agency and sin against God for hindering one's spiritual development.³⁶

Role of Agency: to Align or to Resist?

In this section, I discuss the centrality of agency in Korean Canadian Christian women's hybridity (i.e., resilient/transformational and sinful agency). Although this particular group of women are persuaded to comply or cooperate with the discursive powers at multiple levels, their resiliency demonstrated so far in Korean history and the history of immigration in Canada shows a glimpse into their resilient/transformational agency. This aspect of their agency is where transformational pedagogical curricula may be established in order to inculcate them and the next generation of the women into more explicit culture of transformational pedagogical curriculum. Yet, even with the revelation through such curriculum, they and the next generation of women may choose to cooperate with the discursive powers; this is precisely why my theoretical approach toward agency is hybrid and double-sided.

A. Resilient/transformational agency

Both Jung Ha Kim and Grace Ji-Sun Kim emphasize Korean North American Christian women's agency to survive and be resilient (i.e., resilient agency) based on their faith in God and God's love and grace toward them. In addition, Jung Ha Kim argues for their agency to resist and transform (i.e., transformational agency) discursive power. It is well-demonstrated by these authors that Korean Canadian Christian women's resilient agency is reinforced by the help of religious functions (i.e., prayer and worship) and sociological functions (i.e., community centres and preservation of Korean culture and ethnic identity) of Korean Canadian immigrant churches.

³³ Ibid., 107.

³⁴ Ibid., 100.

³⁵ Ibid., 13

³⁶ Kamitsuka, 194-196.

Additionally, Jung Ha Kim's argument supports the presence of Korean Canadian Christian women's transformative agency. For example, while Korean Canadian Christian women manifest cooperation with patriarchal norms, they also challenge the said patriarchal norms through indirect resistance and unofficial manipulation. Conforming to the Confucian communalism of living in harmony and peace with others, Korean Canadian Christian women eschew direct confrontation with patriarchy but pursue subtle and indirect ways (e.g., deliberate absence and remiss in church meetings and manipulation of their husbands to their advantage) to resist the system that they find themselves in.³⁷

B. Sinful agency

Based on Kamitsuka's two categories of sin (i.e., sin as undue and underdeveloped cooperation with discursive power), I discussed that Korean Canadian Christian women have sinful agency in two significant ways: sin as (1) submerged undue and (2) submerged underdeveloped cooperation with patriarchy and white supremacy. Thus, although Korean Canadian Christian women are disciplined and regulated by discursive power, women, as agential subjects with sinful agency, produce power with which they can participate in and work with the oppressive patriarchy and white supremacy.³⁸

In sum, by utilizing Kamitsuka's postcolonial feminist notion of sin and Jung Ha Kim's analysis on Korean North American Christian women's resilience and resistance, I have discussed two aspects of Korean women's agency (i.e., resilient/transformative and sinful agency). By utilizing Bhabha's concept of hybridity, I understand the relationship of two aspects of agency as hybrid. They are both resilient/transformative and sinful. However, unawareness of their hybridity of agency can lead them to blindly accept discursive power and collude with discursive power. This is where pedagogical intervention, in theory, may enter in order to engage the women with the notion of hybrid agency. So, depending on where we stand to watch Korean Canadian Christian women's agency, both resilience/transformation and sinfulness can be established. Therefore, I argue, from a postcolonial perspective, their agency can be theoretically influenced either way demonstrating the hybrid nature of agency.

Pedagogical Approach of Hybridity: Re-visioning Implicit and Null curriculum in Korean Canadian Immigrant Churches

Despite Korean Canadian Christian women's everyday exposure to discursive powers such as patriarchy and white supremacy, the issues that result from patriarchal structures and white supremacy in dominant Eurocentric traditions have not been included in children's and adults' curricula in Korean Canadian immigrant churches; thus, I would categorize patriarchy and white supremacy in dominant Eurocentric traditions as the implicit and null curriculum with the insight from Boyung Lee and Elliott Eisner.³⁹

Eisner categorizes curricula into three types: the explicit curriculum, the implicit curriculum, and the null curriculum.⁴⁰ The explicit curriculum is the actual content of education that is taught intentionally and consciously. The implicit curriculum is "what it teaches because

³⁷ Jung Ha Kim, 108-110.

³⁸ Kamitsuka, 184.

³⁹ Lee, 70-73.

⁴⁰ Elliot W. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: on the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*, 2nd ed., 378, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1985), quoted in Boyung Lee, 70.

of the kind of place it is”⁴¹. The implicit curriculum is carried by the organizational structure, physical environment, the emotional environment, teachers’ of engagement with students, and the pedagogical rules of the school in more subtle ways.⁴² “Although these features are seldom publicly announced, they are intuitively recognized by parents, students, and teachers.”⁴³ On the other hand, the null curriculum is what schools do not teach. While emphasizing the importance of the null curriculum, Eisner states, “what schools do not teach may be as important as what they do teach. I argue this position because ignorance is not simply a neutral void; it has important effects on the kinds of options one is able to consider, the alternatives that one can examine, and the perspectives from which one can view a situation or problem”⁴⁴.

In most Korean Canadian immigrant churches, different modes of cooperation with patriarchy and white supremacy have never been part of the explicit curriculum of Sunday school and adult Bible studies. Most Korean Canadian immigrant churches use either curriculum from U.S.A. or from Korea for Sunday schools and adult Bible studies, and the major focus of their curriculum is individualistic Soteriology and the importance of the Bible.⁴⁵ Moreover, the Confucian communalism of trying to live in harmony and peace with others leads Korean Canadian immigrant churches to avoid public discussion on patriarchy of Neo-Confucianism and white supremacy in dominant Eurocentric traditions.

However, by excluding explicit discussion about the patriarchal structures in the church and in society in Sunday school curricula and limiting women’s access to official leadership in the church, Korean Canadian immigrant churches have taught the congregation implicitly that patriarchy should be tolerated for communal harmony (i.e., implicit curriculum). Moreover, they have also taught the congregation implicitly and un/subconsciously that women are to uncritically accept patriarchy and to become absolutely compliant to patriarchal demands. Also, by not explicitly teaching about white supremacy in dominant Eurocentric traditions in Sunday school curricula and adult Bible studies (i.e., null curriculum), Korean Canadian immigrant churches have taught congregation that white supremacy should be tolerated for survival in Canadian society. They also taught congregation un/subconsciously that Korean Canadians’ voluntary collusion with white supremacy and resistance/transformation of white supremacy are deficient or non-existent.⁴⁶

However, according to Paulo Freire, education can never be neutral or indifferent regarding the reproduction of discursive power and can be a form of intervention in the world.⁴⁷ Thus, education is political.⁴⁸ With this recognition of the political characteristics of education and of the discursive powers, both education and the discursive powers are in the same arena of contention. Korean Canadian Christian women can have the opportunity to be aware of their silent cooperation with patriarchy and white supremacy and enact agency that honours their roles in the community.

⁴¹ Elliot W. Eisner, 97.

⁴² Ibid., 96-97.

⁴³ Ibid., 97.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 97.

⁴⁵ Lee, 98-99.

⁴⁶ Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng, “Pacific-Asian North American Religious Education,” in *Multicultural Religious Education*, ed., Barbara Wilkerson, 212, (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1997).

⁴⁷ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*, trans. Patrick Clarke (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 91.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 67.

Korean women will also be empowered to transform Korean Canadian immigrant churches.

Conscientization of Resilient/Transformative Agency

In recognition of hybridity of Korean Canadian Christian women's resilient/transformative and sinful agency, I would like to suggest a conscientization process that can be an essential pedagogical tool which can help these women to not only be aware of their sinfulness but also to empower their own transformative agency. A conscientization process for Korean Canadian Christian women includes three aspects: conscientization, repentance, and a shift to transformative agency.

A. Conscientization

The term "conscientization", which was made popular by Paulo Freire, refers to "the development of the awakening of critical awareness"⁴⁹. Freire also defines conscientization as the ability to objectivise reality and "to act consciously on the objectivized reality".⁵⁰ In the context of Korean Canadian Christian women, I define conscientization as an educational process which facilitates the awakening of critical consciousness. Specifically, conscientization in my paper is being aware of their ignorance of hybridity of resilient/transformative and sinful agency and being awakened to their hybridity.

By not being aware of hybridity of resilient/transformative and sinful agency in themselves, Korean Canadian Christian women tend to be unaware that they are agential subjects with both transformative and sinful choices. Lack of awareness of hybridity of resilient/transformative and sinful agency in themselves can lead Korean Canadian Christian women to simply accept and collude with discursive power.

In this sense, through an educational process of conscientization, Korean Canadian Christian women can become aware of their hybridity of resilient/transformative and sinful agency. First, they can acknowledge and appreciate their resilient and transformative agency. Second, they can confront their sinful agency in two categories of sin (i.e., sin as submerged undue and undeveloped cooperation with discursive power such as patriarchy and white supremacy). I will delineate how Korean Canadian Christian women can repent their two categories of sin.

B. Repentance

In a Christian framework of sin-repentance-salvation, the hybrid nature of agency plays a crucial role in not only dissociating sinfulness from the actor/actress but also preserving choice for the actor/actress to either stay in the sinful state or take a godly journey back to righteousness and salvation. Both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, repentance involves two meanings. Repentance means "a turning away from one's own sin and going back to God"⁵¹. In addition, repentance means "regret, remorse, and the change of one's mind"⁵². Such definitions imply that the actor/actress has the ability to choose and act upon their decision. When one reaches a sinful state by turning away from God, the actor/actress associates or aligns with a

⁴⁹ Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Sheed & Ward Ltd, 1974), 15.

⁵⁰ Paulo Freire, "Conscientisation," *Cross Currents* 24, no. 1 (1974): 24.

⁵¹ Andrew Sung Park, *From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded* (Nashville: TN, Abingdon Press, 2004), 73.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 74.

sinful state. When one, through certain gracious means or events, can and does pull oneself away from the sinful state, one would be able to dissociate from the sinful state. In terms of hybridity, although their sinful actions take them into a sinful state, through certain gracious means, they may take it upon themselves to choose to return to God. We now turn to the current context of Korean Canadian Christian women.

In repentance, Korean Canadian Christian women are first compelled by God's grace and love. The women can turn away from their two categories of sin (i.e., sin as submerged undue and underdeveloped cooperation with discursive power) and realize their birthright to agency. Second, compelled by God's grace and love, Korean Canadian Christian women can experience regret, remorse, and sorrow over their two categories of sin. These two aspects of repentance may happen in the faith in Jesus Christ and God's grace. Third, in God's grace, the women may realign with the biblical and godly perspectives of life. This is a shift from sinful agency to fully equipped realization of hybridity of agency. The biblical and godly perspectives may never be devoid of the discursive powers as they are present operating realities. However, when their agential nature and choice are consciously exercised, they would be constantly engaged in critical and free assessment of their choices.

C. Shift to Transformative Agency

After being aware of their hybridity of resilient/transformative and sinful agency in themselves and repenting their two categories of sin in God's grace, Korean Canadian Christian women can shift towards a mode of transformative agency and may choose to maintain their own agency through resistance and/or cooperation with various discursive powers. Therefore, their categorization of 'Korean Canadian Christian women' may not disappear, as my discussion of hybridity of lenses warrants, but their exercise of conscientization and unrelenting engagement with their agential self-awareness would ensure God's grace and intervention amid decision-making.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that hybridity of agency is the focal point of pedagogical intervention of Korean Canadian Christian women in light of Margaret Kamitsuka's notion of women's sin and by dissociating women's identity from the performative and identifying qualifiers (i.e., hybrid 'identity' in Homi Bhabha) for the purpose of leading the women towards transformative agency. Instead of working to redefine women's role and identities as in Bhabha's notion of hybridity, I proposed a hybridity of lenses, a modified concept of Bhabha's hybridity of identity, effectively dissociating and conferring a degree of freedom for women to adjust their positionality of engagement with discursive powers.

The main limitation of this paper is that I attempted to establish a theoretical basis to engage the Korean Canadian Christian women from a modified notion of agency. This paper does not fully explore notions of postcolonial subjectivity because I am only engaging with Kamitsuka's insight on women's sin. In future academic research, I will attempt to more fully utilize postcolonial theorizations to fully study many variations of existence of Korean Canadian Christian women and their struggles to achieve agency. Also, it is my wish to solidify the theoretical aspect of pedagogy and agency in the context I am working with such that new approaches may be developed as we work to educate women within the Korean Canadian Christian community.

Bibliography

- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Daly, Mary. *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1973.
- Darden, Joe T. *The Significance of White Supremacy in the Canadian Metropolis of Toronto*. Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 2004.
- De Bary, William Theodore. "Introduction." In *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*. eds., William Theodore de Bary and JaHyun Kim Haboush. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985: 4-6.
- Eisner, Elliot W. *The Educational Imagination: on the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*, 2nd ed. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1985: 378. Quoted in Boyung Lee, "A Philosophical Anthropology of the Communal Person: a Postcolonial Feminist Critique of Confucian Communalism and Western Individualism in Korean Protestant Education." Ph.D. diss., Boston College, 2004: 70.
- Freire, Paulo. "Conscientisation." *Cross Currents* 24, no. 1 (1974): 23-31.
- _____. *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Sheed & Ward Ltd, 1974.
- _____. *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*. Translated by Patrick Clarke. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998.
- _____. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th anniversary ed. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum Press, 2000.
- Gebara, Ivone. *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002.
- Kallen, Evelyn. "Multiculturalism: Ideology, Policy and Reality." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 51-63.
- Kamitsuka, Margaret D. "Toward a Feminist Postmodern and Postcolonial Interpretation of Sin." *The Journal of Religion* 84, no. 2 (2004): 179-211.
- Kim, Grace Ji-Sun. *The Grace of Sophia: a Korean North American Women's Christology*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2002.
- Kim, Jung Ha. *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers: Korean-American Women and the Church*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997.
- Kwok, Pui-lan. *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.

- Lee, Boyung. "A Philosophical Anthropology of the Communal Person: a Postcolonial Feminist Critique of Confucian Communalism and Western Individualism in Korean Protestant Education." Ph.D. diss., Boston College, 2004.
- Ng, Greer Anne Wenh-In. "Family and Education from an Asian North-American Perspective: Implications for the Church's Educational Ministry." *Religious Education* 87, no. 1 (1992): 52-61.
- _____. "From Confucian Master Teacher to Freirian Mutual Learner: Challenges in Pedagogical Practice and Religious Education." *Religious Education* 95, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 308-319.
- _____. "Pacific-Asian North American Religious Education." In *Multicultural Religious Education*. Edited by Barbara Wilkerson, 190-234. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1997.
- Park, Andrew Sung. *From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded*. Nashville: TN, Abingdon Press, 2004.
- Ray, Darby Kathleen. *Deceiving the Devil: Atonement, Abuse, and Ransom*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1998.
- Tu, Wei-Ming. "Confucianism." In *Our Religions: The Seven World Religions Introduced by Preeminent Scholars from Each Tradition*. ed. Arvind Sharma, 139-227. San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993.

David M. Csinos
Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
dcsinos@astheology.ns.ca
2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4

**From Pioneer to Partner:
Dismantling White Normativity through Ethnographic Theology**

Abstract:

This paper explores postures that transgress white normativity in ethnographic theological research by using a particular research experience as a case study for generating practices for transgressing dominant, white norms and assumptions. The author begins by drawing from the work of non-dominant scholars to build a theoretical framework focused on relationality, multiplicity, and transformation through research. Next, by mining a recent research project, the author offers three postures that researchers can take on in order to dismantle white normativity: remaining flexible and open to improvisation, seeking interpretive lenses that reflect those of the participants, and engaging in practices of reflexivity at every stage of research.

A number of years ago I participated in a day-long workshop about Indigenous communities and reconciliation in Canada hosted by a church on a First Nations reserve. During a session in the afternoon, a white ally of the congregation explained how being involved with the community has transformed her understanding of the word *pioneer*. It's a word woven throughout everyday speech, but one that had been on my mind lately. At the time, I was in the midst of researching and writing a proposal for dissertation research and I wanted to make a contribution to the broader field of practical theology that was novel and original, boldly going where no theologians have gone before. I wanted to be a pioneer.

Until that workshop, I had perceived of pioneers to be bold, daring, and creative. Pioneers were those who thought and acted differently, who blazed new trails that others would follow. To be a pioneer in a given field was something to which one should aspire, a role couched in positivity and laud.

Yet as that white ally explained, the etymology of the term *pioneer* paints a very different picture. The root of the word comes from the French *peon*, which is related to the English *pawn*. These are the words used in the military to speak of foot soldiers, the ones who march ahead of the main legions of troops, marking trails and building roadways for the rest of the soldiers. Much like pawns in a game of chess, they were the first ones to move forward, were not prized for their strength or fighting skills, and were easily expendable.

This was a very different understanding of *pioneer* than that which I had learned. As a white male who grew up in North America, my vision of the world was marked by my inherited privilege as a settler. Pioneers, I was taught, were brave Europeans who gave up their lives at home to enter the wilderness of North America in order to build a new world for others to inhabit. But in reality, those early settlers were often pawns in the power games of empires, the expendable nobodies who followed orders as they engaged in dangerous work for the sake of a more powerful system. And as pioneers settled in North America, this work meant imposing the dominant empire's way of life onto those who already inhabited the area. To be a pioneer was to participate in a system that oppressed those who thought and lived in different ways.

White normativity relies on pioneers. The patterns of thought, belief, and action held up and imposed by whiteness are inscribed onto the world by those of us who act as pawns of the system. As I continued preparing for and conducted my dissertation research, I no longer sought to pioneering. Rather, what I gradually wished was to partner with those who participated in my research, walking alongside the children, adults, and wider faith communities that I came to know along the way. In this paper, I mine this recent experience of conducting qualitative theological research—what some scholars call *ethnographic theology*¹—in order to identify ways in which the practice of qualitative research can transgress white norms and dismantle white normativity. The use of qualitative methods in theological research is common within practical theological fields such as religious education, areas of scholarship that are intimately bound up with the lives of individual persons, communities of faith, and the wider societies in which they participate.

¹ See, for example, Natalie Wigg-Stevenson, *Ethnographic Theology: An Inquiry into the Production of Theological Knowledge* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

The style of auto-ethnography that I use in this paper employs qualitative research in a two-pronged, multilayered manner. At one level, it relies on the results of a year-long qualitative study into the theological lives of children within diverse cultural contexts. Throughout 2013 and 2014, I conducted ethnographic research within four culturally-distinct congregations of the United Church of Canada. Each congregation can be perceived as a distinct cultural context or *habitus*, with many variable and features distinguishing one from the others. They were urban, suburban, and rural; some were struggling financially while others had no problem balancing the books; they welcomed between 20 and 200 people for Sunday worship services; and each community was marked by particular ethnicities—one consisted of mostly white congregants, another of Aboriginal people, the third of immigrants from an African nation, and the fourth seeking to become intentionally diverse.

Instead of describing in detail the results of this study,² I move to a second level of interpretation, that is, I use this broader experience of ethnographic research as a case study for generating practices for transgressing dominant, white norms and assumptions within ethnographic theological research. Such a methodology relies on reflexivity as I explore the struggles and opportunities that surfaced as I, a white person, attempted to engage in research in multiple non-dominant contexts in ways that were respectful and appropriate.

To begin this paper, I will build a theoretical framework by drawing from the work of non-dominant scholars who challenge white normativity in their analyses of common research practices and assumptions. This framework upholds the importance of relationship, multiplicity, and transformation and as guiding principles for research that develops from those who are marginalized by dominant (white) norms. Following this, I take on an auto-ethnographic stance as I probe my recent experience of conducting qualitative theological research. This investigation brings to light three broad postures that researchers can adopt in order to dismantle and transgress white norms in qualitative research: flexibility and improvisation in research methods, an openness to interpretive lenses that rely on non-dominant assumptions, and immersive reflexivity. These postures are related to the principles to which I now turn.

Building A Theoretical Framework

As the end of Enlightenment era draws near, scholars in many fields have taken to examining how the philosophical assumptions and methodological norms of this sweeping epoch have influenced various aspects of human life and thought. One such person is Margaret Kovach, an Indigenous scholar who writes, “The Enlightenment era was marked by the celebration of science and a perception that through scientific reasoning man could understand, control, and shape the natural, social, political, and economic world. Inherent in this method is the belief in a

² For more information about this study, see David M. Csinos, “From the Ground Up: Cultural Considerations in Research into Children’s Spirituality and Theology,” *International Journal of Children’s Spirituality* 23, no. 1 (2018): 53-66, and David M. Csinos, “A Faith Worth Making: Understanding the Cultural Nature of Children’s Theology—and Why It Matters,” in *Story, Formation, and Culture: From Theory to Practice in Ministry with Children*, edited by Benjamin D. Espinoza, James Riley Estep, Jr., and Shirley Morgenthaler (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, forthcoming).

universal truth applicable to all people and cultures.”³ She is one of many scholars from non-dominant (non-white) contexts who are challenging the hegemony of white, western Enlightenment assumptions by raising up the legitimacy of those on the margins—those who were colonized, silenced, and ignored by white normativity. In this section, I will build a framework that will buttress my own assumptions—born out of experiences of qualitative research—by highlighting three key principles that transgresses white normativity in research: relationality, multiplicity, and transformation.

Relationality

The days of the objective anthropologist observing research subjects at arm’s length are coming to a close. While such distancing was at one time seen as a requirement for ensuring validity and reliability, scholars who hail from non-dominant contexts have in recent years emphasized the crucial role of relationships in research.

In his quest to build an Indigenous research paradigm, Shawn Wilson drew from conversations with Indigenous leaders, elders, and scholars to conclude that relationality was at the heart of such an approach to research. In *Research is Ceremony*, Wilson demonstrates the crucial role of relationships both in the arguments he puts forward and the manners by which he conveys them to his readership. For him, relationship is embedded in every aspect of a research paradigm: “Just as the components of the paradigm are related, the components themselves all have to do with relationships. The ontology and epistemology are based upon a process of relationships that form a mutual reality. The axiology and methodology are based upon maintaining accountability to these relationships. There, that sums up the whole book in one paragraph!”⁴ Such accountability shifts the outcomes of research from the generation of ideas to the advancing of relationships, for he posits that any ideas, concepts, or arguments we might put forward hold less importance than the relationships that had a hand in constructing them.⁵ Such accountability is not simply to our relationships with people, but also with the land/environment, with the cosmos (the world of spirituality), with ideas, and with oneself.⁶ With all this in mind, Wilson can confidently say that an Indigenous research paradigm indeed sees research as a ceremony, for “the purpose of any ceremony is to build stronger relationships or bridge the distance between aspects of our cosmos and ourselves.”⁷

Wilson is joined by other Indigenous scholars, including Marlene Castellano and Margaret Kovach, in prioritizing the relationality embedded within all levels of research. In her analysis of Aboriginal knowledge, Castellano identifies five characteristics woven throughout Aboriginal approaches to knowledge: it is “personal, oral, experiential, holistic, and conveyed in

³ Margaret Kovach, “Emerging from the Margins: Indigenous Methodologies,” in *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-Oppressive Approaches*, ed. Leslie Brown and Susan Strega (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2005), 22.

⁴ Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax: Fernwood, 2008), 71.

⁵ Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*, 74.

⁶ Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*, 84-95, 123.

⁷ Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*, 11.

narrative or metaphorical language.”⁸ Relationality is inherently built into each one of these characteristics. For example, the oral nature of Aboriginal knowledge requires relationship, which forms the context in which knowledge is passed on—often through metaphor and story—from generational to generation.⁹ In a related vein, Kovach addresses the importance of relationship in Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies, arguing that a model of research built on relationship includes an abstract philosophical level and a concrete practical level; at the philosophical level, research “honours the cultural value of relationship, it emphasizes people’s ability to share and change their own destiny, and it is respectful.”¹⁰ Relationship matters in a practical sense because it is the basis by which access is granted to a community involved in research, likely through massive amounts of time being invested in building relationships.¹¹

Multiplicity

In addition to placing relationships at centre stage, some scholars from non-dominant contexts are also upholding the value of multiplicity in research. Ghanaian theologian Emmanuel Lartey, in his introduction to intercultural approaches of pastoral care, writes that one of the basic principles of interculturality is the presence of multiple perspectives. In his words, “equally rational persons can examine the same issue and yet arrive at very different understandings. It goes on to insist that these different perspectives need to be seen as equally deserving of attention.”¹² Through conversation and keen attention to one another’s perspectives, researchers can consider multiple—even competing—perspectives on a question or issue in order to gain a fuller, more complex picture of it. Going further, Lartey’s understanding of personhood demonstrates that human beings are in and of themselves individually complex and diverse beings, for they are in some ways: “1. like all others, 2 like some others, 3. like no other.”¹³ By recognizing the universal, cultural, and individual characteristics of all people involved in research, one opens the door to multiplicity.

Castellano likewise names a diversity of perspectives as vital for Aboriginal knowledge. Not only does knowledge come from multiple sources, but one of those sources in particular—empirical observation—ought to be carried out through “a convergence of perspectives from different vantage points, accumulated over time.”¹⁴ For Aboriginal communities, she argues, knowledge is not individual; rather, it’s a collective enterprise that is adjudicated as reliable by

⁸ Marlene Brant Castellano, “Updating Aboriginal Traditions of Knowledge,” in *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts: Multiple Readings of Our World*, ed. George J. Sefa Dei, Budd L. Hall, and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 25.

⁹ Castellano, “Updating Aboriginal Traditions,” 27.

¹⁰ Kovach, “Emerging from the Margins,” 30.

¹¹ Kovach, “Emerging from the Margins,” 30.

¹² Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *In Living Color: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counselling*, 2nd ed. (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2003), 33.

¹³ Lartey, *In Living Color*, 34.

¹⁴ Castellano, “Updating Aboriginal Traditions,” 24.

the consensus of the wider community through collaborative analysis.¹⁵ Thus, both the generation of knowledge and the validity thereof necessitate the holding of multiple perspectives.

The principles of multiplicity is vital for dismantling white normativity for it challenges any monocultural perspectives of our world which, according to Lartey, “are usually inadequate and can actually prove oppressive.”¹⁶ Considering multiple perspectives, then, is an emancipatory research practice.

Transformation

For the third principle that I will highlight in this paper, we turn again to Wilson. We have already seen that, for him, the outcome of research is relationship; it is a ceremony that brings us us closer to one another, to the earth, to the spiritual realm, to ideas. Yet, as I have noted above, Wilson argues that the researcher’s relationship to oneself is also altered as a result of research. Putting in bluntly, he writes “*If research doesn’t change you as a person, then you haven’t done it right.*”¹⁷ Without a degree of personal transformation on the part of those engaged in it, research can be seen as unsuccessful.

This is a value that Wilson demonstrates in his own writing. Toward the end of *Research is Ceremony*, after reminding readers of the necessity of personal transformation, he names a number of ways that his own journey of learning about and building an Indigenous research paradigm had a hand in shaping and re-shaping who he is as a scholar and, more broadly, as a person:

Changes that have occurred were not big revelations, flashes of insight or dramatic differences in my life or lifestyle. Change has been a growing awareness of what I am doing and why, and the change associated with greater awareness. (Is that what maturity feels like?) I feel as though there has been a gradual shift, subtle and perhaps long lasting, in my perception and view of the world.¹⁸

Perhaps the fact that, as Wilson’s experience testifies, transformation can be a subtle, incremental process, it has largely been overlooked in dominant, white norms for research. Outcomes have tended to relate to contributions to a body of work or forming answers to research questions instead of evoking profound changes in the ones doing the research in the first place. Wilson’s words are a call for scholars to engage in research not simply for the sake of changing others, but to kindle the flames of transformation in our own lives.

Of course, the scholars I have cited in this section are certainly not the only—nor the first—to underline the importance of these three principles for emancipatory, transgressive approaches to research. And these authors likewise rely on several other sources to build their arguments. Yet by drawing on their particular works, I can construct a theoretical framework that is both strong enough and flexible enough for me to build upon, which I will do by analyzing

¹⁵ Castellano, “Updating Aboriginal Traditions,” 26.

¹⁶ Lartey, *In Living Color*, 33.

¹⁷ Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*, 135 (emphasis original).

¹⁸ Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*, 136.

three postures for transgressing white normativity that were embedded in my recent research project.

Retrospective Reflections

In 2013 and 2014, as part of my doctoral dissertation research, I embarked on an ethnographic research project in order to learn about how children make meaning in different cultural contexts. Armed with some of the values and principles described above, I built a proposal for a study in which I would spend time at four congregations within the United Church of Canada. In 2006, this Christian denomination made a commitment to become an intercultural church,¹⁹ one that shifted away from tolerance and surface-level experiences of diversity to more profound and complex “encounters among persons and groups with cultural differences.”²⁰ Through pre-existing relationships with clergy and laypeople within this denomination, I recruited four congregations for this study, each of which was culturally distinct from the others in multiple ways. During this project, I spent time at each congregation—between four and eighteen months depending on the congregation—getting to know them and their members, especially their children. I worshipped with the congregations, sometimes offering small leadership roles in services, helped to each Sunday school classes, conducted focus groups with their ministers and lay leaders, volunteered at vacation Bible camps, and—most importantly—held interviews with four or five children from each congregation.

At the end of this research project, I was able to draw a number of fascinating conclusions regarding my initial research questions. I was equipped to speak with detail and nuance about all sorts of topics related to how children make theological meaning in contexts of cultural diversity. But this study not only taught me about children’s generation of theology; it also taught me much about ethnographic theology. Through preparing, carrying out, and reflecting on this adventure in qualitative research, many of the assumptions that I, as an educated white, western, cis-gender, heterosexual male, had learned about the nature of qualitative research. In philosophical, theological, and practical ways, my core assumptions were undermined and challenged by the encounters with difference that met me as I came to know the people at these four unique congregations. For the rest of this paper, I will use this experience as a case study for identifying three postures for dismantling white normativity in ethnographic theological research.

Flexibility and Improvisation

Traditional (white) approaches to qualitative research rely on carefully planning to use methods that allow for consistency throughout the research process. Perhaps nothing demonstrates this better than Research Ethics Board (REB) proposals; these documents indicate that researchers have thorough understanding of the topic of study and have carefully prepared detailed research

¹⁹ United Church of Canada, “A Transformative Vision for the United Church of Canada,” report to the 39th General Council of The United Church of Canada, 2006, *Record of Proceedings* (Thunder Bay: The United Church of Canada, 2006).

²⁰ Roger C. Hutchinson, *Ethical Choices in a Pluralistic World* (Camrose, AB: The Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life, 2009), 11.

plans to be implemented in sites and interview sessions. While consistency and a level of predictability in research help limit variables and demonstrate an ability to carry out a project, the reliance on such norms are based on dominant white academic approaches to research that place the researcher at a distance from those who participate in it.

I certainly took a more rigid, pre-planned approach to research during the first studies I conducted. During a 2007/2008 project into children's spiritual lives,²¹ I heeded the advice of experts like Creswell and Poth, who recommend determining in advance who ought to participate in research interviews that are guided by a particular set of questions asked of each participant.²² While this more clear-cut, predetermined approach was suitable for the three predominantly white Canadian congregations that participated in that project, the immense cultural diversity of the congregations and individuals involved in my doctoral dissertation called for a different approach. In fact, it called for several different approaches.

In order to respect the traditions and norms of those participating who were not part of the dominant white culture of Canada, I had to gradually let go of my desire to maintain consistency and predicability across research sites. My original research design had me proceeding along a clear line of inquiry that began with a particular approach to participant-observation, followed by one-on-one interviews with a set number of children, a focus group with clergy and laity in specific leadership roles, and then a final participant-observation visit. I had created a consistent, chronological—even rigid—method that would be carried out at each of the four participating congregations, spurred on perhaps by nativity or limited previous research experience, but most certainly from white assumptions about acceptable research practices

Lartey reminds us, however, that cultures are not static: “there is a continual interplay resulting in dynamism, adaptability, reinterpretation, reformulation and change. There is certainly continuity, but this is itself continually challenged by changing circumstances. As such, new forms of expression, new perceptions and creative interpretations are emerging all the time.”²³ Embracing the cultural diversity built into my research required that shift from the predicability and consistency lauded by dominant approaches to research to one of the improvisation, adaptability, and change that Lartey—and others²⁴—reminds us is built into all cultures. Not only did I choose to approach interviews with children without a specific set of questions to guide our conversations, but I had to take on an overall posture of flexibility, of dynamic and ongoing reformulation, in order to allow my research methods to become adaptive to the contexts and cultures of participants. Such a posture was necessary to honour the relationships my participants and I had built with each other; as they had come to trust me to

²¹ See David M. Csinos, *Children's Ministry that Fits: Beyond One-Size-Fits-All Approaches to Ministry with Children* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011).

²² John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2017), 164-5.

²³ Lartey, *In Living Color*, 31.

²⁴ See, for example, Neil Bissoondath, who writes, “‘Culture is life. It is a living, breathing, multi-faceted entity in constant evolution . . . Stasis is not possible. A culture that fails to grow from within inevitably becomes untrue to itself, inevitably descends into folklore.’” Neil Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*, rev. ed. (Toronto: Penguin, 2002), 75.

engage in research in a respectful way, I also trusted them to adapt my initial research methods in ways that best suited them and their communities.

For example, at Parkdale United Church, an urban intercultural congregation, community is a core value. This prioritization of the collective over the individual means that, as the minister told me, congregants don't do anything alone. Since my research was seen as a (temporary) congregational practice, this meant that interviewing children one-on-one was not appropriate. Thus, I abandoned my desire for consistency across all four sites (one-on-one interviews) so that the research could reflect the ethos and values of this congregation. While Parkdale required a few adaptations, at Colkirk United church, an Indigenous congregation, nearly every piece of my overall research agenda had to be altered to reflect their cultural norms and values: I engaged in reciprocity as I volunteered at three week-long vacation Bible camps; I worshipped with the congregation several times in order to build relationships and trust among the community; because of these relationships, I grew quite close with this community and they trusted me—and felt it was most appropriate—to interview children without a research assistant; and I continue to remain in occasional contact with members of this congregation. Each of these adaptations sacrificed consistency for flexibility in order to honour and respect those who were participating in my project. And in so doing, new spaces were opened into which the Holy Spirit moved.

Changing Lenses

One of the ongoing challenges I faced during this project had to do with my power and positionality. Given that there were four culturally-distinct congregations that served as research sites, my position to each congregation varied from that of the others. Technically I was an outsider to each site, as none of the congregations served as my home faith community, and I am not a member of the United Church of Canada. But my race, ethnicity, first language, and nationality—among other aspects of who I am—placed me in different positions as researcher within each site. While in one congregation I might have occupied a position of what James Banks calls the indigenous-insider, at another I was certainly an external-outsider.²⁵ And at other congregations, I was perhaps more likely to be in the position of indigenous-outsider or external-insider.

Even though my positionality among each congregation may have varied, my presence as a white person remained consistent. And along with my skin colour I brought assumptions, values, and norms for research that were bound up with my whiteness. This certainly influenced my interactions with the participating congregations during my field research; but it also affected the manners in which I analyzed and interpreted the data generated through this research.

To exemplify this, I turn once again to Colkirk United Church. During my interviews with the children who were part of this congregation and throughout my analysis of these conversations, I became keenly fascinated by the integration of Aboriginal spirituality and Christian theology in their thinking. They shared Aboriginal stories passed on orally from generation to generation, like the story of the woman who fell from the sky or stories about the Peacemaker. And they also spoke about elements of Christian theology. As I asked questions to

²⁵ For more information about this fourfold typology of cross-cultural researchers, see James A. Banks, "The Lives and Values of Researchers: Implications for Educating Citizens in a Multicultural Society," *Educational Researcher* 27, no. 7 (1998): 4-17.

help me learn how these children connected these two traditions, I noticed that they avoided responding directly to these questions, content with the fact that stories from these two traditions blended together but unconcerned with how this is so. In fact, at times it was difficult for me to discern that some of the children even saw Aboriginal spirituality and Christian theology as two distinct schools of faith or thought. Their blending of these traditions with seamlessness and subtlety piqued my interest even more. And yet as I read and re-read transcripts and listened to recordings of my interviews with these children, I could not identify any clues about *how* these children put these two sources in conversation with each other.

Then it hit me. Maybe the problem was not that I could not find any evidence—or even that they they did not offer any evidence in the first place. Maybe the problem was that I was reading their non-dominant culture through my dominant lenses. White normativity suggests that the dominant, white, western view of the world is most credible, most authoritative, most universally legitimate for understanding the world. In *The Comeback*, John Ralston Saul speaks of this hegemony of ideology as an ongoing challenge: “Europeans insisted that their principles were universal. Of course they were universal. After all, they said they were. They still say it, with the same old conviction.”²⁶ Yet the universal credibility of white ideology is simply not true; as I demonstrated above in my discussion of multiplicity, no one interpretation can be sufficient at all times and in all places.

In order to accurately analyze and understand the theological thinking of the children at Colkirk, I had to try as best as possible to view them through their own cultural lenses. This meant, in this case, interpreting these children’s theologies through a narrative lens, for Aboriginal epistemology has at its heart a narrative approach to seeing and engaging with the world.²⁷ I abandoned my quest to make sense of how these children combined Aboriginal spirituality and Christian theology as two distinct sources and sought to pay attention to their use of story. Doing so opened up new vistas that I would not have been able to perceive through my white normative perspective.

Immersive Reflexivity

Qualitative research of any kind has the potential to evoke deeper self-awareness and changes in thought and behaviour among those who engage in it.²⁸ Ethnographic theology in particular is pregnant with such possibility. It assumes the very presence of God within every node of the research process, a God who speaks and acts in our world, a God who can touch our hearts and minds and transform us into those who live as Christ calls us to live. Yes, through ethnographic theology, qualitative research becomes a theological practice that can foster positive spiritual transformation among researchers—and, in fact, among all those who participate in research.

But such transformation is not a given. It comes through a posture of reflexivity. Speaking generally, this involves conscious, intentional efforts on the part of researchers to take

²⁶ John Ralston Saul, *The Comeback* (Toronto: Penguin, 2014), 10.

²⁷ See Castellano, “Updating Aboriginal Traditions.”

²⁸ For more about the formative power of qualitative research, see David M. Csinos, “Between Yes and No: The Inner Journey of Qualitative Research,” in *Qualitative Research in Theological Education: Pedagogy in Practice*, edited by Mary Clark Moschella and Susan Willhauck (London: SCM, 2018).

note of how we are bound up with our own studies. Sometimes this can mean simply keeping a journal in which one tracks one's own emotions, thoughts, and biases throughout the research process; at other times, this might mean writing oneself into the project as a participant, especially if the research involves studying a circumstance or phenomena that the researcher has experienced firsthand.

However one chooses to do so, taking on a posture of immersive reflexivity, that is, reflexivity at every level of a project, is crucial to research that has the power to dismantle white normativity. Throughout the modern era, studies had credibility when researchers conducted them at arm's length, when they served as outside observers who keep their distance so that they did not interfere with the phenomena they were studying nor become bound up with those involved, which might cloud their objective judgment. Often, this meant white researchers observing and studying those from non-dominant groups. This is something the people of Colkirk United Church know all too well, for their minister informed me that Aboriginal people are the most researched group in Canada, yet benefit the least from the studies conducted about them. Rather than building relationships and having a stake in the findings, white research norms seek to maintain an illusive form of objectivity.

Human beings are subjective beings. We live and move and have our being in very personal ways as we interact with the world around us. As much as white researchers might attempt to remain at a distance—physically and/or emotionally—from their participants, we are all bound up together. As I got to know the congregations and members thereof throughout the research process, I came to care about them, to seek their welfare in very different ways. At the predominantly white, middle-class Burke Street United Church, this meant that I wanted to ensure that the interview process was a positive experience for the children. Indeed, thanks to conversations with and emails from parents afterward, it was evident that the interviews offered children a unique space in which they could share their deepest spiritual and theological thoughts with an accepting, non-judgmental adult. At other churches, such as Messiah Methodist United Church, a congregation of African immigrants, I was the one who received spiritual nourishment from the research process; through my participation in their worship services, the deep encouragement of the congregation, and the prayers that the minister offered for me, my family, and my research bound me to them as a contributing member of their worshipping community, if only for a time. Did this affect my research? Most certainly. Did it colour the way I perceived the children? Absolutely. But by tracking these biases through immersive reflexivity, I was able to pay attention to them along the way and account for how they might have affected my analysis and interpretation of the data generated through this study.

Wigg-Stevenson succinctly writes about the importance of reflexivity, stating that “if I am not reflexive about my self in relation to the field, my descriptive analysis of it will be shaped unconsciously and thus distorted by my own biases.”²⁹ For centuries, the “proper” or “correct” analyses of fields of study have been shaped—and distorted—by white biases. In order to dismantle such normativity, a posture of reflexivity is necessary, especially on the part of scholars belonging to dominant white cultures. By becoming conscious of our own assumptions,

²⁹ Natalie Wigg-Stevenson, “Reflexive Theology: A Preliminary Proposal,” *Practical Matters* March 1, 2013. <http://practicalmattersjournal.org/2013/03/01/reflexive-theology/>.

tendencies, and biases—and recognizing them as such and not as *de facto* standards for our fields—we can take apart white constructions of normativity and open ourselves to the plurality of philosophies, methodologies, and pedagogies swirling throughout our diverse world.

Conclusion

As I continue to reflect on and write about this recent research experience, I cannot help but be drawn to Pierre Bourdieu's assertion that an interview can evoke a sort of conversation experience in the researcher.³⁰ For me, the conversation I underwent through this study did not involve the flashing light of the road to Damascus. Rather, it was more of an Emmaus Road experience, one in which ongoing conversation and deepening relationship gradually opened my eyes to new ways of seeing the world.

Through ongoing flexibility and improvisation, a willingness to take on the perspectives of others, and practices of immersive reflexivity, ethnographic theology has the power to dismantle the hegemony of white normativity, not only through the ideas it generates, but through the very means by which theologians engage in research. Of course, the postures I offer in this paper are simply the three that were most salient in my research and most powerful in my own growth as a transgressive researcher. There are countless others that are surely also significant in the dismantling of white normativity in our fields of inquiry as we shed our roles as pioneers and instead partner with those who breathe life into our research.

³⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, "Understanding," in *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, trans. Priscilla Pankhurst Ferguson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 614.

Bibliography

- Banks, James A. "The Lives and Values of Researchers: Implications for Educating Citizens in a Multicultural Society." *Educational Researcher* 27, no. 7 (1998): 4-17.
- Bissoondath, Neil. *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*. Rev. ed. Toronto: Penguin, 2002.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. "Understanding." In *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*. Translated by Priscilla Pankhurst Ferguson, 607-26. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Castellano, Marlene Brant. "Updating Aboriginal Traditions of Knowledge." In *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts: Multiple Readings of Our World*, ed. George J. Sefa Dei, Budd L. Hall, and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg, 21-36. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.
- Creswell, John W. and Cheryl N. Poth. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. Los Angeles: Sage, 2017.
- Csinos, David M. "Between Yes and No: The Inner Journey of Qualitative Research." In *Qualitative Research in Theological Education: Pedagogy in Practice*, edited by Mary Clark Moschella and Susan Willhauck, 60-75. London: SCM, 2018.
- . *Children's Ministry that Fits: Beyond One-Size-Fits-All Approaches to Ministry with Children*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011.
- . "A Faith Worth Making: Understanding the Cultural Nature of Children's Theology—and Why It Matters." In *Story, Formation, and Culture: From Theory to Practice in Ministry with Children*, edited by Benjamin D. Espinoza, James Riley Estep, Jr., and Shirley Morgenthaller. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, forthcoming.
- . "From the Ground Up: Cultural Considerations in Research into Children's Spirituality and Theology." *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 23, no. 1 (2018): 53-66.
- Hutchinson, Roger C. *Ethical Choices in a Pluralistic World*. Camrose, AB: The Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life, 2009.
- Kovach, Margaret. "Emerging from the Margins: Indigenous Methodologies." In *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-Oppressive Approaches*, ed. Leslie Brown and Susan Strega, 19-36 (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2005).

Lartey, Emmanuel Y. *In Living Color: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counselling*, 2nd ed. London: Jessica Kingsley, 2003.

Saul, John Ralston *The Comeback*. Toronto: Penguin, 2014.

United Church of Canada. "A Transformative Vision for the United Church of Canada." Report to the 39th General Council of The United Church of Canada, 2006, *Record of Proceedings*. Thunder Bay: The United Church of Canada, 2006.

Wigg-Stevenson, Natalie. *Ethnographic Theology: An Inquiry into the Production of Theological Knowledge*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

———. "Reflexive Theology: A Preliminary Proposal." *Practical Matters* March 1, 2013. <http://practicalmattersjournal.org/2013/03/01/reflexive-theology/>.

Wilson, Shawn. *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. Halifax: Fernwood, 2008.

Normativity in empirical youth ministry and religious education research

Dr. A. (Jos) de Kock¹

Dr. P.M. (Ronelle) Sonnenberg

E. (Erik) Renkema MA

Dr. A. (Jos) de Kock is a guest professor of practical theology at the Evangelical Theological Faculty Leuven, Belgium (www.etf.edu), and chief editor of the Journal of Youth and Theology (www.brill.com/jyt).

Dr. P.M. (Ronelle) Sonnenberg is the coordinator of the Research Centre for Youth, Church and Culture (www.ojkc.nl/en) based at the PThU and a minister in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.

E. (Erik) Renkema, MA, is PhD student in the research group of practical theology at the PThU and a researcher and lecturer in the field of religious education at Windesheim University of Applied Sciences in Zwolle, The Netherlands.

This paper is part of the proceedings of the REA annual meeting 2018 November 1-4. A version of this paper is accepted for publication in *Journal of Youth & Theology*, 2018(2). For a copy of the journal article, which will be available soon, please send us an email: adekock137@gmail.com.

¹ Authors' responsibilities in writing this article: The first two authors, De Kock and Sonnenberg, are responsible for the design of this article and the completion of the text. The third author, Renkema, wrote the subsection on his own research in Section 3 and, in a previous phase, critically assessed the feasibility of the four layers of normativity, as proposed in Section 2.

Abstract

Normative considerations are an important part of empirical research on the youth ministry and on religious education. In the presentation of results in many practical theological studies on youth ministry and religious education, however, rarely a sufficient reflection is provided on the kind of normativity that plays a role in the way practices are investigated or on how normativity is present in the practices that have been studied. Partly based on the case studies of three PhD studies on youth ministry and religious education from the Dutch Research Centre for Youth, Church and Culture, this article aims (a) to give an overview of the layers of normativity that can be distinguished in current practical theological youth ministry and religious education research and (b) to give directions for the design, execution, and reporting of practical theological youth ministry and religious education research in terms of a sufficient reflection on normativity.

Keywords

normativity – youth ministry research – religious education research - practical theology – research methodology

1 Introduction

After a public presentation of our Research Centre for Youth, Church and Culture² in which we gave an overview of the Centre's current practical theological research projects on the youth ministry and religious education practices, a systematic theologian asked the question about normativity in our work. The question "is every practice good?" can be regarded as the question that summarizes her remarks. To us, this was a trigger to elaborate our thoughts on the place of normativity in empirical youth ministry research. Normativity is the existence, working, or formation of standards or convictions in practices and in the observation and interpretation of practices. In the description of the normative task of practical theological interpretation, Osmer (2008) distinguishes the following three groups of standards: theological, ethical, and "good practice" norms.³ However, we can easily expand these groups with pedagogical standards and psychological norms, to name a few.

Normativity and practical theology are debated and discussed, among other topics that Miller-McLemore (2012) elaborates on.⁴ Miller-McLemore believes that misunderstandings about practical theology exist. One of these misunderstandings is that "practical theology is largely, if not wholly, descriptive, interpretative, empirical, and not normative, theological, and in some cases (dare I say) Christian. Description and interpretation by themselves are insufficient. Practical theology's objective is both to understand *and* to influence religious wisdom in congregations and public life more generally".⁵ Indeed, practical theology not being normative is definitely a misunderstanding. The question "is every practice good?", according to our observation, does not stem from an absence of normativity in our empirical practical theological research projects but, instead, from an absence of a sufficient explication of and reflection on normativity in these research projects.

According to Osmer (2008), normativity is a core issue in the work of the practical theologian, both in the design of research projects and in the reflection on its outcomes.⁶ Osmer (2008) identifies the normative task of the practical theologian as one of the following four core tasks: (a) the descriptive-empirical task, (b) the interpretive task, (c) the normative task, and (d) the pragmatic task.⁷ The normative task of the practical theologian is focused on the question "what ought to be going on?" The question "is every practice a good practice?" can only be answered if any clue of the answer to the question "what ought to be going on?" can be found in a particular practice. However, youth ministry research has different layers at which this normative question can be addressed. With regard to doing qualitative research on the faith narratives of adolescents, for example, Sonnenberg, Visser-Vogel, and Van Wijnen (2016) emphasize the possible gap between the adult researcher perspective and the adolescent participant perspective.⁸ In ethnographic or interview research projects with adolescents, one

² www.ojkc.nl

³ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical theology: an introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 4.

⁴ Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "Five misunderstandings about practical theology," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 16, no. 1 (2012): 5-26.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶ Osmer, *Practical theology*.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Ronelle Sonnenberg, Elsbeth Visser-Vogel, & Harmen van Wijnen, "Reconstructing faith narratives: doing research on the faith of adolescents," *Journal of Youth and Theology* 15, no. 1 (2016): 23-43.

can thus easily see the layer of the particular language and meaning-making frameworks of the adult researcher, on the one hand, and the layer of the particular language and meaning-making frameworks of the adolescent participant, on the other. In addition, one might think of normativity at the layer of the research project as a project. Examples of this kind of normativity can be found in a recent reflection on his own work by Root (2016), in which he proposes to raise ministry as the very organizing principle in empirical practical theological research projects, and in a recent reflection on the role of the empirical in youth ministry research by De Kock and Norheim (2018), in which they typify the work of the youth ministry scholar as a hermeneutical struggle with a kataphatic mode (being involved in positively describing God and God's attributes) and an apophatic mode (being utterly unable to describe God beyond sensation). In this article, we aim to explain these and other layers of normativity further.⁹

We believe that normative considerations are an essential part of empirical youth ministry research, and, therefore, a reflection on normativity cannot be missed in both the planning of and reporting on these research projects. We observe, however, in the presentation of results in many practical theological studies on the youth ministry that rarely a sufficient reflection is provided on what kind of normativity plays a role in the way practices are investigated or on how normativity is present in the practices that have been studied. What we do observe is the growing attention to the particular (normative) position of the researcher by giving the reader of research reports and articles a clue about the biography of the researcher and his/her personal connection with the central theme of the research conducted. Good examples of these kinds of biographical notes can be found in the reflection on the methodology section in the dissertation of Visser-Vogel (2015) and in the reliability procedures section in the dissertation of Sonnenberg (2015).¹⁰ However, this is but one aspect of how normativity can be reflected on in empirical practical theological studies on the youth ministry and how this aspect of personal standards and convictions can play a role in different layers of normativity. We believe that the practical theological research community involved in youth ministry studies can strengthen its scholarly work if the different layers of normativity in its work are better understood and reflected on. In the words of Ziebertz (2002; 2004), this task has to do with clarifying discursive normativity, which can be understood as follows:¹¹

- “to grasp, arrange, and describe the normativity that plays a role in a particular area of practice, that causes conflicts, that paralyses conduct, etc.;

⁹ Andrew Root, “Regulating the empirical in practical theology: on critical realism, divine action, and the place of the ministerial,” *Journal of Youth and Theology* 15, no. 1 (2016): 44-64.; Jos (A.) de Kock & Bard E.H. Norheim, “Youth ministry research and the empirical,” Accepted for publication in *International Journal of Practical Theology* 22, no. 1 (2018).

¹⁰ Elsbeth Visser-Vogel, *Religious identity development of orthoprax Muslim adolescents in The Netherlands*. Dissertation Utrecht University, The Netherlands, 2015.; Ronelle Sonnenberg, *Youth worship in protestant contexts. A practical theological theory of participation of adolescents*. Dissertation Protestant Theological University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2015.

¹¹ Hans-Georg Ziebertz, “Normativity and empirical research in practical theology,” *Journal of Empirical Theology* 15, no. 1 (2002): 5-18; Hans-Georg Ziebertz, *Empirical methodology and normativity*. In: *Normativity and empirical research in theology*, J.A. van der Ven & M. Scherer-Rath (Eds.), 2004, Leiden/Boston: Brill, pp. 289-306.

- to present normativity in theories, from which illumination of a problematic practice is expected;
- to structure the description of normativity in practice and in corresponding theories so that it is reconstructable and that it may be contradicted; and
- to rationally reconstruct the iterative relationship between knowledge and object
- to reveal the implicit decisions so that comment may be made upon the necessity and adequacy of those decisions".¹²

Our aims in this article are (a) to give an overview of the layers of normativity that we can distinguish in current practical theological youth ministry research, (b) to explain the usefulness of this set of layers by describing several studies as examples, and (c) to give directions for the design, execution, and reporting of practical theological youth ministry research in terms of a sufficient reflection on normativity. The central research questions in this article are as follows: (1) What are the layers of normativity in practical theological youth ministry research? (2) How can these layers be explicitly or implicitly recognized in practical theological youth ministry studies? Section 2 focuses on the first question and deals with an overview of the layers of normativity. Section 3 deals with the second research question on recognition by discussing three PhD research projects on the youth ministry and religious education that are a part of the Dutch Research Centre for Youth, Church and Culture. Section 4 presents the directions for the design, execution, and reporting of practical theological youth ministry research in terms of a reflection on normativity. Precisely, this is both the theoretical and practical relevance of the article—to help the practical theological research community involved in youth ministry studies to strengthen its scholarly work by giving structured attention to normativity. This article intends to support researchers directly involved in conducting empirical studies (e.g., PhD students), the researchers who are supervising them (e.g., in a role as promoters), and scholars involved in reviewing manuscripts for publication (e.g., in academic journals). In Section 5, we present the conclusion.

2 Layers of normativity

According to Norbert Mette (1978; 1984)¹³, 'the connection between theory and practice has changed to the effect that Practical Theology no longer provides "Theory *for* practice", but is rather - modifying the phrasing of Schleiermacher - "Theory of practice".' Religious practice is the material object of study of practical theology, and empirical research seeks a theory of practice by taking the insider's perspective. This section deals with an overview of the layers of normativity, and for this aim, distinguishing between the religious practice being studied, the theory of this practice being construed, and the relationship between religious practice and the theory of practice is important.

We propose to distinguish between the following four layers of normativity: (1) discourse in religious practice, (2) professional theory of practice, (3) academic theory of practice, and (4) the metatheoretical foundation of the research project. We will describe these

¹² Ziebertz, "Normativity and empirical research," 16.

¹³ Quoted by Ziebertz, "Normativity and empirical research," 6, and Ziebertz, "Empirical methodology," 291. Norbert Mette, *Theorie der Praxis*, (Düsseldorf, 1978); Norbert Mette, *Von der Anwendungs- zur Handlungswissenschaft*. In: O. Fuchs (Hg.), *Theologie und Handeln*, 1984, Düsseldorf, pp. 50-63.

layers in more detail in the remainder of this section. The distinction between these four layers is a result of a literature study and a group discussion on normativity among research members of our Research Centre for Youth, Church and Culture (OJKC), and in addition, tested and sharpened by a critical and detailed examination of the three OJKC PhD research projects as will be discussed in section 3. The boundaries between the layers of normativity are not to be taken as strictly closed boundaries. The layers significantly overlap, meaning that the boundaries are fluent and transparent. However, for analyzing normativity in empirical practical theological research practices (which we will demonstrate in more detail in Section 3), distinguishing between these layers is helpful.

2.1 Discourse in religious practice

The layer of discourse in religious practice is about discourses containing both text-based, verbal and non-verbal expressions visible in religious practices. These discourses reflect standards and convictions in the tradition of the practice, as well as the current standards and convictions of actors (including the researcher) in the practice.

A religious practice that is the object of research is always more or less historically and locally rooted in a particular tradition and historically and locally embedded in a culture or cultural tracks. Tradition and culture are a part of the DNA of a religious community, religious network, or religious context in which a religious practice is situated. When it comes to youth ministry practices, for example, the denominational position of a faith community in which the youth ministry practice is studied is an important carrier of normativity in youth ministry practice. Denomination is rooted in a historic tradition and, at the same time, operant in the here and now in a particular place embedded in a particular culture. Christian Reformed, Evangelical, Anglican, and Interreligious—these are some examples that hint on what is meant by tradition in religious practices. Clearly, only the use of such a label is not a sufficient indication of the normativity it carries; Evangelical in New York is not the same as evangelical in a little town in The Netherlands, for example. The history and cultural tracks in localities should be thematized in relation to these kinds of religious labels.

A religious practice that is the object of research is not only rooted in a particular tradition and embedded in a particular culture but, at the same time, is the object of the normative discourse of different actors and, as a result, influenced by different, sometimes concurring, normative positions. An example of such a normative discourse is a debate in a particular congregation on the aims that catechesis practices in the congregation should strive for. Although catechesis has had a long tradition as the transformation of knowledge of the Scripture and tradition, a debate is ongoing among parents, in which preferences for a more child-centered catechesis with emphasis on personal meaning-making processes come to the fore. This example brings us to the level of the professional theory of practice.

2.2 Professional theory of practice

This layer is about standards and convictions situated in operant theories of practice or, in other words, theories of practice at work. This layer has particularly to do with normativity as observed in theories construed on the basis of or directing performances in these religious practices. We call them *professional* theories of practice because these operant theories of practice are often found in the actions, habits, and minds of professional workers in religious practices, such as pastors, youth workers, and church leaders. With the term “professional,” we do not only refer to paid workers in congregations but also to volunteer people in all kinds of religious practices who are more or less reflective practitioners in that religious practice. These professionals or reflective practitioners are acting partly on the basis of knowledge (theories) of the good and bad practices they have experienced thus far and, therefore, are normatively steered by performances that convinced them, for example, on the best way to solve a problem. Professionals and reflective practitioners are also partly steered by normative positions on important themes in their work. Here, we might take up again the example of catechesis aims. The preference for the transfer of knowledge of the Scripture and tradition might stem from the conception of religious identity as a commitment to tradition, whereas a preference for personal meaning-making processes might stem from a view of religious identity as an authentic personal choice and expression in life.

2.3 Academic theory of practice

This layer is about normativity situated in academic theories of practice that can be found in handbooks, academic journal articles, scientific theories, and so on. The example of religious identity, being a commitment to tradition or being an authentic personal expression in life, cannot only be found at the level of professional theories of practice but also at the level of academic theories of practice. In a research project on the religious identity development of Muslim adolescents, for example, one might choose to allow the theoretical framework be informed by theories in line with the commitment conception or by theories more in line with the personal expression conception of identity. Very often, in academic research on religious practices, a broad spectrum of (sometimes concurring) normative stances informs the theoretical background of particular studies. Another important aspect of this layer of normativity is the choice of the academic discipline(s) in which the particular religious practice is studied. As will be shown in Section 3, different kinds of religious practices—whether church-related groups of adolescents, liturgical–ritual activities with children in congregations, or practices of religious education with primary school pupils—can be investigated from different angles of academic traditions, such as theology, anthropology, pedagogy, and sociology. A choice of one or more of such angles is, in a sense, a normative choice, including choices for particular ideological tracks of reflection within an academic discipline.

2.4 Metatheoretical foundation of the research project

This layer of normativity is about how the researcher, the research group, or the research community considers the particular empirical research study in terms of how the empirical, the theoretical concepts, and the personal convictions and experiences of the researcher are related

to one another. This is what we call the layer of metatheoretical foundation of the research project, which was hinted on in the introduction section. There, we referred to the example of a recent reflection on his own work by Root (2016), in which he proposes to raise ministry as the very organizing principle in empirical practical theological research projects, and to another recent reflection on the role of the empirical in youth ministry research by De Kock and Norheim (2018), in which they typify the work of the youth ministry scholar as a hermeneutical struggle with a kataphatic mode (being involved in positively describing God and God's attributes) and an apophatic mode (being utterly unable to describe God beyond sensation).¹⁴ To take an emic, insider perspective in empirical research on youth ministry practices, which we, in the Research Centre for Youth, Church and Culture, constantly do, is, in fact, a normative choice on the metatheoretical level. Also a choice for critical realism as a philosophical/social perspective in a research study, for example, is a normative choice on the metatheoretical level.¹⁵ The metatheoretical layer is about reflections on the nature of the research results. Metaphorically said, "what are the dots on a blank sheet and what is the blank sheet?"¹⁶ These are ontological and epistemological questions.

3. Layers of normativity as reflected in three youth ministry studies

This section deals with the second research question on recognition by analyzing three current practical theological PhD studies on the youth ministry and religious education from our Research Centre for Youth, Church and Culture. The Centre is a part of the Department of Practical Theology of the Protestant Theological University. All our studies have the material object of study of religious practices in which young people are involved. Various researchers investigate the broad field of youth, church, and culture from a variety of angles, such as theology, pedagogy, anthropology, and sociology. These differences in background also lead to certain ways in which normativity plays a role in research projects.

We selected three different PhD projects for our exemplary analysis of the layers of normativity. One PhD project has been finished, and two PhD projects are currently in progress. First, we will provide our analysis of the one that is finished, which is the study of Van Wijnen (2016) on faith in small groups of adolescents.¹⁷ This dissertation is an empirical research project with a focus on groups of teenagers deriving mainly from theological and sociological perspectives. Next, an analysis is given on the research project in progress of Van Leersum-Bekebrede (20XX), who focuses on the liturgical-ritual activities for children in Protestant

¹⁴ Root, "Regulating the empirical"; De Kock & Norheim, "Youth ministry research and the empirical".

¹⁵ Critical realism "... acknowledges the ontological (divine) reality that exists independently of the epistemology of human beings, although human activity is needed to understand reality. (...) The 'critical realism' is not a simple or direct realism approach, because it is open to criticism concerning the claims and the supposed connection with the being of reality" (Sonnenberg 2015: 201).

¹⁶ Marcel Barnard, Mirella Klomp, Ronelle Sonnenberg, S. Belderbos, & Nienke van Aniel, "Dots on a blank sheet. Procedures in ritual and liturgical research," *Jaarboek voor liturgieonderzoek* 25 (2009): 35-46.

¹⁷ Harmen van Wijnen, *Faith in small groups of adolescents. Being together as a basic given*. Dissertation Protestant Theological University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2016.

churches in The Netherlands.¹⁸ In this empirical study, young children from 0–12 years of age in church settings are at the core, and theological and anthropological perspectives are combined. Our third analysis is based on the research project in progress of Renkema (20XX), who is studying practices of religious education and rituals in Dutch cooperation schools.¹⁹ This project is focused on primary school pupils in school settings, and the research derives from both theological and pedagogical/educational perspectives.

Aside from the variety of topics, contexts, and research designs, there is another important variety of features in these selected studies in terms of the particular relationship we, as authors of the current article, have to these studies. The authors De Kock and Sonnenberg were members of the thesis committee that reviewed the original manuscript of Van Wijnen (2016) and participated in the public defense of it. De Kock and Sonnenberg are currently supervising the study of Van Leersum-Bekebrede (20XX) in their roles as co-promoters. The studies of Van Wijnen and Van Leersum-Bekebrede are thus reflected on from a reviewing and supervising points of view, respectively. The analysis of the study of Van Wijnen is ours, the analysis of the study of Van Leersum-Bekebrede is in cooperation with her. She selected- at our request- examples of normative layers in her research. Being a co-author of the article, Renkema (20XX) will reflect on the study from his perspective as the researcher himself, while being involved in conducting the PhD research project.

3.1 Analysis of the study by Van Wijnen (2016)

The study of Van Wijnen (2016) is entitled “Faith in small groups of adolescents: being together as a basic given.” It is an empirical research project in which five small groups of adolescents are investigated using ethnographical tools, such as participant observation, focus groups, and interviews with the participating adolescents and leaders of the small groups. The five small groups under study were directly or indirectly related to a local congregation of the Protestant Church in The Netherlands. The study is presented as a practical theological research in which sociological concepts and notions are combined with theological concepts and notions to facilitate a theological discourse on the basis of the empirical data. “The theological perspective can be in harmony with the sociological perspective based on the creation focus on reality. Differences can exist in a critical dialogue with the sociological perspective based on the revelation and salvation view of reality espoused by the theological perspective”.²⁰

The religious practice that is central to the study of Van Wijnen, therefore, is the field of youth ministry practices in the broad context of the Protestant Church in The Netherlands. When it comes to the layer *discourse in religious practice*, much could be said about the historical developments and typical Protestant traditions of the youth ministry in the Dutch context. If we look at what is said in this regard in Van Wijnen’s dissertation, the most dominant observation of the author that can be found both on the book cover and in the general introduction is Protestant youth ministry practices serving as a bridge between the church and adolescents.

¹⁸ Lydia van Leersum-Bekebrede, Liturgical-ritual activities for children from 0-12 in Protestant contexts in the Netherlands. Dissertation in progress, 20XX.

¹⁹ Erik Renkema, Religious identity, religious education and rituals at Dutch cooperation schools. Dissertation in progress, 20XX.

²⁰ Van Wijnen, Faith in small groups, 46.

This reflects a church tradition in which a gap between the church as an institute, on the one hand, and a young generation, on the other, is experienced and all kinds of youth ministry practices are developed to connect the church with young people and vice versa.

Furthermore, a variety of normative discourses could be brought to the fore, both at the level of local church congregations and discourses on religion in society at the national level. The particular discourse that Van Wijnen selects as an important background for his research project has to do with the following: 'We have to reformulate the question "can we bridge the gap between church and adolescents" to "Can the church and adolescents find new ways in thinking, behaving and acting together to live and to believe beyond the gap?"'.²¹ This main question is a major theme in the research project and stems from the author's observation that "[t]he practice of youth ministry yields many examples showing that the traditional approach to organizing activities and church-based groups is not attractive to adolescents".²²

These particular observations and perceptions of both the tradition of Protestant youth ministry practices and the current challenges in these practices are reflected in what the author presents at the level of layer 2, *professional theory of practice*. A direct impression of professional theories of practice at work is found in the general introduction: "In youth ministry, there is a basic understanding that small groups are very important and that these small groups have a great potential to combine faith and daily life in a strong social network. In situations where they participate in organized activities, adolescents are often perceived as having negative attitudes".²³ Here, Van Wijnen presents the concept and the power of small groups, which becomes the central concept for theological reflection in his dissertation. This concept is taken from professional theories of practice in the field and links up with a general observation of Van Wijnen in terms of a development toward bottom-up approaches in youth work, which he includes in the preface of his dissertation: "From 2004 until 2013, I participated in the youth work organized by the Protestant Church in The Netherlands. During these years, a transformation from a 'top-down' to a 'bottom-up' approach took place within the church".²⁴

Therefore, Van Wijnen himself was, for a long period, a part of the field of youth ministry practices, while working for two youth organizations within the Protestant Church in The Netherlands. Against this background, the aim of the dissertation to provide a creative and innovative contribution to the search for new paradigms in youth ministry might not only be conceived as an academic interest but also as a personal interest. In general, distinguishing these particular interests, both personal and academic, is important when evaluating the ways in which the empirical data are analyzed in light of the particular concepts and theories chosen by the researcher.

When it comes to layer 3, *academic theory of practice*, Van Wijnen strikingly starts with the following propositions: (a) theology should be construed with use of other academic disciplines than theology itself, i.e., more than currently is done, and (b) theology should be construed on the basis of youth practices, i.e., more than currently is done. In relationship to this, Van Wijnen

²¹ Ibid., 26.

²² Ibid., 26.

²³ Ibid., 24.

²⁴ Ibid., 7.

explains, “In this practical theological research, sociological concepts and notions are also used to develop the concepts in this study. The sociological concepts and notions were combined with theological concepts and notions in a critical realistic way, which made them useful in the theological discourse”.²⁵ As mentioned, Van Wijnen presents small groups as the central concept for theological reflection in his dissertation. The small group as a sociological concept/notion is embedded in the work of Maffesoli (1996) on neo-tribes.²⁶ As a theological concept/notion, it is embedded in the theology of Van Genneep (1989) in relation to what Van Wijnen calls covenant-genesis.²⁷ Furthermore, the reflection on the power of small groups is embedded in the work of practical theologian Pete Ward (2002; 2012).²⁸

Not only sociological and theological sources inform the main argument developed in the dissertation; to a large extent, the argument is also based on empirical work in which the voices of adolescents come to the fore. In seriously taking the concrete life and living together of adolescents partaking in five small groups directly or indirectly related to a local Protestant congregation, the researcher brings in the voices of these adolescents as an empirical source for construing theology. This is the first and is an important aspect of the layer *metatheoretical foundation of the research project*. A second aspect is already visible in the preface when Van Wijnen explains, “.. this study became the life report of a developmental process in the church, the youth organizations in the church and of myself as a researcher and a person.”.²⁹ This means that the research project is conceived not only as a description of developments in the field but also of developments in the individual as a researcher and a person: studying a phenomenon is not just impersonally registering but is instead an inherently personally engaged endeavor. This observation is important in the level of the metatheoretical foundation of the research project. One other observation in this layer is how Van Wijnen chooses critical realism as a way of dealing with the observed reality of the small groups under study: “This epistemological and ontological position also has consequences with respect to the theological view on sociological reality. Based on Ward’s proposal [referring to Ward 2012; this note added by De Kock, Sonnenberg & Renkema] this study presumes that sociological and theological reality coincide. The same phenomena can be described from both sociological and theological perspectives”.³⁰

²⁵ Ibid., 44.

²⁶ Michel Maffesoli, *The time of the tribes: the decline of individualism in mass society* (London: Sage, 1996).

²⁷ Ted van Genneep, *De terugkeer van de verloren Vader* [The return of the lost Father] (Baarn: Ten Have, 1989).

²⁸ Pete Ward, *Liquid church* (Peabody (Massachusetts): Hendrickson, 2002); Pete Ward (Ed.), *Perspectives on ecclesiology and ethnography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

²⁹ Van Wijnen, *Faith in small groups*, 7.

³⁰ Ibid., 45-46.

3.2 Analysis of the study by Van Leersum-Bekebrede (20XX)

Van Leersum investigates worship practices, also called liturgical rituals, with children.³¹ This contribution is based on mainly one article of Van Leersum, but the research is still ongoing, and normativity also plays a role in other articles.

Taking the insider's perspective and aiming to develop a theory of practice rather than a theory for practice are important in her approach. From this starting point, she deals with different norms that she meets in the practices she investigates. This is a distinction in what we call layer 4, *metatheoretical foundation of the research project*. One of the important remarks in the article "Deconstructing ideals of worship with children" is as follows: "We argue that the dichotomy of intergenerational and target-group worship is not useful because it conflates normative notions with one extreme or the other. *In reality* [italics by De Kock, Sonnenberg & Renkema], various pedagogical and theological views and aims inspire a plurality of worship practices with children".³² The researcher searches a way beyond one of the two dominant practical theories for practice positions of intergenerational liturgy or target-group liturgy by arguing that in reality, a complexity of normativity in and of the practice exists. The practice and the insider's perspective are Van Leersum's starting points, and from there, she concludes about the need to keep the complexity in our theories. A whole world of normativity lies behind these remarks, as we will further explain.

The research is done in Protestant contexts. These contexts, of course, bring Protestant DNA forward, such as not only the (historically based) importance of children understanding the bible story and the sermon, but also the variety of children's worship practices connecting with the broad liturgical variety in Protestant contexts, and each congregation has a certain freedom to shape worship/liturgical rituals. This distinction of the given tradition(s) is what we call the normativity of tradition in the current discourse of the practice, which is the layer *discourse in religious practice*.

Van Leersum, trained as an anthropologist, bases her research results on ethnographic research. She extensively describes the shapes, materials, actions, and other aspects in the children's worship. None of these actions and shapes are neutral. Children sometimes go to their own space, or they stay in the church and have something specific to do (like a church game or so). Different actors in the field of children's worship come with different actions and reflections. These vary from correcting children when they are noisy and searching for possibilities to meet and speak with the children, to explaining that children going to their own space is more practical or that in liturgical services, a kind of rest/peacefulness is important, among others. Actors (a parent, a youth worker, or another actor) show some of their (liturgical) norms in these actions and reflections. In the action of participant observation, the researcher also has her own normative reflections, as can be read in her field notes. We give two examples from her field notes:

³¹ The research project "Liturgical-ritual activities for children from 0-12 in Protestant contexts in the Netherlands" is running from 2016 to 2020. We mainly base this analysis on the first article of this project. Thanks to Lydia van Leersum-Bekebrede for her comments on this section.

³² Lydia van Leersum, Ronelle Sonnenberg, Jos de Kock, & Marcel Barnard, "Deconstructing ideals of worship with children," Accepted for publication in *Studia Liturgica*, 20XX).

"The tip of Yaël's tongue sticks out of her mouth in concentration. But then Wiebe gives a helping hand, I think to make sure the candle won't go out again. As he is holding Yaël's right hand, in which she holds the candle, Yaël herself looks away. She is hiding her face. Mrs. Floor emphatically says 'Oh, she's afraid!' and I, too, feel uneasy as we watch the child being forced to do something that she doesn't want to do." ³³

Therefore, for the researcher, respect for what the children do or do not want to do is important. Second, the researcher, in her field notes, ³⁴ expresses astonishment about all the children of the children's choir and most of their parents taking part in the Lord's Supper. Most of the children are not baptized, and some of the parents say they are atheists. This practice of unbaptized children and atheist parents taking part in the Lord's Supper is something the researcher is not used to. The questions she asks are as follows: who is taking responsibility in and for this praxis? Is education not at least needed so that children know what they are doing? Is baptism not a condition for participating in the meal? Here, we are dealing with what we call the normativity of actors in the current discourses in the practices (layer 1, *discourse in religious practice*). In this second example the researchers' initial reaction arises from the liturgical tradition(s) she has been raised in. In her notes, ³⁵ she describes that she grew up a more homogeneous Christian worldview and has been confronted in her research and her research team with a variety of confessional notions in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. This gives challenging food for thought. Doing research influences the researcher, especially because her metatheoretical stance to take the insiders' perspective seriously leads her to re-examine her initial reactions and to change or contextualize her own beliefs.

The reflective practitioners, often actors in the field, as well as the researcher, have access to practical theories of practices (layer 2, *professional theory of practice*). These are the theories that address the models for actors, roles, and pastoral or educational approaches, to name a few. One of these theories is called intergenerational liturgy and church. This term often emerges in the data of this present research as a theory *for* practice, and it is contrasted with target group theories. It relates to the roles and aims in and for practices. With these theories, pedagogical and theological claims and norms are at stake. For example, on the one hand, the theological claim of the church as one Body of Christ and, on the other hand, the theological claim of the uniqueness of every person, also the uniqueness in faith, are often opposed, as Van Leersum explains.

These claims bring us to layer 3, *academic theory of practice*. The researcher refers to childhood studies in which the normative point of view that children are important in their uniqueness is often stressed. The choice of the concept of liturgical ritual is another example of normativity at the level of academic theories; it includes an anthropological and a theological perspective on the field of children's worship. Questions, such as "does children's worship exist for children's uniqueness or is it because of the glory of God?", are related to these theories.

The final question to be asked in this section is as follows: is every liturgical ritual with children a good practice in the eyes of the researcher? In empirical research, every practice is taken seriously, but this is not the same as saying that every practice is good. In the case of the

³³ Van Leersum-Bekebrede, Field notes taken during Baptism service, February 12, 2017.

³⁴ Van Leersum-Bekebrede, Field notes taken during Service with Children's Choir, June 18, 2017.

³⁵ Van Leersum-Bekebrede, Logbook Spirituality 'On my perception of the field', August 29, 2017.

article of Van Leersum, a forced and exclusive focus by reflective practitioners on one of the two models, intergenerational and target group, is not good. The normative questions that will be asked in her further research are whether the theological or pedagogical normativity of praxis is appropriate for the shapes of the praxis and whether the praxis will be interpreted within the frame of the broader social and pedagogical context in which children live.

3.3 Analysis of the study by Renkema (20XX)

The research of Renkema focuses on the values of school identity as interpreted by teachers of cooperation schools for primary education in the Netherlands and the relationship between these values and the practice of religious education in these schools.

With regard to layer 1, *discourse in religious practice*, Renkema investigates this theme in the unique and specific context of the Dutch educational system. In the Netherlands, a school is either a confessional school or a public secular school. Both are equally financed by the government. In practice, more and more schools are a combination of both types because of the decreasing number of pupils. This practice is challenged because of the fact that a secular non-confessional school is combined with a school that organizes its education based on a religious or philosophical view. Many of the values and practices of these schools are historically developed with a long and valued tradition. Teachers, principals, parents, and most of the pupils are encouraged to bridge the differences between these two distinct identities and to practice living together in education, particularly religious education. It is this unique background that plays an important role in Renkema's research.

His research is also characterized by the second layer of normativity, which is *professional theory of practice*. He investigates the values of the professionals, teachers, and principals of the cooperating schools. Renkema particularly focuses on their good and meaningful education values and their perspectives on the practices of religious education as identity markers in their schools. In this research, Renkema chooses for these respondents and not for the pupils or the parents, who are other important players at the schools. Studying these professionals, teachers, and principals is an explicit objective; they are responsible for education, they organize this education, and do so with a purpose. After all, "it is teachers who in the end, will change the world of school by understanding it".³⁶ As an example, we see that in several of the schools, teachers choose to teach in one of the two merged identities, either the public secular education or the Christian education. At regular times in the week, the pupils receive religious education from their teachers on the basis of one of these identities.³⁷ A second example is the choice of teachers to incorporate biblical stories in their lessons for all pupils; some of the cooperation schools do not organize religious education in a segregated way (as described above), but they provide it to all pupils together. One of the findings in Renkema's research was the emphasis on the biblical tradition in lessons for religious education. Teachers underlined this choice by referring to their personal and professional values.³⁸

³⁶ Lawrence Stenhouse, "What counts as research?," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 29 (1981): 103-114.

³⁷ Erik Renkema, André Mulder, & Marcel Barnard, "Religious education and celebrations in a Dutch cooperation school," Accepted for publication in *Religion & Education*, 2018.

³⁸ Erik Renkema, André Mulder, & Marcel Barnard, "Key values of a Dutch cooperation school and the practice of religious education," *British Journal of Religious Education*, (2017) DOI: 10.1080/01416200.2017.1361380

In Renkema's research, we recognize the third layer, which is the *academic theory of practice*, in the consequent and explicit focus on theoretical views on religious education in the context of diversity in the student population. Although this diversity is very specific in cooperation schools (most of the students are either non-affiliated or Christian because of the rural conditions of these specific schools), theoretical insights into religious diversity are put forward to shed light on the challenges that these cooperation schools face. A theoretically founded perspective is the attention to the fostering of dialogue in Renkema's research. The dialogue between students from different backgrounds about life experiences that are recognizable for all is particularly a key factor when it comes to the encounter in the context of diversity. The interpretive approach, as described by Jackson (1997) and other theoretical views concerning the influence of dialogue and encounter on the identity development of pupils, is a consequent focus in Renkema's research.³⁹ In his research, he elaborates on the theoretical point of view that dialogue and encounter in religious education are highly valued because of two characteristics. First, they encourage mutual understanding of the other, especially the other who has a world view or religious background that is unknown or strange. A democratic and peaceful way of living together is the aim of this point of view. The other characteristic is the development of the personal identity of pupils; through encounters with the other and with a differing point of view, a pupil is encouraged to reflect on his/her personal views and values.⁴⁰ This theory clarifies that the school context of diversity and the explicit enhancement of dialogue in religious education can be significantly important for this development and the understanding of the other.

As a former primary school teacher, Renkema brings in this curiosity for the practice of teachers in dealing with this specific diversity. He asks the question, "what can be said about this practice in relation to the values that teachers bring forward and that formal documents of the schools subscribe [to]?" Renkema shows a strong connection between theory and the views of the respondents when it comes to such values and this practice: all sources underline the importance of encounter and the living together of all pupils. Religious education, in particular, is valued as a key factor for enhancing this encounter and the mutual understanding among the pupils. From a theoretical point of view, Renkema, as a theologian, also puts forward the importance of dialogue about life experiences. This focus can enhance the understanding of the other and can be a strong practice of the identity of schools fostering this mutual understanding in the context of diversity. From a theological and a pedagogical point of view, he also asks fundamental questions about the discrepancy he perceived when relating the values of encounter and living together to the practice of religious education as identity markers. This point of view is based on a normative position of enhancing a democratic society by education, in general, and religious education, in particular: "This encounter serves the ultimate goal of educating young people in order to prepare them to live in a plural society."

3.4 Comparison of the analyses

When comparing the analyses of the three different PhD projects, we observe that each of the first three layers of normativity can be identified and that we can describe how each of these

³⁹ Robert Jackson, *Religious Education. An Interpretive Approach*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997).

⁴⁰ Erik Renkema, André Mulder, & Marcel Barnard, "Religious education".

layers is at work in the subsequent studies. We also observe that layer 4, *meta theoretical foundation of the research project*, could not be observed in the study of Renkema (20XX). We argue that, in general, research studies can vary in whether all layers of normativity are present and reflected on and how explicitly each of these is present and reflected on. Furthermore, we observe that a discussion of each PhD project in terms of the layers of normativity helps us understand the logic of the research design and the analysis of outcomes at a deeper level—the level of standards and convictions with regard to the religious practices that are operant in personal, professional, and academic discourses.

4 Directions for the design, execution, and reporting of further research

From our discussion and observations of normativity in the prior sections, we now turn to giving directions for the design, execution, and reporting of practical theological youth ministry research in terms of reflection on normativity.

For the design phase in practical theological youth ministry research, we propose that the researcher and his/her supervisors extensively reflect on the research problem, research question(s), and research methodology in terms of normativity. When it comes to the research problem, questions might be asked, such as *for whom is this a problem?*, *why is it a problem?*, *where is it a problem?*, and *is this also 'our' problem?* The answers to these questions can pinpoint important standards and convictions in the religious practices under study, in the professional theories operant in these practices, and the normative informed choices in academic theories for researching the problem. When it comes to the research questions, one might ask, for example, *what rationale is behind the distinction between the main question, on the one hand, and the sub-questions, on the other*, and *why are sub-questions presented in this particular order?* Of course, these are questions that should be asked in general, but in this context, these are meant particularly to make explicit the standards and convictions that are beyond the research questions. The answers to these kinds of questions might reveal the convictions on how phenomena or variables are supposed to be connected beforehand. They help make implicit hypotheses more explicit and critically challenge these hypotheses beforehand. When it comes to research methodology, the main question to be asked in practical theology is on the meta-theoretical foundation of the research project: *how do I weigh empirical data in relationship to theological claims?* or *how do I conceive the relationship between the phenomena under study, on the one hand, and my own perception of these phenomena as a researcher, on the other?*

For the execution phase of practical theological youth ministry research, we suggest particularly that the researcher be continuously aware of his/her own standards and convictions when participating in, observing, or analyzing the youth ministry practices under study. Being aware means that he/she should register systematically his/her own normative reflections in each phase of conducting the research project. This systematic registering is definitely helped by making a special kind of field notes or logbook, in which these reflections are written down or narrated. These field notes can help in (a) forcing oneself to distinct oneself from own convictions and, as a result, to be open and sensitive to the convictions and standards in the religious practice under study, and in (b) reporting afterwards on the role of normativity during the course of the research project.

This reporting on the research project is the final phase for which we present some suggestions. First, we suggest the inclusion of a subsection on (the layers of) normativity in the research design section of the research report, whether a monograph or a journal article. Traditionally, the research design section follows a structure in which the research participants, research instruments, data gathering, and data analysis are discussed. We also suggest a discussion on the topic of normativity in terms of clarifying the standards or convictions in the religious practice and professional theories of practice that are at stake, the choices in academic theories that are made, and, on the most fundamental level, the metatheoretical foundation that forms the basis under the research design. Second, a critical reflection on normativity in the discussion section should be included when reporting on the research project. Traditionally, a note is made on “a critical evaluation of the chosen research methodology”; our suggestion is to expand this critical evaluation with a reflection on how each of the four layers of normativity, as presented, were operant during the course of the research project. The field notes on the own normative reflections by the researchers, as mentioned, are important for this aim.

5 Conclusion

The question “is every practice good?” was the start of our reflection on normativity in our research. We opted for a discursive normativity, and our aim was to describe and apply different aspects of this normativity. The central research questions in this article were as follows: what are the layers of normativity in practical theological youth ministry research, and how can these layers be explicitly or implicitly recognized in practical theological youth ministry studies? The first research question can be answered by distinguishing between four layers of normativity, which are (1) discourse in religious practice, (2) professional theory of practice, (3) academic theory of practice, and (4) metatheoretical foundation of the research project. The second research question was sought to be answered by analyzing three practical theological PhD studies on the youth ministry and religious education from the Research Centre for Youth, Church and Culture. This analysis revealed that explicit normativity could be detected, and implicit normativity could be brought to the surface by using the four layers of normativity as an analytical framework. In line with these conclusions, we recommend focusing on normativity in the design phase in practical theological youth ministry research by reflecting on the research problem, research question(s), and research methodology in the execution phase of the research through awareness of one’s own standards and convictions when participating in, observing, or analyzing youth ministry practices and, in the reporting phase, by including a subsection on (the layers of) normativity in the research design section and a critical reflection on normativity in the discussion section of the research report.

The four layers of normativity as presented in this article is one way among others to organize layers of normativity in a framework. As an alternative, one might choose for a more nuanced organization with sub-layers (e.g. in layer (1) distinguishing between standards and convictions of participants in religious practices on the one hand and those of the researcher on the other); or one might have missed in our framework, for example, a clear distinct articulation of the aspect of theological doctrinal normativity, which in our framework is not isolated within one layer but, instead, distributed among layers (1), (2) and (3). At the same time, the distinction

between these four layers of normativity, however, is not just arbitrary. As said in section 2, we ended up with this organizing framework only after a thorough group discussion on normativity among research members in our team and only after having tested and sharpened the framework by a critical and detailed examination of three research projects. We believe that the set of four layers of normativity, as presented in this article, is a simple but powerful tool for reflection on normativity by youth ministry researchers directly involved in conducting empirical studies (e.g., PhD students), the researchers supervising these researchers (e.g., in a role as promotor), and scholars who are involved in reviewing manuscripts for publication (e.g., in academic journals).

References

- Barnard, Marcel, Mirella Klomp, P.M. (Ronelle) Sonnenberg, S. Belderbos, & Nienke van Anandel (2009). Dots on a blank sheet. Procedures in ritual and liturgical research. *Jaarboek voor liturgieonderzoek* 25, pp. 35-46.
- De Kock, A. (Jos) & Bard E.H. Norheim (2018). Youth ministry research and the empirical. *Accepted for publication in International Journal of Practical Theology* 22 (1).
- Jackson, Robert (1997). *Religious Education. An Interpretive Approach*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Maffesoli, Michel (1996). *The time of the tribes: the decline of individualism in mass society*. London: Sage.
- Mette, Norbert (1978). *Theorie der Praxis*. Düsseldorf.
- Mette, Norbert (1984). Von der Anwendungs- zur Handlungswissenschaft. In: O. Fuchs (Hg.). *Theologie und Handeln*. Düsseldorf, pp. 50-63.
- Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J. (2012). Five misunderstandings about practical theology. *International Journal of Practical Theology* 16 (1), pp. 5-26.
- Osmer, Richard .R (2008). *Practical theology: an introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Renkema, Erik (20XX). *Religious identity, religious education and rituals at Dutch cooperation schools*. Dissertation in progress.
- Renkema, Erik, André Mulder, & Marcel Barnard (2017). Key values of a Dutch cooperation school and the practice of religious education. *British Journal of Religious Education*, DOI: 10.1080/01416200.2017.1361380
- Renkema, Erik, André Mulder, & Marcel Barnard (2018). Religious education and celebrations in a Dutch cooperation school. *Accepted for publication in Religion & Education*.
- Root, Andrew (2016). Regulating the empirical in practical theology: on critical realism, divine action, and the place of the ministerial. *Journal of Youth and Theology* 15 (1), pp. 44-64.
- Sonnenberg, Ronelle (2015). *Youth worship in protestant contexts. A practical theological theory of participation of adolescents*. Dissertation Protestant Theological University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
- Sonnenberg, Ronelle, Elsbeth Visser-Vogel, & Harmen van Wijnen (2016). Reconstructing faith narratives: doing research on the faith of adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Theology* 15 (1), pp. 23-43.
- Stenhouse, Lawrence (1981). What counts as research? *British Journal of Educational Studies* 29, pp. 103-114.
- Van Gennep, F.O. (Ted) (1989). *De terugkeer van de verloren Vader [The return of the lost Father]*. Baarn: Ten Have.
- Van Leersum-Bekebrede, Lydia (20XX). *Liturgical-ritual activities for children from 0-12 in Protestant contexts in the Netherlands*. Dissertation in progress.
- Van Leersum, Lydia, P.M. (Ronelle) Sonnenberg, A. (Jos) de Kock, & Marcel Barnard (20XX). Deconstructing ideals of worship with children. *Accepted for publication in Studia Liturgica*.
- Van Wijnen, Harmen (2016). *Faith in small groups of adolescents. Being together as a basic given*. Dissertation Protestant Theological University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

- Visser-Vogel, Elsbeth (2015). *Religious identity development of orthodox Muslim adolescents in The Netherlands*. Dissertation Utrecht University, The Netherlands.
- Ward, Pete (2002). *Liquid church*. Peabody (Massachusetts): Hendrickson.
- Ward, Pete (Ed.) (2012). *Perspectives on ecclesiology and ethnography*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Ziebertz, Hans-Georg (2002). Normativity and empirical research in practical theology. *Journal of Empirical Theology* 15 (1), pp. 5-18.
- Ziebertz, Hans-Georg (2004). Empirical methodology and normativity. In: *Normativity and empirical research in theology*, J.A. van der Ven & M. Scherer-Rath (Eds.), 2004, Leiden/Boston: Brill, pp. 289-306.

Karen E. Mosby
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
karen.mosby@garrett.edu
REA Annual Meeting, November 2-4, 2018

**A Visit to “The Clearing” and “Warrior Falls”:
In Search of “Brave and Beyond” Spaces for Religious Education**

ABSTRACT

This paper will employ the fictional scenes of “The Clearing” from Toni Morrison’s novel, *Beloved* and “Warrior Falls” from the movie, *Black Panther*, co-written and directed by Ryan Coogler as primary sources for my engagement of the question: “How can religious educators learn from those who have been marginalized and whose voices are not usually heard because of the hegemony of whiteness?” I will also use implications from these two scenes to interrogate the concepts of brave and beyond spaces.

What shall I tell my dear ones raised in a white world
A place where white has been made to represent
All that is good and pure and fine and decent.
Where clouds are white, and dolls, and heaven
Surely is a white, white place with angels
Robed in white, and cotton candy and ice cream
And milk and ruffled Sunday dresses
And dream houses and long sleek Cadillacs
And angel's food is white...all, all...white.¹

I. INTRODUCTION

Early attempts at teaching Christianity to African peoples forcibly transported to the United States and indigenous peoples already existing on the land foreshadowed how the teaching of the Bible and Christian faith would become almost inextricably bound with racism, white supremacy, and marginalization of non-white peoples. The June 16, 1854 edition of William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper, *The Liberator*, included an excerpt from *The Southern Episcopalian* news monthly entitled, "A Catechism for Slaves." The excerpt contained the following:

Who gave you a master and a mistress?
God gave them to me.
Who says that you must obey them?:
God says that I must.
What book tells you these things?
The Bible.

These practices of equating whiteness with God set a precedent for sacralizing white normativity that continues to plague Religious Education in less covert, but nonetheless, insidious ways.

This paper aims to contribute to an ongoing conversation about intentionally working toward the field of Religious Education becoming an emancipatory space for teaching and learning in light of the deleterious impact white normativity has had on the field, implicitly and explicitly. It is primarily informed by the cultural productions of two Black creatives from literature and popular culture whose work is grounded in the voices, history, experiences, and imaginations of Black peoples in the U.S. and the African diaspora. Specifically, I examine the "Clearing" scene in Toni Morrison's 1987 Pulitzer prize-winning fiction novel, *Beloved* and the "Warrior Falls" scenes in *Black Panther*, a 2018 records-breaking Marvel comics film co-written and directed by Ryan Coogler. Both scenes model approaches that center Blackness in order to address concerns and realities that confront the Black peoples in their fictional story worlds. I will use implications from these two artistic expressions to inform my engagement of the question: "How can religious educators learn from those who have been marginalized and whose voices are not usually heard because of the hegemony of whiteness?" Additionally, the

¹ Margaret G.T. Burroughs, "What Shall I Tell My Children Who are Black (Reflections of an African American Mother)," *Poetry Foundation*. Accessed August 22, 2018, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/146263/what-shall-i-tell-my-children-who-are-black-reflections-of-an-african-american-mother>.

explication of these scenes assists in problematizing the concepts of “beyond” and “brave” spaces in relationship to de-centering white normativity in religious education.

II. SACRALIZING WHITE NORMATIVITY

One of my most formative religious education lessons came from images that were prominent fixtures in my Christian faith formation from childhood through adolescence in the 60s and 70s in the U.S. South. These images appeared in my home, in the predominantly Black churches I attended, and in many of the homes of my Black family and friends. One was a depiction of a white Jesus adorned with immaculately-groomed shoulder-length blond hair, a mustache, a beard and brown eyes, a white tunic and looking upward. It appeared in wall portraits and in Sunday School materials.² The second image was a composite picture of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., President John F. Kennedy, and a white Jesus. For many Blacks in the South, this image represented a cultural holy trinity. Often it could be found in family homes. Sometimes it was imprinted on the front of handheld cardboard fans available in Black funeral homes and/or in pew pockets alongside Bibles and hymnals in Black churches. There were no formal teachings related to these images. In fact, no one ever said anything about them. They were normalized and authorized by their prevalence in the most sacred and formative spaces for me, i.e., in churches and in family homes. These images subliminally informed my early theological foundation by teaching me that: Jesus/God is white, i.e., 1) Jesus/God does not look like me and 2) There was no need to explain or debate the validity of these depictions because depictions of a white Jesus was a capital “T” truth. Amazingly, many Blacks were able to uphold divine whiteness as an unspoken norm in spite of their participation in social protests against white hegemony and their insistence on a divine mandate for liberation.

The sacralizing and centering of white normativity in religious education demands continuous vigilance even though some progress has been made. Promising strides toward de-marginalizing Blackness in religious education were made in the late 20th century by Black religious educators like Olivia P. Stokes and Grant S. Shockley. They helped to extend the impact of the Black Theology movement into denominational and congregational infrastructures by advocating its privileging of African and U.S. Black history, identity, culture, and theological perspectives as well as its insistence on the connection between Christian faith and social justice engagement. Further evidence of some movement away from centering whiteness can be seen in the diversification of images for humans in mainline denominational Sunday school curricula. However, even though publishing companies have diversified human images in some of their materials, they have not matched that with movement away from theological stances that do not link teachings about Christian discipleship to social justice for the people of color now featured in their resources. In terms of Black religious education, Almeda M. Wright’s research on selected sermons by Black preachers and the Sunday school curricula being used in some Black churches suggests that religious “mis-education” continues. She found that the majority of the examined materials communicated theologically conservative perspectives with little advocacy

² Cf. “Head of Christ” painting by Warner Sallman (1940). Accessed August 15, 2021, <https://www.anderson.edu/warner-sallman/collection/head-of-christ>.

for social justice engagement.³ Finally, there has been even less progress related to the whitening of divinity.⁴ For instance, Charles R. Foster describes the negative responses *Upper Room* received when it published Joe Cauchi's depiction of a Black Jesus blessing children on the cover of its 1983 devotional.⁵

In the academic arena, Black religious education faculty and their colleagues in other fields have written about the resistance they experience in their classrooms in predominantly white institutions when their students' assumptions of white normativity encountered their Black bodies, their syllabi that included and/or prioritized Black sources, and their more relational pedagogies.⁶ Nancy Lynne Westfield and Arthur L. Pressley note the particular challenges faced in teaching about God to Black students in these contexts: "What does it mean for a Black student to learn about issues of faith, theology, and leadership in a white institution?"⁷ Elsewhere, Westfield discusses the additional work of "re-humanizing" herself as a Black woman faculty person.

Racism works to truncate the imagination of the racist person. It thwarts the human spirit's yearning to know and develop meaningful relationships with persons who would be strangers...I have come to understand that an effective teaching strategy when the racism and sexism is thick is to find ways to expand the narrative about Black women in the knowing of my students.⁸

This paper's turn to literature and film created by Blacks as legitimate resources for Religious Education research continues in the path of the scholarship of Black religious educators who have written about the impediments caused by the centering of white normativity in the field and whose scholarship has proven the value of research that foregrounds the realities and concerns of Black people.

III. THE CLEARING

I have never lived, nor has any of us, in a world in which race did not matter. Such a world, one free of racial hierarchy, is usually imagined or described as dreamscape — Edenesque, utopian, so remote are the possibilities of its achievement. From Martin

³ Almeda M. Wright, "Mis-education, A Recurring Theme?: Transforming Black Religious & Theological Education," in *Religious Education*, 112, no. 1: 66-79.

⁴ One exception is Urban Ministries, Inc. It was founded in 1970 with a mission to produce Christian education resources specifically for "African American churches and individuals seeking a Christ-centered perspective on faith and life issues." Accessed on September 10, 2018, <https://urbanministries.com/our-story/>.

⁵ Charles R. Foster, *From Generation to Generation: The Adaptive Challenge of Mainline Protestant Education in Forming Faith* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 64.

⁶ Nancy Lynne Westfield, ed. *Being Black, Teaching Black: Politics and Pedagogy in Religious Studies* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008).

⁷ Westfield and Arthur L. Pressley, "Teaching Black: God-Talk with Black Thinkers," in *Being Black, Teaching Black: Politics and Pedagogy in Religious Studies* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), 139.

⁸ Westfield, "A Strategy to Re-Humanize," *Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, Teaching, Religion, Politics Blog*, February 16, 2016, accessed September 10, 2018, <https://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/2016/02/a-strategy-to-re-humanize/>.

Luther King's hopeful language, to Doris Lessing's four-gated city, to Jean Toomer's "American," the race-free world has been posited as ideal, millennial, a condition possible only if accompanied by the Messiah or situated in a protected preserve — a wilderness park.⁹

Toni Morrison situates *Beloved* within 19th century slavery in the U.S. south. She writes about Black life within this white hegemonic system, paying special attention to Black women's experiences, Blackness, freedom, wholeness, and community. Morrison wrote the novel after reading about the true story of Margaret Garner, a young Black mother who escaped slavery in 1856. When Garner was later captured, she tried to prevent the re-enslavement of her children by attempting to kill them. One child died. The novel is Morrison's attempt to address "what 'free' could possibly mean to women."¹⁰ She recreates Garner in her protagonist, Sethe. She also gives voice to the murdered Garner child through the character Beloved, a reincarnated form of the daughter Sethe murdered when she also tried to resist her children being returned to slavery. The novel begins nine years after Sethe has killed her child. She has settled in Ohio with her freed mother-in-law, Baby Suggs holy, her two sons and her surviving daughter. In order to grasp the power of the Clearing scene, one must stand in the horror of this indefensible history of human enslavement and the "marrow weariness" it induces in the enslaved.¹¹

The character Sethe mentally escapes her present by recalling the Clearing. The Clearing is a hidden, yet visible gathering place in the woods of the Sweet Home Plantation where Sethe and other Blacks were enslaved. Apparently, the whites who owned Sweet Home had not ventured into this area of their land or if they had, they did not deem it worthy of their attention. It was a seemingly barren lot of land, not yet claimed or commodified by its owners. But it was claimed by the enslaved Black community as a site for their clandestine Saturday afternoon gatherings. The Clearing in *Beloved* functions much like the historical hush arbors where enslaved Blacks would "slip off in de woods in de old slave days on Sunday evening way down in de swamps to sing and pray to our liking" to beseech God "for dis day of freedom" and plead "dat if we don't live to see it, do please let our chillun live to see a better day and be free."¹²

In the Clearing scene, Baby Suggs holy presides over a congregation of Black women, men, and children broken by enslavement. Having earned the community's respect as elder, healer, and griot, she stands regally in the Clearing to teach and preach. Her body is bent, but her spirit has not been broken yet. In her Sweet Home days, she was a hopeful, resilient, defiant woman who possessed "no tittle of honor before her name, but allowing a small caress after it, she became an unchurched preacher...Uncalled, unrobed, unanointed, she let her great heart beat

⁹ Toni Morrison, "Home" in *The House That Race Built: Original Essays by Toni Morrison, Angela Y. Davis, Cornel West, and Others on Black Americans and Politics in America Today*. ed. Wahneema Lubiano (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 3.

¹⁰ Toni Morrison, *Beloved: A Novel*, 1st Vintage International ed. (New York: Vintage International, 2004), xvi.

¹¹ Morrison, *Beloved*, 212.

¹² From excerpted interview with Alice Sewell in *Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk About Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation*. eds. Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, and Steven F. Miller (New York: New York Press, 1988), 205.

in their presence.”¹³ She invoked the Spirit to usher her co-sojourners into her presence. There, she exhorted them to love their body parts. The dominating narrative of the slaveholders negated their humanity. But the counternarrative that Baby Suggs holy proclaimed instructed them otherwise. She believed that her teachings about self-love could resuscitate her people from the suffocating chokehold of slavery.

“Here,” she said, “in this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it... This flesh I’m talking about here. Flesh that needs to be loved... More than your life-holding womb and your life-giving private parts, hear me now, love your heart. For this is the prize.” Saying no more, she stood up then and danced with her twisted hip the rest of what her heart had to say while the others opened their mouths and gave her the music. Long notes held until the four-part harmony was perfect enough for their deeply loved flesh.¹⁴

Baby Suggs holy transformed the Clearing into a communal intergenerational worship/teaching/learning space that was infused with what Anne Wimberly calls an “evocative nurture” that cradles the broken while calling forth something from them as well.¹⁵ Suggs did not preach morality or teach respectability. She scaffolded the Saturday afternoon sessions with a foundational word about grace: “She told them that the only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine. That if they could not see it, they would not have it.”¹⁶ Hers was a “liturgy of Spirit” that revived the image of God within them in spite of the brutal, systematic attempts to erase their divine humanity.¹⁷ She taught them how to reclaim their embodiment. Each time they reassembled or re-membered their bodies in the Clearing, they rejected the “dismembered self created in chattel bondage”.¹⁸

She led them in practicing vulnerability in the Clearing. The practices she taught them freed them to risk removing the cloak of stoic docility that they wore to protect themselves; to risk transgressing age and gender role boundaries by crying, laughing, and dancing in front of one another. She celebrated their full humanity. These practices were emancipatory and transformative. The participants understood that acts of freedom like unauthorized learning or worship would be viewed as acts of resistance by their oppressors. In other words, Baby Suggs’ exhortation for them to love their Black selves was not an innocuous ask. As bell hooks suggests: “to love blackness is dangerous in a white supremacist culture — so threatening, so serious a

¹³ Morrison, *Beloved*, 102.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 103-104.

¹⁵ Anne S. Wimberly, *Nurturing Faith and Hope: Black Worship as a Model for Christian Education* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004).

¹⁶ Morrison, 103.

¹⁷ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 52.

¹⁸ Carol E. Henderson, “Refiguring the Flesh: The Word, the Body, and the Rituals of Being in *Beloved* and *Go Tell It on the Mountain*,” in *James Baldwin and Toni Morrison: Comparative Critical and Theoretical Essays*, eds. Loyaliste King and Lynn Orilla Scott (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 148.

breach in the fabric of the social order, that death is the punishment.”¹⁹ Hooks asserts further that “loving blackness as political resistance transforms our ways of looking and being, and thus creates the conditions necessary for us to move against the forces of domination and death and reclaim black life.”²⁰

Morrison constructs the Clearing scene as an affirmation of Blackness rather than a polemic against slavery. She draws her marginalized and oppressed community from the margins of the Clearing and centers their humanity during their time together. Although the African country of Wakanda in *Black Panther* is not enslaved, Coogler takes an similar to Morrison's. He centers the community's humanity and affirms their evolving communal identity.

IV. WARRIOR FALLS

The critically acclaimed Marvel comics movie, *Black Panther* secured its place in popular culture with its global commercial success, exceeding the \$1 billion in sales mark less than a month after its February 2018 U.S. release.²¹ The movie was also a victory for Black representation with Black male and female lead actors, a predominantly Black cast, Black artistic leadership, and a storyline informed by the history and cultures of Black peoples in Africa and the U.S. Visually, the movie immersed viewers in diverse and beautiful images of Blackness. It has been widely praised for its depictions of Blacks as multidimensional and powerful. These depictions stirred the imaginations of its viewers nationally and internationally.

What if there existed a time when marginalized and oppressed peoples were free, when their freedom, whole humanity and flourishing selfhood was the norm? What if in that time their culture, history, and traditions were celebrated? What if their worldviews, leaders, and governance reflected their identities and their theologies, spiritualities and their religious education reflected their epistemologies and pedagogies? Unlike the backdrop of enslavement in *Beloved*, the afrofuturistic world of the movie, *Black Panther* creates a time and space where the dreams, prayers, and hopes of generations of Blacks come to fruition. It has been said that the story world of *Black Panther* represents the “stand-ins for those great *what-ifs* in black history.”²² As an artistic expression, it helps us visualize a human existence wherein whiteness is not the center for non-white peoples. It offers a world where the marginalized no long dream of freedom, but live the dream by means of Wakanda, a fictional independent African country. One reviewer wrote that *Black Panther* was “revolutionary” because it “envision[s] a world not devoid of racism but one in which black people have the wealth, technology and military might to level the playing field.”²³

¹⁹ bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1982), 9.

²⁰ hooks, 20.

²¹ Rebecca Rubin, “‘Black Panther’ Crosses \$1 Billion at Global Box Office,” *Variety*. March 10, 2018. Accessed September 6, 2018, <https://variety.com/2018/film/news/black-panther-billion-global-box-office-1202723326/>.

²² Vann R. Newkirk II, “The Provocation and Power of *Black Panther*,” *The Atlantic*. February 14, 2018. Accessed September 6, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/02/the-provocation-and-power-of-black-panther/553226/>.

²³ Jamil Smith, “Behind the Revolutionary Power of *Black Panther*,” *Time*. February 8, 2018. Accessed September 6, 2018, <http://time.com/black-panther/>.

Black Panther begins with a conversation between a father and his son. The son asks his father to tell him “the story of home.” The father shares highlights from the origins of Wakanda, the history of Wakanda’s tribal leadership, and the history of vibranium, the country’s most valuable natural resource that establishes its wealth and technological advancement. This prologue introduces viewers to foundational dilemmas facing Wakanda: 1) preserving traditions vs. engaging ideas of emerging generations; 2) maintaining national security vs. extending itself to the world; and 3) remaining hidden vs. risking visibility. Questions of identity and belonging underlie these dilemmas, i.e., Who are we? Who were we? Who are we and our emerging generations becoming? These questions inform the entire movie, but they dramatically converge in the communal gatherings at Warrior Falls.

Warrior Falls is a treasured centerpiece of the Wakandan landscape.²⁴ Like the Clearing in *Beloved*, it is a consecrated space for this community. It is nature’s handiwork, carved out of a towering mountain range that is accentuated by multiple waterfalls. Here, the elders stand covered by the respect of the community. Alongside them are the young who learn the country’s history as they practice ancestral traditions alongside their elders. Warrior Falls is a majestic space where Black bodies are never subjugated or commodified. Wakanda celebrates its history of freedom, wholeness, and greatness at Warrior Falls. Warrior Falls is also the place where kings are made.

The first Warrior Falls scene occurs after King T’Chaka has been assassinated during his tenure as Wakanda’s representative on an international council in the U.S. The community convenes at Warrior Falls in anticipation of the king’s son, Prince T’Challa, succeeding him. Sounds of joy and celebration arise from the intergenerational assembly of men, women and children who are splendidly adorned in their tribal attire. As the drums greet them, they move rhythmically to its beats. The ceremony continues with each Wakanda tribal representative indicating whether they will accept or challenge T’Challa’s succession to the throne. Unexpectedly, members of the estranged Jabari tribe arrive to contest the succession because they believe it will push Wakanda to abandon its traditions. The challenge necessitates a battle between T’Challa and the leader of the Jabari tribe. In the ensuing battle, T’Challa appears to be on the edge of defeat. At this point, the Queen Mother of Wakanda shouts out defiantly to her faltering son: “Show them who you are!” Prince T’Challa, in his weakened state, responds to his mother’s demand. He declares: “I am T’Challa, son of T’Chaka!” The declaration of his identity and lineage imbues the prince with the surge of inner and physical strength he needs to ultimately defeat his opponent. T’Challa, the Black Panther, is pronounced King of Wakanda at Warrior Falls amidst exuberant outbursts of acclamation. The lesson to onlookers is clear: True strength is connected to knowing one’s identity.

In the second Warrior Falls scene, another unexpected leadership crisis pits King T’Challa against an estranged cousin named N’Jadaka (or “Killmonger”) who seeks revenge for being abandoned as a child in the U.S. after the death of his father at the hand of fellow Wakandans. He not only threatens to become Wakanda’s next king (which he becomes), he threatens to shift the country away from its “hidden-in-plain sight” stance. N’Jadaka has made it

²⁴ Michael Maher, “Designing Wakanda and the Amazing Sets of Black Panther,” *The Beat*, Feb. 9, 2018. Accessed August 22, 2018, <https://www.premiumbeat.com/blog/production-set-design-black-panther/>.

clear that he will use violence and Wakandan resources to battle against hegemonic forces worldwide. As a result, there is no pageantry, no dancing, no celebration at the second Warrior Falls scene. The community anticipates an impending crisis it is not prepared to handle. Nevertheless, the community shows up because whatever happens, it must walk through it together. The first Warrior Falls scene displays Wakanda at its best. It basks in its heritage and history. In the first scene, the Queen Mother calls her son to claim his individual identity. But in the second scene, no one is present to call the community back to a place of strength after King T'Challa is defeated. The community falters when its collective identity is shaken.

Morrison and Coogler tell stories about enslaved Black bodies claiming freedom and free Black bodies losing and finding their individual and collective identities. They do not portray these characters or their communities in the Clearing and Warrior Falls as perfect or superior. They are foremost Black and human.

V. INTERSECTIONS & IMPLICATIONS

Morrison and Coogler share their visions of Black communities in bondage and freedom; in times of joy and suffering; in times of transition and conflict; and in times of teaching/learning and praxis. In the Clearing and Warrior Falls scenes, they develop Black characters imagined from the past and the future who respond to their human realities from the standpoint of their Blackness rather than from the perspective of imposed white normative resources that define their images of divinity, self, and others for them. Their engagement with a couple of themes in particular can be informative in that the themes intersect with the goal of de-centering white normativity in Religious Education.

Starting “Darkly”

Vincent Wimbush asks in his introduction to *African Americans and the Bible*, “How might putting African Americans at the center of the study of the Bible affect the study of the Bible?” He suggests that this repositioning will have implications for the “methods, orientations, approaches, politics, goals” of the field, the formation of biblical scholars, and the business of academic guilds for biblical studies.²⁵ He argues for “an openness to beginning the study of the Bible...in a different key — in a different time, which means from a different site of interpretation and enunciation, with the necessarily correlative different presuppositions, orientations and agendas.”²⁶ This translates into what he calls “reading darkly” or “viewing and experiencing the world in emergency mode, as through the individual and collective experience of trauma.”²⁷ Wimbush’s queries could also be posed to Religious Education, i.e., What if the Religious Education field centered Black and other marginalized peoples as Wimbush suggests and as was done in *Beloved* and *Black Panther*? What would it mean for Religious Education to read “darkly” or start “darkly”— to educate, to train educators, to research about faith formation

²⁵ Vincent Wimbush, ed. *African Americans and the Bible: Sacred Texts and Social Textures* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 9.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 21.

and religious practices, etc. with an awareness of the experiences of marginalized persons and a willingness to foreground those experiences?

One outcome for Religious Education of reading or starting ‘darkly’ is to engage in what Trinh Min-ha calls “ground-clearing” activity, i.e., a commitment to question everything.²⁸ It means interrogating every aspect of established Religious Education categories. We would replace assumptions of their validity with a hermeneutics of suspicion about our field’s intent, methods, practices, etc. For example, conversations about faith formation generally assume that we start the research within traditional congregations. Faith formational work not located in congregations tends to be viewed as peripheral or even illegitimate. This approach is problematic for religious education with Millennials because so many of them have identified spaces other than traditional churches as preferred sites for their sacred or religious experiences. Clearing the ground with faith formation could lead us to begin research with the alternative spaces and resources that young adults have chosen for their religious expressions. It would allow us to hear their voices and to learn from them. This would expand our understanding because it positions the research *among* current and emerging generations of young adults rather than above or in opposition to them. Ultimately, this generates more possibilities for mutual growth that we hope will result in faithful Jesus followers.

Valuing Embodiment

Morrison and Coogler script their characters in their full, embodied humanity which is then reflected in their actions, beliefs, and traditions. The speech by Baby Suggs in the *Clearing* invited enslaved Blacks to love self, to love their Blackness, and to seek communal well-being. She led them in practices that liberated their spirits and affirmed Black bodies that hurt, cried, laughed, and danced. She emboldened the participants to risk believing they deserved a divine birthright of emancipated human existence. The self-love she taught equipped them to de-center the dominant (dominating) narratives that eroded their personhood. The transformation and freedom Baby Suggs facilitates in the *Clearing* then becomes enfolded in the characters at Warrior Falls.

To value embodiment as it is modeled in the examined scenes requires pedagogical commitments from religious educators. One commitment is to work on intentionally *seeing* learners in the classroom as individually embodied persons who are with you in that space. Poet Claudia Rankine describes an experience of temporary invisibility. She writes:

In line at the drugstore it’s finally your turn, and then it’s not as he walks in front of you and puts his things on the counter. The cashier says, Sir, she was next. When he turns to you he is truly surprised. Oh my God, I didn’t see you. You must be in a hurry, you offer. No, no, no, I really didn’t see you.²⁹

She suggests that what happens here is not an inadvertent overlooking. In other words, without intentional effort, not seeing easily translates into intentional erasure. It is hard to regain the trust of students once they recognize they have been erased. Another commitment is to intentionally

²⁸ Trinh T. Min-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 37.

²⁹ Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2014), Kindle Locations 389-393.

see the *colored* bodies of learners in their classrooms. Religious educators must resist any claims of color-blindness that further marginalizes minoritized students and replicate a religious history of white-washing God/Jesus, Christianity, and Christian discipleship. Educators de-center white normativity when they create teaching/learning spaces where students feel that their full humanity, including being people of color, is welcomed and honored. Westfield describes a “ritual of invocation” that she uses to acknowledge that students do not enter classrooms alone. They bring their whole selves which are filled with stories of loved ones who have come with them and/or who they have had to leave behind.³⁰ Practices like this indicate to students that there is room in the classroom for their embodied humanity.

VI. BRAVE AND BEYOND SPACES

Morrison and Coogler give us access to worldviews influenced in some way by experiences of marginalization and oppression. In this section, I will visit the concepts of brave and beyond spaces through the lenses of the imagined lives of the Black peoples in the Clearing and at Warrior Falls. The objective is to problematize the concepts and add some dimension to them by viewing them a different vantage point.

The concept of ‘beyond’ generally communicates movement to a location that is away from or outside of something. For some, beyond means an improvement or advancement. In the context of our conference theme, a desired goal in Religious Education is to reach a point where white normativity no longer exists. Perhaps, the idea is to reach a post-white normativity status where our work is more reflective of diverse voices rather than a single dominating narrative. Clearing and Warrior Falls informed lenses would not negate the benefits of such a goal. But the lenses do nuance the concept.

For Morrison, the past is never really finished in the sense that it is not valuable and no longer makes a demand upon us. The past bears witness to what can heal or set free and to what can also imprison and torment. The past is available to teach and form in ways that equip the characters to live in the present with hope for the future. Likewise at Warrior Falls, the characters hold past, present, and future together as an interrelated reality. They participate in rituals that require them to retrieve their history in order to inform their present and envision their future. Neither Morrison or Coogler confine history to the past, nor do they strive toward a fixed time located somewhere in a future that is disconnected from the present. They are moving back-and-forth and forward. In his work, Homi K. Bhabha states that ‘beyond’ is a space of revisioning that requires a “return to the ‘present’.”³¹ He refers to the fluid interrelationship between past, present, and future that we see operative in *Beloved* and *Black Panther*. All of this adds to the concept of ‘beyond’ the importance of keeping past, present, and future in relationship so that we are also consider the possibilities for renewal and change as we back-and-forth, move through and toward.

³⁰ Nancy Lynne Westfield, “Bootstraps in Classrooms: Dissuading Rugged Individualism,” *Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, Teaching, Religion, Politics Blog*, November 12, 2017, accessed September 10, 2018, <https://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/2017/11/bootstraps-classrooms-dissuading-rugged-individualism/>.

³¹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 6, 10.

Finally, there is agreement that we cannot promise safety or an absence of conflict, discomfort or risk in settings that involve the difficult anti-racism work, combatting white supremacy, or de-centering white normativity.³² The Clearing and Warrior Falls lenses add that being brave and courageous are not optional. They were not optional for the characters in those scenes. Additionally, from the voices of the marginalized in those scenes, we hear that hope cannot be optional. The spaces where we engage critically around the systemic ills that plague Religious Education must be brave and hope-filled spaces. Brave spaces alert us that the spaces will be messy, entail risk, and require courage. Hope-filled spaces remind us that we cannot do this work without the God of our faith. Hope revives our imaginations when our failures threaten to derail us.

VII. CONCLUSION

*Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another.*³³

Beloved and *Black Panther* thrust us immediately into worlds that revolve around Black peoples. They envelop us in experiences of family, community, loss, mystery, triumph, loving, suffering, the ordinary, and the spectacular. Morrison and Coogler narrate human experiences viewed through the particular lenses of Blackness. One does not have to be a Black person from the U.S. or Africa to enter these story worlds. However, once inside, all are exposed to a worldview that privileges the feelings, experiences, thoughts, and imaginations of minoritized, marginalized persons. There is not a single white narrative through which everything is being filtered. Consequently, in the Clearing, no explanation or justification is needed for an enslaved Black woman preaching on a white-owned plantation during the slavery era in the U.S. Her sermon/teaching unapologetically exhorts her listeners to love themselves because loving and valuing their embodied selves is a necessity whereas words about obedience to slavery and white slaveowners only reinscribe death on their bodies. In *Warrior Falls*, no legitimation is needed for the diverse expressions of Blackness or for the peoples' respect for their traditions and assumptions of worthiness. These are the accepted norms. Starting with the affirmation of humanity produces freedom where there is none and deepens identity where freedom already exists.

I was a young adult seminarian before I started questioning the images of a white Jesus that were presented to me during childhood and adolescence. My interrogation began after exposure to Black History studies, Black Theology, fiction by Black novelists, and congregational life that emphasized being Black and Christian. It did not occur to until then that I was being formed by the white Jesus that I would not release. Having an image of divinity that did not look like me contributed to my inability to imagine myself as a co-creator with God. I could only conceive of God as 'power over' and 'other than'. I more readily accepted a transcendent God than an immanent God. The religious education of my early days nurtured my

³² Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens, "From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces: A New Way to Frame Dialogue Around Diversity and Social Justice," in *The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections from Social Justice Educators*, ed. Lisa M. Landreman (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2013), 136.

³³ Morrison, 111-112.

faith in God until its whiteness began to limit my growth as a Christian disciple in a Black female body. But that was my reality decades ago. This does not have to be anyone else's reality particularly if we are willing to listen to the artistic among us. We already know enough to be like Coogler's Queen Mother of Wakanda who upon seeing Religion Education faltering, can issue a demand: "Tell them who you are!"

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arao, Brian and Kristi Clemens. "From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces: A New Way to Frame Dialogue Around Diversity and Social Justice." In *The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections from Social Justice Educators*. Edited by Lisa M. Landreman. 135-150. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2013.
- Berlin, Ira, Marc Favreau, and Steven F. Miller. Edited by *Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk About Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation*. New York: New York Press, 1988.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Copeland, M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.
- Foster, Charles R. *From Generation to Generation: The Adaptive Challenge of Mainline Protestant Education in Forming Faith*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012.
- Henderson, Carol E. "Refiguring the Flesh: The Word, the Body, and the Rituals of Being in *Beloved* and *Go Tell It on the Mountain*." In *James Baldwin and Toni Morrison: Comparative Critical and Theoretical Essays*. Edited by Lovalette King and Lynn Orilla Scott. 149-165. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- hooks, bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press, 1982.
- Min-ha, Trinh T. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcolonality and Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- Morrison, Toni Morrison, *Beloved: A Novel* (1st Vintage International ed.). New York: Vintage International, 2004.
- _____. "Home." In *The House That Race Built: Original Essays by Toni Morrison, Angela Y. Davis, Cornel West, and Others on Black Americans and Politics in America Today*, edited by Wahneema Lubiano. 3-12. New York: Vintage Books, 1998.
- Rankine, Claudia. *Citizen: An American Lyric*. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2014, Kindle.
- Westfield, Nancy Lynne. ed. *Being Black, Teaching Black: Politics and Pedagogy in Religious Studies*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2008.
- Wimberly, Anne S. *Nurturing Faith and Hope: Black Worship as a Model for Christian Education*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004.

Wimbush, Vincent, ed. *African Americans and the Bible: Sacred Texts and Social Textures*. New York: Continuum, 2000.

Wright, Almeda M. "Mis-Education, A Recurring Theme? Transforming Black Religious and Theological Education." *Religious Education*, 112, no.1: 66-79.



Tamara Henry
New York Theological Seminary
thenry@nyts.edu
REA Annual Meeting: 2018

“Don’t Touch My Hair”: Exploring a Womanist Pedagogy of Resistance in the Music and Art of Beyoncé and Solange Knowles

Abstract: For many young Black women, aesthetic rituals and practices related to their hair serve as embodied forms of resistance that also reflect a constitutive, yet often unrecognized dimension of their spirituality. This study will highlight specifically that the art and music of two black female popular artists, Beyoncé and Solange are being utilized by young Black women not only to theologize from their unique positions in the world but also to engage in distinctly womanist pedagogies that employ a natural black hair aesthetic as a primary site of resistance to white dominance.

Introduction

Preoccupation with white beauty standards has a long history in the legacy of Christian tradition, especially with respect to hair. In this regard, a preoccupation with white beauty standards represents one feature of a racialized, Eurocentric aesthetic regime within Christianity that ultimately gives way to viewing white bodies as beautiful, good, and divine.¹ The effects of this racialized aesthetic are particularly evident in the distinct pedagogical agenda adopted by many churches that privilege a white aesthetic and make it difficult for persons of African descent—and especially Black women—to locate themselves within the images of the Christian tradition they have claimed.

Womanist scholars of religion have sought to resolve this conundrum by prioritizing Black women’s stories and experiences and reflecting them within theological, aesthetic, and pedagogical frameworks of Christianity. Still, these attempts have not always addressed the aesthetic needs, concerns, and interests of younger Black women in ways that attend to their bodies and namely their hair. These attempts tend not to honor these qualities as a constitutive dimension of spirituality within the context of the Black church. Given the significance that hair often has on the social and spiritual identity development of young Black women, this oversight warrants attention within religious education and research. At its core, the current disconnect begs a fundamental inquiry: how can religious education within the Black church begin to frame a more adequate aesthetic vision that reflects the needs, interests, and concerns of younger Black women, especially in relation to their hair?

Although many young Black Christian women look to the church and religious education for solace and identity in the development of their faith, the church tends not to pay attention to the aesthetic and embodied dimensions of their lives. This is one factor that has contributed to the sense of invisibility many young women feel within their churches. Additionally, this dynamic has produced a sense of fragmentation in their

¹ Willie James Jennings, “The Aesthetic Struggle and the Ecclesial Vision,” in *Black Practical Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015), 163.

relationships to spirituality; it makes it difficult or impossible for them to see Christian faith as being relevant and responsive to their concrete, lived realities.

Instead, many young Black women have turned to the work of contemporary Black female artists as a religious and theological resource in their lives. More specifically, these women are often drawn to the art and music of two specific Black female artists: Beyoncé and Solange Knowles. The Knowles sisters are significant in that they fill a void that many young Black women feel within church education as currently constituted. The music and art that they create allows young Black women to engage with a spirituality that attends to their entire personhood.

In light of this trend, in this paper, I argue specifically for the consideration of new resources in the development of religious, theological, and pedagogical frameworks within religious education. I posit that churches should look to the vast engagement of young Black women with these two artists so that they can more appropriately meet their needs. To this end, the purpose of this paper is to argue that religious education needs to frame a more adequate aesthetic vision for young Black women by attending to popular culture and references to Black hair as part of its real, embodied aesthetic. In particular, the church needs to prioritize the work of Beyoncé and Solange in order to reconceptualize pedagogies within religious education that present and define how these young women see their bodies, and what is defined as good, beautiful, and divine.

Method

The research employs theomusicology as a central research method. A theomusicological approach to research seeks to understand the theological inferences in varied musical forms, including popular music forms that don't appear to be explicitly religious. To accomplish this, the method emphasizes the importance of moving beyond mere textual analysis to uncover the less-explicit theological messages in this music forms. In this study, I do so by attending to the following contextual factors: (a) cultural context, (b) political climate, (c) artist's upbringing and background, (d) album cover and art, (e) cultural era, (f) religious landscape, and (g) artist's geographic location. Within the study, I employ theomusicology specifically to explore the womanist spirituality inherent in the music and art of Beyoncé and Solange and especially the aesthetic of Black hair they present.

Within religious education, the use of theomusicology encourages a fundamentally religious understanding of the whole of Black life. It posits that it is sacred in the ways in which it averts the binaries of "good" and "bad" that might lead to overlooking the rich religious significance inherent in explicitly "secular" music forms. Such a method enables us to view the work of secular artists like Beyoncé and Solange as theological and religious resources.

Interviews

Second, given the sheer frequency with which certain forms of popular music contribute to sexist and misogynistic depictions of young Black women, many analyses that engage young women's relationship to popular culture often posit that Black popular music is corruptive, pathological, and violent. To avoid these pitfalls and the ways in which researchers routinely position young women as "victims" of popular culture, this study seeks to affirm the critical agency of young Black women by privileging their

voices in ways other studies have not. More specifically, it draws insights from focus groups that I conducted with five young adults, all of whom were Black female seminarians ages 24 to 28.² This research was part of a larger mixed-method study designed to explore the significance of mentoring as it pertains to four central areas of urban ministry practice: ministry efficacy, community involvement, job satisfaction, and vocational retention. I conducted this study as part of preliminary focus group where six populations were interviewed. The paper is concerned solely with the focus group that composed urban millennials.

The paper highlights three distinct womanist pedagogies of resistance that emerge in the music and art of Beyoncé and Solange. These include (1) pedagogy of (re)presenting (2) a pedagogy of solidarity and (3) pedagogy of healing. Overall, these themes elucidate the title for the paper “Don’t Touch My Hair” which also serves as a metaphor for the womanist pedagogy of resistance that emerges out of Beyoncé and Solange’s music and art around hair.

The Spirituality of African American Youth

This paper calls for the development of pedagogical frameworks within religious education that are more deliberately attuned to the aesthetic needs and interests of young Black women within the Black church. Such an exploration necessarily entails attention to the spirituality of young Black women. To do this, I draw from prior explorations of the spirituality of African American youth who are engaged by religious educators and practical theologians.

Two key contributions include the work of Evelyn Parker and Almeda Wright. Parker’s research first introduces themes related to the fragmented spirituality she observed in the lives of African American youth living in Chicago. She then points to a prevailing trend among the youth she interviewed: an inability to view Christian spirituality as being connected to and responsive to the moral and social ills plaguing their lives and communities.³ Although Parker’s work focuses on an adolescent population, it provides an important reference point for naming the dynamics of fragmentation also observed among the young adult women who are the focus of this study. Here, I borrow from Parker’s general understanding of fragmented spirituality as an inability to join religious belief to social action.

Building upon Parker’s framework, Almeda Wright explores alternatives to the presence of fragmentation in the lives of young African Americans by proposing revised

2. J. M. Spencer, *Theological Music: An Introduction to Theomusicology* (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1991)

3. Evelyn Parker, *Trouble Don’t Last Always: Emancipatory Hope for African American Youth* Parker, Evelyn (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003),35.

theological and pedagogical frameworks to foster a more integrated spirituality for this population.⁴

This paper continues in the vein of this research by identifying new pedagogical frameworks within popular culture for the development of an integrating spirituality in the lives of young Black women. In particular, it asserts the significance of the work of two artists, Beyoncé and Solange, as a fundamental starting point for understanding their spirituality this way. A focus on popular culture situates spirituality in the everyday lives and experiences of young Black women and necessarily demands attention to their bodies as a central site through which their knowledge of God is made manifest. To this end, the focus of this exploration is to highlight the significance of hair as an embodied form of spirituality that is one feature of the womanist pedagogy of resistance that is present in the music and art of Beyoncé and Solange. Additionally, because the central thrust of this work is to identify ways the church can revise its aesthetic vision, attention to how womanist religious educators have treated the aesthetic dimensions of practice is also important to explore.

In general, womanist scholars of religion have affirmed the need to focus religious and theological reflection through the lived experiences of Black women. Quite frequently this has included considering how Black women's lives reflect the beauty and justice of God. Womanist religious educators have also made an awareness of the aesthetic dimensions of life a significant feature within their work. For example, Lynne Westfield relies on an aesthetic of poetry to explore the resilience of African American women through the practice of hospitality to frame a distinctly womanist approach to teaching/learning within the Black church.⁵

In *Reclaiming the Spirituals: New Possibilities for African American Christian Education*, Yolanda Smith utilizes the African American spiritual, which is forged primarily out of the creative imaginations of enslaved Africans, to inspire an artistic approach to curricula in the Black church.⁶ Both Westfield and Smith utilize aesthetic frames to explore approaches to religious education within the context of the Black church. While womanist religious educators have engaged the aesthetic dimensions of religious education in developing their distinct approaches for the Black church, there has been a paucity of attention to Black hair as an aesthetic form within religious education. This paper seeks to address this gap in literature while highlighting the aesthetic significance of hair to the spiritual and social identities of young Black women.

The Significance of Hair within Black Culture

Within Black culture, hair has never just been for purely cosmetic purposes. The social, aesthetic, and spiritual significance of hair has been intrinsic to the personhood of

4. . Almeda Wright. *The Spiritual Lives of Young African Americans* (New York: Oxford Press

5. Lynne Westfield. *Dear Sisters: A Womanist Practice of Hospitality* (Pilgrim Press, 2007) 105.

6. Yolanda Smith, *Reclaiming the Spirituals: New Possibilities for African American Christian Education* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004)

Black women for centuries. Prior to the twentieth century, many continental Africans wore hair to identify one's marital status, age, and social rank.⁷ However, as Europeans colonized the region, Africans were thrust into a world shaped by a new aesthetic landscape that viewed their skin, hair, and other physical features as ugly while lifting up White skin, straight hair, and thin noses as the ideal standard of beauty. In the face of this oppression, some enslaved Africans turned to using their hair as a form of embodied resistance. Elaborate and unconventional hairstyles were a way for Black people to assert their individuality and humanity in an oppressive hair culture.

In the era that followed slavery, the vestiges of this White aesthetic regime continued to shape the way many African American women viewed themselves, including within the context of the church. Imitation of White beauty standards became a way of venerating the White universal. Willie Jennings argues that imitation ultimately sets the conditions out of which one comes to judge one's aesthetic value. He writes, "The process of racial imitation or mimicry enfold[s] people in unrelenting patterns of comparison bound to visions of originals and copies. Imitation in this regard is a power that not only continuously generates the white body exemplars of beauty, goodness, and truth but also carries forward housing capacities—patterns of thinking and ways of being—within which people may judge their own bodies, manners and moods." For Jennings, an examination of imitation within the Christian tradition gives rise to a central question for Black people: Why should I love my black body? For young Black women, a variation of this question today might enquire: Why should I love my Black hair?

The thrust toward imitation of White beauty standards for African Americans was deeply lodged in the quest for survival. Imitation through straightening one's hair was prized as a way of gaining widespread acceptance through conformity to White standards.

The Emergence of a Natural Black Hair Aesthetic: Black Power and the Black Arts Movement

During the twentieth century, hair once again emerged as an embodied, aesthetic form of resistance during the Civil Rights era. During this period, the emergence of the Black Power movement advocated a militant approach to oppression that was focused on promoting Black consciousness within society, including advancing a radical political agenda through the arts, which became known as the Black Arts (BAR) movement.

The BAR movement gave rise to a radical collective of Black artists and thinkers who emphasized the need for a distinct Black aesthetic to address the conditions of Black people who were living in the United States during the turbulent Civil Rights era.⁸ The goal of this art was to engage resistance to White supremacy through, at times, violence and aggression. From this perspective, art was never just for art's sake—art was necessarily political. While emphasizing the need for a Black aesthetic, these artists rejected older political, cultural, and artistic traditions by creating an oppositional

7. Ayana Byrd and Lori Tharps. *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001) 2.

8. William C. Banfield, *Cultural Codes: Makings of a Black Music Philosophy* (Toronto: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 32–33.

framework that contested the notion that White critics could be the sole arbiters of African American accomplishments within the arts or otherwise.⁹ To this end, artists sought to reflect the inside lives, consciousness and concerns of everyday Black people through varied art forms, including an aesthetic of Black hair.¹⁰

As such, perceptions of hair shifted from simply concern over style to seeing hairstyles as political statements that signaled resistance to oppression. One of the foremost symbols of this aesthetic was the wearing of the Afro. The rise of the Afro during this era became a symbol of both self-acceptance and of resistance to White oppression. “Black is Beautiful” became a mantra and rallying cry that many Black people adopted to reshape aesthetic consciousness within the United States. Not unlike today’s artists, young Black adults played a vital role in advancing this aesthetic revolution.

Religious Dimensions of the Black Arts Movement

The Black church was generally not supportive of Black Power groups’ militant efforts, which included embracing wearing natural hair as a resistance to White beauty ideals. Because of the apparent aesthetic and ideological divides between the Black church and the radical agenda advanced by the Black Power movement, proponents of the latter are often cast as youthful, radical, separatist, and secular critics of the clergy and churchgoers.¹¹ Such patterns reflect the prevailing tendency today to overlook the religious and spiritual dimensions inherent in the art and music of artists like Beyoncé and Solange.

Religion played a vital role in the political and aesthetic dimensions of the Black Power movement; this included people within and beyond the Black church. Many young religious scholars began to affirm the need for a racialized critique of the Christian tradition, which necessitated a reframing of Christian theology through the lens of Black experience. However, womanist scholars critiqued these frames as being focused exclusively on Black men, and in response began developing theological frameworks of their own that were attentive to the particular experiences of Black women. Church education in the Black church was necessarily affected by these new developments and began to envision pedagogical approaches that made Black experiences central to teaching and learning processes. A major effort within all of these frameworks involves bolstering the significance of Black culture, especially popular culture, within theological and pedagogical discourse.

Generational Critiques

While engagement with Black popular culture is central to the development of both the Black liberation and womanist theologies that have shaped the Black church’s education, many young Black Christian women find it difficult to locate themselves within these theological traditions. From one perspective, the heart of the divide between

9. . Ayana Byrd and Lori Tharps. *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001) 2.

10. Josef Sorett. *Spirit in the Dark: A Religious History of Racial Aesthetics* (New York: Oxford Press, 2016) 160.

younger Black Christian women and the church is a cultural one, focused specifically on the negative appraisal of the music of Black female artists and its perceived depiction of women.¹² These tensions immediately surface when artists like Beyoncé are identified as womanist voices through which a pedagogy within religious education for young women might be re-envisioned. Over the years, Beyoncé's unapologetic display of sexuality within her art and music has made her the source of immense scrutiny by many within the church. The response to Beyoncé immediately highlights the generational tensions around narratives of civility and control that have come to define expectations for women's conduct within the context of the Black church.¹³ Whereas the prevailing tendency has been to secularize artists like Beyoncé, both she and her sister, Solange, are shaping how young women understand God and engage faith in ways that affirm their love of their bodies and especially their hair.

Beyoncé and Solange: Womanist Pedagogies of Resistance in the Form of Natural Black Hair Aesthetics

Solange

Beyoncé and Solange grew up in the South in Houston's predominantly African American Third Ward, where their mother Tina owned a hair salon. As such, hair has always assumed a prominent role in the life and art of these two women.

As the younger sister of a widely popular music star, Solange lived in the shadow of her sister's success for much of her career. She toured as a backup dancer with her sister's group, Destiny's Child, before releasing her first set of solo recordings, which only garnered a modicum of success. However, it was the critically acclaimed *A Seat at the Table* that solidified Solange's place as one of the most influential protest artists of her generation. A central feature of the album's appeal is the emergence of a distinct aesthetic vision that reflects clear womanist sensibilities. For example, the album cover, which features Solange's recreation of the *Mona Lisa*, is indicative of how she uses her art and music—as a way to disrupt traditional artistic paradigms by prioritizing and imposing Black women's images and voices. Within minutes of the album's release, fans began to replicate the album cover, posting their own versions.

A Seat at the Table is a deeply personal yet political work of art that engages themes of racism, activism, and cultural appropriation that is at the heart of the Black female experience. The album ignites resistance to white norms that have shaped the United States' cultural aesthetic. To this end, Solange promotes a natural hair aesthetic as a central feature within her activism.

At the beginning of her career, Solange sported an array of wigs and weaved straight hairstyles, but in 2009, she made a bold decision to wear her natural hair. Since then, she has sported an array of natural styles such as afros and twists and a variety of

11. Brandee Jazmin Mimitzraiem, "Too Young to Be Black: The Intergenerational Compatibility of Black Theology," in *Walk Together Children: Black and Womanist Theologies* (Church and Theological Education).

12. Kelly Brown Douglas. *Black Bodies and the Black Church*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012),xii.

braided styles. Solange's wearing of her natural hair has been a significant symbol for many young Black women who contend with racialized pejoratives with respect to their hair. Solange represents an ally, someone who allows them to be seen. As such, Solange's Black hair aesthetic functions as a resistance to the invisibility young Black women experience within society, including at times in the church. Invisibility here is understood in two ways. First, it refers to *whether* young Black women are seen and second to *how* they are seen.

Frequently, in national and popular discourses, young women are viewed in ways that either depict them negatively or omit them altogether, especially with respect to their hair. Racialized pejoratives around natural Black hair are still pronounced within contemporary culture. Black women and other people of African descent are among the only groups criticized when they choose to wear hairstyles consistent with their natural hair textures. Younger Black women routinely report being humiliated and shamed in schools, places of employment, and even churches because of cultural bias against natural hair. One research participant recounts a particularly painful exchange within her church shortly after deciding to wear her hair naturally for the first time:

One Sunday, I had this big, chunky twist out, and my hair was just big and doing whatever it wanted . . . This woman made a face in response, and I hadn't noticed until another woman asked the woman why she made that face. And the woman's response was that my hair was too much and hard to manage. Mind you, it's my hair. Clearly, I'm managing it, but I felt so insulted because my hair became a representation of me. I did this. I made the choice to do my hair in this way, and although it wasn't something that could be understood by somebody else, it was something I could claim as my own. This is my natural hair, and it's something that comes out of my body.

While the response of this congregant may appear extreme, it represents some of the prevailing narratives within contemporary culture that contribute to viewing Black women's natural hair as undesirable and straight hair as more desirable. In ways akin to the artists of the Black Arts Movement, hair functions as a political statement for Solange, one that declares her power and agency in the face of oppression.

Black Hair: Pedagogy of Re(Presenting)

The lyrics of Solange's song "Don't Touch My Hair" explore many of the dynamics surrounding Black women's hair:

Don't touch my hair
When it's the feelings I wear
Don't touch my soul
When it's the rhythm I know
Don't touch my crown
They say the vision I've found
Don't touch what's there

When it's the feelings I wear ¹⁴

The motifs highlighted in Solange's lyrics go to the heart of the need to exercise autonomy in relation to one's body. "Don't Touch My Hair" delivers a statement of autonomy, one that declares that hair for young Black women is an exercise in personal agency. In a culture that historically has laid claim to Black women's bodies as property, whether through objectification, exploitation, or cultural appropriation of Black cultural products, young Black women's ownership of their bodies becomes essential. Ultimately, hair becomes one aspect of the body that is important for young women to own. To declare "don't touch my hair" is to reclaim one's agency.

For Solange, hair also represents a sacred dimension of one's being, which she describes as an expression of the soul. Here, the meaning of "soul" is both a reference to one's Blackness and to one's spiritual identity. Essentially, hair is where the spiritual and material realities of one's life collide; as such, there is a certain sacramentality attached to one's hair that necessitates that hair be guarded and protected. There is a need to provide young women in church education with rituals of resistance that help them identify the sacredness of their bodies, including how God is revealed through them. For many young women, hair becomes one of the ways they are re-presented to the world. Through their hairstyles, young Black women not only present new images but also reflect how they come to know God through their bodies. One young woman reflected on this dynamic as follows:

For so long, you grow up with this image of what God looks like. And what God looks like, God doesn't really look like you. But what I'm beginning to understand is that what I'm made up of and what naturally comes from me must be part of God's image too. I've never thought about it this way until recently but I could confidently say that my relationship with God is much more personal because I feel like [God] knows me and has known me. [God] knows everything about me, including my Afro and whatever it wants to do.

Hair as a Pedagogy of Solidarity in the Art of Beyoncé

Whereas Solange's natural hair aesthetic has been the key to how she is perceived by the general public as an explicitly Black artist, her sister, Beyoncé, has been viewed in the opposite way. With respect to hair, Beyoncé is renowned for her elaborate hairstyles, which range from tightly bound updos and bleach-curled waves to straightened manes and the occasional natural Afro. Because Beyoncé's hairstyles and overall presentation have reflected more mainstream looks, people have been less inclined to associate her with the promotion of an aesthetic of Blackness.

However, the release of her *Lemonade* album signaled a shift in those perceptions. On *Lemonade*, Beyoncé repositions herself alongside a radical Black agenda intent on resisting race, class, and gender oppression. *Lemonade*'s decidedly womanist text links to a broader historical African American narrative of triumph over tragedy. Similar to the artists of the Black Arts movement, Beyoncé makes the personal political.

13.Solange Knowles, "Don't Touch My Hair" *A Seat at the Table*, Columbia, 2016.

In particular, this visual album details the marital infidelity of her husband, rapper Jay-Z. While exploring the depth and agony of the betrayal, Beyoncé segues into the broader experiences of suffering and oppression among Black women. Beyoncé's reflections on Black women's suffering are steeped in religious symbolism and imagery, including those from the Christian tradition. Although Beyoncé is not typically viewed as a religious artist, religious themes pervade *Lemonade*. In ways that reflect womanist theological approaches, Beyoncé uses religious symbolism alongside images of Black women as a means of re-presenting the sacred through Black women's bodies.

A key moment in the album's accompanying film is when Beyoncé features a quote from Malcolm X that describes the Black woman as the most disrespected and neglected woman in the United States. Despite the privileged status Beyoncé holds within the social and cultural landscape, the reference demonstrates Beyoncé's attempt to stand in solidarity with Black women. However, the solidarity she forges also encompasses aesthetics.

In "Formation," the first track Beyoncé released from the *Lemonade* album, she employs the use of a distinctly natural hair aesthetic, singing, "I like my baby hair and afros / I like my negro nose with Jackson Five nostrils." Here, Beyoncé affirms an aesthetic rooted in Blackness by declaring her preference for "baby hair and afros." From one perspective, this line is a response to criticism Beyoncé received regarding her choice to leave her daughter's hair natural, which many perceived as unkempt. On a deeper level, this criticism reflects a preoccupation with White beauty ideals. When Beyoncé refers to Afros as the foremost symbol of an embodied aesthetic of Black resistance, she is highlighting a key mark of Black racial identity: one's hair. Throughout this visual album, she also wears a variety of African inspired hairstyles as a way of establishing continuity between black cultural traditions of the past and present.

The video for "Formation" was shot in New Orleans and contains references to Hurricane Katrina and images that reflect the Black Lives Matter movement. Beyoncé's performance of "Formation" during the 2017 Super Bowl featured her backup dancers dressed in all black with black berets and Afros, which is reminiscent of the way members of the Black Panther Party dressed in the 1960s. The politically charged performance caused controversy in part because of the hair aesthetic she employed. For many, an Afro was also tied to prevailing narratives regarding Black women as being aggressive, uncontrollable, and vulgar.

In "Sorry," another track from *Lemonade*, Beyoncé alludes to Jay-Z's infidelity in the now-infamous line "Becky with the good hair." The line generated much speculation about the individual Beyoncé was referencing. More significantly, however, Beyoncé taps into the binaries of "good" and "bad" hair that remain a part of the African American lexicon while also resisting them. For many young Black women steeped in our media-saturated culture, a part of socialization involves learning that hair texture is a type of currency that determines one's place in the world. Because of cultural bias, the texture of their natural hair is often deemed undesirable. This can contribute to a sense of fragmentation in their lives that reinforces a sense of never being good enough. When artists such as Beyoncé tap into these dynamics, they are offering a gesture of solidarity to young Black women.

If My Hair is Not Right, I'm Not Right: Pedagogy of Healing

For so many young Black women, repairing the fracture in their personhood that results from their exposure to varying forms of oppression occurs through caring for their hair. This is because the state of one's hair is fundamentally tied to one's overall sense of well-being. As one young interviewee aptly put it, "If my hair is not right, I'm not right." Recognition of this reality forces church educators to contend with how attention to hair and engagement with artists such as Beyoncé and Solange might help to foster pedagogies of healing that prioritize well-being as a central feature within the teaching and learning processes of the church. This is why so many young Black women are expressing an affinity for artists such as Beyoncé and Solange—they use a hair aesthetic not just as an avenue for social resistance but also as a way to become whole.

Bibliography

Banfield, William C. *Cultural Codes: Makings of a Black Music Philosophy* (Toronto: Scarecrow Press, 2010),

Byrd, Ayana and Tharps, Lori. *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America* (New York: St.Martin's Press, 2001)

Douglas. Kelly Brown. *Black Bodies and the Black Church*, (New York: Palmgrave Macmillan, 2012),xii.

Jennings, William James. "The Aesthetic Struggle and the Ecclesial Vision," in *Black Practical Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015)

Parker, Evelyn *Trouble Don't Last Always: Emancipatory Hope for African American Youth* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003),.

Smith, Yolanda. *Reclaiming the Spirituals: New Possibilities for African American Christian Education*(Cleveland:Pilgrim Press, 2004).

Sorett, Josef. *Spirit in the Dark: A Religious History of Racial Aesthetics* (New York: Oxford Press, 2016) 160.

Spencer, J.M. *Theological Music: An Introduction to Theomusicology* (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1991).

Westfield, Lynne. *Dear Sisters: A Womanist Practice of Hospitality* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2007).

Wright, Almeda. *The Spiritual Lives of Young African Americans* (New York: Oxford, 2017)

Rev. Jana. L Howson
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
prjLhowson@gmail.com
2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov. 2-4

To Boldly Go: Using Science Fiction to Open the Door to Brave Racial Conversation in White Spaces

Abstract: Science fiction and speculative fiction, as domains of white geek culture, can help provide a safe, and therefore productive, environment for white people to begin to explore themes of racism and racial justice. These initial explorations can help participants acculturate to using the language and thought patterns of anti-racist work. These conversations can then serve as scaffolding experiences upon which the religious educator can build to help faithful learners then examine themes and concerns of racial justice in the bible, and finally in their personal lives.

Introduction:

Geek culture is on the rise, and along with it, engagement with science fiction. This provides a unique opportunity for religious educators who want to begin conversations about race in their teaching contexts. For some white people, perhaps the only time they may have been challenged to think critically about race is through the genre of science fiction, which is known for examining the human condition through the lens of the speculative, allowing producers and actors to explore questions surrounding issues like race with frankness that would otherwise be censored. The fantastical nature of the genre makes these controversial questions safer and more approachable. I suggest that religious educators who are committed to addressing difficult conversations about race with primarily-white congregations can use science fiction as a bridge in their congregation to help facilitate these conversations, using the theory of play in education to both take seriously the opening that science fiction as a genre gives, and help make conversations around race more approachable in these contexts. Through the act of naming and decentering the white experience in science fiction, a relatively safe environment, educators can then encourage their learners to do this same work in engagement with the theological text, and then the learner's own lives.

A word of context:

Throughout this paper, I will be writing as a white clergywoman in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and doctoral student speaking about a possible approach to religious education for majority-white mainline protestant spaces. The particular approach I suggest – using geek culture as a possible opening within religious education for an emancipatory pedagogy - also centers itself in a primarily white space, and as such, has some inherent limitations. While there may be aspects of this approach that are more broadly applicable, for the scope of this paper, these are the contexts and spaces which I am imagining and for which I am formulating this approach.

Play as a teaching approach:

Play is often relegated to something that children do. Per Brene Brown, it is “apparently purposeless”¹ a type of fooling around, something we do “because it’s fun and because we want to.”² Similarly, Courtney Goto in her text *The Grace of Playing*, explores the history of play, especially as it relates to the church, and notes that play is often dismissed as meaningless. She observes that “Historically, a person’s work is the criterion by which to judge success, while playing is considered time off from work – understood either as “a [mere] reward for past work, a temptation to idleness, or a pause that refreshes.””³ In the context of the church, play has been relegated to the Sunday School wing, that when adults play it raises fears about “messing with that is holy.”⁴

But Brown and Goto⁵ argue fiercely that to define and regulate play as such is a critical loss. Both argue that the art of play must be reclaimed: for Brown, it is a matter of attending to our inner needs and desires, that play allows us to confront and manage the difficulties we face in everyday life⁶ - such as the high-stakes racial conversation happening in the U.S. context today. Without play, in Brown’s world, we fall prey to the North American cultural forces that promote overwork, overconsumption and over-stress.

While Brown approaches play from a whole-life perspective, Goto addresses the role of play specifically in ecclesial structures. While she provides a thorough description of the history and sociology of a theology of play, her basic claim is that “Churches have much to offer if they intentionally provide opportunities for playing, where the faithful might have creative encounters with mystery and one another.”⁷ For Goto, play is a way into revelatory experiences of the Divine.

For the purposes of this paper, two of her particularly important concepts of play are the communal nature of play, and acting ‘as if’. For Goto, in terms of play in the church, the role of play is particularly important when it is communal. She argues “While playing alone can be absorbing, transporting and fulfilling, playing together multiplies possibilities as creative ideas, resources and energies collide, compete, resonate, or are amplified. Playing together can extend a sense of agency in players as they participate in, construct, and are shaped by possibilities.”⁸

While the domain of science fiction starts with “what if,” in play, the concern is instead “as if.” Acting as if, according to Goto, means “setting aside enough disbelief, appearances or literal ways of thinking to shift temporarily into another way of engaging reality and one another.”⁹ This is one of the easily observed elements of play, particularity between children. From my own history, there was a particular cube-shaped jungle gym on the playground of the elementary school which I attended. While I cannot remember ever explicitly being told, all of my grade (and I think the majority of the school) behaved “as if” the ground under this playground element was lava, and interacted with the element with that shared understanding. Similarly, children, in their play, will often behave ‘as if’ mundane objects have additional properties or identities – ‘as if’ this box were a spacecraft, ‘as if’ this stick were a wand, or a

¹ Brown, 100

² *ibid*

³ Goto, 10

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ Goto builds on a number of other theologians work, most notably Jürgen Moltmann’s *Theology of Play*

⁶ Brown, 101

⁷ Goto, 12

⁸ Goto 18

⁹ Goto, 16

lightsaber or a gun. “As if” allows those who play to enter a speculative world, a world of exploring other possibilities, a world of what could or might be made from the broken world we live in.

Why Sci-Fi?

I suggested in the introduction that science fiction (inclusive of speculative fiction) may be an introductory forum for exploring themes of racism. This is, after all, the domain of sci-fi – a genre which has been termed “the literature of ideas” that asks “what if?”¹⁰ More precisely, Robert A. Heinlein defined the genre as “realistic speculation about possible future events, based solidly on adequate knowledge of the real world, past and present.”¹¹ Through the lens of science fiction, authors have looked at the world around them, and asked ‘what if?’ and used this as a forum to explore questions of religion, of personhood, of race, of class, either through utopias or dystopias, or somewhere in-between.

As a specific example of how sci-fi works as a lens for ‘what ifs’ in this way, *Star Trek: The Next Generation* has particularly clear examples of this ‘what if’ examination of societal issues. Within the first two seasons, *TNG* had addressed gender roles and norms through the episode “Angel 1” where the crew encounters an entirely matriarchal society; the ethics of capital punishment in the episode “Justice”; and the nature and qualities of personhood in “The Measure of a Man.”¹² In each of these cases, issues and concerns facing the current world were used to create an alien culture or situation that could ask what would happen if these concerns were taken to the extreme. It is particularly worth noting that in each of these cases, the crew was examining the question through an external culture, and at no point in time was the issue or concern explored directly through the lens of the crew of the Enterprise-D. Sci-fi provided a format to examine these issues through an alien culture, while leaving the crew (representative of the dominant human culture) as blameless. This made these highly controversial issues safer to confront and examine, as they were being looked at not only through the distance of sci-fi to begin with, but also located within the culture of an alien race. *Star Trek: Deep Space 9* took it a step further, and moved the discussion into the primary crew; through the character of Captain Benjamin Sisko and the plot device of time travel, *DS9* looked at human history and race in a way that *TNG* never dared.

While *TNG* and *DS9* are both significantly dated at this point, science fiction as a genre is not, and is a particularly useful lens for this endeavor in this time and place for two reasons: it is geeky, and it is playful.

As to the first, geek culture has been gaining traction over the last decade, moving from the shadows into mainstream acceptance. There is greater interest around geek culture, and its subdomains of sci-fi fandoms than there has been in a long time, and because of that, there is energy around these conversations. In the old adage of “Preach with the bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other,” geek culture is the newspaper, the new media, a conversation partner for the Christian educator as much as the newspaper used to be. This is the new culture in which we operate. In her text *Engaging Technology in Theological Education*, Mary Hess argues that theological education cannot afford to ignore digital spaces as a place of meaning making.¹³

¹⁰ <http://www.writing-world.com/sf/sf.shtml>

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_fiction#cite_note-fandom_def-2

¹² <http://memory-alpha.wikia.com/wiki/Portal:Main>

¹³ Hess, *Technology*

I would argue that theological education cannot afford to ignore geek culture any longer, either, as it is a site of both meaning making and exploration for certain generations. Geek culture is also a specifically useful lens for the white mainline protestant church, because mainstream geek culture is generally a white-dominated space, as confirmed by my wanderings around Chicago's biggest geek convention, C2E2 this spring. Yet through sci-fi, stories about race can be more approachable; they provide a distance while still being grounded in the real world.

The second aspect that makes sci-fi a particularly useful lens to use is that it is playful. It is fun. It is engaging - which all ties in with Courtney Goto's analysis of play as a useful pedagogical tool in Christian education. While play has been dismissed as a reason to incorporate something in education, Goto makes a compelling argument for why it should be reconsidered.

Constructing a Pedagogy of Play

From this, one can begin to construct a possible approach to Christian education in white mainline protestant churches that addresses the bondage of racism through the play of engaging with science fiction that asks "what if" about race.

The play approach is particularly important, to avoid the common response to racial conversation of shutting down or defensiveness. Stuart Brown, in his text on the concept and neurobiological effect of play argues that, "In play, most of the times we are able to try out things without threatening our physical or emotional well-being. We are safe precisely because we are just playing."¹⁴ This safety, imparted through play, can be freeing. If the conversation begins at the level of play, we can create a safe and productive space to begin to discuss topics which would otherwise be unapproachable. Approaching the topic of racism through play, particularly the lens of science fiction, allows us to cross boundaries that would otherwise be stumbling blocks.

Teaching about race, particularly in white religious education environments can be fraught with opportunities for 'failure' – groups hijacking the discussion, a devolution of the discussion into a session of 'not all white people', and even loss of members from the faith community. Successes, such that they are, may be difficult to come by as the educator learns how to effectively broach the topic with any particular group or dynamic. Talking about race is an inherently transgressive activity, crossing boundaries of 'politeness' and social distance. There is significant risk of failure. However, bell hooks' model of transgressive teaching can be particularly informative here, as she makes it clear that transgressive pedagogy is not just about allowing the participant or learner to experiment and make mistakes – the instructor, or teacher, should also be prepared to fail as well – and that, in this model of teaching, is okay.

hooks also addresses experience as a way of knowing. In order to have an effective pedagogy, the Christian educator must first have students acknowledge their experience of the world as it is now. hooks quotes Henry Giroux and his view on the experience that students bring into the classroom, when he argues that "you can't deny that students have experiences and you can't deny that these experiences are relevant to the learning process even though you might say these experiences are limited, raw, unfruitful or whatever. Students have memories, families, religions, feelings, languages and cultures that give them a distinctive voice. *We can critically engage that experience and we can move beyond it. But we can't deny it.*"¹⁵ In order to critically

¹⁴ Brown, S., 34

¹⁵ hooks, 88

engage the experience of white protestant Christian Education students, instructors must first acknowledge that these experiences exist.

In this sense, the theological educator can act as permission giver, allowing students to acknowledge, perhaps for the first time, that their experience of whiteness is a real thing that affects their ability to process the world in meaningful ways. Daniel Hill, author of *White Awake*, reflects on the first time he was invited to reflect on this reality. He was attending the wedding of one of his friends who was of South Asian/Indian descent, and Hill complemented the groom on the wedding and the ways in which the groom had brought his culture into the celebration. Then Hill, an U.S. citizen of European descent, made the comment that he wished he had a culture. In the opening chapter of his book, Hill reports his friend's response: "He [the friend] suddenly got very serious, placed his hands on my shoulder, and looked me straight in the eye. "Daniel you may be white, but don't let that lull you into thinking you have no culture. White culture is very real. In fact, when white culture comes into contact with other cultures, it almost always wins. So it would be a really good idea for you to learn about your culture.""¹⁶ Hill, in the rest of his books reflects on this moment as a 'permission-giving' moment. It was through the invitation (or perhaps challenge) of his friend that he began to take seriously his exploration of race. Religious educators can function in the same role – in fact, I would go so far as to argue that white Christian educators *must* function in the same role – to give white people permission to examine Whiteness and White culture as a very real thing. bell hooks argues that this is an imperative of a transgressive pedagogy – that teachers bear the responsibility to ensure that issues of race are addressed even when the class/teaching context is predominantly white.

In this pedagogical model, the theological educator also acts as permission-giver for play. Above I outlined the arguments that have been used against play. In introducing a pedagogy of play in a religious context, the religious educator may find themselves up against even scripture, as 1 Corinthians 13 seems, at a simple level to speak out against play as a theological practice, saying "When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, reason like a child, think like a child. But now that I have become a[n adult], I've put an end to childish things."¹⁷ However, if the religious educator as a person of some authority, gives permission, or legitimizes, this playful approach as a valid approach, then participants are more likely to be willing to engage in these activities and ways of learning.

The overall goal with this approach to religious education is that a group can practice playing with the as ifs and what-ifs in the safe environment of a fictional universe provided through a sci-fi fandom or universe. Through this playful approach, participants gain competency, vocabulary and experience discussing and thinking about racial issues. This 'safe' experience then gives permission for these students to take this same approach that they used in the 'safe' environment of science fiction and apply it to the very real situation of faith and their lived experiences surrounding race. Through this approach, white students unaccustomed to talking about race can be scaffolded through, beginning in the relative safety of play in the science fiction environment and then moving to the real world.

Case Study: *Firefly* as a means to legitimize protest against structural oppression

As noted earlier in the paper, science fiction has been used in the past to examine societal approaches to race. However, within the contexts of these shows, it is often the experience of people of color that is being discussed or examined. I am going to suggest that a particular

¹⁶ Hill, 4

¹⁷ 1 Cor 13:11

science fiction show, *Firefly*, can be used as a stepping stone to examine the concept of whiteness and the role that white people can play in protest against unjust societal structures.

Firefly is a Joss Whedon¹⁸ show that ran for one season in 2002-03, and was described as an “American space Western drama television series.”¹⁹ Existing in a speculative future where the United States and China are the only remaining political superpowers, and humanity has achieved space travel, the show traces the adventures of the crew of the *Serenity* – a small cargo ship that navigates through these new political waters, while facing age-old questions of human existence. As Whedon put it, “nothing will change in the future: technology will advance, but we will still have the same political, moral, and ethical problems as today.”²⁰ The show centers around this crew-for-hire and highlights their conflict with the central government, the Alliance. The Alliance has all the characteristics of a stereotypical big government: centralized power among the elite, military force, and a cheerful wish to silence all those who would critique it.²¹

Four characters in this show are of particular interest: The captain of *Serenity*, Malcolm Reynolds; the pilot, Wash; the doctor, Simon Tam, and the mercenary, Jayne – all portrayed by white men. These four characters can be used to highlight four distinct white male archetypes, and their different approaches to institutional structures and oppression.

Captain Malcom Reynolds is the highly relatable white guy. He’s personable, confident, and carries the comfortable assumption that he should be in charge. However, in an unusual twist on the average white guy trope, Reynolds fought against the Alliance as a ‘Browncoat’ – a rebellious force that protested against the Alliance in a war that ended a fictional five years before the timeline in the series. Reynolds embodies the heroism of rebellion, albeit an unsuccessful one, as the Browncoats lost.

Wash, the pilot, is the archetype of oblivious white maleness. Wash is the overgrown puppy, assuming all is well and essentially fair in the world, and is constantly surprised when it turns out not to be so. He did not participate in the Browncoat rebellion, and generally tries to avoid the Alliance in a live and let live system.

Simon, the doctor, is the privileged, educated white man who has previously benefitted from power and status in the Alliance hierarchy and structure. He finds himself on *Firefly* in an attempt to save his sister from the structural powers of the Alliance; however, his worldview reflects his privileged perspective and assumptions.

Finally Jayne is the gunslinging redneck who turns to violence, bravado and overblown masculinity in response to every problem. His services and allegiances can be bought, his primary motive is profit, and he positions himself wherever seems advantageous at the moment. Though he hates the Alliance, he will work for them – for a price.

How does all of this apply in a religious education setting? By beginning the conversation in the world of *Firefly*, White religious educators can broach topics of power structures and establishment, relation to authority, race and power, moral imperative, and creative resistance through the lens of play. An opening conversation may begin among a group of known fans of the show regarding each of these characters and who the conversation participants relate to the most based on characteristics and worldview; from there, the conversation can progress into the relationship between each character and the systemic power structures in play. Issues of motivation – why would each of these characters, members of the dominant culture, choose to

¹⁸ Legendary geek director of *Buffy*, *Angel*, and a whole host of other nerdy film/tv credits

¹⁹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Firefly_\(TV_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Firefly_(TV_series))

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ Sound familiar?

ally themselves with the Browncoats in an act of rebellion? What is their motivation for resisting the powers that be? Fandom provides a shared experience and a safe lens through which to examine these modern issues.

The next step of conversation is looking at the *Firefly* fandom in real life. While the Browncoats are the heroes of rebellion, the term "Browncoat" has also come to apply to fans of the show who protested its premature cancelling by the FOX network. By taking the identity of Browncoats, fans then align themselves with the "Independents" as they fight against the Alliance – in this case, the FOX network that stopped airing *Firefly* after its first season.”²² This is an example of allying oneself against a real-life power. Discussion questions could include the motivation on the part of the Network, and what principles guide decision making in power structures today; commonalities between these power structures and the Alliance can be discussed.

Through both stages of these conversations, there are two goals. Goal one is to assist the white participants in aligning themselves with the Browncoats (independents) – after all, they are the heroes of the show, and the majority of us like to align ourselves with the heroes. Goal two is to get students comfortable using language around power structures, systemic power, and rebellion/protest, as well as identify key moral concepts, such as justice, freedom, and equality, as informed by the religious tradition. These concepts can be discussed in both terms of the show, and in explicitly religious terms appropriate to the situation. While still in the context of fandom, these ideas can be discussed as concepts once-removed without personal tie-in or challenge, and the educator can build conceptual frameworks of these systemic issues, as well as making explicit tie-ins to religious language and concepts as well.

The next step is to make the jump to examine a biblical text with these same concepts of transgression and alliance. A text which has these themes of alliance and powerful/lowly comes from none other than Luke 1:46-56 – the Magnificat. The question of alliance carries nicely from the *Firefly* example here – with whom is Mary aligned? With whom does God align God’s self? What principles and values are shared between the Browncoats and the worldview presented in the Magnificat, and how might we frame them in theological language?

The final step in the conversation is to invite participants into the what if/as if of transgressive thought by asking questions that bridge the gap from fandom to real life using the theological principles developed in discussion with the biblical text. Who are the Browncoats today? Who is the Alliance? What systems are in place in today’s world? Where do we see actions that oppose systemic injustice? Or explicitly: if we, as white people, identify emotionally with the Browncoat Malcolm Reynolds, and have created a theological argument to support his actions against the systemic injustices perpetuated by the Alliance, how then do we need to reconsider our relationship and understanding of the protestors of the Black Lives Matter movement? And here, fundamentally is where play and transgression come into focus; by taking these concepts seriously though play, then making the connection between play and real life explicit, the play takes on real meaning in the lives of those who have engaged with it.

This example is just one way that approaching racial discussions through sci-fi/geek fandoms can help bridge conversations between moral concepts and lived faith. While the example and scenario I chose above looked specifically at the role of white characters in relationship to power, the *Firefly* fandom has multiple examples and openings to discuss race, gender, class, power structures, morals, and wisdom (particularly in the ways in which wisdom, intelligence, restraint and pure, unadulterated awesomeness was embodied in black bodies in this

²² <http://firefly.wikia.com/wiki/Browncoat>

show in the characters of Zoe (Gina Torres) and Shepherd Book (Ron Glass). The character of Book in particular has clear religious tie ins that can bridge the gap into discussions within a Christian Education context.) In any case, the deep passion, interest and engagement in the characters and universe of *Firefly*, as used in a religious education setting, can help scaffold that passion from being contained to the world of play to having a real impact on people's faith and lived experiences.

Critiques of this approach

This, like all approaches, has strengths and weaknesses. Some of the potential critiques that I can see in this approach is that from the beginning it centers the white experience, and can certainly be accused of over-catering to white fragility. It paints a poor picture of the white psyche that discussions about race need to take a roundabout approach through play and fandoms. This approach relies on the assumption that there are many well-meaning white Christians who are clumsily trying to do better in discussing race, but are held in bondage by their fear of approaching such a complex topic. In order to help those who could be powerful allies make the leap into discussing race, the scaffolding approach is used to bridge the gap.

A second key critique is that this approach is focused on white people talking to white people about race: by its very nature, any conversation in this context is an incomplete conversation as there are key voices missing the conversation. A counterpoint to this critique is that this approach avoids putting all the onus on POC to carry the conversation and learning surrounding race, and makes white educators take responsibility for direct education about race. The educational approach modeled in this paper is only a first step to establish basic ideas, concepts and to engage white imagination, so that in transracial conversations white people are able to more fully engage as we step into our role to be co-creators with God. As such, conversations that use this play through fandom approach must be limited in scope – there is only so far this approach can go. But it is also a helpful approach to lay groundwork that is needed to begin serious conversations about race.

Finally, a third critique of this approach is that it relies on, or is at least best suited for groups with familiarity and knowledge of a particular fandom in order to be most effective. This approach presupposes a group that is a) interested in a particular fandom, with the language and cultural knowledge to discuss it in some detail b) in a religious education setting, and interested in drawing connections to faith issues and concern and c) is willing to have meaningful conversations about race. These spaces where this approach might work are few and far between; however, when those three factors are present, this could be a particularly useful and unique approach to broach this complicated topic.

Next Steps and future research

Next steps to further develop this approach is a greater engagement in racial theory and approaches. The racial realities of the current U.S. culture are complex, and this paper assumed a particular context, educator and audience. Before making this a wide-scale approach, additional consultation with existent research around teaching race in predominantly white settings would be helpful to nuance and layer the argument within this paper.

After that, field-testing this approach to using geek culture and fandoms, in combination with religious education to help approach difficult topics would be useful. Seeing whether or not this approach actually works to help explore issues of race and justice through the comparatively safe lens of play, and then make the harder, transgressive connections with faith and life, and

what could be changed about this approach to better meet those learning goals would be helpful. I would be intrigued to see what groups for whom this approach is particularly well-suited think of this approach.

Finally, if this approach turns out to be somewhat effective, it would be interesting to see how the basic framework or premise could scale up or down to include different groups. This paper was focused on white religious educators teaching in white contexts through the lens of play via fandom as an approach to race. But I wonder if there is a space for a play-based fandom approach that would not be specifically limited by race of instructor/audience, and if there is space to focus more on Goto's emphasis on community as a critical component to an approach to play.

Bibliography:

- Brown, Brene. *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Are Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are*, Hazelden, 2010
- Brown, Stuart L., and Christopher C. Vaughan. *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*. Scribe, 2010.
- "Firefly (TV Series)." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 12 May 2018, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Firefly_\(TV_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Firefly_(TV_series)).
- Giroux, Henry A. *On Critical Pedagogy*, Continuum, 2011
- Goto, Courtney T. *Grace of Playing*. Pickwick Publications, 2016.
- Hess, Mary E. *Engaging Technology in Theological Education: All That We Can't Leave Behind*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005.
- Hill, Daniel, *White Awake: An honest look at what it means to be white*, IVP Books, 2017
- hooks, bell, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, Routledge, 1994
- "Memory Alpha: A Star Trek Archive." Memory Alpha, memory-alpha.wikia.com/wiki/Portal:Main.

Amanda J. Pittman and John H. Boyles
Abilene Christian University
2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4

Challenging White Jesus: Addressing Effects of Race in the Undergraduate Bible Classroom

Abstract: This paper examines both the presence of and the potential for opposition to white normativity in Christian undergraduate education. Research on a cohort of first year undergraduate students demonstrates the durability of race as a factor in students' experiences and outcomes in required Bible courses. After interpreting these findings in light of literature on race, biblical studies, and higher education, we suggest strategic pedagogical interventions aimed at more active resistance to the prevailing winds of white normativity.

Introduction: Jesus, Race, and Christian Higher Education

The most reproduced image of Jesus in United States history—the well-known and practically paradigmatic image—is white. Warner Salaman's 1941 painting *Head of Christ* remains, for many in the West, the most recognized image of Jesus. Even in the midst of the explosion of liberation theologies, important challenges to the white presentations of Jesus during the Civil Rights period and beyond, and explicit recognition that Jesus was not and could not have been white, fair skinned, blue eyed Jesus prevails in the 21st century cultural imagination. So suggests Edward Blum, whose 2012 book, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America*, traces the white racialization of Jesus in the American context. For a great many people, the default, formative image of Jesus is a white man, whether they encountered that image on the television show *South Park* or in Sunday school.

The white Jesus of the cultural imagination represents one of many powerful covert operations of white normativity within religious education generally, and within Christian undergraduate education specifically. In keeping with national trends, racial and ethnic diversity is rapidly increasing at institutions of Christian higher education affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCCU), though the pace of diversification lags a bit behind national trends (Jolivet and Longman, 2018; Menajares, 2017). While the demographic shifts toward greater diversity have been welcome, professionals of various kinds in such institutions recognize the need for institutional change and self-examination. The 2017 volume, *Diversity Matters* represents one substantial effort in this direction, addressing the challenges faced by non-White professionals working in these predominantly white contexts, the particular responsibilities of white educators to their students, pedagogical and institutional necessities, and the theological commitments that should and do animate these efforts (Longman, 2017). The need for this conversation is great; as Tabatha Jones-Jolivet puts it, this variety of Christian institutions of undergraduate education are often not just "Predominantly White Institutions", but "Dominantly White Institutions" or DWI's (Jolivet and Longman, 2018, employing the language of Collins and Jun, 2017). That the kinds of issues named in conversations specific to Christian higher education echo broader trends in higher education overall testifies to the pervasiveness of the problem.

The way forward for Christian institutions, who may endeavor to support the learning of all students but which struggle to do so in the face of systemic injustice (or, more theologically stated, institutional sin), “can be clarified by focusing on the historical legacy of white supremacy and racism that plagues our institutions” (Jolivet and Longman, 2018, pg. 124). In response to that mandate, we decided to investigate the nature and extent to which white normativity shapes student experience, focusing our analysis on introductory Bible courses.¹ Such courses frequently comprise part of the general education curriculum in Christian higher education, and so involve a wide swath of students. Bible courses cover material that most students claim as personally important and theologically authoritative, during an important developmental stage at which students are considering and integrating new understandings (Gurin, et al., 2003, pg. 13). The academic study of the Bible in a confessional context resides at the nexus of some critical issues discussed so far—cultural conceptions of Jesus as white, ecclesial backgrounds, the broader context of undergraduate Christian higher education, and the broader educational context in the United States. Furthermore, introductory New Testament courses within Christian undergraduate education, like seminary courses of a similar kind (Byron, 2012), present a powerful and necessary location for resisting white supremacy.

In what follows, we provide close analysis of data collected as part of a broader descriptive inquiry into the spiritual lives of first year college students enrolled in a two semester introductory New Testament course sequence at a Christian liberal arts institution. The results of our analysis indicate that white normativity functions as a persistent factor in these courses. Other scholars then help to situate these findings within broader conversations on race, religion, and academic experiences. The reality of white normativity in such classrooms and religious spaces demand pedagogical intervention. Thus we claim that educators employing contextually attuned and reflectively engaged pedagogy can both enact and foster resistance to white normativity by relocating Jesus, reframing expertise, and persistently re-evaluating themselves, their course structures and processes, and their institutions.

While we will deal with data drawn from only one institution, given the prevalence of such courses at Christian undergraduate institutions we believe the findings have broader applicability and can inform discussions about resisting white normativity. A biblical scholar (John) and a practical theologian (Amanda), we teach classes of this kind, and so we approach this conversation as both practitioners and researchers. As white instructors in contexts like this, we assume the radical insufficiency of good intentions and remain committed to the constant project of unlearning and renouncing the racism that places us in a position of racial privilege and distorts our own imaginations. Consequently, we assume that our teaching practice must be continually critiqued and revised, lest our classrooms reconstitute the damaging racial dynamics that can define higher education at DWI’s. For that reason, we hope that the findings discussed here and the suggested trajectories pedagogical interventions will inform the necessary reflexive and self-critical practices of white instructors in a variety of contexts.

Description of the Research

Using data from a broader inquiry into the spiritual lives of students across their first year at a Christian undergraduate institution, we tested our working theory that race/ethnicity was a

¹ We follow Cornell and LeMon (2016) in defining as those courses that take a set of biblical books, rather than a single biblical book, as their subject matter.

persistent factor in student experience and outcomes in a standard two-semester sequence of introductory Bible courses. We paired data from a survey with demographic information (e.g.: sex, race/ethnicity, religious affiliation) and academic information (e.g.: grades, Pell grant eligibility) from the institution.² We conducted bivariate analyses of the data in order to determine whether such factors are correlated with higher grades in introductory Bible courses and correlated with scores on other measures enabled by the survey, including engagement in Christian practices, prior engagement with the Bible, faith integration, and Christian moral boundary measures.

Data collection occurred during the first and final weeks of student's enrollment in a standard New Testament course sequence. 845 students completed the fall semester survey in a Gospels class required for all incoming freshmen, a participation rate of 89.42%. Most of the following analysis attends specifically to these 845 participants in their enrollment in this fall semester course on the Gospels. 766 students completed the spring semester survey while enrolled in a second New Testament course surveying Acts - Revelation, a participation rate of 90.76%. The spring course is also required; a majority of first year students took it during their second semester on campus, but a portion of them did not. Thus, the two surveys yielded a pool of 561 participants, who took both fall and spring semester surveys and thus permit paired and comparative analysis.³ Since the racial/ethnic composition of this cohort of research participants only provides large enough populations of Black, Hispanic, and White participants for statistical analysis, we will attend primarily to these groups. At times, we will also consider White students as a group compared to all other students.

Given the incredible complexity of race as a social reality and its various intersections with other powerful social, political, and economic forces, a few important caveats are necessary here. We recognize that race is neither an isolated factor nor a predictive factor in and of itself and at no point suggest reductive causal relationships between it and any other measure. Race is one factor among many that impact student grades and at times provides a particular nexus for the types of experiences (academic, ecclesial, educational, relational, socio-economic, etc.) that students bring to university campuses and courses. We focus attention here because race is significantly correlated with students responses on the survey and outcomes in the courses in view, correlations which we believe merit attention. Within the limits of this paper, we will not have space to discuss at length the intersection of race, gender, and socioeconomic status, all of which impact course outcomes and student experience significantly. Nor will we be able to adequately explore the convergences of race and religious upbringing, though religious upbringing also matters with respect to a student's prior exposure to the Bible. Thus, while this

² Institutional data on race is collected using the IPEDS system, which necessarily forces students with multi-racial/multi-ethnic identities to choose. The 2017 IPEDS categories are titled "race/ethnicity." In an effort to be more readable, we will occasionally use the shorthand "race" even when referring to what IPEDS properly terms "race/ethnicity." The system also capitalizes the groups identified through IPEDS data. Here we will follow suit when referencing a particular racial/ethnic group (e.g. race/ethnicity and Black, Hispanic, White).

³ The difference between the 766 and 561 is made up of students who had not successfully completed, had not previously enrolled, or were hoping to improve a previous grade in the second semester course.

discussion will consider race as a factor in such courses, we recognize that this provides important but still partial information about a complex intersectional reality.

Race and Educational Outcomes

We first evaluated the factors correlated with final grade. Of the factors highly correlated with a student's grade in the Gospels course, the most prominent is whether or not a student is enrolled in the honors program. Honors students received A's at a high rate: 73%. The fall semester honors cohort was overwhelmingly White. Out of the 141 honors students who participated, 117 (83%) were White, 18 (12.8%) were Hispanic, and 1 (.7%) was Black. This distribution is quite skewed from both the racial/ethnic demographics of the overall entering class and of the fall research cohort. Among the fall participants, 566 (63.5%) are White, 148 (16.6%) are Hispanic, and 99 (11.1%) are Black. Based on both of the above facts, we will consider the non-honors population here (686 participants).

The grade distribution for these 686 participants is skewed, with about 75% of students receiving an A or B. In the analysis and tables that follow, grades are represented numerically according to a traditional GPA calculation and the data is summarized in table 1 (Grade Statistics) and table 2 (Grade Distributions). When we compare grades from Black, Hispanic, and White student cohorts against each other and against the overall averages, we see that Black and Hispanic students receive lower than average grades while White students receive above average grades (see table 1).

Table 1

Grade Statistics	Median	Mean	50th percentile	25th percentile
All	3.00	3.10	3.00	3.00
Black	3.00	2.77	3.00	2.00
Hispanic	3.00	3.05	3.00	3.00
White	3.50	3.20	3.50	3.00

The gap in grades is widest between Black and White students. Further, while the overall failure rate was low, Black participants were over three times as likely to fail the course as their White peers and Hispanic students were about twice as likely (see table 2).⁴ Thus, not only do the higher grades favor White participants, but Black and Hispanic students are more likely to fail.

⁴ All of these facts are confirmed by ANOVA and Tukey post hoc analysis. The means for non-White participants and White participants are 2.96 ($sd = 1.158$) and 3.20 ($sd = 1.005$), respectively. The differences among the means are statistically significant at the .01 level ($F [1, 1.144] = 9.092, p = .005$). Though the differences among all IPEDS categories is not statistically significant ($F [6,679] = 2.099, p = .051$), a Tukey post hoc test shows that grades for Black participants in the Gospels course are statistically significantly lower than those for White participants (2.77 ± 1.237 min and $3.20 \pm 1.0005, p = .010$).

Table 2

Grade Distributions	4 (A)	3 (B)	2 (C)	1 (D)	0 (F)
Overall	318 (46.4%)	211 (30.8%)	94 (13.7%)	36 (5.2%)	27 (3.9%)
Black	31 (34.4%)	29 (32.2%)	15 (16.7%)	8 (8.9%)	7 (7.8%)
Hispanic	51 (42.9%)	40 (33.6%)	17 (14.3%)	5 (4.2%)	6 (5%)
White	204 (50%)	120 (29.4%)	56 (13.7%)	17 (4.2%)	11 (2.7%)

These facts about grades in the Gospels course indicate a substantial advantage for the White cohort and a substantial disadvantage for both the Black and Hispanic cohorts, with the Black cohort experiencing a greater disadvantage. This disadvantage has consequences into the next semester, as students who fail the first course are unable to continue to the next one. Such an initial experience, where White students more readily excel and Black and Hispanic students are more likely to fail, can influence a student's entire experience at the university and of Christianity, especially considering the predominantly white nature of this university. It is also possible that the precipitous drop-off in participation among Black students in the spring survey reflects the experience of this disadvantage as one of the multiple ways white normativity on this campus affects Black students.

Systemic injustice in US education broadly provides further context for these findings. These two required courses depend on student ability to read and comprehend material independently, yet broader, pre-college assessments of these academic areas suggest that non-white students are disproportionately affected by systemic inequities in K-12 education. For example, the NAEP has reported that Black and Hispanic students lag behind White students in reading comprehension scores on standardized tests (National Center for Education Statistics, 2103).⁵ Scores on reading comprehension exams from high school seniors in 2015 exhibit these gaps. The mean of White student scores was 295, the mean of Black student scores was 266, and that of Hispanic student scores was 276 (see table 3).⁶

⁵ This data is from a retrospective report published after the 2012 test results were processed. In 2012, the gaps between Black student scores and White student scores, as well as between Hispanic students scores and White student scores, had narrowed since 1971, but had widened since 2008. Any newer retrospective has yet to be published.

⁶ For more on the scoring and to see the available data, visit <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>.

Table 3

Race/ethnicity used to report trends, school-reported	Average scale score	below Basic	at Basic	at Proficient	at Advanced
White	295	21	33	38	9
Black	266	48	36	15	1
Hispanic	276	37	38	23	2
Asian/Pacific Islander	297	21	32	38	10
American Indian/Alaska Native	279	35	36	25	3
Two or more races	295	21	33	36	9

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2015 Reading Assessment.

This trend may also be observed in reading assessments in Texas, where the majority of participants completed secondary education. The 2012-2013 STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) scores show the cohort's scores when they completed 8th grade. While 88% of Black and Hispanic students performed at a satisfactory level in reading, 96% of White students performed at a satisfactory level (Texas Education Agency, 2013). Even this data may be deceptive as the STAAR is administered in multiple rounds over the year, with these final percentages based on the final round of testing. The relative percentage of each cohort requiring retesting to achieve the satisfactory rating is much higher among Black and Hispanic students.

An intersectional perspective is also mandatory, given, for instance, the nature of how race and socio-economic status interlock. Students who receive Pell grants have lower graduation rates (Turk, 2017). The percentage of Black and Hispanic research participants on Pell grants is almost triple and more than double, respectively, that of White participants. Further, White participants only make up 44.2% of the total Pell grant recipients in the study. Future research will explore these intersectional phenomena in more detail.

Race and Prior Engagement with the Scriptures

While grades are intended to indicate a student's success in an academic endeavor, the place where each student begins with respect to the markers of success in that course can differ significantly. Since we saw that race makes a difference in the grades students received, we began to wonder about where each group of participants started with respect to the course material. Given that these courses consider sustained, close reading of New Testament biblical texts to be a central skill and component of the course, we evaluated the rates and modes with which students report having engaged with the Bible prior to their arrival in these classrooms.

We were curious whether differences persisted across different racial/ethnic groups, working from the theory that the nature of students' prior engagement with the Bible (both mode of reading and frequency of reading) would prepare students differently for the kind of sustained reading that the courses assume and practice.

The entering cohort of participants showed wide divergence by racial/ethnic categories in the ways they have read the Bible before entering this classroom (see table 4). For example, while Black students have the highest reported rate of reading verses or selected passages of the Bible, they showed much lower rates than White students of having read an entire book of the Bible, the entire OT, or the entire NT. Similarly, Hispanic students showed lower rates on each of these markers. These differences have bearing on course experiences, because they suggest that students have been formed in different modes of Bible reading. In particular, the method(s) of reading that Black and Hispanic students may have been formed to expect differ from those of the White, Western, and male method(s) of reading the Bible in an academic setting, whether exemplified by the professors or peers.

Table 4

Exposure to the Bible	Read vss or passages	Read an entire book of the Bible	Read the entire OT	Read the entire NT
All	94.7%	49.3%	14.3%	19.2%
Black	97.8%	35.2%	11%	12.1%
Hispanic	90.8%	35.8%	10%	10.8%
White	96.8%	57.2%	15.9%	23%

This theory is partially corroborated by the work of Shelton and Emerson (2012), who combined in-depth interviews with rigorous statistical analysis of two nationally representative surveys in order to compare Black and White Protestants on various areas of Christian faith. While the participants in our research are a more restricted set (ie: all first year college students), Shelton and Emerson's findings provide broader context for the differences between the prior engagement with the Bible by Black and White participants our survey shows. They report "racial group membership color-codes the frequency with which believers read the Bible," with Black Protestants being twice as likely to have read their Bible in the past year (p. 100). As stated above, the first year student survey indicated that Black students reported having read verses or sections of the Bible at a rate higher than any other racial group. Shelton and Emerson suggest, however, that on the whole, Black and White Protestants have different commitments regarding an *academic vs. experiential* model of Christian faith (p. 68). The interviewees in Shelton and Emerson's research, all Black religious leaders, posited that the community's experience of slavery and oppression generates these differences: an orientation toward survival and practical needs because neither could be taken for granted, a historical lack of access to higher education, and a broad lack of seminary training for clergy (p. 73). The researchers found that the academic and experiential distinction also shaped how survey respondents viewed the Bible. In their analysis, Black Protestants were far more likely to hold to a literal view of creation, specifically, or engage in a more immediate or literal reading of the Bible generally. While, in our survey, Black students were not more likely to say that "Christians should believe

that God created the world in seven literal days” than were White and Hispanic students, these broader findings do suggest that the students surveyed may come from homes, churches, and religious communities that engaged in quite different hermeneutical strategies than do their White professors in these college classes.

This divergence in religious sensibilities may have some important applicability to this research. We would posit that prioritization of biblical content knowledge – the possession of biblical facts, propositions, and assertions—presents another instantiation of Emerson and Shelton’s “academic” vs. “experiential” religious disposition. In these courses, which build and assess students knowledge about the New Testament literature, prior content knowledge inevitably plays a large role. To the extent that certain modes of reading might better support such an academic acquisition of “biblical facts”, and also given that prior knowledge of material is one predictor of success in reading comprehension (Elleman, 2017; Vaughn, Martinez, Wanzek, et. al., 2017), the differences in reading practice and exposure advantage students practiced in reading according to the standards of white normativity, thus creating an additional potential barrier some students. To take one concrete example—our analysis showed that whether a student could correctly answer one basic Bible knowledge question had predictive power in terms of their final grade. If a student knew that Abraham appears prior to Miriam, David, and Joshua, they were more likely to get a higher grade in the course.⁷ Though Black participants answered the question correctly at a higher rate than Hispanic participants, both groups were lower than White participants (see table 5).

Table 5

Percent of students answering “Which character appears first in the Bible?”	Abraham	Miriam, David, Joshua, or I don’t know
All	67.44%	32.56%
Black	62.63%	37.37%
Hispanic	58.96%	41.04%
White	70.88%	29.12%

Thus, these courses might not only reflect and operate within an “academic” approach to faith that fits more comfortably with white religious cultures, but such courses may also uncritically

⁷ Students completed a twenty-one question Bible content section of the survey. They were provided four options and the option of “I don’t know.” For the purposes of this discussion, “I don’t know” is counted as incorrect. The question under discussion here is: “Which of the following people appears first in the Bible?” Answer choices are Miriam, Abraham, David, Joshua, and I don’t know. A statistically significant linear regression was found showing that the final grade in the course relates to whether or not a student could correctly answer which of four characters appears first in the Bible ($F(1,684) = 26.633, p = .000$).

assume the outcomes of being raised in that culture, wherein White students appear to be advantaged.⁸

Summary of the Findings

So, what do these findings tell us? First, the findings confirm our strong suspicion, based on both anecdotal evidence and significant broader higher education discussions, that race is a factor in student experience and outcomes in these introductory New Testament courses. White students receive higher grades in these courses than do Black and Hispanic students. Second, the research shows us that students from the three primary racial/ethnic groups (White, Black, and Hispanic) report very different levels of prior exposure to the practices of reading most common within academic Bible courses. Thus, in our assessment, racial injustice is present in these classes in the form of inequities in college preparation, and white normativity is present in the form of institutional culture, assumed modes of engagement with the scriptures, and in the (still predominantly white) professorial perspectives offered. In this context, it seems that the “invisible knapsack” of white privilege may well include increased prior exposure to certain modes of reading common to the ecclesial and academic cultures of their professors (McIntosh, 2002). Each of the above factors witnesses to the need for active resistance to White normativity particularly in this type of introductory level Bible course.

Pedagogical Implications

The challenge of addressing and counter-acting white normativity in these contexts falls to all university stakeholders – faculty, student support staff, administrators, students (including, perhaps especially, white faculty, students, staff, and administrators whose Christians convictions should lead them to address the white supremacy in which they are implicated). Our suggestions here focus entirely on the responsibilities of faculty, but at no point do we mean to elevate the work of faculty over the critical work of administrators, staff, and student support staff in these efforts; instead, we assume that there must be a cooperation of co-curricular and curricular elements of campus life for students of color to have the kind of access and ownership that support student success in the undergraduate context (Jolivet and Longman, 2018). Such systemic inequities require urgent and comprehensive attention, much of which necessitates administrative action—for instance, the tremendous need for DWI’s to hire and support more non-White faculty, staff, and administrators can only be addressed at broader structural level. Even so, there are critical opportunities to resist white normativity at the classroom level that merit careful attention. We offer three trajectories for pedagogical intervention, concretely instantiated within introductory Bible classes: reframing expertise, re-locating Jesus, re-evaluating self, classroom, and institution.

First, such courses provide a ground-level opportunity to dislocate Jesus from cultural assumptions that situate him as a white, American savior and relocate Jesus into an appropriate historical context. As Blum contends, many people—including the students arriving on our campuses—harbor an implicit image of Jesus that is white. There is real danger that assumptions of Jesus’s primary alignment with (white) American interests rather than with others might

⁸ This data also indicates the need for more robust examination of the ways race itself plays out for our Black students in particular, since they correctly answered the question at higher rates than Hispanic students, yet still achieved lower grades on average.

flourish if not explicitly countered. Such white domestication/commodification of Jesus obscures the radically counter-cultural message of the Gospel. Jesus as 1st century Palestinian Jew in the Gospels regularly challenges varied forms of political, social, economic, and religious power when they serve to advance their own interests at the expense of others. Religious educators have an important opportunity here to expose the myth of white American Jesus in light of the Gospels' portrayal of Jesus as friend of the oppressed and vulnerable. Evans and Shearer provide one way of thinking about this task in their suggested practice of principled relocation, "pedagogical interventions that purposefully disorient white students to the assumptions about race and racism into which they have been socialized." (Evans and Shearer, 2017, p. 12). While these authors are referring to direct and personal discussions about race, a similar pedagogical intervention could unsettle the ways that students have been socialized and spiritually formed into a relationship with White American Jesus. Historical and literary forms of biblical scholarship can be a significant help in this task.

Feminist and minority biblical scholars have shown the potential but also limited use of these historical and literary methods in biblical scholarship. While they can help properly re-situate Jesus and Christianity, Brian Blount and others have shown that these methods are necessarily Eurocentric and patriarchal (Blount 2004, esp. 2-7). Uncritically assumed and employed, such methodologies can contribute to the elision of race and the reader in biblical analysis (Byron 2012, 109). Furthermore, and more directly related to the discussion here, in Segovia's analysis, historical critical and literary approaches to the New Testament also tend to generate patriarchal, Eurocentric, top-down pedagogies that are all ill-fit with the kind of liberative and interactive pedagogies religious educators champion (Segovia, 1998). Despite these issues, the scholars whose critiques are described here nonetheless retain a specific role for historical approaches to the New Testament; that role can contribute to resistance to white normativity in the study of the New Testament. First, attention to the historical context helps to center students in the Jewishness of Jesus, critical in light of inherited anti-Semitism in some modern receptions of Jesus at both popular and scholarly levels. Second, locating Jesus in the first century Judea under Roman occupation reinforces the critical theological point that the gospel is written from the bottom up, not the top down, such that white students (and professors!) may find themselves as the apparent recipients of Jesus' prophetic critiques more often than his blessings. The principled dis-location of Jesus can, in this way, subsequently lead to the principled dis-location of some readers.

Second, professors in such courses can resist white normativity by reframing expertise. Hospitality metaphors, a common theological framework for conceptualizing cultural diversity in the classroom (Gallagher, 2007; Jennings, 2017), provide one framework for accomplishing this. In the context of undergraduate introductory Bible courses, we would suggest the following specific manifestations of hospitality. First, we see a need for interpersonal hospitality, since the quality of interpersonal relationships between majority culture professors and non-majority culture students disproportionately impacts the success of students of color (Tuitt, 2003, p. 244-245). Such relationships need to arise at the professor's invitation but on the student's terms, in a spirit of mutuality and an ethic of care with (not for) students of color (Jolivet, 2018, p. 127).

There is an additional need for intentional ecclesial hospitality, by which we mean pervasive and intentional welcome of the church (or un-churched) backgrounds that students bring into the classroom. Almeda Wright refers to the "chasm" that is generally fixed between theological education and minority communities, created by "not simply a lack of diversity in

courses, but the internalization of dominant cultural values and knowledge” to the detriment of the values received from one’s community (Wright, 2017, p. 73). While she situates her critique within African American Christian education, it seems safe to assume that the chasm between white academics and African American students would only be larger. In order to the bridge that chasm, “scholars and clergy must pay attention to what is central within the religious communities and to begin with these central components in our educational efforts” (p. 77). Hospitable welcome of diverse student ecclesial backgrounds takes various forms: learning from students about their ecclesial contexts, recognizing where pedagogical choices (like a choice of Bible translation) might depart from ecclesial practices/teachings, creating space for diversity of experience and theological priorities, providing concrete opportunities for students to integrate new information with their personal histories and church communities. In so doing, professors might better “honor the traditions of the communities and... invite them into the process of knowledge construction—such that we are not simply changing the content of information imparted but the way that learning and knowing take place” (p.77-78).

A continued renegotiating of the guest/host dynamics of power and expertise in the classroom, of which hospitality to ecclesial communities is one kind, provides the final manifestation of Christian hospitality in light of white normativity. Hospitality to the kinds of expertise that students’ possess is obviously a critical piece of this, so that we enter into a space in which students are hosts and “we who teach are guests who again and again enter the worlds of our students . . . in honor and love.” (Jennings, 2017, p. 64). Jennings, however, also points to other areas wherein the reframing of hospitality resists white normativity; he indicates, for instance, the persistence of a white image of the imagined “educated person” (p. 62). As white educators in dominantly white contexts, our embodiment supports rather than resists that white supremacist construct, though other features of our identities (e.g. gender) also shape our negotiation of those spaces.⁹ In order to countermand that reality, we take seriously the political and formative nature of embodiment as part of reconfiguring hospitality dynamics in our classrooms (Perkinson, 2004, p.231). This public rearrangement of hospitality roles takes a number of small but cumulative forms, as any hospitality “must find its way *more tangibly* into the pedagogy of the academy” (Jennings, 2017, p. 64; emphasis original). First, we regularly and publicly situate ourselves as the guests of scholars from diverse ethnic backgrounds. In those efforts, we typically include photos of the scholars of color who are “hosting” our class discussion, in an effort to shift latent perceptions of who holds expertise. Second, we will sometimes physically de-center our presence in the classroom, situating ourselves as co-investigators with our students and recipients of the wisdom and work of other scholars . This is not an abdication of authority or responsibility, but an attempt to embody and creatively instantiate the fluidity of guest/host roles that characterize the Gospel accounts.

Third, the interventions that we have tentatively explored here must arise from and depend on the educator’s close attention and thoughtful re-evaluation of his or her own self, classroom, and institution. White educators face a particular exigency here, as our social location blinds us to institutional realities that are inescapably apparent to our colleagues and students. Resistance to white supremacy in religious education cannot happen in theory—it must happen in practice. It must happen somewhere, with a particular group of someones gathered for some

⁹ The precise dynamics of this negotiation depend on each educator’s careful assessment of the ways their social location intersects with the dynamics of their institution and context.

purpose. A religious educator's own particular context—church, parachurch, seminary, school of religion, undergraduate university, and so on—possesses distinctive opportunities and resources, powers and prejudices, objectives and measures, histories and affiliations, limitations and constraints. In the face of that kind of particularity, religious educators must find ways of attending very carefully to the dynamics, outcomes, and experiences that pertain to their own students and stakeholders.

For the particular context of learning that we have named and explored, attention at the level of both curriculum and pedagogy is vital. Cochran-Smith (2003) suggests that we must examine “what kind of message or story about race and racism is being told, what assumptions are being made, what identity perspectives and points of view are implicit, and what is valued or devalued” in a given curriculum (p. 107). Analysis along that line should, necessarily, include attention to the implicit and the null curriculum (Eisner, 1979). The null curriculum (what is not taught) in an introductory Bible class conveys institutional and professorial priorities as effectively as the explicit curriculum. Thus, if Greek and Roman materials are considered as important backgrounds to the New Testament, but broader aspects of the ancient Mediterranean world such as North Africa are excluded, something powerful, even if unintended, is communicated (Byron, 2012). This is particularly true given the legacy of ancient Greek culture being appropriated and adopted as “white American culture.” In terms of pedagogy, some research shows that a lack of pedagogical variety, especially when the dominant mode of pedagogy is top-down and patriarchal in its orientation, may disadvantage some minority student groups more than others (Kumashiro, 2003). The pedagogies employed must invite students into the co-construction of knowledge (Tuitt, 2003; Wright, 2017).

This paper arises from one such attempt at honest, self-critical, and careful attention to the dynamics related to race that operate in and around a particular context of learning, aimed at a concrete revision of course components, and in order to better serve the liberating, equipping, and empowering ends of Christian higher education for all students. This work is provisional, and it must continue and expand. In particular, we hope to see the continued expansion of this kind of research into other aspects of Christian undergraduate education, as well as other contexts. There is great need for longitudinal studies measuring the ongoing value and limitations of learning in these contexts. Educators in every context, and white educators in particular, must constantly engage in the work of critical self-evaluation, providing mechanisms for students to provide honest feedback about their experiences and inviting students into the common project of critically and creatively engaging the resources of the Christian tradition for participation in God's good redemptive and liberating work.

Additional Bibliography Information

Blount, B. 1995. *Cultural interpretation: Reorienting New Testament criticism* Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.

Byron, G. L. 2012. Race, ethnicity, and the Bible: pedagogical challenges and curricular opportunities. *Teaching theology and religion* 15(2), 105-124.

Cochran-Smith, M. 2003. Blind vision: unlearning racism in teacher education. In *Race and higher education: rethinking pedagogy in diverse college classrooms*, ed. A. Howell & F. Tuitt, 97-127. Harvard Educational Review.

Collins, C. S. & June, A. 2017. *White out: Understanding white privilege and dominance in the modern age*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Cornell, C. & J. M. LeMon. 2016. How we teach introductory Bible courses: a comparative and historical sampling. *Teaching Theology and Religion* 19(2), 114-142.

Eisner, E. W. 1979. The educational imagination: on the design and evaluation of school programs. Macmillan.

Elleman Amy M. 2017. "Examining the impact of inference instruction on the literal and inferential comprehension of skilled and less skilled readers: A meta-analytic review." *Journal Of Educational Psychology* 109, no. 6:761-781.

Evans, D. and T. Shearer. 2017. A Principled Pedagogy for Religious Educators, *Religious Education*, 112:1, 7-18, DOI: 10.1080/00344087.2016.1256367

Gallagher, E. V. 2007. Welcoming the stranger. *Teaching Theology and Religion* 10(3), 137-142.

Gurin P., E.L. Dey, S. Hurtado, & G. Gurin. 2003. Diversity and higher education: theory and impact on educational outcomes. In *Race and higher education: rethinking pedagogy in diverse college classrooms*, ed. A. Howell & F. Tuitt, 9-42. Harvard Educational Review.

Jennings, W. J. 2017. Race and the Educated Imagination: Outlining a Pedagogy of Belonging, *Religious Education*, 112(1), 58-65, DOI: 10.1080/00344087.2016.1247320

Jolivet, T. L. J., and K. A. Longman. 2018. Solidarity and mutuality as an ethic of care with students of color. In *A calling to care: Nurturing college students toward wholeness*, ed. T. W. Herrmann and K. D. Riedel, 119-140. Abilene, Texas: Abilene Christian University Press.

Kumashiro, K. K. (2003) Against Repetition: Addressing Resistance to Anti-Oppressive Change in the Practices of Learning, Teaching, Supervising, and Researching. In *Race and higher education: rethinking pedagogy in diverse college classrooms*, ed. A. Howell & F. Tuitt, 45-67. Harvard Educational Review.

Longman, K. A. (Ed.). (2017). *Diversity matters: Race, ethnicity, and the future of Christian higher education*. Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press.

McIntosh, P. 2002. White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. In *White privilege: Essential readings on the other side of racism*, ed. A. McClare, 97-101. New York: Worth Publishers.

Menajares, P. C. 2017. Diversity in the CCCU: The current state and implications for the future. In *Diversity matters: Race, ethnicity, and the future of Christian higher education*, ed. K. A. Longman, 11-30. Abilene, Texas: Abilene Christian University Press.

National Center for Educational Statistics. 2013. "The Nation's Report Card: Trends in Academic Progress 2012."
<https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/main2012/pdf/2013456.pdf>

Perkinson, J. W. 2004. *White theology: Outing supremacy in modernity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Segovia, F. F. 1998. Pedagogical discourse and practices in cultural studies: Toward a contextual biblical pedagogy. In *Teaching the Bible: The discourse and politics of biblical pedagogy*, ed. F. F. Segovia and M. A. Tolbert, 137-167. New York: Orbis Books.

Shelton, J. E. and M. O. Emerson. 2012. *Blacks and whites in Christian America: How racial discrimination shapes religious convictions*. New York: New York University Press.

Texas Education Agency. 2013. "State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness Cumulative Summary Report: Grade 8 Reading."
<https://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/staar/rpt/sum/yr13/>

Tuitt, F. 2003. Afterward: Realizing a more inclusive pedagogy. In *Race and higher education: rethinking pedagogy in diverse college classrooms*, ed. A. Howell & F. Tuitt, 243-268. Harvard Educational Review.

Turk, D. F. 2017. Nyack college. In *Diversity matters: Race, ethnicity, and the future of Christian higher education*, ed. K. A. Longman, 37-46. Abilene, Texas: Abilene Christian University Press.

Vaughn, Sharon, Leticia R. Martinez, Jeanne Wanzek, Greg Roberts, Elizabeth Swanson, and Anna-Mária Fall. 2017. "Improving content knowledge and comprehension for English language learners: Findings from a randomized control trial." *Journal Of Educational Psychology* 109, no. 1: 22-34.

Wright, A. M. (2017) Mis-Education, A Recurring Theme? Transforming Black Religious and Theological Education, *Religious Education*, 112:1, 66-79, DOI: 10.1080/00344087.2016.1247327

Mara Brecht

University of St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto

mara.brecht@utoronto.ca

2018 REA Meeting, Nov 2–4

Catholic Social Learning and Racial Injustice: See–Judge... Act?

See–Judge–Act. If Catholic social thought were a musical genre, this would be the bassline thumping under every rhythm. It is the essence of Catholic social thought. The common denominator. It defines and links Catholic thinkers and their approach to social issues. Thomas Massaro elaborates the three-step process: “Take a careful look at the situation... make an accurate judgement about what is going on... act vigorously.”¹ Of course, each step is complex, resource demanding, and time-consuming and while Catholics have and will debate the particulars, the bassline pounds on.

Students feel the vibrations of See–Judge–Act when Catholic theological educators take up social issues in their classes, and orient themselves to the social issue accordingly, moving along with the rhythm. Yet in the *antiracist* Catholic theological classroom, I contend, See–Judge–Act creates something of a problem, in the form of tension or—if not well-managed—conflict. Where Catholic social thinkers package together reflection, judgment, and action, antiracist educators recommend forestalling the last step—action.

This paper tries listens to classical Catholic social thinking and the latest antiracist pedagogy and tries to show how the two can harmonize if they can recognize that both are building off that shared bassline. Specifically, I focus on the place of “action” in Catholic social thought and antiracist pedagogy, explains how drawing on antiracist pedagogy can generate tension in the Catholic theological classroom.² I then propose a way to make this tension productive rather than vicious, specifically through focusing on the formation of (guilty) conscience. I come at this work as a white ally for racial justice. Echoing Paul O. Myhre, being an ally necessitates “willingness to assert that whiteness is a problem within a racism systemic structure.”³ As an educator, I foreground this assertion in my teaching practices.

Catholic Social Thought, Catholic Social Learning, and the Call to Action

The Second Vatican Council renewed Catholic social thought (henceforth, CST) for the modern era.⁴ *Gaudium et spes*, the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World,

¹ Thomas Massaro, *Living Justice* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 2000), 103.

² I am inspired in this work by Karen Teel’s astute observation that theological educators, in particular, need to systematical analyze “specific strategies and experiences” when using antiracist pedagogy in the theological classroom (Karen Teel, “Getting Out of the Left Lane,” *Teaching Theology and Religion* 17 [2014]: 15).

³ Paul O. Myhre, “Angle of Vision from a Companion/Ally in Teaching for a Culturally Diverse and Racially Just World,” in *Teaching for a Culturally Diverse and Racially Just World*, ed. Eleazar S. Fernandez, (Eugene OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 237

⁴ J. Millburn Thompson helpfully distinguishes between Catholic social teaching (or Catholic social doctrine) and Catholic social thought. Catholic social teaching refers to the formal body of teachings issued by the Magisterium on matters of social concern, and is “the province of the hierarchy of the church.” Catholic social thought is broader in both scope and participants. It encompasses “theological and social reflection on social issues that takes place in the church.” Catholic social ethics is “the academic study of morality as it applies to social issues” (J. Millburn, *Introducing Catholic Social Thought* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010], 6–7).

renews the tradition of CST by bringing “the Gospel and faith in Christ... to bear on what is actually happening in the world.”⁵ But *Gaudium et spes* goes beyond creating a new method for CST, as it articulates its foundation in clear, Biblical terms: “God, Who has fatherly concern for everyone, has willed that all men should constitute one family and treat one another in a spirit of brotherhood. For having been created in the image of God, Who ‘from one man has created the whole human race and made them live all over the face of the earth’ (Acts 17:26), all men are called to one and the same goal, namely God Himself.”⁶

CST lays out a number of principles, each tied to the biblically-based and theologically-grounded Catholic tradition.⁷ The first principle of CST—“the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person”—is born from a foundational and biblically-based faith claim: God creates us. The second principle—the call to family, community, and participation—also springs forth from this theological anthropology. It upholds that “the person is not only sacred but also social,” accentuating that we only “achieve fulfillment in community.” Human dignity and community form CST’s “twin foundations” from which all other principles extend.⁸ Created by God, humans endowed with rights which leads to the third principle: Those rights have corresponding responsibilities and duties.

The fourth principle is the dignity of work and rights of workers, because work is a “form of continuing participation in God’s creation.” Fifth, because the Gospel “instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first,” CST defends the option for the poor and vulnerable. Humans are created as a family, and we are all “our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they live.” The sixth principle therefore is solidarity. The final principle looks beyond the sanctity of *human* life to confirm the significance of all creation. We “show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation.”

As their content makes clear, Catholics are called to live by these principles and, indeed, to proclaim and share them with “new clarity, urgency, and energy.”⁹ Catholic educators can use their classrooms as a place to spread the good news about CST and to foster their students’ commitment to the principles. Roger Bergman, a self-described “faith-that-does-justice educator,” outlines “an educational strategy” for “faith that does justice,”¹⁰ by which Bergman means a way of having faith that is justice oriented and focus.

Adding wisdom from Ignatian pedagogy to this mix, Bergman sketches out a learning process that aims to “stimulate a hunger and thirst for justice and therefore a commitment to Catholic social teaching.”¹¹ He describes his model as a Pedagogical Circle. It involves four necessary “moments”: “(1) encounter with the poor, (2) analysis of their situation and its structural causes, (3) theological reflection (Where is God to be found and what does God call us to do?), and (4) a commitment to intelligent and responsible action.”¹² The overlap with See—

⁵ Thompson, *Introducing*, 49–50.

⁶ Pope Paul VI, “*Gaudium et spes*: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” December 7, 1965, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html

⁷ Though scholars vary on the *number* of principles (usually anywhere from two to ten), all capture the same basic ideas. For simplicity’s sake, I follow the pattern offered by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Sharing Catholic Social Teaching,” June 19, 1998, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/sharing-catholic-social-teaching-challenges-and-directions.cfm>

⁸ Thompson, *Introducing*, 49.

⁹ USCCB, “Sharing Catholic Social Teaching.”

¹⁰ Roger Bergman, *Catholic Social Learning* (New York: Fordham UP, 2011), xi, 9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, vii.

¹² *Ibid.*, 62

Judge–Act is clear: the first moment involves seeing, the second and third entail judgement, and the final moment spurs to action. Bergman notes that the four moments don’t necessarily emerge in “lock-step progress” but—following the first moment of encounter—occur in a kind of a flexible sequence.¹³

By getting students personally invested in the effects of injustice—by making them deeply confront injustice and *really see it*—students will be ready to think critically about injustice, and to respond to it theologically and in action. Bergman’s Catholic social learning paradigm is less about *instruction in* CST and more about *conversion to* it. The circle “works” when it *transforms* students—when they are called to apply and live out the principles of Catholic social teaching.¹⁴

The question of interest to me is: How does such a paradigm—which is “natural” to Catholic theological thinking—function in an educational setting which is aimed at *racial* justice and which draws on wisdom from antiracist pedagogy?

Learning with Massingale and His Analysis of the Catholic Response to Racial Injustice

In 1983, James Cone, the “father” of black theology challenged the American Catholic Church to acknowledge its failure to sufficiently deal with racism, and he challenged it to do better.¹⁵ Catholic priest and ethicist Bryan N. Massingale is one voice in Catholic theology who has risen to the challenge, placing racial injustice at the heart of his theological project and calling for the whole Church to seek justice with him. Like his Protestant forefather, Massingale maintains an essential connection between theology and ethics. He invites his audience to reflect theologically and, at the same time, stirs them to action.

Massingale’s *Racial Justice in the Catholic Church* is a landmark text for both black theology and Catholic theology. To black theology, Massingale brings a Catholic perspective.¹⁶ And to Catholic theology, Massingale contributes significantly to breaking a longstanding tradition of silence on racism, his body of work directly responding to Cone’s charge.¹⁷ The book is something of a *pedagogical* landmark as well.

Massingale provides readers with a highly accessible set of concepts to help them understand and analyze racism in contemporary society. His clear terms lays out Catholic teaching on racial injustice, and he carefully walks readers through statements from the U.S. Catholic Bishops that address racism. In my experience, the book functions well as a core text for an introductory level Catholic theology class, as well as an engaging piece of theology for graduate students, and I know other faculty share my experience of the book as a highly effective

¹³ Ibid., 36.

¹⁴ Ibid., 37–38.

¹⁵ Though it would be an overstatement to say black theology began with James Cone, there’s widespread consensus in the Christian theological world that, until Cone, “no scholar had yet conceived of a black theological project in such explicit and urgent terms,” as Andrew Prevot puts it. Cone’s work draws from the wells of black intellectuals, pastors and preachers, and the spiritual traditions of the black Christian community (as well as white European and American theologians and philosophers) to *create* black theology “in its most direct and enduring articulation” (Andrew Prevot 2018, “Theology and Race: Black and Womanist Traditions in the United States,” *Theology* 2, [2018]: 20).

¹⁶ Ibid., 40

¹⁷ Bryan N. Massingale, “James Cone and Recent Catholic Episcopal Teaching on Racism,” *Theological Studies* 61 (2000): 700.

teaching tool.¹⁸ Massingale serves my thinking not only by standing as a forefather of black Catholic theology whose insights are critical to Catholic racial justice work, but also by providing a paradigm of example the content students in Catholic theological education engage.

Massingale's first chapter sets out to help students "see" the issue of racism rightly. He urges readers to leave behind a "commonsense" notion of racism, which defines racism as conscious and deliberate negative interpersonal acts undertaken on the basis of skin color.¹⁹ He then helps readers shift to a structural and systematic understanding of racism. After that shift, racism is understood to be a "culturally entrenched" phenomenon that "pervades the collective convictions, conventions, and practices of American life."²⁰ Racism, from this perspective, is a "way of interpreting human color differences" that are so deeply set in American culture as to go unseen by most whites.²¹ While racism forms a way of seeing, it also translates into real "economic disadvantage and exploitation" for people of color.²²

The second chapter of *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* forms the core of the CST-dimension of Massingale's project. There, Massingale takes a closer look at the American bishops' efforts to address racism during the 20th century. Remarkably, the entire body of bishops only produced three letters "solely devoted to racial justice." As Massingale analyzes the letters he both introduces his readers to the contours of CST and evaluates the American Church's response to racism.

The U.S. bishops, Massingale shows, appeal to categories familiar to CST, talking about racial injustice with well-worn terms such as sin and evil. And yet, Massingale is unambiguous in his indictment of the American Church: "The most notable fact concerning the Catholic theological contribution to racial reconciliation is its absence."²³ While there are ample resources in the tradition for rejecting racism, the bishops, in his view, fail to undertake "sustained social analysis of racism," in large part because of an impoverished ability to be self-reflective.²⁴ They are encouraged toward "an overly optimistic perspective that fails to account for how deeply entrenched racial bias is in American culture."²⁵

The problem also lies in a failure to marshal the full power of CST. According to Massingale, the bishops do not address racism as a *structural* reality, an oversight that is inimical to the ontology in which CST is embedded. Namely, CST builds on the conviction that all the world forms a single unit, deeply interconnected and originating from and moving toward a single source, using tools that align with this vision.

One of those tools, social analysis, is a method for studying social systems. This methodological approach looks facts and issues as "interrelated parts of a whole" rather than "isolated problems," and attempts to capture a "sense of the systematic unity of reality."²⁶ The bishops problems—the failure to be self-reflective and to undertake serious social analysis—are related to an inability to envision the whole. They don't see properly.

¹⁸ See for example, Anna Floerke Scheid and Elisabeth T. Vasko, "Teaching Race: Pedagogical Challenges in Predominantly White Undergraduate Theology Classrooms," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 17 (2014): 27–45.

¹⁹ Bryan N. Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 13–14.

²⁰ Ibid., 33.

²¹ Ibid., 15.

²² Ibid., 40.

²³ Ibid., 103.

²⁴ Ibid., 181.

²⁵ Ibid., 75.

²⁶ Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, *Social Analysis* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 11.

Seeing rightly is at the heart of Massingale's criticisms of the America Church's response to racism: The bishops didn't get the problem right. If the vision is off, so too will be the judgement and action that follow. Bergman accentuates the importance of seeing rightly. He knows well that encounter with the poor—the first moment of the Pedagogical Circle—plays a pivotal role in the success of the Pedagogical Circle. Unless students meaningfully and wholeheartedly encounter the poor, the other moments of the circle either won't materialize or will, but only palely. What is to ensure that students' vision of racism is appropriately sharp?²⁷

Antiracist Pedagogy in the Catholic Theological Classroom

For theological educators, antiracist pedagogy is a way to help students sharpen their vision by offering Catholic educators concrete resources to help them fine tune how students experience—or enter into—the first moment of the Pedagogical Circle of “seeing” and “encountering the poor.” Specifically, antiracist pedagogical theory forces the questions: *What* is the object of our seeing? *Who* are the poor that we encounter?

The Approach of Antiracist Pedagogy

Antiracist pedagogy fits into the broader category of critical multicultural education, a way of approaching education that prioritizes student learning about difference and, most importantly, “the structural roots of inequality.”²⁸ Robin DiAngelo, a leading scholar in this area, articulates the key tenants of the educational approach: Antiracist pedagogy “seeks to interrupt relations of racial inequality by enabling people to identify, name, and challenge the norms, patterns, traditions, structures and institutions that keep racism and white supremacy in place.”²⁹

Antiracist pedagogy assumes that racism is always operative, even when race seems irrelevant to the topic. It's even there when racial diversity is absent from the educational environment.³⁰ This assumption is grounded by the key insight of critical race theory, on which antiracist pedagogy builds: Race is *the* central construct for social analysis.³¹ All people are socialized to participate in racism in one way or another. Though “whiteness is indeed most

²⁷ Massingale's first chapter contributes significantly to helping students *see* racism rightly. He adeptly walks students through a way to re-conceptualize racism, and turns their attention to whiteness as the more pressing, real “problem area.”

²⁸ Julie Kailin, *Antiracist Education* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014). To briefly situate antiracist pedagogy in the wider field further: Multicultural education is an educational approach that “seeks to expose students to various cultures and affirms cultural differences” (Shirley Mthethwa-Sommers, *Narratives of Social Justice Educators* [New York, NY: Springer, 2014], 16). Critical multicultural education goes one step further, holding that examining “one's own socialized stereotypes and assumptions” is integral to learning about the other (Robin DiAngelo and Ozlem Sensoy, “OK, I Get It! Now Tell Me How to Do It!” *Multicultural Perspectives* 12 [2010]: 99). The distinction between multicultural education and *critical* multicultural education matters because it's possible to teach about sociocultural or racial diversity without also asking students to consider the role *racism* plays in diversity. Such an approach, for example, would aim to help students accept others “as equals regardless of their skin color” and to celebrate difference as the way to “forge better intergroup relations” (Kim A. Case and Annette Hemmings, “Distancing Strategies,” *Urban Education* 40 [2005]: 622).

²⁹ Robin DiAngelo, *What Does It Mean to Be White?* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 289.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 290.

³¹ Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate, “Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education,” *Teachers College Record* 97 (1995): 50. Critical race theorists attempt to theorize race akin to how gender (by feminists) and class (by Marxists) have been theorized. Building on the intellectual legacy of Carter G. Woodson and W. E. B. DuBois, critical race theorists position race at the center of any social analysis.

prevalent in whites themselves,” people of color can “inhabit whiteness ideology,” as educators Cheryl Matias and Janiece Mackey explain.³² Antiracist pedagogy is therefore an equal opportunity affair. All educational spaces can benefit from gaining the tools to dismantle racism and all students can learn from exposing whiteness.

To further clarify whiteness, many antiracist theorists speak in the idiom of “white racial frame,” a concept developed by sociologist Joe Feagin, which is broadly consistent with Massingale’s idea of culturally entrenched racism. A frame, according to Feagin, shapes what and how people see. He explains that frames embed “in individual minds (brains), as well as in collective memories and histories, and [help] people make sense out of everyday situations.”³³

The “white racial frame” positions “white” as the natural and normative way of being—or makes it the “ideal type”—that “in everyday practice are drawn on selectively by individuals acting to impose or maintain racial identity, privilege, and dominance vis-à-vis people of color in recurring interactions.”³⁴ Antiracist pedagogies strive “to make implicit norms of White talk and White racial ideology explicit.”³⁵

The “metalogic” approach, which tries to help (white) students see how whiteness shapes how they think, talk, and see, is a key mechanism of antiracist pedagogy. This is no small feat. It is laborious—and something of a minefield—to expose white students to their own assumptions, assumptions which are so deeply internalized as to be unrecognizable.

Antiracist educators structure learning experiences such that students are able to grasp the concept of the white racial frame, or an equivalent concept. White students learn to apply the concept self-reflectively, so that they can see how whiteness informs their very way of experiencing the world. Students of color too learn to apply the concept as well. Once students can identify whiteness and its function, they can also begin to consider what the implications of having previously *not* known it. If they are white, students can question why they didn’t see their whiteness before.

The epistemology of ignorance, a field that “attempts to explain and account for the fact that substantive practices of ignorance... are structural,” studies how ignorance is essential to holding whiteness in place. The issue here is not just that whites don’t know their whiteness, but rather that they benefit from not knowing it. Barbara Applebaum speaks to this point by saying that white ignorance isn’t a passive lack of knowledge but an active process that begins from “readiness to *deny, ignore, and dismiss*” what victims say about their experiences of racism.³⁶ White students resist hearing and believing victims of racism, because to hear and believe means they can’t remain blind to their whiteness and its relationship to racism.

Antiracist pedagogy involves more than just exposing this feature of reality, but also is committed to interrogating investments in whiteness. In Karen Teel’s words antiracist pedagogy also “aims to show how benefiting from white supremacy is linked to contributing to it.”³⁷

What is especially powerful about antiracist pedagogical theory is that it changes the place where (white) vision rests. Rather than looking *out* onto the world, whites are asked to look

³² Cheryl E. Matias and Janiece Mackey, “Breakin’ Down Whiteness in Antiracist Teaching,” *The Urban Review* 48 (2016): 34.

³³ Joe Feagin, *The White Racial Frame* 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁵ Case and Hemmings, “Distancing Strategies,” 623.

³⁶ Barbara Applebaum, “‘Listening Silence’ and Its Discursive Effects,” *Educational Theory* 66 (2016): 396.

³⁷ Teel, “Getting Out of the Left Lane,” 15.

into themselves. Rather than encountering the poor *out* there, the white encounter with the poor is in fact an encounter with their own impoverishment, namely an impoverishment of awareness.

Cataloguing (White) Student Responses

Because antiracist pedagogy theory is largely inductive, and grows from educators' teaching experiences, antiracist theorists create a collective catalogue over time of student responses that's helpful for other teachers to anticipate and rightly categorize their students' reactions to antiracist work.

It's difficult to be systematic about all the categories and themes engaged by antiracist educators. The catalogue is ever-expanding, and the interdisciplinary nature of antiracist pedagogy means scholars slice up the pie a little differently.

I propose the heading Fight-or-Flight under which to organize and analyze an array of student responses.

Fight-or-Flight is a physiological, instinctual response humans have to stress. This response is unthinking and preconscious, and understood to be a survival mechanism. Fight-or-Flight works because humans are able to respond efficiently to a perceived threat. We jump out of the way of a falling tree and tackle a charging dog before letting our consciousness gum up the works. Fight-or-Flight keeps us alive, but it's also activated in situations when the stress is not *really* threatening and has been misidentified.

Fighting is not hard to recognize. When fighting, students reject the idea that there is racism, and do so in a variety of ways. They say racism is a thing of the past, and will often emphasize social progress in America,³⁸ or point out that they don't live in the past and never themselves owned slaves.³⁹ They claim to live in a post-racial world, that they see people in such a way that skin color actually doesn't register with them.

Some students recognize race-related social problems, but hold people of color culpable for "poverty, lack of education, crimes, and other social problems" rather than attributing these problems to structural racism.⁴⁰ Some students accept that racial injustice exists, but make the caveat that whites are victims of racism too, calling so-called reverse racism and invoking affirmative action as generating discrimination against whites.⁴¹

Students sometimes remove themselves from discussion altogether, fleeing by retreating into silence. While they might see this as a way to just listen or a result of having little to add, silence shuts down dialogue and limits conversation.⁴² Alternatively, they'll appeal to unconscious bias, a concept describing the deeply held beliefs people rely on to organize social worlds, to explain away their unwitting racism.⁴³

Robin D'Angelo's conceptualization of "white fragility" is especially instructive for "getting inside" the Fight-or-Flight response. White fragility, D'Angelo writes, is a state that triggers white defensiveness, manifested in "the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear,

³⁸ Kathy Hytten and John Warren, "Engaging Whiteness," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 16 (2003): 77.

³⁹ Case and Hemmings, "Distancing Strategies," 619.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 620.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 622.

⁴² Barbara Applebaum, "'Listening Silence' and Its Discursive Effects," 401; Hytten and Warren, "Engaging Whiteness," 85–86.

⁴³ Shirley Anne Tate and Damien Page, "Whiteness and Institutional Racism," *Ethics and Education* 13 (2018): 142.

and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation.”⁴⁴ Fragility may manifest in tears and displays of anger.⁴⁵

The problem with white fragility—and here’s where the Fight-or-Flight analogy is really helpful—is that it is a way of enacting and protecting whiteness.⁴⁶ Before (white) students even realize they’re doing it, they’re slapping their hands on their desks in anger (fighting) or turning on their laptops to completely check out (fleeing). Fighting and fleeing are survival strategies—ways of ensuring that whiteness lives.

The Call to Action and Catholic Theological Learning

Experienced antiracist educators know that a moment will come when (at least some) students—even those who fought the hardest or fled the fastest—become open to learning about their whiteness, their ignorance to it, and its effects. But they soon run up against a hard edge: *What are we supposed to do? How are we supposed to change? Just tell us what to do!*

Antiracist educators are trepidatious of white students’ “missionary-like zeal for direct and specific action.”⁴⁷ Antiracist educators identify a pattern: Students study racism and whiteness for only a few weeks, and “grow impatient” of talking about the problems. They want to move to solutions.⁴⁸ They dichotomize critical reflection and “the more important task of doing something.”⁴⁹ They get restless, claim that more talk is futile, and demand space to act.

Antiracist educators point out that white students’ zeal and impatience is, at root, generated by the very same fragility that brings about fight-or-flight. Antiracist educators recommend keeping (white) students in the tense space between resisting (through Fight-or-Flight) and calling for action. In this space, students see that dismantling racism requires *real* change, and not good intentions.⁵⁰ At the same time they see that way to real change will be only in and through “dwelling with unease” that is intrinsic to exposing whiteness.⁵¹

This dwelling puts students in an odd and uncomfortable liminal space as educators push them to understand the problems of racism but at the same time rein them in to ensure that understanding matures and develops, before students rush off to act hastily.

Though fragility is a powerful explanatory factor for students’ charge to justice, but it seems to me there’s an additional dynamic at play. Recall that, on the Catholic social learning model, students’ *readiness* to act, to do, to put something on the line is a marker of success. Transformation is, after all, what the model aims for, and doing justice in the world is not only the call of CST, but also the call of God. Setting up a classroom according to the model of Catholic social learning and teaching students to think through the frame of CST will deliver students to a place where they see action as the necessary (and good) outcome of what they’ve learned.

Massingale offers a reading of racism that runs as follows: God creates people in God’s image. Though all people reflect God and share in the gift of equal dignity, the human family is

⁴⁴ Robin DiAngelo, “White Fragility,” *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3 (2011): 54.

⁴⁵ Cheryl E. Matias, et. al., “The Twin Tales of Whiteness,” *Taboo* (2017): 10.

⁴⁶ Barbara Applebaum, “Comforting Discomfort as Complicity,” *Hypatia* 32 (2017): 869.

⁴⁷ Hytten and Warren, “Engaging Whiteness,” 75.

⁴⁸ DiAngelo, *What Does It Mean to Be White?* 297.

⁴⁹ Hytten and Warren, “Engaging Whiteness,” 76.

⁵⁰ DiAngelo, *What Does It Mean to Be White?* 296.

⁵¹ Tate and Page, “Whiteness and Institutional Racism,” 153.

also diverse, which is itself an insight into God.⁵² The diversity of the human family is understood to be a “divine blessing” and reflect God’s own inner life.⁵³ Racism creates a system wherein the dignity of some is jeopardized, trod upon, and spurned. Racism defies human dignity and breaches human solidarity.⁵⁴

Note that Massingale offers a CST-grounded account of racial injustice, which emphasizes themes related to theological anthropology and community. This is another way of saying that Massingale looks to the deepest structures of human life to apprehend and explain racism.⁵⁵ In my experience, it is *this* move that is precisely what frees (white) students from their instinct to fight or flee. Explaining that racism violates God’s designs for humanity and creation racism powerfully draws (white) students beyond their own fragility, to a place where they aren’t defensive but prepared to accept and resist their complicity in racism. Even for students who understand themselves as “nones” or are actively questioning, this is a compelling line of argument.

To recognize the terrible offense of racism is also to call for a forceful response: In the tradition of CST, the circle among “see–judge–act” must remain unbroken. To this end, Massingale offers specific details of what it takes to ensure solidarity and protect human dignity. He writes that solidarity “entails a constant effort to build a human community where every social group participates in equitably in social life and contributes its genius for the good of all.”⁵⁶ Catholics are called to the ongoing work of ensuring all truly belong to the human family, to building a social reality in which human dignity can flourish. For, the Catholic response human dignity, Massingale writes, “is to defend it from all forms of attack and to create the social conditions in which all human persons may flourish.”⁵⁷

Students who learn with Massingale are ready to solve racism, fight injustice, and dismantle whiteness. They are ready to act: to defend human dignity and create social conditions anew. Herein lies the difficulty. How does an educator tell students that racism is a violation of ultimate order and explain that Christian faith depends upon ensuring the stability of that order and, in the very next breath, raise questions to students about their motivations when the commit themselves to action?

Though I’m simplifying the terms, I’ve felt on many occasions that my way of setting up their learning about racial justice puts my students in a theo-ethical bind. At the very least, I haven’t been transparent with them about the bind, nor given them tools to transform it into an experience of *productive tension*.⁵⁸ If the educator doesn’t carefully help students navigate this bind—and learn to see it as a tension—students will experience a conflict between CST and the values of antiracist pedagogy.

⁵² Massingale, *Racial Justice and The Catholic Church*, 135.

⁵³ Ibid., 127.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 117.

⁵⁵ Massingale’s account differs from, but does not contradict, the CST-grounded accounts offered by the bishops.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 127.

⁵⁸ I anticipate some readers will view my conundrum as just another expression of white fragility, and another strategy to protect whites (myself included) from doing the hard work of dealing with whiteness. Though I’ve made a good faith effort to eliminate blind spots, I admit that this may be a blind spot. Even so, it stands to reason that addressing racism *theologically*, creates new stakes for and different circumstances in which student respond to racism—stakes and circumstances for which antiracist theorists do not typically account. To expose and fill this lacuna is the purpose of this essay.

George Yancy powerfully theorizes the idea of “tarrying” to capture what it’s like to occupy such a space: To tarry is to stay longer than intended, to linger, to hang around. Yancy calls for whites “to tarry with the pain and suffering of black people... to dwell in spaces that make them deeply uncomfortable, to stay with the multiple forms of agony that black people endure from them.”⁵⁹ He tells whites to quash the impulses to act, move, or move on, and instead to remain in the “unfinished present.”⁶⁰ In short, whites must *just be uncomfortable*.

Applebaum is in agreement with Yancy. She argues that antiracist pedagogy must enable white students to interpret their experiences as whites in new ways, and push white students to stay in the discomfort that arises from their re-interpretative work.⁶¹ This requires a significant conceptual shift around how they think of their relationship to experiences: Rather than *having* experiences—and understanding themselves to be logically prior to events in the world—students are encouraged to see themselves as constituted by experiences.⁶² Yancy puts other language to this: Whites realize (painfully) to be a product of a law that is not their own.⁶³

It’s only such a shift in identity, DiAngelo theorizes, that will shift how whites orient themselves to action: “How we *view* the world impacts how we *act* in the world, as their vision takes in more complexity, their responses will become more nuanced and complex.”⁶⁴ To my view, the vision Yancy, DiAngelo, and Applebaum walk us toward deeply resonates with Christian theological convictions, though it can feel to students that they are being *shut down* rather than *opened up*.

As theological educators grasp for ways to do this work well, they should, I submit, hold tight to modifier defining their work: *theological*. Anthony G. Reddie notes how he begins his antiracist classes with a “deceptively simple inquiry ‘What does it mean to be a human being? What does it mean to be you?’”⁶⁵ These theological-anthropological questions, set in relation to a critical analysis of whiteness, can induce students to consider themselves as a site of struggle between socially-given identity and a more complex, theologically-given one.⁶⁶ In other words, they can see that their identity is formed not only by a larger social context, but also—and here we go beyond antiracist pedagogy—that they are, at the same time, given and formed by the Creator.

I propose conscience formation as significant—even necessary—complement to antiracist pedagogy in Catholic theological education. Linda Hogan explains that, in the Christian tradition, conscience is conceived of as a site of encounter. There we meet God and “discover ethical values.” Conscience becomes the place from which we “direct our actions.” Conceived as such, our actions are less the result of private, moral choice than they are an

⁵⁹ George Yancy. *Look a White!* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2012), 157

⁶⁰ Yancy, *Look a White!* 158.

⁶¹ Barbara Applebaum, “‘Doesn’t My Experience Count?’” *Race Ethnicity and Education* 11 (2008): 410.

⁶² Applebaum “‘Doesn’t My Experience Count?’” 410.

⁶³ Yancy *Look a White!* 167.

⁶⁴ DiAngelo, *What Does It Mean to Be White?* 301.

⁶⁵ Anthony G. Reddie, “Teaching for Racial Justice: A Participative Approach,” *Teaching Theology and Religion* 13 (2010): 97.

⁶⁶ This language plays on a primary scholarly theme (the dialectic of subjectivity) of Anthony Pinn, noted by Reddie, “Teaching for Racial Justice,” 97.

incarnation of God's will.⁶⁷ Thinking in these terms releases the pressure that tends to be build up around "act," because acting is effect of an authentic meeting between God and person.

I see Mary E. Hobgood providing a rubric of powerful questions to help students prepare for a daily examination of conscience. We—especially we whites—review our thoughts, words, and deeds by asking these questions:

What kinds of selves are being created? What kind of selves do we want to become? What established practices do we want to resist? What new practices need to be imagined and embraced? What kind of people do we want to be, and how do our cultural and religious structures facilitate or frustrate our capabilities of becoming these particular kinds of persons?

Taking care not to "spiritualize" antiracism, working with students on forming conscience is a way to galvanize them to adopt daily, specific actions that re-create themselves *in accord with* God's creative vision for humanity.

⁶⁷ Linda Hogan, *Confronting the Truth*, 23–24.

Bibliography

- Applebaum, Barbara. "Comforting Discomfort as Complicity: White Fragility and the Pursuit of Invulnerability." *Hypatia* 32 (2017): 862–875.
- _____. "'Doesn't My Experience Count?' White Students, the Authority of Experience and Social Justice Pedagogy." *Race Ethnicity and Education* 11 (2010): 405–411.
- _____. "'Listening Silence' and Its Discursive Effects" *Educational Theory* 66 (2016): 389–404.
- Bergman, Roger. *Catholic Social Learning: Education the Faith that Does Justice*. New York: Fordham UP, 2011.
- Case, Kim A. and Hemmings, Annette. "Distancing Strategies: White Women Preservice Teachers and Antiracist Curriculum." *Urban Education* 40 (2005): 606–626.
- DiAngelo, Robin. *What Does It Mean to Be White? Developing White Racial Literacy*. New York: Peter Lang, 2012.
- _____. "White Fragility." *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3 (2011): 54–70.
- DiAngelo, Robin and Sensoy, Ozlem. "'OK, I Get It! Now Tell Me How to Do It!': Why We Can't Just Tell You How to Do Multicultural Education." *Multicultural Perspectives* 12 (2010): 97–102.
- Feagin, Joe. *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing*, 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Hess, Mary E. "White Religious Educators Resisting White Fragility: Lessons from Mystics." *Religious Education* 112 (2016): 46–57.
- Hess, Mary E. and Brookfield, Stephen D. "'How can white teachers recognize and challenge racism?' Acknowledging Collusion and Learning an Aggressive Humility." In *Teaching Reflectively in Theological Contexts: Promises and Contradictions*, edited by Mary E. Hess and Stephen D. Brookfield, TK. Malabar, FL: Krieger, 2008.
- Hobgood, Mary E. *Dismantling Privilege: An Ethics of Accountability*, rev. ed. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2009.
- Holland, Joe and Henroit, Peter. *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983.
- Hytten, Kathy and Warren, John. "Engaging Whiteness: How Racial Power Gets Reified in Education." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 16 (2003): 65–89.

Kailin, Julie. *Antiracist Education: From Theory to Practice*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

Ladson-Billings, Gloria and Tate, William F. "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education." *Teachers College Record* 97 (1995): 47–68.

Massaro, Thomas. *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*. New York: Sheed & Ward, 2000.

Massingale, Bryan N. "James Cone and Recent Catholic Episcopal Teaching on Racism." *Theological Studies* 61 (2000): 700–730.

_____. *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010.

Matias, Cheryl E. and Mackey, Janiece. "Breakin' Down Whiteness in Antiracist Teaching: Introducing Critical Whiteness Pedagogy." *The Urban Review* 48 (2016): 32–50.

Matias, Cheryl E., Henry, Allisonn, and Darland, Craig. "The Twin Tales of Whiteness: Exploring the Emotional Roller Coaster of Teaching and Learning about Whiteness." *Taboo* (2017): 7–29.

Mthethwa-Sommers, Shirley. *Narratives of Social Justice Educators: Standing Firm*. New York, NY: Springer, 2014.

Myhre, Paul O. "Angle of Vision from a Companion/Aly in Teaching for a Culturally Diverse and Racially Just World." In *Teaching for a Culturally Diverse and Racially Just World*, edited by Eleazar S. Fernandez, 219–238. Eugene OR: Cascade Books, 2014.

Pope Paul VI. "Gaudium et spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World." December 7, 1965.
http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html

Prevot, Andrew L. "Theology and Race: Black and Womanist Traditions in the United States." *Theology* 2 (2018): 1–79.

Reddie, Anthony G. "Teaching for Racial Justice: A Participative Approach." *Teaching Theology and Religion* 13 (2010): 95–109.

Scheid, Anna Floerke and Vasko, Elisabeth T. "Teaching Race: Pedagogical Challenges in Predominantly White Undergraduate Theology Classrooms." *Teaching Theology and Religion* 17 (2014): 27–45.

Tate, Shirley Anne and Page, Damien. "Whiteness and Institutional Racism: Hiding Behind (Un)Conscious Bias." *Ethics and Education* 13 (2018): 141–155.

Teel, Karen. "Getting Out of the Left Lane. The Possibility of White Anti-Racist Pedagogy." *Teaching Theology and Religion* 17 (2014): 3–26.

Thompson, J. Millburn. *Introducing Catholic Social Thought*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010.

United States Catholic Council of Bishops, "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions." June 19, 1998. <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/sharing-catholic-social-teaching-challenges-and-directions.cfm>

Yancy, George. *Look a White! Philosophical Essays on Whiteness*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2012.

Addressing White Supremacy on Campus: Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Theological Education

Steffano Montano
Boston College, Boston, MA, USA

Abstract

Students in colleges and universities across the United States are being exposed to overtly White supremacist groups on campus. These groups dub themselves ‘identitarians’ and attempt to influence students to support a White nationalist ideology that threatens the lives of people of color. Theologically, this ideology also presents an obstacle for instruction: the existence of a competing Imago Dei that ties itself to White supremacy, dehumanizing persons of color. This paper encourages the use of anti-racist pedagogies in theological education as a corrective to this competing Imago Dei.

White Supremacist Groups on Campus

In June of this year, the New York Times reported on recent data from the Anti-Defamation League that showed a 70% rise in White Supremacist marketing on college campuses in the U.S.¹ Many of these flyers and pamphlets are marked by slogans such as “You will not replace us” and “Don’t apologize for being White.” The authors of these flyers, groups like Identity Evropa, Patriot Front, and Vanguard America, are targeting colleges and universities for recruitment and for media attention.² They call themselves ‘identitarians’ rather than supremacists and focus much of their attention on an alleged ‘White cultural genocide’ which they see taking place primarily in universities and the media.³ These flyers are a part of a larger effort by White supremacist groups to build out their “metapolitics”,⁴ an attempt to shift culture towards their narrative of White genocide. Despite all evidence to the contrary that White culture and people are experiencing genocide, these groups hold to this idea and see evidence of it in every attempt to decenter Whiteness from society. These groups are predicated around the myth that the U.S. is an Anglo-Saxon nation and that the only way to prevent the destruction of the White race and culture is to heavily curtail immigration, to seal the borders, and to prevent ethnic studies

¹ Julia Jacobs, “White Supremacist’s Use of Campus Propaganda Is Soaring, Report Finds,” *The New York Times*, June 28, 2018. Accessed July 12, 2018.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/28/us/White-supremacist-groups-adl.html>

² Emma Kerr, “White Supremacists are Targeting College Campuses Like Never Before,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 1, 2018.

³ Darren Simon, “White Supremacists Targeting College Campuses More Than Ever, Report Says,” *CNN.com*, February 1, 2018.

⁴ Shane Burley, “The “Alt-Right” Is Building A White Nationalist Mass Movement With “Operation Homeland,” *Truthout.org*, February 20, 2018. Accessed August 30, 2018.

<https://truthout.org/articles/the-alt-right-is-building-a-white-nationalist-mass-movement-with-operation-homeland/>

instruction in colleges and universities.⁵ The groups responsible for this marketing are employing tactics that are pedagogical in nature: they hope to spread an ideology among groups of students who feel threatened or disenfranchised by the increasingly diverse nature of the U.S. population. This ideology preys on fears of suffering the material disadvantages that minority and marginalized groups today must contend with: income inequality, housing discrimination, rampant incarceration and criminalization, and cultural misrepresentation or underrepresentation. Recent data shows that their metapolitics strategy is working: roughly 11 million Americans espouse three of the main points that these and other White supremacist groups rally around: “a strong sense of White identity, a belief in the importance of White solidarity, and a sense of White victimization.”⁶ While the analysis centered its conclusions on those who espouse all three of these main points, it can be surmised by the results of the 2016 election that many more hold to at least one of these identity points, “...when racialized fears surrounding crime, immigration, and terrorism shape the political behavior of White voters”.⁷

In re-telling the mythology of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism, these groups are connecting to the deeper historical realities of U.S. colleges and universities as promulgators of racial sciences and destructive colonial missionary education. Rather than a foreign attack on modern sensibilities, ethics, and simple biology, these groups represent a call for a return to the White racial knowledge that Christian colleges and universities originally constructed. As theologian Jeannine Hill Fletcher has noted, “It was in the academic spaces of theological training that ideas of Christian supremacy were manufactured as knowledge, to be put to the project of conquest, colonization, and conversion as they made their way from lecture hall to pulpit to legislative assemblies.”⁸ Christian supremacy and White supremacy are intermingled at the root, with the first giving birth to the second in ways that ensured that racialized colonization and enslavement was not only reasonable but also ordained through the proliferation of the Hamitic myth.⁹ “From out of this matrix emerged a theological pattern that repeated in Christian reasoning and Christian writing. First, God had a design, a Christian destiny for all humankind. Second, the sliding scale of humanity could be seen in God’s favor on Christians and God’s curse on non-Christians, *reflected in skin and status* [emphasis mine]. This logic formed a White Christian pattern of thought repeated throughout U.S. history.”¹⁰ This

⁵ Anti-Defamation League, “White Supremacist Propaganda Surges on Campus: Data Shows Incidents More Than Tripled in 2017,” January 29, 2018.

⁶ Political Scientist George Hawley, quoted by Zack Beauchamp, “Study: 11 Million White Americans think like the alt-right,” *Vox*, August 10, 2018. Accessed August 30, 2018. <https://www.vox.com/2018/8/10/17670992/study-white-americans-alt-right-racism-white-nationalists>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Jeannine Hill Fletcher, *The Sin of White Supremacy: Christianity, Racism, and Religious Diversity in America*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017): 9.

⁹ While it is noted in Gen. 9:20-28 that Ham (Canaan) was given into the slavery of his brothers, no where is his skin color noted. The promulgation that Ham, because of his slavery, was the progenitor of Black people is a White supremacist myth grounded in their own belief in the natural inferiority and slavery of Black people.

¹⁰ Hill Fletcher, *The Sin of White Supremacy*, 11.

colonizing logic was present at the outset of the study of Christian education as well: Russell Moy has noted that Horace Bushnell, one of the founders of this field, was himself influenced by “prevailing notions of White superiority,” specifically in the belief that in God’s approval and blessing of the Anglo-Saxon race and Anglo-Saxon Christianity lay the reason for the enslavement of non-White races and the propagation of the White race, even unto the extinction of non-White peoples.¹¹ While scholarship on addressing and combating racism within and through religious / theological education is on the rise, it is still considered a specialized knowledge whose curricular and pedagogical insights have not become normalized in the ways the practice of theological education is handed down.

White supremacy therefore represents a theological problem that was generated from and continues to impact the practice of Christian theological education.

An Alternative Imago Dei

The racist ideologies that White supremacist groups interpret the world with are historically and epistemologically intertwined with Christianity. Indeed, to speak of this ideology as *Christian White Supremacy* is a more exact and thorough naming of its character. Theologian Kelly Brown Douglas notes that racism in the United States exists as a comingling of the Anglo Saxon myth of cultural exceptionalism over other races with a natural law theology that imprinted on those races a construction of their created nature that favors subjugation.¹² Terming this comingling a “theo-ideology,” Douglas’ work traces its development into what could easily be described as a counter-Imago Dei: the theo-ideology of Anglo Saxon exceptionalism posits that only Whites, apart from other races, are capable of entering into a sense of unity with and full election by God. “During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there were plenty of accounts of the Genesis creation myth in support of such an idea. These accounts virtually pronounced Anglo-Saxons as a special divine creation, distinct from other races of people, most notably the darker races.”¹³ This idea evolved into the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, ensuring that the Anglo-Saxon version of Imago Dei would be codified into laws that created and supported what critical race theorist Cheryl Harris termed “White property”. Whiteness as property is not a commodification into property of White bodies (as occurred with Black bodies) but rather a series of fundamental rights that belong to (are the property of) Whiteness and whose basis is the right to claim land and stake out space that excludes others.¹⁴ Examples of this include calls to police officers by White persons reporting that People of Color are either occupying spaces or performing activities that White persons themselves would not be found suspicious of doing. Each of these calls to a police officer is in essence a threat against a Person of Color’s life, given the heightened sense of danger that White supremacy has painted onto them. The shooting deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Philando Castille,

¹¹ Russell G. Moy, “American Racism: The Null Curriculum in Religious Education,” *Religious Education* 95, no. 2 (2000): 127.

¹² Kelly Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015): Kindle location 1146.

¹³ *Ibid*, Kindle location 559.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, Kindle location 804.

and many others are evidence of the ways that these interactions with police officers can be fatal.

The equation of Anglo Saxon domination of land and space with their theological connection to God means that Whiteness is essentially the gateway to God within the exceptionalist, pseudo-nativist narrative of the US.¹⁵ “Whiteness in this respect is not simply cherished property, but it is also sacred property... anything that cannot pass the test of Whiteness cannot get to God.”¹⁶ This is not only a counter-Imago Dei positing that only one race is created in the image and likeness of God, but indeed also a reverse-Imago Dei which paints God in the image of Whiteness: “if God is on the side of Whiteness, God is by implication not simply White but Anglo-Saxon. An Anglo-Saxon God is the only God that Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism can admit.”¹⁷ This narrative is alive and well in the US today in the privileges afforded to Whites, namely the freedom to dwell and move in spaces without legally protected harassment or threat of death from White citizens and civil authorities. It is a freedom that is codified into law, not through the overt Jim Crow segregation of White and black spaces, but through the policies that have covertly targeted People of Color in the US for mass incarceration, deportation, and unjustified death.¹⁸

It is clear that what we as theological educators must contend with is a competing vision of the human person and, ultimately, of God. It is one that denies the sacredness and gift that persons and communities of color bring to the world and, if we truly believe God’s image is imprinted onto all persons, poisons the ability for God’s image to be reflected in those who construe themselves as White. It is an image that kills and destroys communities. This counter image is present within U.S. society at the level of *culture* and infects the images of persons and communities of color with a level of danger that begs for their exclusion not only from White spaces and communities, but from an Imago Dei that is only fully applied to Whiteness. This counter image presents a difficult obstacle to overcome if we are to ask our students to understand the Imago Dei as more than a theological construction, but as a ground for equal rights and protections for all people regardless of skin color or ethnicity. It is an important topic to confront through theological education, yet one that is difficult to address in the classroom precisely because of the ways that these theo-ideological constructions have been embedded into White US culture.

The supporting framework that allows White supremacy to continue existing differs only on the surface from the framework that allowed it to come into being. While White supremacy was born from explicit and rationalized ideas about race, ethnicity, and religion,

¹⁵ It is ironic that White supremacists have in the past positioned themselves as nativists, given their commitment to genocide of the true natives of this land. Yet this also has ties to Christianity and Christian supremacy: Manifest Destiny positions this land as a “New Jerusalem”, a concept which ties the colonization of Canaan by the Jews escaping bondage in Egypt in the book of Exodus as an enactment of their covenant with God, with the Christian colonization of this land acting as a mirror to that same covenant.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, Kindle location 821.

¹⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁸ Critical race education theorist Zeus Leonardo provides an excellent 29 point list, in the style of Peggy McIntosh, of the “acts, laws, and decisions” that “capture a reliable portrait of White supremacy” in his book, *Race, Whiteness, and Education* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 85-88.

today it exists in a cultural milieu that believes it has transcended these premises and has self-corrected for the injustices of the past. This phenomenon, which attempts to deny the continued prevalence of racism today, is known as color-blind racism. An analysis of how overtly White supremacist groups ironically leverage color-blind racism in order to further their ideology will allow us to understand the subtle logics that we as theological educators must overcome.

Color-Blind Racism and White Fragility

Beyond reconstructing and supporting mythologies of White nationalism, these groups are also furthering color-blind racism by attempting to redirect the flow of racial sentiments away from People of Color and onto White people. The cultural and symbolic intricacies of this process reveal that the construction of Whiteness acts as a “technology of affect” that critical race theorists Zeus Leonardo and Michalinos Zembylas posit as a critical barrier to be overcome:

We are, therefore, interested in delineating how Whiteness manifests as a kind of apparatus and technology of affect that produces inequalities, ossifies certain identifications, and prevents new affective connections with Others on the basis of solidarity, caring, and justice. We argue that unless educational scholars engage with a theoretical analysis of how Whiteness is manifest as affective technology, we will fail to appreciate the important implications of this idea for educational theory and praxis.¹⁹

The technology of affect that they describe above, which includes what has come to be known as White fragility, can only exist within a color-blind society. While some conceptions of White fragility focus on the fear and anxiety that Whites experience when confronted with frank discussion about racism, there is more at play to this phenomenon. Leonardo and Zembylas describe this technology as generating an “alibi” for any particular White person engaging in conversation about race.²⁰ The alibi seeks to locate the problem of racism in another individual person, or in that person’s own past self. Doing so allows them to claim that their own subjectivity and intent was ‘somewhere else’ when a racist event occurred: if confronted with an accusation of racist thinking or behaving, an appeal is made to personal intention or to a misunderstanding. The activity of this affective technology is couched in an understanding of racism that is individual rather than structural, and instantial rather than systemic. These are the same definitional features that color-blind racism uses to explain behaviors or occurrences of racism.

Color-blind racism proposes that racism only exists within the realm of intention: it would define as racist anyone or anything that intentionally chooses to discriminate based on skin color and/or ethnicity. All other instances of discrimination are written off as

¹⁹ Zeus Leonardo and Michalinos Zembylas, “Whiteness as Technology of Affect: Implications for Educational Praxis,” *Equity and Excellence in Education* 46, no. 1 (2013): 151-152.

²⁰ Ibid, 151.

circumstantial. As such, it claims a further effect that serves to hide the ways that Whiteness and racism function: it purports the possibility of 'reverse racism', wherein Whites can somehow be racially (and systematically) oppressed. Color-blind racism exists as a societal network of understanding and has been the basis of much Whiteness arguments for antidiscrimination law: when policies such as affirmative action work well, some White people are inevitably upset at their own perceived lack of opportunity. Yet this perception is based on their own belief that U.S. society is post-racist. This is an example not only of how the system retrenches status quo power asymmetries, but further subverts gains made by those seeking to correct them by labeling those gains as discrimination against Whites.²¹ The crux of the problem, therefore, lies in the assumption of a post-racial, color-blind United States. It is critical, therefore, that this assumption be addressed within those institutions that educate Americans civically, morally, religiously, and scientifically.

Anti-Racist / Anti-Bias Pedagogy

Most theology departments across the country espouse a commitment to diversity and inclusion. Yet, by incorporating Elliot Eisner's theories on implicit and null curricula, we can surface how we fall short of these lofty goals. Eisner notes that every curriculum has its explicit components, its implicit assumptions and practices, and its lacunae which make up its null side. Each of these curricular positions are active every time we teach. As Mark Hearn has noted before in this conference's journal:

... if class textbooks lack a diversity of authors, syllabi do not consist of topics relating to diversity, and persons of color are not given fair representation on the faculty and administration, the message heard and seen might be altogether different than what is intended. Finally, null curriculum refers to the teaching that happens as a result of what is left out. For instance, it may not be in an institution's understanding to discuss racism or poverty in the pulpit, Bible study class, or class setting. By withholding certain subject matter, these institutions teach what they are and are not.²²

Triangulating Eisner's insights on implicit, explicit, and null curricula within theological education shows how theological faculty, departments, and curricula end up espousing color-blind racism as a null curriculum, that is, its refusal to engage explicitly with racism in both its old-fashioned and new forms. The implicit curriculum within these examples is also operative: it is an implicit curriculum of White supremacy when Euro-American, North Atlantic theological sources are privileged over other ethnicities and races. This dual effect,

²¹ Critical race theorist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw notes the success with which White people have been able to win anti-discrimination lawsuits they have brought against institutions, particularly in her article "Race, Reform, and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Anti-Discrimination Law".

²² Mark Hearn, "Color Blind Racism, Color Blind Theology, and Church Practices," *Religious Education* 104, no. 3 (2009): 280-281.

of implicitly supporting White supremacy while refusing to mention the realities of racism, causes damage to our ability to teach and embody the Imago Dei.

Theological education, if it is to combat this counter-Imago Dei, must study and adopt anti-racist pedagogical principles. As Louise Derman-Sparks and Carol Brunson Phillips, leading anti-racist educators, define it, anti racism education

...is not an end in itself but rather the beginning of a new approach to thinking, feeling, and acting. Anti-racist consciousness and behavior means having the self-awareness, knowledge, and skills – as well as the confidence, patience, and persistence – to challenge, interrupt, modify, erode, and eliminate any and all manifestations of racism within one’s own spheres of influence. It requires vision and will, an analysis of racism’s complexities and changing forms, and an understanding of how it affects people socially and psychologically.²³

The definition that Sparks and Phillips provide points to several competencies that we as theological educators must develop if we are to take seriously the anthropology of Imago Dei that our tradition advances. We must develop our own self-awareness on how and what we teach theology with, so that the White and European sources of our thought do not become the only ones that our students hear. We must develop learning outcomes that challenge our student’s understanding of their own identities and of the identities of others around them, so that they are better ready to resist appeals to their own in-groups that would lead them on a path of violence and nationalist / supremacist thinking. We must pass along the tools that can be used to deconstruct the arguments made in favor of White nationalism and supremacy and provide accompanying spiritualities of resilience so that our students can, in their own spheres of influence, shape conversations and policies to ensure the protection of people of color. In order to develop these competencies, we must engage in processes that take a critical look at our teaching methods and that accompany our students through these difficult journeys of self-discovery and transformation.

One area of competency that would serve to engage the “technologies of affect” described above is Derald Wing Sue’s approach to difficult dialogues around race (what he labels “Race Talk”), which pays careful attention to the stages of development of White anti-racist identities. Bringing White people to a greater awareness of their own racial identity is pivotally important to teaching theology and to helping to form anti-racist Whites. As Wing Sue notes: “... the level of White racial identity awareness [is] predictive of racism. The less aware Whites are of their racial identity, the more likely they [are] to (a) exhibit increased levels of racism, (b) to deny the racial reality of people of color, (c) to profess a color-blind approach to racial interaction, and (d) to find race talk uncomfortable, anxiety provoking, and threatening.”²⁴ The stages of White anti-racist identity development begin with the *naivete* stage, which is most often depicted by young children who have not yet been exposed to societal ideas about racial others. Children quickly mature into the *conformity* stage, however, in which they mimic what they hear in their environments,

²³ Louise Derman-Sparks and Carol Brunson Phillips, *Teaching / Learning Anti-Racism: A Developmental Approach* (New York, NY: Teacher’s College Press, 1997): 3.

²⁴ Derald Wing Sue, *Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2015): 189.

explicitly or implicitly, about People of Color. Wing Sue notes that some adults never progress out of this stage. The stage most immediate to any explicit educational engagement with racism is the third stage, *dissonance*, in which Whites struggle to see and understand how racism functions. This stage is normally accompanied by feelings of White guilt and / or isolation from People of Color as they attempt to understand if and how they have been complicit in racial oppression. Careful pedagogical attention paid at this stage can help transition White students into the *resistance and immersion* stage, in which they begin to question their own racism, though can sometimes exhibit what is known as the White “over-protector” reaction or exhibit cross-racial over-identification, which can actually serve to set the students back in their anti-racist identity development by either becoming paternalistic in the ways they attempt to shield People of Color from abuse or by attempting to escape their own Whiteness (and any feelings of guilt or responsibility that accompany it).²⁵ In the fifth stage, *introspection*, White students begin to question who they are in relation to their Whiteness. This stage is where White students can begin to ask “painful questions of who they are in relation to their racial heritage; honestly confronting their biases and prejudices; and accepting responsibility for their Whiteness...”²⁶ This is fertile ground for educators to help nurture healthy authenticity and humility, the necessary components for the final two stages: *integrative awareness* and *commitment to anti-racist action*. In these final stages, which can display at the same time, White students internalize their anti-racist identities and form familial bonds with other races while getting involved in anti-racist work.

While it should not be expected that any one class or program can help usher White students through these stages of anti-racist identity development, educators can nevertheless find these stages useful in “provid[ing] clues as to the most likely resistances associated with each level of developmental consciousness. Further, by anticipating the resistances and challenges posed by White participants in a dialogue, it may allow educators to devise intervention strategies or techniques to overcome them.”²⁷ Wing Sue provides further advice for addressing race talk, whether it occurs spontaneously or as part of a planned discussion. It is also important to note that, like any developmental theory, it is possible for circumstances or situations to shift the operative stage at any moment in time, just as it is possible to exhibit characteristics from multiple stages at once.

Understanding what *not* to do is an important part of knowing how to respond to race talk. The biggest temptation for faculty members who feel uncomfortable discussing racism in the classroom is to do nothing when back talk or push back from students occurs. This temptation may arise out of fears of being perceived as incompetent, biased, and inadequately prepared.²⁸ Doing nothing allows for White supremacist ideology and anthropology to reassert its privileges in the classroom precisely because it is the dominant ideology at play in the U.S. Faculty should always be willing to address these situations, and should have a set of tools in their tool-box for doing so. A second temptation is sidetracking the conversation by changing topics or following a red herring, usually in the form of re-framing the discussion around issues of gender, class, or some other issue. This is a safety

²⁵ *Ibid*, 196.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 198.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 202.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 231.

maneuver meant to move away from the discomforts of speaking about race, but it also provides a scapegoat that returns racial dynamics to the realm of the unchallenged. A third temptation many faculty may experience is to appease the participants by focusing on commonalities rather than differences. This is a pedagogical move that favors classroom harmony over tension and conflict, which “negates deeper explorations of biases, stereotypes, and nested emotions associated with race and racism.”²⁹ Terminating the discussion is another way of retrenching racism and adding to it to the null curriculum. This usually takes the form of tabling the discussion for another date, asking to speak with a student(s) privately after class, asking participants to remain calm, or placing limits on the discussion meant to exclude the examination of emotions around the issue. Finally, some faculty may become defensive; especially if they feel their own knowledge and authority are being called into question. Both White faculty and faculty of color may react defensively, for different reasons. The inherent biases of a White faculty member may be called into question, while faculty of color may experience microaggressions from White students who challenged their experience and expertise.

Wing Sue points to a powerful paradigm that lies in the background of all of these pedagogical failures; he calls it the “academic protocol”, which “emphasizes a learning environment characterized by objectivity, rationality, and intellectual thought and inquiry.”³⁰ While these aspects of academic life and practice are usually things that faculty member strive to achieve, they tend to work against the success of racial dialogue in the classroom. Arising from White Western epistemologies, these protocols for practice not only devalue experiential knowledge arising from different particular contexts, cultures, and experiences, they also retrench racial biases and racist structures because *unperceived* and *unprocessed* emotions create a cognitive barrier to cross-rational understand, and an emotional barrier to cross-racial empathy. Accordingly, the eleven strategies that Wing Sue suggests for successful racial dialogue in the classroom are centered on overturning this protocol and paying closer attention to the emotions that arise as pieces of knowledge themselves. These potential helpful strategies are couched in

(a) an understanding of the dynamics and characteristics of race talk; (b) being knowledgeable of the ground rules that hinder open discussions of topics on race, racism, Whiteness, and White privilege; (c) anticipating and being able to deconstruct the clash of racial realities between different groups; (d) being cognizant of how race talk is embedded in the larger sociopolitical system and influenced by it; (e) being aware and nonjudgmental about communication style differences; (f) understanding White and people-of-color fears about engaging in racial conversations; and (g) having knowledge of racial / cultural identity development.³¹

The eleven strategies Wing Sue promotes are:

1. Understand One’s Racial / Cultural Identity

²⁹ Ibid, 233.

³⁰ Ibid, 65.

³¹ Ibid, 235.

2. Acknowledge and Be Open to Admitting One's Racial Biases
3. Be Comfortable and Open to Discussing Topics of Race and Racism
4. Understand the Meaning of Emotions
5. Validate and Facilitate Discussion of Feelings
6. Control the Process and not the Content of Race Talk
7. Unmask the Difficult Dialogue Through Process Observations and Interventions
8. Do Not Allow a Difficult Dialogue to be Brewed in Silence
9. Understand Differences in Communication Styles
10. Forewarn, Plan, and Purposefully Instigate Race Talk
11. Validate, Encourage, and Express Admiration and Appreciation to Participants Who Speak When It Is Unsafe To Do So

While it is possible to focus a substantial amount of time to discuss each of these strategies, it is helpful to extract from them the tools that theological educators should work on developing. The first of these tools is a knowledge of self (strategies 1 and 2). Theological education, and theology in general, has already benefited from a "turn to the subject" that asks each of us to contextualize our knowledge and approaches. Taking this one step further towards racial dialogue would mean investigating each of the ways that we are biased towards other races, ethnicities, groups, and various other identity "-isms" that bear investigating. There are various tools to help us do so, from implicit bias tests that can be taken online, to workshops led by diversity trainers that can kick off the sort of awareness necessary to understand how biases function within each of us. The second tool that can be deduced from these strategies is emotional intelligence and empathy (strategies 3, 4, 5). While usually a learning objective for children, emotional intelligence in a very polarized U.S. society is sorely needed among adults as well. There is ample literature on cultivating this in oneself, as well as recognizing emotions in others.³² In terms of race talk, it is important to understand and recognize both the emotions that bubble up within us as educators and the ones we see displaying among our students. Paying attention to the ways our bodies react is an important step in the right direction, as is understanding how best to bring attention to our emotions through paying attention to our embodied reactions. The third tool is facilitation (strategies 6,7,8,9). Classroom and process facilitation is a skill that can be acquired through rough and tumble experience or through careful guidance. Many universities have centers for teaching that strive to help faculty improve their classroom facilitation. For our purposes, being familiar with the processes of anti-racist identity development as well as difficult dialogues are also necessary. The final tool is management of the educational environment (strategies 10 and 11). Many educational theorists discuss the importance of cultivating a classroom environment that values courage, honesty, and resilience.³³ For successful race talks to occur, we must avoid emphasis on "safe spaces" that discourage any sort of conversation that might be painful, and encourage the claiming of pain (and joy) within these conversations.

³² This article from *Psychology Today* is a good start:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/your-mind-your-body/201201/10-ways-enhance-your-emotional-intelligence>

³³ bell hooks and Parker Palmer, among others.

Towards an Anti-Racist Theological Education

By helping our White students to become aware of their own cooperation with racism and helping them to disavow color-blind racism, we are also improving the educational experience of our students of color. As Wing Sue notes,

Back talk from people of color is filled with attempts to make well-intentioned Whites aware of the direction they are taking and aware of the harm they are inflicting on people of color. But these people of color are hindered by many obstacles: well-intentioned White Americans who tell them they are going the wrong way (White talk); institutional policies and practices that put obstacles in their retreating path (institutional racism); and punishment from society for not obeying the traffic rules – a one-way street of bias and bigotry.³⁴

By improving the way that we as theological educators address toxic theological anthropologies, such as White supremacy, we are also providing a more welcoming and educational environment for our students of color to share their knowledge and experience with everyone. By centering our attention on White supremacy, we actually serve to decenter the implicit assumptions and biases of Whiteness from our curricula, pedagogies, and institutions. Wing Sue's observations also serve to remind that the careful structuring of White anti-racist identity development in the classroom is not enough on its own if we wish to address White supremacy on campus. The ways our institutions hobble these efforts with policies that isolate students of color from their cultural contexts in the classroom, or fail to protect students of color from physical and psychological abuse, also retrench White supremacy on our campuses and serve as a backdrop to those overtly White Supremacists groups to encourage their ideologies. As theological educators, we must also engage our institutions to change its policies around diversity, inclusion, hiring, and retention of students, faculty, and staff in order to reflect a more authentic acceptance and living out of the Imago Dei.

³⁴ Wing Sue, *Race Talk*, 188.

Bibliography

- Anti-Defamation League. "White Supremacist Propaganda Surges on Campus: Data Shows Incidents More Than Tripled in 2017." January 29, 2018.
<https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/white-supremacist-propaganda-surges-on-campus>
- Beauchamp, Zack. "Study: 11 Million White Americans think like the alt-right." *Vox*, August 10, 2018. <https://www.vox.com/2018/8/10/17670992/study-White-americans-alt-right-racism-White-nationalists>
- Brown Douglas, Kelly. *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015.
- Burley, Shane. "The "Alt-Right" Is Building A White Nationalist Mass Movement With "Operation Homeland." *Truthout.org*, February 20, 2018.
<https://truthout.org/articles/the-alt-right-is-building-a-White-nationalist-mass-movement-with-operation-homeland/>
- Derman-Sparks, Louise and Carol Brunson Phillips. *Teaching / Learning Anti-Racism: A Developmental Approach*. New York, NY: Teacher's College Press, 1997.
- Hearn, Mark. "Color Blind Racism, Color Blind Theology, and Church Practices." *Religious Education* 104, no. 3 (2009): 272-288.
- Hill Fletcher, Jeannine. *The Sin of White Supremacy: Christianity, Racism, and Religious Diversity in America*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017.
- Jacobs, Julia. "White Supremacist's Use of Campus Propaganda Is Soaring, Report Finds." *The New York Times*, June 28, 2018.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/28/us/White-supremacist-groups-adl.html>
- Kerr, Emma. "White Supremacists are Targeting College Campuses Like Never Before." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 1, 2018.
- Leonardo, Zeus and Michalinos Zembylas, "Whiteness as Technology of Affect: Implications for Educational Praxis." *Equity and Excellence in Education* 46, no. 1 (2013): 150-165.
- Moy, Russell G. "American Racism: The Null Curriculum in Religious Education." *Religious Education* 95, no. 2 (2000): 120-133.
- Simon, Darren. "White Supremacists Targeting College Campuses More Than Ever, Report Says." *CNN.com*, February 1, 2018. <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/01/us/white-supremacist-propaganda-on-college-campuses/index.html>

Wing Sue, Derald. *Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race*. Hoboken: Wiley, 2015.



John Valk
University of New Brunswick
valk@unb.ca
2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4

“Beyond Religious Normativity:
Creating Plural Worldview Spaces”

Abstract

The term “worldview” has entered our lexicon – in the academy, in the media, and now in Religious Education. In an age of plural worldviews – religious, spiritual and secular – it is imperative to be inclusive. Creating plural worldview spaces opens up refreshingly new inclusive opportunities for RE: inclusion of the worldview *self* and the worldview *other*, also as to invite interdisciplinarity. This paper will argue for expanding RE to include a plurality of worldviews, and for initiating worldview discussions across the academy, and even beyond to the public square.

Introduction

The use of the concept *worldview*, and even more so its understanding and application, needs to be expanded, beginning with religious education. It is currently undervalued and underutilized, and even more so misunderstood. We have not yet plumbed its depth, broadened its scope, nor recognized its reach. We have not yet invited students and scholars into a sufficiently robust discussion to uncover the value of worldview education for religious education as it faces challenges from societies that become more plural. It is not clear that we recognize the extent of its implication and implementation for the larger academy, as schools and institutions of higher learning continue to be inundated with multiple perspectives that become contentious when these perspectives are only narrowly perceived. Perhaps most important is the value of worldview education for enriched dialogue and enhanced engagement in a diverse public square, where an increasing failure to understand the other is a failure to engage meaningfully with the other.

Religious education faces the dire threat of becoming irrelevant if not obsolete the more religious institutional influence subsides in an increasingly secular society, the more younger and older alike distance themselves from religion as it is generally perceived, and the greater the challenges mount from the world of the natural and social sciences regarding religion's validity and legitimacy. Religious education has suffered a major blow in the past half century. Perhaps even its vitality has waned. It will, of course, survive, even in a diminished state – religion has had its challenges over the centuries and always survived. But can religious education regain its vigour and again make a substantial contribution to both academy and public square in spite of its numerous challenges? How might that be done? I suggest that it will occur as religious education reimagines itself. Let me try to spell some of this out.

Emerging Challenges

The term “religion” is problematic today, and increasingly so. It is problematic in politics, where with few exceptions politicians guardedly avoid linking their religious beliefs, if they have any, to public policies (Lerner, 2003; Carter, 1994). It is problematic in the media, which by and large tends to avoid mention of its contributions, though not its failures, or truncates religion to such an extent that its more thoughtful and faithful adherents deem unrecognizable (Marshall et al, 2009). It is problematic in the secular academy, where, according to religious and social historian D. G. Hart, “academic inquiry waters religion down to the point where faith makes no actual difference” (Hart, 1999, p. 12), and, according to historian George Marsden, where Christian scholarship is considered outrageous (Marsden, 1997). It is problematic in the general public, where religion has been “denounced as the greatest plague of mankind” (Clark, 1989, p. 182), where according to the late Christopher Hitchens, “religion poisons everything” (Hitchens, 2007), and where, according to former evangelical minister Dan Barker, “God is the most unpleasant character in all fiction” (Barker, 2016). Religion has an image problem.

Yet, in all of this, the large questions of life, once the intellectual domain of the religious traditions of the world, continue to surface, and are debated and discussed at length, even in the academy. There is also strong indication of increased interest in it

among students, if less so among faculty (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2007; Chickering, Dalton & Stamm, 2006; Young, 2003). Yet, where interest continues to be shown in matters religious, the academy has tended to consign it to specific Religious Studies or Religious Education departments, now often at the margins of academic inquiry. It becomes a special area of interest only for those so inclined. The result, according to professor of religion Stephen Prothero, is a growing religious illiteracy in society (Prothero, 2007).

The problem here is that neglecting to give religion, where existential questions continue to abound, its due at the academic table limits the discussion of some of life's most important questions and issues. It also leads to the uncritical acceptance of other perspectives – other beliefs and values that hold great sway in the public academy if not the public square. It also results in a failure to see other perspectives as competing viewpoints, and all with similar markings and traits of traditional religions – metanarratives, teachings, symbols, rituals and more. Can a focus on worldviews or “Worldview Education” begin to turn matters around, give greater exposure to numerous perspectives and viewpoints both religious and secular, and level the playing field when it comes to competing worldviews and their reach in the public square?

Worldview

The term “worldview” has entered our lexicon, and is widespread in the English-speaking world. It has been integrated into the vocabulary of other languages. One increasingly hears of it used casually in the media, politics, economics, and more. Within the academy, virtually every academic discipline now uses it – from philosophy to physics, sociology to social work, health care to ecological care, and more. It is also now used increasingly in Religious Education, and in many countries. This is not surprising, for Religious Education recognizes *visions of life* and *ways of life* as its subject matter, notions central to the concept of worldviews.

The term “worldview” can be controversial, however. When translated into certain languages, its use can become problematic, conjuring up past eras and associated evils, especially when linked with leadership, as in the case of Germany. There it has been associated and identified specifically with certain social, historic, and problematic ideologies, such as Nazism, Marxism and Communism, if not hijacked by them. Yet, is use of the term nonetheless desperately needed, especially in regard to Religious Education, but also beyond? In a subject area that increasingly becomes contested, isolated and even closeted from mainstream academia because of its perceived outmoded and exclusive terms, concepts, and even ideas, can Worldview Education, more so than Religious Education, offer refreshingly new inclusive opportunities in a world increasingly shattered by divisive and competing viewpoints?

The concept “worldview” began with the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), who coined the now well-known German term *weltanschauung* – a life view. The well-known philosopher Hegel (1770-1831) understood it as “ways of living and looking at the universe.” The Danish philosopher/theologian Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) saw it as “a deep and satisfying view of life that would enable a person to become a total human being.” Historian, philosopher and sociologist Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), often referred to as the “father of worldview theory”, linked it to life's ultimate questions, the stuff of numerous “life stories” or metanarratives. The truth of

metanarratives, Dilthey came to assert, however, could now no longer be affirmed with any absolute certainty: they can only be accepted on faith (Naugle, 2002; Bulhof, 1980). Each of these scholars came to recognize in his own way that diversity of viewpoints was a given reality, characteristic of a humanity for whom homogeneous thought and behaviour had vanished long ago, if it had existed at all save for some uniform and isolated pockets here and there.

And so the worldview discussions began. Since these early beginnings the debates have not only proliferated but also expanded, and so has their reach. In the university Christian theology, once the centerpiece of academic scholarship, gave way to an academic study of religion, highlighting its various features and functions but shifting away from necessarily investigating its truth, or even truth in general (Wellmon, 2018). In terms of religious education alone a whole new approach unfolded in the last half-century or more, where an exclusive focus on one religion gave ground to an inclusive examination of many. Attention shifted from the catechetical teachings of one to the exploration of the meta-narratives, sacred texts, doctrines, teachings, symbols, and rituals of many – Christian, Islamic, Indigenous, Eastern, and now also new Spiritual expressions. Within the last decade or so religious education has expanded even further to include some secular worldviews, such as Marxism, Communism, Scientism, and Humanism. Some also include in their list Consumerism and Capitalism. All of these have now come to be recognized, by those who study them in depth, as powerful *visions of life* and *ways of life* – formidable worldviews. Today they compete in the public square for the hearts and minds of people, though often unrecognized and unbeknownst to many of the unwary. We know these worldviews exist; we can even see their imprints and impacts, subtle or flagrant, good or ill (Valk, Albayrak, & Selçuk, 2017; Goetz & Taliaferro, 2008; Borchardt, 2006; Cox, 2016; Gill, 1999; Smart, 1983).

The academy remains a place where worldviews can and should be studied, debated and discussed, with lessons learned from them that enlighten younger and older alike. The educated mind must be aware of these worldviews, of their subtle influences and their pervasive reach. They impact the university itself, for shifts in the dominance of one worldview for another can easily alter the goal and focus of education (Thiessen, 1993; Baltodano, 2012; Lakes & Carter, 2011; Olssen & Peters, 2005).

Inherent Challenges

The endeavour to debate and discuss various worldviews becomes problematic, however, when two things occur. One, when worldviews are explored only in terms of a study of one's own personal worldview, in effect, a study of "the self". We see this occurring in the proliferation of courses focused on personal identity or "personal well-being courses", where effort expended on coming to terms with one's own personal identity or well-being becomes a principal objective of learning. This can easily hide an individualism that so often drives them, a common feature of the fragmentation of much of modern society. The German philologist Max Müller (1823-1900) stated that "he who knows one (their own); knows none".

Equally, he/she who explores only the worldviews of others, as academic Religious Studies programs have been prone to do, fails to explore and engage the worldview of the self. Study of the various religious traditions that have greatly influenced and shaped humans since the dawn of time can be intriguing, especially in an

era where secularization has taken a strong foothold. But such an approach can easily lead to treating them as museum pieces, of individual interest but of little or no value to modern society. This easily hides a secular-centric view of life, and a failure to appreciate that various religious worldviews are alive and well in spite of their marginalization by media and academy alike.

As such, study of the self and of the other go hand in hand. Questions asked of the worldviews of others in effect become questions asked of the worldview of the self. Exploring the beliefs and values of others, their sources, how they are expressed, where they stand on certain issues and why becomes crucial as one explores at the same time the beliefs, values and positions of the self. Knowing self necessitates knowing others.

The second problem area is one of education itself, especially higher education. Some of this is a problem of our own making in the academy in general, but no less of those of us in religious education in particular. There is a serious risk of truncating the learning of students when learning becomes siloed. The risk is even greater when certain kinds of learning are marginalized, physically relegated to the margins of a university campus, or even removed from the curriculum altogether. A significant paradigm shift has occurred in the academy and the public square in the last half-century that has siloed, marginalized, truncated and even removed religion from academic and public discussion whereby students can graduate today with the highest degree the academy offers without having rubbed two religious thoughts or ideas together (Menard, 2010; Miller, 2010; Hauerwas, 2007; Burtchaell, 1998; Marsden, 1994). All of this raises four issues that I now want to spell out.

Worldview Education

First, education about faith and beliefs, about metanarratives and sacred texts, about God and gods, about rituals and symbols are all too often relegated to Religious Education, and then still all too often with a focus on traditional religions. This too narrowly confines such issues; it cloisters them into narrow if not optional compartments of life. It is exclusive. It cloisters the richness of religious traditions that have a long history of addressing a wide array of life's questions and issues (Joas, 2008; Connor, 2006; Smith, 2001). It communicates to students that only religion and religious people concern themselves with such matters. The more it is confined to religious studies or religious education the more it becomes isolated from learning as a whole, from mainstream society in general, and from its contributions to dialogue in the public square in particular (Valk, 2017a). Existential or ultimate questions of life - long the domain of various religious traditions – fall off the radar screen for many educators and students, whose interest in religion has narrowed, waned or become hostile as a result (Connor, 2005; Austin & Austin, 2004). It even results in a separation of religion from ethics, spawning an entirely different subject area, with the presumption that ethics can even *be* separated from groundings in religious traditions.

Second, expanding the subject area from Religious Education to Worldview Education opens up many more possibilities (Van der Kooij et al, 2017; McBain, 2003). This necessitates a name change so that those who are not religious are also invited into the discussion, communicating to them that not only do they also have faith, beliefs and values, but also exploring these with others is a valuable undertaking (Valk & Tosun, 2016). Müller's dictum holds alike for those of religious *and* secular worldview

perspectives. This is particularly relevant for younger people. Worldview education signals to students that humans by nature are spiritual creatures that need faith and beliefs to make sense of their world. Faiths and beliefs come in many different forms, styles and patterns, and have done so throughout the ages. *Visions of life* and *ways of life* are of various kinds, and reveal themselves among traditional religions, within them, and even outside of them. Today these various visions and ways of life are portrayed and depicted in film, music, poetry and novels. Education fails students when it ignores such matters, overlooking the fact that worldviews, traditional or their alternatives, come in many different shapes and forms (Gardner et al, 2017; Valk, 2017b; Parks, 2011; Benthall, 2008).

Third, becoming more inclusive by implementing a worldview approach, yet separating organized or structured worldviews and personal worldviews, as some have done, is helpful and necessary, but not sufficient (Van der Kooij et al, 2015). Focusing only on developing one's own personal worldview isolated from larger worldview groupings, organizations or structures may spawn creativity, imagination and independence in terms of the self, but it also fits in nicely with today's post-religious, post-secular and individualistic culture. It can easily result in further privatization of one's faith and beliefs; a fulfilment of an individualized self. Yet, it remains disconnected: isolated from the other, from a sense of community, and from the rich traditions of the past and present – from the “wisdom of the ages”. It tends towards today's *bricolage* and “spiritual but not religious” phenomena (Mercadante, 2014; Ammerman, 2013; Blake, 2010). Such worldview independence may prove creative and liberating in the short-term but elusive in the long run, with dissatisfaction, isolation, even fear of commitment as key characteristics.

Connection to a larger entity, a larger collective, with a longer history of communal care and thoughtful responses to some of life's big questions, gives an individual something to go on, something to think about, something by which to compare one's own percolating thoughts and ideas. It recognizes that within traditional religions there have always been creative forms, innovative expressions, artistic outlets, and engaging theologies. One-size fits all has never held sway for very long periods of time, least of all today, where they are more variations in religious expressions than any other time in Christian history. Have all too many younger and older people today shunned the religious traditions in which they have been raised, without sufficiently exploring their depths (Smith, 2017; Prothero, 2007)?

Fourthly, the subject matter that worldview education encompasses cannot be confined to one narrow area – it is interdisciplinary. It touches all subject areas, even though it might be grounded in one, or have its starting point in one. Worldview education has to do with how our *views of life* and *ways of life* – our beliefs and values – come to be what they are.

Worldview Education has to do with how these views and behaviours are shaped and influenced by the circumstances in which we were raised, by the communities in which we live, by schools that shaped our minds, and by our ethnic and/or national identities. In essence our worldviews are shaped and influenced, though not necessarily determined, before we may even become conscious of them. I have explored these influences in a “Personal/Group Identity” framework, which is the subject matter of disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and psychology. These scholarly areas have

rendered great insight into revealing how we are all products of our environments, even if those environments do not determine our every thought and action.

Worldview education has to do with the metanarratives and teachings we embrace, which inform our sense of right and wrong, and our responsibilities and obligations to self and others. I have explored these in a “Cultural Dimensions” framework, earlier written about by historians of religion such as Ninian Smart (Smart, 1983). Metanarratives are the stories by which we live, and from which we derive teachings about life, notions of right and wrongs ways of living and being, and the responsibilities and obligations that weigh on individuals. These all differ from age to age, cultural to culture, and tradition to tradition. These are also the domains of disciplines such as history, sociology and cultural anthropology.

Worldview Education has to do with how and where we find meaning and purpose, how we understand ultimate reality, the nature of the human, our sense of God or gods, religious or secular, and whether we see this life as the only life or as the beginning of a larger journey. I have explored these matters in an “Ultimate/Existential Questions” framework. These concerns have long been the domain of disciplines such as theology, religious studies and philosophy (Tillich, 1957; Volf, 2015).

Worldview Education has to do with whether we think matter or spirit is the essence of all things, or a combination of the two. It has to do with what it means to be human, and what we think the future may hold for humans as well as the larger cosmos. It concerns also the difficult epistemological questions; from where we get our knowledge and to what sources do we turn for our knowledge. I have explored these issues in an “Ontological/Epistemological” framework, which is the subject matter of philosophy, science and religion.

Worldview Education has to do with the universal beliefs and values we hold in common but understand and exercise in our own particular situations. We may all agree, for example, that dignity must be bestowed on humans, but how often is that dignity not rendered in ways that seem quite normal and accepting to so but appalling to others. We may also agree that the environment must today be preserved but come to accept environmental standards that others find completely unacceptable. I have explored such differences in a “Universal/Particular Beliefs, Values and Principles framework, a subject matter of disciplines such as ethics, philosophy, literature and even history.

In turn, all of these matters impact these subject areas even beyond the academy. Public policy, for example, has to do with “the world we want”, but this is fraught with worldview questions – what world or whose world do we want to create (Sandel, 2010; Kingwell, 2000). Economics has to do with how we care for our regional, national and international *econos*, that is, our household. This too is fraught with worldview questions – whose household or what kind of household do we wish to create, for whom will we care and whom will we neglect (Raworth, 2017; Belshaw et al, 2001; Goudzwaard & de Lange, 1994)? Physics, in investigating laws of the universe, bumps up against cosmological questions, which in turn are fraught with worldview questions, as new discoveries of the universe challenge currently held philosophical and/or theological views (Nagel, 2012; Polkinghorne & Welker 2000). Environmental Studies recognizes that one’s ecological care and concern for the earth is rooted in one’s starting points, in essence, one’s worldview (Hedlund-de Witt, 2013; Abdul-Matin, 2010; Gottlieb, 2006; Dunlop, 2004).

As one can perhaps see, worldview issues touch many if not all disciplines, and impacts people individually and collectively, whether religious, spiritual or secular. A case can be made for why this approach can take some questions out of the religious education cloister and into the larger academy. At minimum it ought to entail an expansion of religious education to worldview education, so that more than traditional religions become its subject matter. Even more so, however, these questions need to enter the academic public square, and with greater intensity for they are interdisciplinary and connections need to be made between various components. Even further, one hopes that these larger questions come to play also in the larger public square, where religious, spiritual and secular people can recognize in numerous ways how *visions of life* also impact *ways of life* (Valk, 2009). Neglecting to give space in the public square to various worldviews allows the dominance of particular worldviews. The public square should be a place where worldviews are engaged critically, but knowledge and awareness of these worldviews are needed, in order that a secular public square is not mistaken for a neutral public square. Perhaps Religious Education/Worldview Education can lead the initiative, pursuing even further a challenge posed by Habermas, to use language in the public square that is understandable by all (Habermas, 2006).

Conclusion

Let me draw all of this to a close by summarizing my argument. First, while valuable in itself, religious education has its limitations. It restricts itself by its very title, and its focus primarily on religious worldviews. No amount of openness to secular perspectives under the larger banner of religious education will resolve this dilemma. In a society with plural worldviews, schools should focus on religious, spiritual and secular worldviews, and within a subject area properly designated.

Second, while valuable in itself, exploring personal worldviews also has its limitations. It restricts itself by its very nature, if its focus is primarily on the personal. With apologies to Max Müller, “he who explores only their own; explores none.” We are all assisted in comparing/contrasting our beliefs and ideas to those of others, including the traditions out of which we come. Exploring the worldviews of others ought not be seen as a threat to our own, but as a way of expanding and deepening it. In a society of plural worldviews, knowing self cannot come without knowing others.

Thirdly, while the study of worldviews in a course so designated is valuable in itself, it too has its limitations. It runs the risk of remaining cloistered in a specific course, department, or curriculum area. Studying worldviews, as *visions of life* and *ways of life*, must be interdisciplinary. The study of worldviews cannot be confined to one or two areas – they are much too large, much too broad, and much too complex. The study of worldviews has implications across disciplines, across the curriculum, and in the public square.

Fourth, and lastly, an argument for worldview education is an argument for greater inclusion, broader focus, deeper exploration, and communal engagement.

Works Cited

- Abdul-Matin, I. (2010). *Green Deen: What Islam Teaches about Protecting the Planet*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Ammerman, N. (2013). "Spiritual but not religious: beyond binary choices in the study of religion", *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion*. 52 (2): 258-278.
- Astin, A. and H. Astin (eds.) (2004). "Why spirituality deserves a central place in liberal education", *Liberal Education*. 90, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 34-41.
<http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.hil.unb.ca/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&hid=127&sid=49b25649-fe5a-45f8-a6fa-c0823e04e813%40sessionmgr113>
- Barker, D. (2016). *God: The Most Unpleasant Character in all Fiction*. Edinburgh: Sterling.
- Baltodano, M. (2012). "Neoliberalism and the demise of public education: the corporatization of schools of education", *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 25(4): 487-507.
- Belshaw, D., Calderisi, R., and Sugden, C. (2001). *Faith in Development: Partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa*. Oxford: Regnum Books International.
- Benthall, J. (2008). *Returning to Religion: Why a Secular Age is Haunted by Faith*. New York: I.B.Tauris.
- Bulhof, I (1980). *Wilhelm Dilthey: A Hermeneutic Approach to the Study of History and Culture*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhof.
- Burtchaell, J. (1998). *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans.
- Butler, J., Habermas, J., and Taylor, C. (2011). *The Power of Religion in the Public Square*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Carter, S. (1994). *Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Chickering, A.W., Dalton, J.C., Stamm, L. (2006). *Encouraging Authenticity and Spirituality in Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Clark, M., E. (1989) *Ariadne's Thread: The Search for New Modes of Thinking* (New York: St. Martin's Press).
- Connor, R. (2006) "The right time and place for big questions", *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 52 (June) 40: B8-B9.
<http://chronicle.com.proxy.hil.unb.ca/article/The-Right-TimePlace-for/8806/>
- Connor, R. (2005). "Where have all the big questions gone?" *Insider Higher Ed*, Dec. 12, 2005
<http://insidehighered.com/index.php/views/2005/12/12/connor>
- Dunlop, T. (2004). *Faith in Nature: Environmentalism as Religious Quest*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Gardner, R., Soules, K., & Valk, J. (2017). "The urgent need for teacher preparation in religious and secular worldview education", *Religious Education*, 112 (3): 242-254.
- Gottlieb, R. (2006). *A Greener Faith: Religious Environmentalism and Our Planet's Future*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Goudzwaard, B. , and de Lange, H. (1994). *Beyond Poverty and Affluence: Toward an Economy of Care*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Habermas, J. (2006). "Religion in the public sphere", *European Journal of Philosophy*, 14, 1: 1-25.
- Hart, D. G. (1999). *The University Gets Religion: Religious Studies in American Higher Education*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University.
- Hauerwas, S. (2007). *The State of the University: Academic Knowledge and the Knowledge of God*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hedlund-de Witt, A. (2013). "Worldviews and their significance for the global sustainable development debate", *Environmental Ethics*, 35(2), 133-162.
- Hitchins, C. (2007). *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.
- Jacobsen, D., and Jacobsen R. H., eds. (2007). *The American University in a Postsecular Age: Religion and Higher Education*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Joas, H. (2008). *Do We Need Religion?: On the Experience of Self-Transcendence*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.
- Kingwell, M. (2000). *The World We Want: Virtue, Vice and the Good Citizen*. Toronto, Viking.
- Lakes, R.D. and Carter, P.A. (2011). "Neoliberalism and education: an introduction", *Educational Studies* 47(2): 107-110.
- Lerner, M. (2007). *Left Hand of God: Healing America's Political and Spiritual Crisis*. New York: HarperOne.
- Marsden, G. M. (1997). *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Marsden, G. M. (1994). *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Non-belief*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Marshall, P., Gilbert L, and Ahmanson R. (2009). *Blind Spot: When Journalists Don't Get Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McBain, D. (2003). "Towards a just peace: opening our schools to discussing worldviews", *Education Canada*. 43 (Winter) 1:26-27.
- Menard, L. (2010). *The Marketplace of Ideas: Reform and Resistance in the American University*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Mercadante, L. (2014). *Belief without Borders: Inside the Minds of the Spiritual but not Religious*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Miller, L. (2010). "Harvard's crisis of faith: can a secular university embrace religion without sacrificing its soul?", *Newsweek* February 11.
<http://www.newsweek.com/id/233413/page/1>
- Nagel, T. (2012). *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Naugle, D. (2002). *Worldviews: History of a Concept*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans.
- Olssen, M and Peters, M. (2005). "Neoliberalism, higher education and the knowledge economy: from a free market to knowledge capitalism", *Journal of Education Policy*. 20(3): 313-345.
- Parks, S. D. (2011). *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose and Faith*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Polkinghorne, J. and Welker M. (2000). *The End of the World and the Ends of God: Science and Theology on Eschatology*. Harrisburg, PA.: Trinity Press International.
- Prothero, S. (2007). *Religious Illiteracy: What Every American Needs to Know – And Doesn't*. New York: HarperOne.
- Smith, H. (2001). *Why Religion Matters: The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Raworth, K. (2017). *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing
- Sandel, M. (2010). *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Smart, N. (1983). *Worldviews: Cross-Cultural Explorations of Human Beliefs*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Smith, C. (2017). *Religion: What it Is, How it Works, and Why it Matters*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Thiessen, E. J. (1993). *Teaching for Commitment: Liberal Education, Indoctrination and Christian Nurture*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's.
- Tillich, P. (1957). *Dynamics of Faith*. New York: Harper.
- Valk, J., Albayrak, H., & Selçuk, M. (2017). *An Islamic Worldview from Turkey: Religion in a Modern, Democratic and Secular State*. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan.
- Valk, J. (2017a). "Reflections on interfaith education", in Weilzen, J. and Ter Avest, I. *InterFaith Education*. Rotterdam, NL: Sense Publishers.
- Valk, J. (2017b). "Worldview inclusion in public schooling", in Etherington, M. (Editor). *What Teachers Need to Know: Topics of Inclusion*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock. Pp. 233-248.
- Valk, J. (2009). "Religion or worldview: enhancing dialogue in the public square", *Marburg Journal of Religion*, 14 (May) 1: 1-16.
- Valk, J., and Tosun, A. (2016). "Enhancing religious education through worldview exploration", *Discourse and Communication for Sustainable Education*, 7, 2: 105-177.
- Van der Kooij, J. C., De Ruyter, D. J., & Miedema, S. (2015). "The influence of moral education on the personal worldview of students". *Journal of Moral Education* 44 (3): 346-363.
- Van der Kooij, J. C., De Ruyter, D. J., & Miedema, S. (2017). "The merits of using "worldview" in religious education", *Religious Education* 112 (2): 172-184.
- Volf, M. (2015). *Flourishing: Why we need religion in a global world*. New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press.
- Wellmon, C. (2018). "A wild muddle", *Aeon* (August 16)
https://aeon.co/essays/have-elite-us-colleges-lost-their-moral-purpose-together?utm_source=Aeon+Newsletter&utm_campaign=7e0103189d-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_08_13_01_11&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_411a82e59d-7e0103189d-68717837
- Young, J. R. (2003). "Most students care strongly about religion and spirituality, survey finds", *Chronicle of Higher Education* (November 21) A42.



Mariska Lauterboom
Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley
mlauterboom@ses.gtu.edu
“2018 REA Annual Meeting Nov 2-4”

Decolonizing Interreligious Education as Resistance Against White Normativity

Abstract

Common ground has been commonly used as the basis for interreligious engagement and dialogue. However, behind this concept lies Christian supremacy, the theology that gave birth to the ideology of white hegemony. It is through decolonizing interreligious education, this paper argues, that Christian supremacy, white privilege, and dominant narratives will be challenged at the intersection of education, politics, race, power, plurality, and multi-religious narratives in a brave new third-space.

Keywords: decolonizing, interreligious, common ground, white normativity, third-space.

A. Introduction

Religious plurality is everywhere, and, as notes by Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, “the United States is one of the most religiously pluralistic countries in the world.”¹ Therefore, religious education in America should cross religious boundaries. Kujawa-Holbrook claims that there should be an interreligious approach to this education, and, further, she believes that interreligious learning must take place in all religious organizations across the United States.

With regard to interreligious engagement, the tragedy of September 11, 2001, provides important background. As argued by Judith Berling, it stunned the Americans with a striking reminder that religious differences and misunderstandings can lead to acts of massive violence, which, in that case, took thousands of innocent lives. Using this as an important piece of historical context, Berling claims that American Christians need to extend a hand of friendship and express Christian regard for all people worldwide.² Here, Berling builds her argument for interreligious education on the acknowledgment that Americans hold a prominent position in the world and that Christians hold an important position amongst religions in the United States. I find this problematic. On one hand, it is understandable, because she draws from a Christian perspective, as well as from a Christian majority context. However, on the other hand, can effective interreligious dialogue and education aimed at peace, harmony, liberation, or reconciliation start with the assumption of the supremacy of one country and one religion over others? Berling possibly refers to the need to recognize the power imbalance between countries and between religions to start interreligious engagement. Hence, I believe that interreligious

¹ Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond Borders: Interreligious Learning Among Faith Communities* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2017), xvii. See also Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 4.

² Judith Berling, *Understanding Other Religious Worlds: A Guide for Interreligious Education* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), vii.

engagement/education must start with a recognition of the equality between all religions, as well as between all parts of the world, not only a tolerance of difference. Kwok Pui-Lan affirms this, stating that religious tolerance opens the gate for interaction but not for equality.³ Tolerance holds the superiority of one over another. Therefore, we should be more than just tolerant of one another in this multicultural world.

In accordance with this, Leonard Swidler asserts that one of the important principles or rules of dialogue is equality. He says, “dialogue can take place only between equals.”⁴ He then elaborates that in an authentic interreligious dialogue among religions, both partners must come mainly to learn from each other, which will happen only when they speak “equal with equal.” Consequently, any aspect of inequality caused by the presumed supremacy of one religion or one race over the other(s) should not characterize interreligious dialogue/education.

Arguing for the need to decolonize interfaith engagement, in her dissertation proposal, Teresa Crist states that “the status-quo position of Christianity in the West has led to an unexamined discourse of interfaith/interreligious interaction that promotes exclusion and surface-level engagement, impediments the ultimate aims of interfaith interaction.”⁵ In her description, she critiques the idea of “common ground” which has been the basis of the interreligious engagement and dialogue. Crist draws from the work of Paul Knitter, in which Knitter asserts that without serious attention to difference, common ground often results in imperialism.⁶ Emphasizing and normalizing similarities as the basis for conversation can be dangerous. Knitter states that “Christians embracing a pluralist model for dialogue can be transformed, usually unwittingly, into imperialist or manipulators not only in the way they talk about ‘the one God’ within all religions but also in the way they talk about the one dialogue that must occupy all religions.”⁷ Knitter then warns of the danger of becoming a dominant party amidst diversity; an imperialist instead of a pluralist in an effort to find common ground.

Behind the concept of common ground lies Christianity supremacy, the theology that gave birth to the ideology of white supremacy.⁸ Jeannine Hill Fletcher asserts that “Whiteness” and “Christianness” have become two pillars of the dominant religion. Looking back at the history, there was a time when conversion to Christianity made people appear to be more white. The Whiteness itself continues to reproduce in everyday narratives. Therefore, the narratives used as the starting places for interreligious engagement are often purported to be universal lexicons, ideas, and concepts, when, in fact, they are imposed by the dominant tradition. Consequently, general ideas and concepts in interreligious education, as well as similarities, related to the notion of common ground, need to be contested and questioned because they are often indebted to Christianity and dominant Western narratives.

³ Kwok Pui-lan, *Globalization, Gender and Peacebuilding: The Future of Interfaith Dialogue* (New York, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2014).

⁴ Leonard Swidler, “Death or Dialogue: From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Dialogue,” *Grand Valley Review* 6, no. 2, Article 16, (1990): 67, <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/gvr/vol6/iss2/16>

⁵ Teresa Crist, “Decolonizing Interfaith: A Qualitative Study Exploring the Operative Assumptions and Categories of Interfaith Interaction,” *Dissertation Proposal Presented to the Joint Doctoral Committee of the Iliff School of Theology and University of Denver*, <https://portfolio.du.edu/downloadChildItem/202567>

⁶ Paul Knitter, *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), 43-45.

⁷ Knitter, *One Earth*, 44.

⁸ See Jeannine Hill Fletcher, *the sin of white supremacy: Christianity, Racism, and Religious Diversity in America* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2017), 1.

Furthermore, it is essential to unpack concepts such as peace, reconciliation, and love, as they relate to interreligious education. Who determines the meaning of these terms? Whose narratives are used? How does the cultural foundation of Christianity in the West, in its position of power, influence interreligious education? How can interreligious education effectively address Christian supremacy and White normativity? To address this, I see the need to decolonize interreligious education by examining its underlying power structures, languages, narratives, and assumptions. This should be done with all aspects of interreligious curricula, implicit, explicit, and null. We need more than religious education in the American context; we need decolonizing interreligious education. Through this, Christian supremacy and White privilege will truly be challenged and questioned as they intersect with race, power dynamics, pluralism/diversity, and multi-religious narratives in the brave new third-space that is created.

For this paper, I will use postcolonialism as my lens, as it examines and questions dominant narratives of oppression. It addresses the notion of religion as a social construction and provides a third space for engagement. This space is a brave space for education where hybridity and inter-subjectivity are celebrated; where power relations and dynamics are acknowledged. It is a site of complex struggle and of meaning-making that allows both the educator and student to reimagine and re-conceptualize their identities as they deal with white normativity in all its forms.

The specific methodology that I will employ is a literature-based review and analysis. The first category of literature that I will consider focuses on is interreligious education and the second is related to white supremacy. The scholars whose work I will examine in relation to interreligious education are Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook, Diana L. Eck, Judith Berling, Paul Knitter, Najeewa Syeed-Miller, and Carl Sterkens. I will also examine the work of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and their project entitled *Peaceworks* that is presented in a report edited by David R. Smock. This will be the first part of my paper. The research of Jeannine Hill Fletcher, Robin DiAngelo, Tomoko Masuzawa, and others will be used in my effort to connect Christian supremacy and white privilege to interreligious education. Finally, after arguing for the importance of decolonizing interreligious education, I will highlight some of its practical implications.

B. Religious or Interreligious Education?

In the pluralistic context of America, where there is a rapidly growing level of religious diversity, interreligious education is necessary. Religious education should include an interreligious curriculum. In Carl Sterken's argument, there should be an interreligious model of religious education for a context where plurality is inescapable.⁹ Sterkens discusses the context of the primary education in the western society, where he further argues that religious education is a religious communication and, therefore, it needs an interreligious model. Based on his research, religious testimony remains possible in this interreligious model of religious education. Thus, instead of a monoreligious or multireligious model, it provides an interreligious model for the western society which is characterized by the increasing plurality of religions and world-views. For him, these three approaches relate to specific theological premises and focus on different goals. They are the products of a specific social context. Thus, to answer the needs of the current context of the plurality of the western society, the interreligious model is a perfect fit.

⁹ Carl Sterkens, *Interreligious Learning: The Problem of Interreligious Dialogue in Primary Education* (Leiden, Boston, Koln: Brill, 2001), 1, 3.

Hence, I argue that this model is not only relevant in the setting of primary education, but also in other settings, such as in a theological education and a faith community.

“God Beyond Borders” by Kujawa-Holbrook is based on a decade of research and argues for interreligious learning among faith communities in the United States.¹⁰ She describes how faith communities across America are looking for their specific ways to deal with plurality in the context of interreligious learning. Diana L. Eck’s “A New Religious America,” written sixteen years prior to the work of Kujawa-Holbrook, introduces America as the most religiously diverse nation in the entire world.¹¹ She comes to the conclusion that it is necessary to build bridges in the newly multi-religious nation of America. She acknowledges that encounters that happen among different religions are often full of fear, conflict, and tension, and, many times, ended in vandalism and violence. For Eck, rather than ignoring the plurality of America, the bridge should be built upon many differences. Yet, “the story of the new religious America is an unfinished story, with both national and global implications.”¹² This means that the struggle is still taking place to determine the identity of this nation anew in the midst of cultural and religious diversity. Therefore, interreligious engagement and education are critically important for the American context.

What is interreligious education? How do we understand it? There are not so many scholarly works that explicitly describes this enterprise. Thus, the term interreligious education may overlap with interreligious engagement, interreligious dialogue, and interreligious learning. These four terms, including interreligious education, have different emphasizes. For the purpose of this paper, while I understand that these terms are somewhat parallel and they overlap one another, I refer specifically to interreligious education. Here, education relates to or focuses on the intentional aspect of an interreligious learning or engagement.

In Berling’s effort to provide a guide for interreligious education from a Christian theological education perspective, she does not offer a working definition of an interreligious education. However, she recognizes that it relates to understanding other religious worlds. In accordance with this, John Borelli asserts that interreligious refers to the relations and outreach between and among members of different religious traditions.¹³ Here, interreligious education teaches the students to humbly recognize the failings of their own traditions so that they can begin to see the goodness that might be found in others.¹⁴ It also teaches the students to appreciate the goodness in their own traditions and to accept with love the failings of others. Gloria Durka contends that the term ‘inter’ in an interreligious approach means understanding one’s own religious position in relation to other religious possibilities.¹⁵ Hence, interreligious learning includes the interreligious dialogue tradition as well as additional approaches, especially in religious education.¹⁶ Therefore, interreligious approaches and religious education become inseparable.

¹⁰ Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond*, 1.

¹¹ Eck, *A New*, 1.

¹² Eck, *A New*, 335, 385.

¹³ John Borelli, “The Origins and Early Development of Interreligious Relations during the Century of the Church (1910-2010),” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 28, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 83.

¹⁴ H.A. Alexander, “Editorial Interreligious Education,” *Religious Education* 90, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 172.

¹⁵ Gloria Durka, “The Philosophical and Theoretical Aspects of Interreligious Education,” in Derek H. David and Elena Miroshnikova, *International Handbook of Interreligious Education* (Heidelberg, London, New York: Springer, 2010), 1.

¹⁶ Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond*, 6.

Interreligious learning/education is an interdisciplinary approach and an emerging discipline that answers the needs of a pluralistic society, argues Kujawa-Holbrook. She states that it aims to help participants acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to interact, understand, and communicate with persons from diverse religious traditions.¹⁷ Interreligious learning in an educational setting begins with stories and identifying shared values. It values cultural differences and religious pluralism amongst the learners. It also challenges discrimination and addresses intolerance and oppression. Interreligious learning values cultural differences and religious plurality. Kujawa-Holbrook further mentions that one of the important skills it requires is the ability to analyze the power and to open to structural equality, as well as to engage in the redistribution of power. Yet, what she missed in her argument is the issue of capitalism, which is very important in discussing education, including an interreligious education, in the present context of America.

Capitalism is an ideology that is present in or affects many aspects of life, including education. In a capitalist education system, profit or capital plays an important role. Here, students or learners become a commodity and education becomes a privilege. Sarah Knopp and Jeff Bale argue that the schools in America are designed to serve the needs of capitalism, that is, a system organized for the purpose of profit.¹⁸ They, therefore, suggest a change in action so that the students can be liberated. This is helpful, not only for education in general but also for interreligious education. This based on the opinion that capitalism affects education, as well as that it relates to religion and interreligious engagement.

In a report about the works done by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), there are seven case studies provided about the stories of religious communities and leaders all over the world joining together to resolve conflicts that are at least partially rooted in religion.¹⁹ It gave me the impression that the USIP has helped many nations in dealing with their particular religious conflicts. The case studies are about faith-based peacemaking, where intra-religious and interreligious dialogue is important. Furthermore, the cases demonstrate that, without credible local partners, no international actor, in this case, the USIP, has a chance of making much of a contribution to conflict resolution, and so local institutions should provide guidance on the most effective methodologies. Yet, who benefits from the conflict and who is responsible for the conflict in the first place? Furthermore, the funds allocated to facilitate these projects are huge. This leads to another important concern regarding the relationship between interreligious engagement and capitalism, as well as with imperialism of the West to the East. What lesson does this project offer to the effort of an interreligious engagement and education that is taking place in the multicultural context of America where privilege remains, discrimination happens, white supremacy exists, and white normativity rules? Is finding a common ground as the foundation of interreligious engagement effective enough to address these issues?

Common ground is surely something to pursue in interreligious engagement. However, often this pursuit is relevant only amongst the Abrahamic religions, where Muslim, Christian, and Jews look to Abraham as the father of the covenant between God and God's people, and as a

¹⁷ Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond*, 2.

¹⁸ Sarah Knopp and Jeff Bale, "A Defense of Public Education and Action Plan for Change," in Jeff Bale and Sarah Knopp (eds.), *Education and Capitalism: Struggles for Learning and Liberation* (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2012), 5.

¹⁹ Smock, David R. (ed.). *Religious Contributions to Peacemaking: When Religion Brings Peace, Not War*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2006.

friend of God.²⁰ Paul L. Heck claims that insight into the possible common ground between Christianity and Islam will provide direction for wider discussion. He further contends that religious pluralism that is focused on finding the common ground between the Abrahamic religions, primarily Christianity and Islam, will cause greater understanding. He missed acknowledging that it can also result in Christian supremacy. Here, Christianity through the search for common ground determines the category of religion in general, which is problematic. It reflects the superiority of Christianity over other religions and other faith traditions.

The idea of common ground as the basis of interreligious engagement may help to initiate conversation and dialogue, but without discerning differences, it will lead to imperialism. Crist contends that many interfaith or interreligious programs in the United States look for connection in similarity and ignore the differences.²¹ Often times, the similarity is produced by using the ideology of one world religion, primarily Protestant Christianity. Therefore, how can interreligious education effectively address this instance of white supremacy and its normativity? As I argue throughout this paper, it is through decolonizing interreligious education.

C. Interreligious Education and White Normativity

Any form of interreligious education that ignores the matters of capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism is a colonized form. When interreligious education exists within a superiority-based and colonial approach to the many social issues, especially discrimination, injustice, and violence, there is the need for decolonizing. People who believe and participate in an interreligious engagement or education must stand uncompromisingly against the empire, the capitalist system, and the white supremacy.

White supremacy and Christianity have long fed and supported one another. This had led to many things including discrimination of different others and violence. Sadly, there are still many people who do not believe in the existence and the influence of white supremacy and its normativity. I once shared my personal opinion regarding the close connection between Christianity and white supremacy in a classroom setting and one of my friends who is Caucasian felt offended. She said that white supremacy is not real and that it is dangerous to generalize and blame all white people. I was shocked and speechless but soon realized that not all people understand what white supremacy means and how its normativity has negatively influenced America as a nation, and the world. It has become a kind of norm that is invisible to some people. It manifests as “unconscious and invisible ideas and practices that make whiteness appear natural and light.”²² This classroom experience that I had parallels what Robin DiAngelo argued in her recent book “White Fragility,” noting how difficult and sensitive it is for white people to talk about racism.²³ The term white fragility itself is used to describe the disbelieving defensiveness and sensitivity that whites in North America reveal when their ideas about race and racism are contested. There are two sides to white fragility, which are “discomfort and anxiety” on one side, and the other is “superiority and entitlement.” White fragility is indeed

²⁰ Paul L. Heck, *Common Ground: Islam, Christianity, and Religious Pluralism* (Washington D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 1.

²¹ Crist, “Decolonizing Interfaith.”

²² J. Ward. “White normativity: The Cultural Dimensions of Whiteness in a Racially Diverse LGBT Organization,” *Sociological Perspectives*, 51, no. 3 (2008): 563-586, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1525/sop.2008.51.3.563>.

²³ Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2018), 2.

born of superiority and entitlement. According to DiAngelo, white people are the beneficiaries of separation and inequality arising from racial differences in America.

In accordance with this, Hill Fletcher makes the argument that “the stories of Christian tradition were mobilized for the self-love of White Supremacy and the destruction of non-white, non-Christian others.”²⁴ To her, America is a White Christian Nation and was built on the conviction that it was God’s special destiny for the white people to live there and curse every other race. She argues that “if Christians desire a world of racial justice and religious integrity, understanding the sin of supremacy and theology’s role within it is our only way forward.”²⁵ Christian supremacy and white supremacy share a close relationship and this has affected the present context of America.

In this project, education aims for conscientization and liberation is an essential tool. There is a need to undo and dismantle the whiteness and the Christianness in education. What I mean here is that we must employ interreligious education. Unfortunately, as is argued by Crist, interreligious engagement in America is characterized by Christianity, including its values and norms. It draws from a Christian perspective, and it produces a surface-level of engagement. In this regard, dialogue emphasizes finding the common ground, and therefore interreligious engagement is not effective enough to dismantle racism, discrimination, and oppression.

Therefore, in the American context, where the colonized interreligious education takes place, there is a need for decolonizing interreligious education. There are at least four rationales for it that I propose. First, decolonizing interreligious education is needed because the category of religion itself should be contested. What I refer here is the Protestant Christianity. Masuzawa asserts that the creation of religion as a category is built upon understandings of Christianity (Protestantism) as a religion. In this regard, the categories of religion have been determined by Euro-Christianity.²⁶ For Crist, who argued for decolonizing multiple religious belonging, this arises from deterritorialization and the “world religions” approach which distorts religion into the shape of Protestant Christianity. Additionally, indigenous traditions are often excluded from religion categorically.²⁷ As the concept of multiple religious belonging draws from colonial contexts and Protestant Christian paradigms, it ignores the displaced people and their identities. This makes the effort of religious pluralism finding the common ground based in Christianity (and Islam) doubtful. In “The Politics on Interreligious Education,” Najeeba Syeed Miller claims, “religion as the sole epistemic commitment for the basis of pluralism ignores the fractal genealogical patterns of lived religion.”²⁸ She contends for many other sources in the interreligious course as we live in an age of plurality of pluralisms. In decolonizing interreligious education, there is no single religion that will dominate the entire conversation and that will be the basis of pluralism.

Second, decolonizing interreligious education helps us to rethink the notion of the common ground in the American context. In this regard, this education should speak to its multicultural context and pay serious attention to differences, both religious and cultural.

²⁴ Hill Fletcher, *the sin*, 2.

²⁵ Hill Fletcher, *the sin*, 2.

²⁶ Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, Or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 315.

²⁷ Teresa Crist, “Discussing Displacement: Decolonizing Multiple Religious Belonging,” *The Journal of Interreligious Studies* 21 (October 2017): 13-22, 18, http://irstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Crist.Discussing-Displacement_Decolonizing-Multiple-Religious-Belonging.pdf.

²⁸ Najeeba Syeed Miller, “The Politics of Interreligious Education,” *American Academy of Religion (AAR) Spotlight of Theological Education* (March 2014), <https://www.aarweb.org/node/1877>

Everyone must have a voice (voices) and be equal to others. Differences are something to celebrate, not something to be ignored. There are many different ways to deal with pluralism other than finding a common ground between the Abrahamic religions, primarily using the languages and narratives of the Protestant Christianity.

Third, decolonized interreligious education addresses the native or Indigenous cultures that are rich but were degraded by the occupation of Europeans in America. Syeed-Miller stresses the importance of acknowledging Indigenous traditions.²⁹ She found out that there is a lack of discussion of many Indigenous traditions. By drawing from Linda Tuhiwai-Smith's work, she states that "it addresses the processes by which the academy has relentlessly marginalized the bodies, knowledges, and voices of indigenous communities."³⁰ For Syeed-Miller, it would be a pity to see interreligious education repeat these dynamics in its curriculum. I concur with her and therefore argue for decolonizing interreligious education that leads to an acknowledgment of Indigenous people, their cultures, traditions, and religions, or perhaps better, their spiritualities.

The fourth rationale that I propose here is that a decolonizing interreligious education would pay attention to the intersection of capitalism, globalism, patriarchy-hierarchy, politics, education, power, race, religion, and multi-religious narratives in the American context. This intersection will create a brave new third space. By decolonizing interreligious education in the American context, hybridity will be celebrated in the third space of engagement. Homi K. Bhabha coined the term "hybridity" as the third space of enunciation that is created in order to explain the positionality of the colonized individual.³¹ Here, culture has no fixity and even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, re-historicized, and read anew. Hybridity itself relates to the position of in-betweenness wherein it two cultures, or more, are intertwined with one another and are characterized by the ability to negotiate differences. The third space itself is the place where this negotiation takes place, where identity is constructed and reconstructed, where life in all its ambiguity is played out.³² Furthermore, decolonized interreligious education touches upon not only the linguistic aspect but also the extra-linguistic aspect of interreligious engagement. In so doing, it challenges white or the Euro-Christian normativity regarding the notion of dialogue that is elitist. This means that there are many other creative forms of interreligious engagement in addition to dialogue, that can be done in an educational setting.

D. Toward Decolonizing Interreligious Education

Kujawa-Holbrook drawing on Peggy McIntosh's "Christian privilege," describes that the privilege of the Christians in the United States relates to things that occur in everyday settings, such as listening to Christian music on the radio, watching a Christmas or Easter program on television, and so on.³³ Yet, it is also more than that. The Christian privilege that exists alongside and supports white privilege includes many other things from personal to the national level, from private to public space, from family to the society, from school rules to a nation's official motto, and more. This privilege causes ignorance, a high level of cultural superiority, a low level of religious literacy, and a secure comfort zone. The Christians, as a majority, are too much at ease and forget to learn, understand, and respect other religions. There is no true cultural humility in

²⁹ Syeed-Miller, "The Politics." See Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People* (London, New York, and Dunedin: Zed Books Ltd and University of Otago Press, 2004).

³⁰ Syeed-Miller, "The Politics."

³¹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London/New York: Routledge, 2004), 37-38.

³² Bhabha, *The Location*, 39.

³³ Kujawa-Holbrook, *God Beyond*, xxvii.

interaction with different others. That is why religious literacy, as claimed by Kujawa-Holbrook, is an aspect that needs to be worked on for interreligious learning. To this, I will add that cultural and religious humility are important values for Americans.

It is through decolonizing interreligious education that Christian supremacy, white privilege, and dominant narratives will be challenged at the intersection of education, politics, race, power, pluralism, and multi-religious narratives in a brave new third-space. In this regard, interreligious education does not start from the superiority of Christianity or other Abrahamic religions. It does not start from the superiority of the white race over other races or ethnicities. It does not start from the superiority of white people over the immigrants; realizing that the white at some point in the history of the great America were also immigrants who colonized the Native peoples. Interreligious education must acknowledge the history of colonialism, the shortcomings of the capitalist system, and the reality of discrimination and oppression experienced by all Americans.

For Crist, educational programs in a decolonizing interfaith/interreligious project, need to acknowledge and confront the varieties of multiple religious belonging that exist in order to nurture the spirituality of those with multiple belongings and to refrain from preserving the trauma of Christian supremacy.³⁴ This means that in order to decolonize interreligious education, the general/universal paradigms of religion must be contested, which one of the ways to do this is by using other sources on spirituality, not only those from Protestant Christianity. Peter C. Phan, who also discusses multiple religious belonging as something urgent and desirable for the present plural context, suggests that theological reflections on religious pluralism should use sources from spirituality traditions.³⁵ This includes multi-faith worship and prayer where sacred scriptures will be used together with prayer and rituals from other religious traditions. In decolonizing interreligious education, the narratives, languages or categories that are used should acknowledge whose voice is missing and left out, especially those from the lived religions other than Christianity.

Thus, in a third-space of interaction in an interreligious setting, where everyone is equal, the concepts of peace, reconciliation, love, and other universal or general terms will be unpacked. Syeed Miller argues that “it is imperative that we do not allow this “universal” lexicon to prevail.” She believes that there are historical, cultural, communal, and individual meanings of terms that are often proposed as conventional values or wisdom for all in interreligious learning, which should not be. By decolonizing interreligious education, important questions and concerns regarding who determines the meaning of concepts/terms, whose narratives are used, and whose voices are left behind will be always taken into consideration in a curriculum design. Thus, the educator or instructor also need to think about how hidden sources of knowledge and subjugated knowledge can be surfaced and acknowledged. How it would be ethically and creatively taught in interreligious education. This means the educator in interreligious education need to always consider other sources of learning and use them imaginatively and fairly, such as when engaging inter-spirituality. In relation to this, Syeed Miller claims that as we live in an age of a plurality of pluralisms and it is time to consider about the study of inter-spiritualities in addition to Diana L. Eck, Paul Knitter, Judith Berling, and so on. I agree with her. Decolonizing interreligious education is about acknowledging and using sources, as well as methods, other than the

³⁴ Crist, “Decolonizing.”

³⁵ Peter C. Phan, “Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church,” *Theological Studies* 64, no. 3 (2003): 518.

dominant ones. Borrowing Tuhiwai Smith's concept, it is about "decolonizing methodologies" that are used not only in research but also in teaching.

Moreover, it is about packing and unpacking, learning and unlearning. By decolonizing interreligious education, underlying power structures, languages, narratives, and assumptions are challenged. This third space in interreligious education is a brave space where hybridity and inter-subjectivity are celebrated; where power relations and dynamics are acknowledged. It is a site of complex struggle and of meaning-making that allows both educator and student to reimagine and re-conceptualize their identities as they deal with white normativity in all its forms. It is a space where everyone celebrates differences, where 'uncommon ground' can be used to initiate conversation in its many forms, not only in the linguistic form of dialogue.

Finally, what I present here is a preliminary work in discussing about decolonizing interreligious education. In an educational setting of interreligious engagement, there are many important questions still to address as part of decolonizing and resistance against the white normativity. Those questions include who will do the teaching, which qualifications for the educator will be needed, who is involved in the curriculum design, whose voices are left behind, where the teaching takes place, what creative means other than dialogue that can be used in teaching that promotes equality and liberation, what are the politics and structures of spiritual formation in our present hybrid contexts, how do we deal with white fragility, how do we deal with non-white discrimination, how do we deal with multiracial identities, and much more. Everyone who is involved in decolonizing interreligious education must think thoroughly about this and should be well prepared to address this prior to presenting a curriculum, either inside or outside of a classroom setting. The curriculum here, whether produced by theological schools or faith communities, must take seriously plurality in many forms. As plurality is inescapable everywhere, not only in America, and white normativity has influenced other parts of the world and has crossed the boundary of the west to the east, the efforts to decolonize interreligious education and contribute to equality and liberation, may be an important consideration for other contexts.

E. Selected Bibliography

- Alexander, H.A. "Editorial Interreligious Education," *Religious Education* 90, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 170-172.
- Berling, Judith. *Understanding Other Religious Worlds: A Guide for Interreligious Education*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004.
- Bhabha, Homi, K. *The Location of Culture*. London/New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Borelli, John. "The Origins and Early Development of Interreligious Relations during the Century of the Church (1910-2010)," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 28, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 81-105.
- Crist, Teresa. "Decolonizing Interfaith: A Qualitative Study Exploring the Operative Assumptions and Categories of Interfaith Interaction," *Dissertation Proposal Presented to the Joint Doctoral Committee of the Iliff School of Theology and University of Denver*. Accessed <https://portfolio.du.edu/downloadChildItem/202567>
- DiAngelo, Robin. *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2018.
- Durka, Gloria. "The Philosophical and Theoretical Aspects of Interreligious Education," in Davis, Derek H., and Elena Miroshnikova (eds.). *International Handbook of Interreligious Education*. Heidelberg, London, New York: Springer, 2010.

- Eck, Diana L. *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation*. New York: HarperCollins, 2001.
- Fletcher, Jeannine Hill. *the sin of white supremacy: Christianity, Racism, and Religious Diversity in America*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2017.
- Heck, Paul L. *Common Ground: Islam, Christianity, and Religious Pluralism*. Washington D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2009.
- Knitter, Paul. *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995.
- Knitter, Paul. *Introducing Theologies of Religions*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004.
- Knopp, Sarah, and Jeff Bale. "A Defense of Public Education and Action Plan for Change," in Jeff Bale and Sarah Knopp (eds.). *Education and Capitalism: Struggles for Learning and Liberation*. Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2012.
- Kujawa-Holbrook, Sheryl A. *God Beyond Borders: Interreligious Learning Among Faith Communities*. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2017.
- Kwok Pui-Lan. *Globalization, Gender and Peacebuilding: The Future of Interfaith Dialogue*. New York, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2014.
- Masuzawa, Tomoko. *The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Phan, Peter C. "Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church." *Theological Studies* 64, no. 3 (2003): 495–519.
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*. London, New York and Dunedin: Zed Books Ltd and University of Otago Press, 2004.
- Sterkens, Carl. *Interreligious Learning: The Problem of Interreligious Dialogue in Primary Education*. Leiden, Boston, Koln: Brill, 2001.
- Swidler, Leonard. "Death or Dialogue: From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Dialogue," *Grand Valley Review* 6, no. 2, Article 16 (1990).
<http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/gvr/vol6/iss2/16>
- Syed-Miller, Najeeba. "The Politics of Interreligious Education." *American Academy of Religion (AAR) Spotlight of Theological Education*. (March 2014).
<https://www.aarweb.org/node/1877>



Power, equality and difference in religious pedagogy: the underrated relation

Bernhard Grümme, Ruhr-Universität (Ruhr University) Bochum

I am beginning my lecture with an example from a schoolbook in North Rhine-Westphalia, a state in Germany where my university is. Sensitive to the mechanisms of gender-related constructions of a doing gender, they want to do justice to the individual children in their gender. Learning aids are differentiated according to gender, for example when girls are offered text exercises on pink paper and dictation exercises on blue paper with a pirate logo for boys. And the former North Rhine-Westphalian Minister of Education, Löhrmann, focused on the goal of “Learning together in diversity”, was heard in an interview as follows: “Girls tend to need an application-oriented approach, while many boys are fascinated by technology itself. In chemistry, for example, girls wanted to know above all: What do I need this for? If they know that this is interesting for cosmetics, for example, they have their own access.”¹ Do you think this is appropriate? Does this do justice to every single child? The exciting point is that a heterogeneity-capable pedagogy here wants to appreciate and acknowledge each child as itself. A heterogeneity-capable pedagogy wants to take the heterogeneity in the classroom seriously and develop a pedagogy of diversity. And yet a strange impression remains. Something is deeply problematic. Here one works with the imputation that there are natural distinctions between the sexes, which are then symbolically reinforced and normatively charged by the differentiated assignment of colors. This makes the indicated problem clear. In order to recognize individuals, to honor them, to bring justice to them, they must be identified beforehand. A real girl plays with pink dolls, a real boy is interested in technology. The interpretation of these examples may be considered hypersensitive, perhaps exaggerated or even ideologized. The mechanism in the background in dealing with heterogeneity, however, becomes blatantly visible when we play it out in the field of ethnicity, for example. In mathematics classes, Turkish children calculate with camels, Italian children with pizza. The typological stereotype becomes even clearer if we would say: “the children with a migrant background get the green worksheet, the bio-Germans the yellow one”.² So if we take this example to the extreme, the problem becomes clear: in the attempt to recognize people in their heterogeneity, recognition is also prevented. This happens behind the teachers' backs, so to

¹ Barbara Rendtorff, Heterogenität und Differenz. Über die Banalisierung von Begriffen und den Verlust ihrer Produktivität; in: Koller, Hans-Christoph et al. (eds.), Heterogenität. Zur Konjunktur eines pädagogischen Konzepts, Paderborn 2014, 115-130; here: 116.

² Ibid., 126.

speak. This brings into play a factor that is usually overlooked when it comes to school and teaching: power and the connection between power, equality and difference. This connection is surprisingly also found in religious education classes. This is surprising because it directly contradicts the fundamental ethos of religious education classes to do justice to every human being as a child of God and to help them to develop their possibilities. But the problem is that this happens if we do not examine our own practice, our thinking and behavior self-critically. If we do not clarify our attitude to heterogeneity self-critically, i.e. if we do not develop enlightened heterogeneity, then we remain blind to the mechanisms of power and devaluation, which is the theses defended in this lecture. In order to justify and explain this thesis, first the concept of power is to be analyzed in more detail using Foucault's theory of discourse (1) and then hegemonic power-related tendencies illustrated using the example of interreligious learning (2), in order finally to open up a further perspective with the category of enlightened heterogeneity (3).

1. Education as pastoral power

In view of far-reaching changes in cultural, economic and social self-understanding processes, the focus is increasingly on education. Understood by some as a “secularized religion,”³ others point out that educational processes as a whole “are anything but a power-free space.”⁴ For Michel Foucault, too, the question arises as to why, despite the empathetic promises of autonomy, subjectivization and maturity, these very promises are not fulfilled through education. Discourse-theoretically, he exposes the educational system: “In a society such as ours, education may de jure be an instrument that allows every individual access to every kind of discourse - but we know that in its distribution, in what it allows and in what prevents it, it follows the lines drawn by social differences, opposites and struggles. Every educational system is a political method to maintain or change the appropriation of discourses with their knowledge and power.”⁵ According to discourse theory, there is therefore an intrinsic connection between the power and education of subjects, since these are “the great procedures of subjugation of discourse.” What applies to the court system, the judicial system, psychiatry, even to the literary act of writing, which is generally

³ Konrad Paul Liessmann, *Bildung als Provokation*, Wien 2017, 36.

⁴ Ulrich Bröckling, *Gute Hirten führen sanft. Über Menschenregierungskünste*, Berlin 2017, 241.

⁵ Michel Foucault, *Schriften III*, Frankfurt a.M. 2003, 29f.

considered free and creative, applies not least to schools and universities: “What is actually a teaching system - if not a ritualization of the word, a qualification and fixation of roles for the speaking subjects, the formation of an at least diffuse doctrinal group, a distribution and appropriation of discourse with its power and knowledge.”⁶ Another example from school lessons can illustrate this:

Inclusive classes where disabled and non-disabled students, students with lower and higher performance learn together: The teacher distributes work tasks. In order to proceed in a student-oriented manner, the teachers distribute tasks and materials that have the same target but strongly differ in methods and levels. However, as a prerequisite for this, the children must first be identified in their cognitive level and their motivation to learn and then explicitly named, but at least in the distribution of the differentiated materials the cognitive level and the motivation to learn must be performatively named. In this way, however, derogatory distinctions are already made in the learning group and categories of power are applied. To better understand this, we turn to Michel Foucault's theory of discourse.

With regard to the linguistic-analytic reflections of confessional conversations, Foucault wants to expose such mechanisms in educational processes as subtle exercises of power. Their subtle power mechanisms consist in the fact that power-shaped structures of society assert themselves in such a way that the subjects believe they are free. Such leadership is “not based on coercion, but on a willingness to let oneself be guided”. It is based on the practice of what must seem paradoxical from the point of view of liberal self-determination: “voluntary bondage as the highest form of individual freedom.”⁷ In the subjects' search for autonomy, an asymmetry is reproduced that Foucault calls “pastoral power”.⁸ As the confessor together with the penitent, as the 'shepherd' together with the 'sheep' affirms the order of confession and spiritual guidance, so the power of discourse prevails. Accordingly, “education itself can be read as a social transformation through individual formation and thus as a specific form of 'leadership of guidances' (Foucault).”⁹ The inner connection between power and education is that education

⁶ Ibid., 30; cf. Bröckling, *Gute Hirten führen sanft* 2017, 15–73.

⁷ Bröckling, *Gute Hirten führen sanft* 2017, 22.

⁸ Cf. Michel Foucault, *Das Subjekt und die Macht*; in: Dreyfus, Hubert L. et al. (eds.), *Michel Foucault. Jenseits von Strukturalismus und Hermeneutik*, Frankfurt a. M. 1987, 243–261; cf. Hermann Steinkamp, *Lange Schatten der Pastoralmacht. Theologisch-kritische Rückfragen*, Münster 2015.

⁹ Norbert Ricken, *Die Ordnung der Bildung. Beiträge zu einer Genealogie der Bildung*, Wiesbaden 2006, 25; cf. Friedrich Schweitzer, *Interreligiöse Bildung. Religiöse Vielfalt als religionspädagogische Herausforderung und Chance*, Gütersloh 2014, 120–126.

ultimately cultivates self-control and thus introduces it to power contexts that are reproduced behind the backs of subjects. Education and power must therefore be thought critically together in order to be able to deconstruct this discourse power. “Thus, not only modern pedagogy in general, but especially the figure of 'education' can be understood as a central moment of secularized pastoral power, whose fertility and effectiveness lies precisely in making one's own forming access to the way of life of the people themselves unrecognizable in the rejection of foreign determination and repression and in passing it off as 'representative concern'.¹⁰

In the background is a discourse-theoretical concept of power. Michel Foucault's poststructuralism places theories and concepts in the context of practice and social distinctions. Fixed meanings, ontological attributions, non-historical, quasi natural essentializations, descriptions of essence are dissolved and ascribed to the power of discourses to determine meaning.¹¹ Every speech, every action, every thinking gains its significance in concrete hermeneutic conflicts, which are shaped by the dynamic and highly complex structure of knowledge and interest in the sign of social and cultural hegemony and political power. The microphysic type of power in Foucault's theory requires,¹² that every society controls and produces at the same time the discussion and also organizes and selects it by using procedures, which have the main task to control the dangers and power of discussion, to banish its incident type and bypass its materialism.¹³ That is why “speaking” is meant to be a relative and might-productive speaking.¹⁴ To discover, show up and counteract this social mechanics in an ideological way is what Foucault wants his concept of “discourse analysis” to do.

So the point of discourse analysis is discursive articulation. In this power critical analysis the question is how terms are embossed, which meanings are implemented, which mechanics of exclusion, inclusion and hierarchy are performed in discourse. In doing so the following aspect can be seen as axiomatic base: There is no in itself valid verity. There is nothing fixed. Verity is produced by a discourse, which is dominated by power structures.

¹⁰ Ricken, Die Ordnung der Bildung 2006, 212; cf. Norbert Ricken, Nicole, Balzer, (ed.), Judith Butler. Pädagogische Lektüren, Wiesbaden 2012.

¹¹ Markus Emmerich, Ulrike Hormel, Heterogenität – Diversity – Intersektionalität. Zur Logik sozialer Unterscheidungen in pädagogischen Semantiken der Differenz, Wiesbaden 2013, 107 and cf. 9-15. Detailed cf. Jürgen Budde, Die Rede von der Heterogenität in der Schulpädagogik. Diskursanalytische Perspektiven; in: Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung. Forum Qualitative Social Research 2 (2012).

¹² Ralf Konersmann, Die Unruhe der Welt, Frankfurt a.M. 2015, 236.

¹³ Cf. Foucault, Schriften III, 2003, 10f.

¹⁴ Nadine Rose, »Alle unterschiedlich!«. Heterogenität als neue Normalität; in: Koller, Hans-Christoph et al. (ed.), Heterogenität. Zur Konjunktur eines pädagogischen Konzepts, Paderborn 2014, 143.

This implies not only epistemological consequences, but although heavy implications in the theory of subjects. The characters are molded in an always precarious discourse of normative power, search for identity and discursive dispute.¹⁵ The relation of self and world stays in performative practices of its execution involved.¹⁶

This shapes the intersubjective process of constitution of world and self in a performative way. Concerning this, power is not just hetero-norm imposed. Power can only be wield on free individuals, but only, when they are really free.¹⁷ It works by getting affirmed and forms characters. „Diese Form der Macht gilt dem unmittelbaren Alltagsleben; sie teilt die Individuen in Kategorien ein, weist ihnen ihre Individualität zu, bindet sie an ihre Identität und erlegt ihnen das Gesetz einer Wahrheit auf, die sie in sich selbst und die anderen in ihnen anzuerkennen haben. Diese Machtform verwandelt die Individuen in Subjekte“. ¹⁸ (This type of power applies in everyday life; it separates characters in categories, gives them their individuality, builds their identity and gives them their variety, which they have to recognize in themselves and in others. This type of power creates individuals as subjective characters.)

So the subjective character is in a power led process of social discourse and performative practice of “subjectivation“ to be constituted. ¹⁹

2. Learning interreligiously as a hegemonic way of speaking?

Those observations, even though they seem to be abstract, have an enormous relevance in practical process for R.E. This is emphasized in the field of globalization and migration, which shows up how important interreligious learning is. This is meant to be illustrated in a few words. This emphasizes that categories of distinction are not sufficient. It also has to be dealt with inner relations of differences and questions of equality.

¹⁵ Cf. Foucault, Michel, *Die Ordnung des Diskurses*, Frankfurt a.M. 1991.

¹⁶ Cf. Kerstin Jergus, Jens Oliver Krüger, Sabrina Schenk, *Heterogenität – Zur Konjunkturreines pädagogischen Konzepts? Analysen der Kontingenz, Generativität und Performativität pädagogischer Artikulationen*; in: Koller, Hans-Christoph et al. (ed.), *Heterogenität. Zur Konjunktur eines pädagogischen Konzepts*, Paderborn 2014, 149-168; here: 154–164; cf. Heinrich Schmidinger, Michael Zichy, (Ed.), *Tod des Subjekts? Poststrukturalismus und christliches Denken*, Innsbruck 2005.

¹⁷ Michel Foucault, *Schriften IV*, Frankfurt a.M. 2005, 287; cf. Rainer Forst, *Normativität und Macht. Zur Analyse sozialer Rechtfertigungsordnungen*, Berlin 2015, 74–76.

¹⁸ Foucault, *Schriften IV* 2005, 275; Forst, *Normativität und Macht* 2015, 75.

¹⁹ Jürgen Budde, *Einleitung*; in: Jürgen Budde (ed.), *Unscharfe Einsätze. (Re-)Produktion von Heterogenität im schulischen Feld*, Wiesbaden 2013, 7-28, 13.

What is meant by ‘interreligious education’ is according to the German scholar Monika Tautz “mostly the rehearsal into a change of perspective which esteems the other, the rehearsal into a tolerance which perceives differences and respects them as such, the acquisition of knowledge about foreign religion(s), the maturation of one’s own faith in and through the encounter with the non-Christian religion(s) [...] whereby the ‘inter’ in terms of a ‘dialogical learning through encounter should take place as it were”.²⁰ Oriented on individuation and identity formation in a social context, such an interreligious education aims at, as Friedrich Schweitzer points out, an “ability to pluralism” which is aligned in an interreligious way.²¹

But there are some problematical aspects.

1.1 Intra-pluralism in interreligious learning

Interreligious learning assumes implicitly that not only religious individuals encounter each other within it, but individuals as members of religions. This assumes a religious homogeneity, and what might be termed representation-logic. Christians encounter Muslims and learn understanding, dialogue, recognition by experience-based and knowledge-based change of perspective. In doing so, a representation is presumed that is not given according to every socio-religious study. However, the studies clearly show that for most students in religious education classes, only a fractional identification with the Christian faith is given, which in itself is already highly plural. For a vast majority of adolescents, the Christian religion with its semantics has become a foreign religion, which they first and foremost experience from an external perspective.²²

1.2 Cultural, developmental and social heterogeneity

Can interreligious learning presume a similar culture of argumentation, of rationality and discourse from all participants? If, perhaps, Christian students which have been socialized in

²⁰ Monika Tautz, Welche Rolle spielt die Theologie im interreligiösen Lernen?; in: Stefan Altmeyer et al. (ed.), *Religiöse Bildung – Optionen, Diskurse, Ziele*, Stuttgart 2013, 279-288; here: 279.

²¹ Friedrich Schweitzer, *Interreligiöse Bildung* 2014, 133.

²² Burkard Porzelt, *Jugendliche Intensiverfahrungen. Qualitativ-empirischer Zugang und religionspädagogische Relevanz*, Graz 1999.

Catholic or Protestant religious education classes, enter into a dialogue with Muslim students, also divergent methods of dealings encounter the handling of religious traditions and Holy Scriptures: here, a learning culture that is coined rather by enlightenment, there a learning culture that is primarily oriented on the scripture text. Learning through encounter here insinuates a symmetry of discursive and action-theoretical premises, which does not plainly exist.²³

For interreligious learning, socioeconomic requirement's sensitivity and categorical consideration should be elementarily. Not only, that a justice-problem exists in denominational religious education classes anyhow, because discrimination's distinctly domestic and social conditions are relevant.²⁴ This would then carry weight for interreligious learning processes, if perhaps Muslim children from socially deprived migrant families would learn together with Catholic acolytes from established households.²⁵ Nevertheless, the issue becomes more meticulous and heterogeneous due to the interdependency of the individual factors. The sociology of education has proved the inconsideration among migrant status, discrimination and lacking educational commitment. Indeed, a correlation between success in school and migration is undeniable: the higher the degree, the lower the grade of students with a migrant background. However, while students with Turkish or Arabic migration contexts reveal rather inferior performances, it is reverse with students from Asia. Besides, the involvement in peer groups, as well as gender carry a significant weight.²⁶

This conflict situation indicates the interdependency and partially intensifying impact of the various dimensions of culture, religion, social status, gender, and thus shows the heterogeneity concept's validity for interreligious learning. Not considering this interdependency would lead interreligious learning to walk right into culturalism's trap, which locates interreligious learning within the field of culture and differences, but in doing so neglects the mechanisms and their intrinsic fixations. These already become apparent by the specific teaching structure of the teachers and their expectations and habitual attitudes. Undeniably, they contribute to discrimination and educational injustice due to their – thoroughly well-intentioned – attitudes,

²³ Cf. Claudia Gärtner, *Religionsunterricht – ein Auslaufmodell? Begründungen und Grundlagen religiöser Bildung in der Schule*, Paderborn 2015, 216f.

²⁴ Cf. Bernhard Grümme, *Bildungsgerechtigkeit. Eine religionspädagogische Herausforderung*, Stuttgart 2014.

²⁵ Cf. Gärtner, *Auslaufmodell* 2015, 216.

²⁶ Cf. Anna Brake, Peter Büchner, *Bildung und soziale Ungleichheit. Eine Einführung*, Stuttgart 2012, 50ff.

expectations and suppositions. If students with migrant backgrounds from socially deprived families are denied the recommendation for an academic high school (*Gymnasium*) despite good grades, because they are not given credit for the necessary domestic support, then this is an issue of “institutional discrimination”,²⁷ from which religious education classes, and thus also interreligious learning cannot be exonerated.

1.3 Essentialist attribution and didactic mechanisms of constructing

Such fixations and suppositions can for instance already be found in the expectations which are affiliated to the representation-logic. They manifest themselves there, where for instance Islamic children should bring in the Muslim prayer tradition into religious education classes. These common didactics require the attribution of religious practices (“Being a Muslim, you believe, after all...”).²⁸ A student is identified religiously from the group of his/her classmates and is removed from his/her peer group. Starkly, this denotes the heterogeneity-discourse’s dialectics which has already been worked out, and which, encouraging participation, acknowledgement, and individualization, has a disposition to attribution, to essentializing fixations, to reifications and thus to the development of stereotypes. Intentionally aimed at the acknowledgement of differences, this is produced at the same time. This logic, from which processes of acknowledgement express themselves as “misjudging acknowledgement”,²⁹ is discernible in interreligious learning. One phenomenon shall be singled out illustratively:

In an oppressive, as well as almost caricaturing way, this becomes manifest by way of example on the level of materials and schoolbooks, insofar as Judaism is for instance represented as a devout orthodox Judaism in schoolbooks, which is embodied by a Jewish boy who is wearing a kippah and dons the phylactery. Something that targets schoolbook pedagogical empathy for the peers which is appropriate to the student’s age, and that also targets a change of perspective, is, however, highly problematic on several levels: on the macro level, Judaism is perceived as a religion, which was able to evade the processes of diversification, individualization and

²⁷ Ibid., 113.

²⁸ Friedrich Schweitzer, Die Religion des interreligiösen Lernens. Neue Antinomien einer religionspädagogisch-wissenschaftstheoretischen Grundfrage; in: Stefan Altmeyer u.a. (ed.), Religiöse Bildung: Optionen – Diskurse – Ziele, Stuttgart 2013, 269-278; here: 276.

²⁹ Cf. Thomas Bedorf, Verkennende Anerkennung. Über Identität und Politik, Berlin 2010.

secularization in a very opaque way. On the micro level of Judaism itself, it is displayed as a coherent construct, without even mentioning Judaism's inner differentiations. Finally, on the micro level, it is suggested that a Jew is a devout, orthodox Jew, which is disregarded by the accelerating processes of Judaism's inner differentiation globally, as well as in Germany. In nuce, the logic of the misjudging acknowledgement becomes blatantly visible by this example. It seeks to motivate acknowledgement, but amounts to folklorization and stereotyping.

This analytic perspectives of discourse of interreligious learning emphasizes:

- a. The hermeneutical category of pluralization, which has dominated the field of interreligious learning, is not sufficient. So far it has been focused on cultural and religious differences. Questions of equality and recognition and the interdependence between difference and inequality have been ignored. Hermeneutics of pluralization used as a singular hermeneutic and analytic point of reference gives Religious Education a culturalistic drift, which makes it able to be sensitive for differences, but on the same way enables it to realize and reflect on inequalities, so it could avoid its own postulation of character orientation.
- b. On the same way failure of the margin proposition is shown. So interreligious didactic is fundamental important for recognition of otherness, change of perspective and dialogue. The other is not appreciated as the other, who gives new boost, who can irritate and enhance the faith. But the other is constructed by mechanics of experience and hermeneutics, which are mechanics of power. That is why Joachim Willms wants to guide the view of religious pedagogy "how – in everyday life, but also in offers of interreligious learning – categories of "interreligious reasonable" and religious different are created and categorizations are fulfill, which make the religious different to the religious different, contrary to the participants intentions and in this consequence, creating stereotypes and stigmatization.

There it has to be asked, how the other is **made** in different dimensions (gender, ethnic, social class)³⁰.

Concerning this, interreligious education misses is a self-reflective review of the discourse on its discourse immanent mechanics of identification, misjudging recognition, the exclusion, the

³⁰ Joachim Willems, Art.: Interreligiöse Kompetenz; in: Wirelex 2015.

power.³¹ This aspects are meant to recognize the otherness as a condition for respect, tolerance and dialogue.³² But this discourse immanent is often ignored.

3. Enlighted heterogeneity as a perspective for the sustainability of R.E.

With these few statements the following should be considerable: If religious pedagogy wants to fulfill its own postulations of orientation of character and education, it has to deal with a sophisticated discourse of legitimization and justification, which not at least has to reflect its own item concept. Religious pedagogy has to become sensitive for hegemonic leanings and phenomenons of power, which still are recognizable in itself, even when it introduces a normative and value donating tradition of a liberating god. In this way, religious pedagogy is asked in its fundamental theoretical principles.

When it is about learning conditions, when it is about structure and aim of religious learning processes and about the consideration of multinational conditions of religious educational procedures, when it is about inclusion, about interreligious learning, about religious pluralism and the decline of sex and gender in construction of god semantics, when it is about even these didactic and methodical designs of Religious Education and other fields of religious pedagogy or even school's pastoral work: the discourse of heterogeneity seems to be heavier than the meaning of pluralism for religious pedagogy and it's connectivity.

As a central criteria “Enlighted heterogeneity” can apply.³³ “Enlighted heterogeneity” postulates a critical reflexive reflection beside its contextual conditions and practical and theoretical connotation. It asks for influences of power on the own educational action, that is apparent, where the gospel is meant to be shown. This Enlighted heterogeneity is based on mechanics of the term construction and its self-reflection that has always to do with the power of discourse and obtain it on the normative personal goal statements and orientations of Christian tradition. Power and normativity are controlled. In this way, perspectives of justice and recognition, of cultural and religious difference and equality, of inequality and variety are critically are with regard to

³¹ Rita Burrichter, Umgang im Heterogenität im konfessorischen Religionsunterricht? Anmerkungen zu Optionen und Herausforderungen in einem schulischen Praxisfeld; in: Rita Burrichter et al. (eds.), *Komparative Theologie* 2015, 141-158; here: 155.

³² Summing Claudia Gärtner, Vom interreligiösen Lernen zu einer Lernort- und Altersspezifischen interreligiösen und interkulturellen Kompetenzorientierung. Einblicke in aktuelle Entwicklungen im Forschungsfeld „Interreligiöse Bildung“; in: PThl 35 (2015) 281–298; here: 290.

³³ Cf. Bernhard Grümme, *Heterogenität in der Religionspädagogik. Grundlagen und konkrete Bausteine*, Freiburg i.Br. 2017, 100-150.

each other. It is quite obvious that disabled children from wealthy families have other compensation measures and possibilities of support, as children from social and cultural contexts of discrimination. When there are types of learning preferred in inclusive R.E., that allow children to work with different methods on the same matter, students with larger resources have a better chance of participation.³⁴ A special representative office of disabled people with migration background can be shown by empirical survey.³⁵ The multiple differentiation and their dynamisation and interdependences of the differences and inequalities of disabilities and poverty, sex and migration can be related and discussed by Enlightened heterogeneity.

This Enlightened heterogeneity is sufficient self-reflexive, because of its drift of the including discourse to misjudging recognition to essentialization and exclusion. This does not relieve it of dialectics. Every lesson of Religious Education, every planning and reflection connects to this problem. The Enlightened heterogeneity qualifies, to resolve ideological critical and edit it in pedagogic and didactic. The often oppressive implications of some R.E. teachers can be analyzed in this way. Maybe the category of “Enlightened heterogeneity” can be a contribution to give it sustainability.

Bibliography

Bedorf, Thomas: *Verkennende Anerkennung. Über Identität und Politik*, Berlin 2010.

Brake, Anna/Büchner, Peter: *Bildung und soziale Ungleichheit. Eine Einführung*, Stuttgart 2012.

Bröckling, Ulrich: *Gute Hirten führen sanft. Über Menschenregierungskünste*, Berlin 2017.

Budde, Jürgen: *Die Rede von der Heterogenität in der Schulpädagogik. Diskursanalytische Perspektiven*; in: *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung. Forum Qualitative Social Research* 2 (2012).

Budde, Jürgen: *Einleitung*; in: Jürgen Budde (ed.), *Unscharfe Einsätze. (Re-)Produktion von Heterogenität im schulischen Feld*, Wiesbaden 2013.

Burrichter, Rita: *Umgang im Heterogenität im konfessorischen Religionsunterricht? Anmerkungen zu Optionen und Herausforderungen in einem schulischen Praxisfeld*; in: Rita Burrichter et al. (eds.), *Komparative Theologie* 2015, 141-158.

Emmerich, Markus/Hormel, Ulrike: *Heterogenität – Diversity – Intersektionalität. Zur Logik sozialer Unterscheidungen in pädagogischen Semantiken der Differenz*, Wiesbaden 2013.

³⁴ Kerstin Rabenstein, *Das Leitbild des selbständigen Schülers – revisited. Praktiken der Subjektivierung im individualisierenden Unterricht*; in: Rabenstein, Kerstin et al. (eds.), *Individualisierung schulischen Lernens, Mythos oder Königsweg?*, Seelze 2016, 47-63.

³⁵ Cf. Ingeborg Hedderich, *Migration*; in: Ingeborg Hedderich et al. (eds.), *Handbuch Inklusion und Sonderpädagogik*, Bad Heilbrunn 2016, 412-416.

- Forst, Rainer: Normativität und Macht. Zur Analyse sozialer Rechtfertigungsordnungen, Berlin 2015.
- Foucault, Michel: Das Subjekt und die Macht; in: Dreyfus, Hubert L. et al. (eds.), Michel Foucault. Jenseits von Strukturalismus und Hermeneutik, Frankfurt a. M. 1987, 243-261.
- Foucault, Michel: Die Ordnung des Diskurses, Frankfurt a.M. 1991.
- Foucault, Michel: Schriften III, Frankfurt a.M. 2003.
- Foucault, Michel: Schriften IV, Frankfurt a.M. 2005.
- Gärtner, Claudia: Religionsunterricht – ein Auslaufmodell? Begründungen und Grundlagen religiöser Bildung in der Schule, Paderborn 2015.
- Gärtner, Claudia: Vom interreligiösen Lernen zu einer Lernort- und Altersspezifischen interreligiösen und interkulturellen Kompetenzorientierung. Einblicke in aktuelle Entwicklungen im Forschungsfeld „Interreligiöse Bildung“; in: PThl 35 (2015) 281–298.
- Grümme, Bernhard: Bildungsgerechtigkeit. Eine religionspädagogische Herausforderung, Stuttgart 2014.
- Grümme, Bernhard: Heterogenität in der Religionspädagogik. Grundlagen und konkrete Bausteine, Freiburg i.Br. 2017.
- Hedderich, Ingeborg: Migration; in: Ingeborg Hedderich et al. (eds.), Handbuch Inklusion und Sonderpädagogik, Bad Heilbrunn 2016, 412-416.
- Jergus, Kerstin/Krüger, Jens Oliver/Schenk, Sabrina: Heterogenität – Zur Konjunktureines pädagogischen Konzepts? Analysen der Kontingenz, Generativität und Performativität pädagogischer Artikulationen; in: Koller, Hans-Christoph et al. (eds.), Heterogenität. Zur Konjunktur eines pädagogischen Konzepts, Paderborn 2014, 149-168.
- Konersmann, Ralf: Die Unruhe der Welt, Frankfurt a.M. 2015.
- Liessmann, Konrad Paul: Bildung als Provokation, Wien 2017.
- Porzelt, Burkard: Jugendliche Intensiverfahrungen. Qualitativ-empirischer Zugang und religionspädagogische Relevanz, Graz 1999.
- Rabenstein, Kerstin: Das Leitbild des selbständigen Schülers – revisited. Praktiken der Subjektivierung im individualisierenden Unterricht; in: Rabenstein, Kerstin et al. (eds.), Individualisierung schulischen Lernens, Mythos oder Königsweg?, Seelze 2016, 47– 63.
- Rendtorff, Barbara: Heterogenität und Differenz. Über die Banalisierung von Begriffen und den Verlust ihrer Produktivität; in: Koller, Hans-Christoph et al. (eds.), Heterogenität. Zur Konjunktur eines pädagogischen Konzepts, Paderborn 2014, 115-130.
- Ricken, Norbert: Die Ordnung der Bildung. Beiträge zu einer Genealogie der Bildung, Wiesbaden 2006.
- Ricken, Norbert/Balzer, Nicole (eds.): Judith Butler. Pädagogische Lektüren, Wiesbaden 2012.

- Rose, Nadine: »Alle unterschiedlich!«. Heterogenität als neue Normalität; in: Koller, Hans-Christoph et al. (eds.), Heterogenität. Zur Konjunktur eines pädagogischen Konzepts, Paderborn 2014.
- Schmidinger, Heinrich/Zichy, Michael (ed.): Tod des Subjekts? Poststrukturalismus und christliches Denken, Innsbruck 2005.
- Friedrich Schweitzer: Interreligiöse Bildung. Religiöse Vielfalt als religionspädagogische Herausforderung und Chance, Gütersloh 2014.
- Friedrich Schweitzer: Die Religion des interreligiösen Lernens. Neue Antinomien einer religionspädagogisch-wissenschaftstheoretischen Grundfrage; in: Stefan Altmeyer et al. (eds.), Religiöse Bildung: Optionen – Diskurse – Ziele, Stuttgart 2013, 269-278.
- Steinkamp, Hermann: Lange Schatten der Pastormacht. Theologisch-kritische Rückfragen, Münster 2015.
- Tautz, Monika: Welche Rolle spielt die Theologie im interreligiösen Lernen?; in: Stefan Altmeyer et al. (eds.), Religiöse Bildung – Optionen, Diskurse, Ziele, Stuttgart 2013, 279-288.
- Willems, Joachim: Art.: Interreligiöse Kompetenz; in: Wirelex 2015. 27. Aug 2018
<<https://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/wirelex/das-wissenschaftlich-religionspaedagogische-lexikon/lexikon/sachwort/anzeigen/details/interreligioese-kompetenz/ch/e6222d2e8dde52829a0da1c0778b0c7b/>>



Katherine Turpin

Iliff School of Theology

kturpin@iliff.edu

2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4

The Ambivalent Legacy of Practice in Faith Formational Literature

Abstract: This paper explores historical and ideological connections between the discourse of practice as a regularly-deployed metaphor for the work of Christian faith formation and the desire for the disciplined control of bodies enacted through colonizing forms of white Christianity. The appeal to practice in religious education and practical theology has relied heavily on a virtues discourse rooted in the philosophical work of Alisdair MacIntyre, and it often fails to account for the ways in which disciplined practice can transmit domination and oppression as easily as virtue and wisdom within the Christian tradition. After tracing the links between practice discourse and the potential maintenance of white normativity, this paper lifts alternative metaphors for the work of Christian faith formation imagined in recent works by Tran and Goto and seeks a more adequate ethic of interrogation of practice.

Introduction

This summer, I visited significant cultural sites of the Wind River Reservation in Riverton and Ft. Washakie, Wyoming. This reservation is a geographic neighbor to the retreat center that my spouse directs near Dubois, Wyoming. This retreat center sits on land that was sacred to the Sheepeater peoples, distant ancestors to some members of the Eastern Shoshone nation that inhabit Ft. Washakie. So this trip was part of a white Christian institution trying to be accountable to the intertwining of its heritage with the people from whom the land on which it is located was taken. The educator who helped interpret these sites, Fred Nichol, a member of the Shoshone nation, is the spouse of a member of the board of Trustees of the retreat center. As we visited St. Stephen's Mission (originally Jesuit) and the St. Stephen's Indian School on the grounds, Mr. Nichol talked about how he could speak some of the Shoshone language because of his own work on the reservation as a social worker and educator, but that he hadn't grown up with the language. His father had been forbidden to learn the language because of his grandmother's brutal treatment in Christian boarding schools when she spoke her mother tongue.

I have studied and taught about the legacy of Christian boarding schools and their participation in cultural genocide and the generational trauma that they created. What was startling to me, and shouldn't have been, was the immediacy of the experience to my friend. It was his grandmother who experienced the brutality of Christian education firsthand, and he and his father experienced directly the erasure of culture and generational wisdom that these schools had wrought. This is not historical trauma, it is present trauma, wrought by Christian practices of education, in the case of Wind River Reservation, sponsored by the Episcopal and Roman Catholic churches.

In Mr. Nichol's story, the need to deal adequately with the ambivalence of Christian religious practice as transmitting both wisdom and destruction came home to me once again. I had actually

written very briefly about the different ways that practice is understood in practical theology several years ago: “Whereas virtue-based analyses of practice tend to focus on their value as a site of formative wisdom in the norms and virtues of a social tradition, political analysis of practices also focus on the manner in which everyday practices may often unknowingly replicate or reproduce unequal distributions of resources, differential valuing of persons and experiences, and oppressive ‘common sense’ understandings of the world.”¹ The goal of this paper is to briefly trace these competing traditions of understanding “practice” in social science and philosophy and to advocate for an understanding of formational practice in white Western Christianity² that better takes our history of domination seriously. This philosophical reflection is an attempt to draw our attention to how the ways in which we talk about practice in the fields of religious education and practical theology may erase the history of and continued potential for domination in Christian practice. Primarily, my concern is that the ways we talk about practice in our field softens the legacy of embodied control and links to dominating power that can be related to practice, perhaps as a part of a broader apologetic function of the two fields to support the work of the church. This recognition of the ambiguity of practice is particularly important for dominant culture Christians, whose historical heritage of practice includes both oppressive and virtuous practice linked through the pedagogical and formational practices of the church in colonizing settings. How might one theorize and engage in Christian formational practice without a sense of confidence that it is entirely beneficent, thereby unlearning white pedagogical habits of dominance?

Practice and the Transmission of Virtue

The timing of the contemporary turn to practice in mainline U. S. Protestantism aligns with the desire to recapture the moral and cultural influence and vitality of the white church in a time of great demographic change and institutional decline. The discourse of practice in faith formational literature truly picked up steam in the late 1990’s and the first decade of the 21st century. While in educational and management literature the idea of “best practices” became a strategy for capturing easily replicable insights that could be scaled-up as a way of improving efficacy, in the world of religious education, spiritual formation, and practical theology, the “turn to practice” involved a shift in strategies of formation to improve the vitality of the (primarily white mainline and emergent) church through voluntary, embodied commitment to reclaimed and often recontextualized traditional practices of the church.

¹ Turpin, “Liberationist Practical Theology,” 157-58.

² The use of “white Western Christianity” throughout this paper is intentionally broad. I use this phrase to refer to the branches of Christianity that emerged in the modern era that are deeply informed by the practices of colonial expansion and conquest, the logic of white and Christian supremacy that emerged from the encounter with the peoples of the “new” world, and a struggle to convert, educate, and civilize the entire spectrum of peoples and cultures into its fold through a coordinated effort of embodied economic and cultural conquest. These inheritors would include all mainline and evangelical protestant and Catholic movements in the United States and their European forebears. I follow theologian and ethicist Jennifer Harvey in not capitalizing the word “white” to designate a noncritical form of racialized identity. While some movements within these churches have worked to understand the legacy of white supremacy birthed in their religious traditions, as a whole they have not reckoned with or embraced the undoing of this legacy, which often remains subterranean and therefore very powerful.

In the field of religious education, various approaches to faith formation have emerged as different theoretical conversation partners engaged scholars in the field. Developmental literature in psychology brought age-level developmentally appropriate standard curriculum to be delivered in the schooling model, anthropology brought a socialization model that involved rich participation in communities of faith, and hermeneutical theory and liberative pedagogy brought a shared praxis model. More recently a “revitalizing Christian practice” discourse as a model for faith formation emerged in conversation with neo-Aristotelian philosophies of practice. With generous funding from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., under the leadership of Craig Dykstra, and through collaborative scholarship organized by Dorothy Bass at the Valparaiso Institute, this understanding of Christianity as a way of life learned through intentional participation in historic practices of Christianity was articulated in several collaborative projects in practical theology and faith formation: Dorothy Bass, ed., *Practicing Our Faith*, Bass and Richter, eds. *Way to Live*, Bass and Dykstra, eds. *For Life Abundant*, and Volf and Bass, eds. *Practicing Theology*. Additionally, attention to practices was popularized and disseminated widely to historically mainline churches through the written work and speaking engagements of Diana Butler Bass³ and Brian McLaren.⁴ The idea of participating in intentional practice gained traction as a way of thinking about how people come to be more Christian in their lives in a time when the institutional church’s power to form faithful disciples through socialization was waning. As Gordon Mikoski and Kathleen Cahalan note, “Whether in more restricted (e.g., practices of hospitality) or more expansive notions of practice (e.g., the practice of discipleship), many practical theologians, in recent decades, have emphasized the importance of understanding and proposing specifically religious practices for individuals and communities.”⁵

There are many theories for why this turn to practice in faith formational literature. One element is surely as a corrective to the overly cognitive and doctrinal understandings of faith that were a legacy of white western Protestantism, sometimes articulated in terms of bridging the theory/practice divide or in recognizing the “wisdom” or “intelligence” of practice and the value of *phronesis*. Emerging attention to ritual studies, feminist and womanist theology’s attention to embodiment, and other theological movements created a sense that there was more to the experience of faith than cognitive assent to doctrines. The perhaps overdone embrace of modernity and rationality in many historically white Protestant denominations left a sense of emotional disconnect and a dissatisfaction with the lack of a sense of transcendence and connection with mystery. While their Jewish and Roman Catholic counterparts held a deeper notion of what it meant to be “observant” of the religious practices of their traditions, this had been lost in mainline Protestantism, which was perceived to be part of the loss of the vitality of these communities. A route to revitalization for the white mainline church and individual faith lives might be through “an intentional and reflexive engagement with Christian tradition as embodied within the practices of faith, with the goal of knowing God.”⁶

³ Since Diana Butler Bass and Dorothy Bass share a surname, I will refer to them respectively as Butler Bass and Bass throughout this article to maintain a distinction between them.

⁴ Particularly related to Butler Bass’s book *Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church is Transforming the Faith* and McLaren’s book *Finding Our Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Practices*.

⁵ Cahalan and Mikoski, “Introduction”, *Opening the Field*, 2.

⁶ Butler Bass, *Christianity for the Rest of Us*, 305.

The hopeful trajectory of attention to practice was represented by the very popular book in US mainline circles by Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity for the Rest of Us*, in which she did ethnographic research with mainline congregations that were bucking the trend of decline, often doing so through a renewed focus on practice: “All the congregations have found new vitality through an intentional and transformative engagement with Christian tradition as embodied in faith practices. Typically, they have rediscovered the riches of the Christian past and practice simple, but profound, things like discernment, hospitality, testimony, contemplation, and justice.”⁷ Butler Bass focuses on practices as “signposts to let us know that we are heading toward beauty, goodness, and truthfulness...the things they do together in community that form them in God’s love for the world.”⁸ She names several key features that allow practices to function in a time when the authority of the church was waning: “Practices require commitment (they are ‘high demand’), but that commitment is typically internally and subjectively driven and not external or authoritarian.”⁹ She notes that a focus on practice rather than doctrinal purity “...elevates the sense of intentionality throughout the congregation that leads to greater vitality and spiritual depth.”¹⁰

In the study, the congregations Butler Bass spoke with focused on their engagement with intentional practices framed in a largely positive way: “The practices that predominated discussion were: worship, hospitality, discernment, theological reflection, healing, forming diverse communities, testimony, and contemplative devotional disciplines.”¹¹ Like Pohl, she warns about naïve reclamation of history in the text: “Remixing the past by taking out the unpleasant bits is a dangerous thing” and expresses frustration with the evangelical version of America’s Christian identity as “ignoring the fact that American Christians committed wholesale evils like slavery, the genocide of native peoples, persecution of non-Protestants, racism, and violence against women and children.”¹² However, she does not connect her advocacy of practice with the idea that these historic evils might have themselves been perpetuated through intentional Christian practice.

Another issue of this moment in history was the loss of cultural dominance of white Protestants in the US context. This sense of loss comes through in Butler Bass’s chapter “The Vanished Village.” Whereas once the white Protestant churches had had a trifecta of formation through their control of the culture in home, church, and school¹³, the changes wrought by changes in immigration patterns, honoring of more diverse racial and religious groups, secularization in schools, and the deep cultural challenges of changing family structures to the historic “mainline” in the late 60’s and 70’s had begun to demonstrate the loss of cultural dominance to white Protestants. Authors in the 80’s and 90’s began to speak of post-Christendom, sometimes with

⁷ Butler Bass, *Christianity for the Rest of Us*, 7.

⁸ *ibid*, 11.

⁹ *ibid*, 306.

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² *ibid*, 31.

¹³ Foster, *Educating Congregations*, 37.

the hope that this change might loosen the ties between empire and church, but also with a clear sense of loss and concern for the need to double down on formation to stop the hemorrhaging of members in those Protestant communities. White Protestants could no longer assume that the vague cultural air was going to do the work of religious formation for them because they were losing their dominant position. And they began to take embodied practice seriously as a means of engaging that religious formation more effectively. This historical coincidence should raise questions about whether a desire to promote connection with God or a desire to regain cultural authority are the central motivating force of the turn to practice.

A primary philosophical understanding of religious practice draws on the neo-Aristotelian work of Alasdair MacIntyre, who understands practice as a communally-based, self-critiquing, transmitter of wisdom across generations. Don Richter claims, “The breakthrough book in this regard—that catalyzed rich conversation and a significant body of literature—was Alasdair MacIntyre’s *After Virtue*.¹⁴” Richter goes on to recount the definition of practice found in that work that has animated a great deal of research into Christian practices in the last two decades:

By a ‘practice’ I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which good internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.¹⁵

For many working with the idea of practice in the fields of religious education and practical theology, this particular quote is the primary piece that they take from MacIntyre, often linking it to his explanation with playing sports and chess, and walking through the various elements necessary to make a practice a good practice. In full disclosure, I was a part of this movement to think about intentional, embodied practice in community rather than doctrinal instruction or communal socialization as a key model for education. In fact, Richter quotes my first book as an example of intentional practice in religious community that runs counter to social norms, in the case of that book, those practices embodied in consumer culture.¹⁶ In a time when socialization into the Christian faith seemed less possible in church communities because of decreasing rates of participation, raising the notion of intentional spiritual practice steeped in the tradition became an attractive way of talking about faith formation and re-enlivening congregations in the face of deep formation into other value systems.

Part of this understanding of practice is that engaging in it shapes the character of persons, largely in virtuous ways, with the potential to allow for more depth of engagement with God. Particularly in the literature about theological education, there is much talk of the importance of forming a *habitus* as a part of doing practical theology. The version of *habitus* that it forms is perhaps most clearly articulated by Edward Farley, when he talks about “theology as *habitus*”—

¹⁴ Richter, “Religious Practices in Practical Theology,” 204.

¹⁵ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 187.

¹⁶ Turpin, *Branded*.

“...a disposition, power, and act of the soul itself. And some of the writers argued that the primary character of this disposition (habit) was wisdom. The genre of theology is, therefore, an existential, personal act and relation of the human self, namely, wisdom.¹⁷” In other places, Farley shorthands a definition of habitus as “a cognitively disposed posture that attends salvation, a knowledge of the self-disclosing God. As such, it is for the sake of God, but, specifically, for God’s appointed salvific end of the human being.¹⁸” Terry Veling uses a similar understanding of habitus, which he defines as “a disposition of the mind and heart from which our actions flow naturally, or, if you like, ‘according to the Spirit’ dwelling within us.”¹⁹ *Habitus* is a cultivated disposition of the heart and mind that attends to God’s presence habitually.

Richard Osmer points to key elements of MacIntyre that are attractive to those scholars who participate in what he calls “The Neo-Aristotelian Trajectory of Practical Theology”:

MacIntyre seeks to recover Aristotle’s theory of virtue and character, arguing that virtues are acquired through participation in the practices and moral vision of particular religious and moral communities. He is critical of modernity, for he believes it has eroded the capacity of such communities to shape the character of their members and fostered an individualistic, utilitarian moral outlook.²⁰

One can see how the shared frustration with MacIntyre over the erosion of communities capable of shaping the character of their members might resonate with leaders of white Western Christianity in a period where their churches are declining precipitously in membership and cultural prominence. The call for the renewal of communities of character is a key element of the work of virtue ethics, and this kind of thinking resonated with religious educators who recognized the role of formative communities in their own educational efforts.

The counter to this decline in the power of formative communities becomes imagined in terms of creating vibrant communities of practice that can shape *habitus* through serious engagement with religious practices, vibrant leaders through theological education focused on practices, and vibrant personal spirituality that leads to greater connection with God. For Dykstra, the formative power of practices ultimately rests in God’s beneficent action: “While human achievement is valued in the Christian story, it has a different place and meaning. The human task is not fundamentally mastery. It is the right use of gifts graciously bestowed by a loving God for the sake of the good that God intends—and *ultimately assures* (emphasis original).²¹” Dykstra places great confidence in the involvement of God in religious practice, arguing that a gracious and loving God ultimately assures the good that God intends in practice will come to fruition. He grounds this belief in a powerful Christian theological claim about the goodness of God. Dykstra

¹⁷ Farley, *Practicing Gospel*, 16.

¹⁸ *ibid*, 19.

¹⁹ Veling, *Practical Theology*, 16. Christopher Brittain humorously challenges the notion of the importance of habitus in theological education as expressed by the book *Educating Clergy* by asking “Can A Theology Student Be an Evil Genius?”

²⁰ Osmer, “Empirical Practical Theology,” 69.

²¹ Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith*, 76.

envisions this as a check on the tendency toward human mastery and control in practice, and an assurance that God's presence in the practice will put us on the right track.

My concern with framing religious practice in such an intentional and positive way, primarily as a source of virtue and connection with God that is backed up by the gracious intervention of God to ensure positive outcomes, is that this conceptually aligns the work of the white mainline churches as synonymous with religious practice that is grounded in the goodness of God. We are good people who offer good things that you should imitate. Christian practice has an ambivalent legacy. Scholars who have looked deeply into a particular historic practice in Christianity with the goal of reclaiming them for their positive formation of virtue, such as the practice of welcoming strangers as Christ described by Christine Pohl in her work on hospitality, discover this ambiguity of virtue and evil embedded within them. Pohl wisely indicates that we should be careful in how we talk about the "recovery" of practice: "A wholesale, indiscriminate recovery of any ancient practice is neither possible nor desirable. Certain aspects of the Christian tradition of hospitality are deeply disturbing. Only honest and serious attention to the failures, omissions, and tragedies in the story will allow us to make use of its strengths."²² These failures, omissions, and tragedies are evident in other religious practices, like institutional secrecy about clergy sexual abuse in order to protect the holy image of clerical authority, which clearly have a harmful legacy that we would hesitate to claim as God's gracious self-giving action made manifest.

The way that the virtues-based Christian practices discourse might deal with this concern about the ambivalent legacy of practice is to say that some practices occur in communal settings, linked to founding narratives, seeking standards of excellence, with an internally formed wisdom seeking salvation, and others do not. As Bass notes her and Dykstra's normative criteria for what makes a particular practice Christian, "It has seemed to us, therefore, that to be called 'Christian' a practice must pursue a good beyond itself, responding to and embodying the self-giving dynamics of God's own creating, redeeming, and sustaining grace."²³ But this distinction that some practices are wholly Christian and implicitly benevolent while others are not seems on shaky ground. The institutional practice of protecting clergy authority through moving abusive priests and pastors was a "coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity" that sought a good beyond itself in maintaining the capacity for people to view clerical leaders in their ritual roles as largely holy and not pedophilic, for the good of the community who would be led by those priests as a representative of Christ. However, we know that this practice, though maintained for decades, did not contribute to the good of community but rather caused great harm to the survivors and families of the abuse of religious leaders. Yet, I think that we can give evidence to the enduring and coordinated state of this behavior as a Christian religious practice.

To be fair, Bass, like Pohl, was aware that practices could go awry. She notes, "Because communities engage in these practices forever imperfectly—faltering, forgetting, even falling into gross distortions—theological discernment, repentance, and renewal are necessary

²² Pohl, *Making Room*, 9.

²³ Bass, "Ways of Life Abundant," 31.

dimensions of each practice and of the Christian life as a whole.²⁴ And she recognized that in trying to give accounts of various practices, “it is easy to idealize Christian practices and the way of life they comprise, making them seem more smooth and coherent than they actually are in the midst of everyday conditions.”²⁵ She nevertheless argues that embracing such practices “humbly yet boldly” is how people are helped to make decisions about “what to do next within the actual complexities of contemporary society.”²⁶ Even more strongly, Bass and Dykstra conclude the book with the following endorsement of practices: “Like faithful ministry and discipleship, practical theology pursues the telos of a life-giving way of life in awareness that the means employed in doing so—the practices of faith, including the arts of ministry—are not merely tools. Rather, they are both the goal and the path of the Christian life.”²⁷

Practice and Symbolic Violence

Another important set of theories of practice less commonly deployed in practical theology and religious education comes from social philosophers who also understand practice as socially-based, institutionalized forms of behavior that inform the construction of selves through the formation of habitus. However, these understandings of practice are more concerned with how practice reiterates domination across generations through the disciplining of bodies (as in the work of Michel Foucault), forming habitus that aligns with those with the most capital (as in the work of Pierre Bourdieu), and the demand that one performs an embodied identity recognizable within the norms of the community (as in the work of Judith Butler). For the purposes of this paper and to provide a strong contrast to the ideas of MacIntyre, I will focus on the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

Where MacIntyre conceptualizes practice as passing down virtue through socially organized behavior, Bourdieu conceptualizes practice as maintaining structures of domination and forming people to serve the values of dominant culture even against their own best interests, often without their noticing or questioning it. Bourdieu understood people as active agents deeply formed within a particular sector of the world, what he calls not communities of practice but “social space”, “field” or “fields of power.”²⁸ Individuals become “...endowed with a *practical sense*, that is, an acquired system of preferences, of principles of vision and division (what is usually called taste), and also a system of durable cognitive structures (which are essentially the product of the internalization of objective structures) and of schemes of action which orient the perception of the situation and the appropriate response. The habitus is this kind of practical sense for what is to be done in a given situation—what is called in sport a ‘feel’ for the

²⁴ Bass, “Ways of Life Abundant,” 29.

²⁵ *ibid*, 34.

²⁶ *ibid*.

²⁷ Bass and Dykstra, “In Anticipation,” in *For Life Abundant*, 358.

²⁸ Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*, 32-33.

game....²⁹” The habitus³⁰ works for people in the way other philosophies might talk about the conscience, but was what Bourdieu understood as a “...a socialized body, a structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world or of a particular sector of that world—a field—and which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world.”³¹

Bourdieu is deeply suspicious of the power relations in which practice is formed, and the way in which practice generally benefits those with more economic, social, political, or cultural capital, even referring to practice as “pedagogic violence” or “symbolic violence.”³² For Bourdieu, practice creates an internalized, embodied cooperation with those “...who possess a sufficient amount of one of the different kinds of capital to be in a position to dominate the corresponding field.”³³ He did not understand domination so much as direct physical coercion by those who are dominant. Rather, systemic violence occurred in a more structural and embedded way, “the indirect effect of a complex set of actions engendered within the network of intersecting constraints.”³⁴ The resulting effect of this socialization favors the cognitive, institutional, and economic structures of the more powerful by recruiting those with less power to see and understand the world through the lenses of the powerful through embodied practice, which serves to uphold the power of existing structures and institutions.

Bourdieu uses religious language to describe the dominant cultures that assert themselves through the logic of practice into the habitus of individuals. His word for the shared established order encoded in a person’s habitus is “doxa, an orthodoxy, a right, correct, dominant vision which has more often than not been imposed through struggles against competing visions.”³⁵ Bourdieu asserts that “cognitive structures are not forms of consciousness but *dispositions of the body*”³⁶ (emphasis original) that “belong to the order of *belief*” (emphasis original) that is neither conscious nor rational choice, “outside the channels of consciousness and calculation” as a form of “common sense.”³⁷

For Bourdieu, practice is linked with power, in particular the recruitment of bodies and selves into an orthodoxy that favors the values and aesthetics of the dominant group. In his reckoning, practice keeps nondominant bodies in line. Whereas within faith formational literature, religious practice is almost always cast as intentional, for Bourdieu, practice worked best when it did not draw attention to itself. The most powerful practices are those that we simply engage without conscious thought nor question. As religious educator Michael Warren interpreted him, “Much

²⁹ *ibid*, 25.

³⁰ Since many translations of Bourdieu do not italicize the word “habitus,” I am following that practice here. This also provides a convenient visual distinction between *habitus* in the virtues discourse of practice and habitus in the domination discourse of practice.

³¹ *ibid*, 81.

³² *ibid*, 121.

³³ *ibid*, 34.

³⁴ *ibid*

³⁵ *ibid*, 56.

³⁶ *ibid*, 54.

³⁷ *ibid*, 55.

of Bourdieu's social theory focuses, not on explicit norms guiding social behavior, but on the more subtle production of practices standing outside of rational calculation while entering deeply but unspokenly into behavior.³⁸ Warren also picked up on Bourdieu's "feel for the game" language, noting, "One does not think about the game reflexively; one just plays it."³⁹

While both Michael Warren and Joyce Mercer drew on Bourdieu as part of their explorations of formation, both stop short of describing the practice of religious communities using Bourdieu. They tend to use Bourdieu to describe the formative power of the broader cultural milieu in which an alternative Christian formation or practice occurs as a form of resistance. Michael Warren, for example, insists that any discussion of Christian practice has to be imagined within the already existing conditions of material existence, and that practice in the local congregation is at best contesting those conditions while working within them. Mercer, like Warren, sees Bourdieu as helpful to describe the formation that already exists through participation in consumer culture: "In short, this method will lead me to examine the larger 'habitus' in which belief and practice take shape—that wider social and cultural shape within which people experience and learn a way of life."⁴⁰

Accounting for the Ambivalent Nature of Christian Practice

In one sense, both understandings of practice contain common themes. They are drawing on similar Western traditions of formation, so that words like practice and habitus and a "feel for the game" are a part of both traditions of practice. As Bass describes practice, it could apply to either understanding of practice outlined above:

In spite of important differences among theories, certain features are common to many ways of understanding what a practice is, including our own. Practices are borne by social groups over time and are constantly negotiated in the midst of changing circumstances. As clusters of activities within which meaning and doing are inextricably interwoven, practices shape behavior while also fostering practice-specific knowledge, capacities, dispositions, and virtues. Those who participate in practices are formed in particular ways of thinking about and living in the world.⁴¹

However, one of the two understandings of practice asks pointed questions about whom the practice benefits, notices sleight of hand in misrecognition that hides these power relationships, and links the embedded, preconscious feel for the game to practices of domination. The other links practice with a goodness that points beyond itself, is assisted by God to form persons, and is intentionally engaged as the "goal and the path of Christian life." In religious education it is much more comfortable to talk about intentional formation of Christian habitus in communities of faith, but not so much about pedagogic violence, or the naked analysis of power, domination, and misrecognition that Bourdieu saw as intimately connected with the logic of practice,

³⁸ Warren, *At this Time, In this Place*, 107.

³⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁰ Mercer, *Welcoming Children*, 29.

⁴¹ Dorothy Bass, "Ways of Life Abundant" in *For Life Abundant*, 29.

particularly religious practice. I am going a step further to argue that primarily framing practice as transmitting virtue is a way of disregarding potential alignment between Christian practice and the violence of dominant culture, downplaying the possible evils transmitted through Christian practice in the name of revitalizing the church.

How does this happen, even with those within the field who use theorists such as Bourdieu to understand religious practice? Christian Scharen is one of a few people who uses Bourdieu in his attempt to “develop a theory of ritual as a social practice, rooted in the habitus produced in communities of character and practice.”⁴² He is initially attentive to the ways in which practice is linked to categories of socially significant distinction: “Immediately one sees that Bourdieu is trying to describe the way in which particular social space—one’s social class, nationality, religious identity, gender, whatever—becomes to some extent merged with one’s embodied existence. Those social distinctions, those things that make one what one is and not another, Bourdieu describes as ‘bodily knowledge.’”⁴³ Scharen is focused on how Bourdieu understands the body as a primary site of learning, citing Bourdieu to note the “...most serious social injunctions are addressed not to the intellect but to the body, treated as a ‘memory pad.’”⁴⁴ (). I find it interesting that Bourdieu is talking about injunctions and enforcement, but in Scharen this language gets shifted to “apprenticeship in the community of practice,” more common to the virtues ethics discourse of Stanley Hauerwas. As Scharen notes, the language of “community of practice” is not used in Bourdieu. Scharen softens the language of Bourdieu, a theorist whose primary metaphor for education is “pedagogic violence,” and who thought that education served to maintain power across generations that served the dominant group. We might ask ourselves what it means to change this understanding of formation to “apprenticeship within a community of practice” erasing the bold analysis of power and the warnings about violence that are a part of Bourdieu’s understanding of habitus? Why do we avoid the parts of this understanding of practice that speak of the issues of control and the exercise of power that are a part of constructing habitus through embodied practice?

Bourdieu perhaps would call this the classic euphemistic language of the church, a kind of collective misrecognition that is required to maintain itself. In the field of practical theology, which intentionally understands itself in some cases as existing to build up the church, this misrecognition of the power involved in determining embodied practice may serve as a kind of habitual apologetic for the work of the church as always and entirely benevolent, linked to the goodness of God and different from other forms of practice in economic or political realms. Indeed, Bass and Dykstra talk about practical theology’s “special responsibility” to educate and form ministers: “The special responsibility of practical theology for teaching and research on the arts of ministry including preaching, pastoral care, Christian education, worship, evangelism, and leadership) imbue this field with a crucial role in a theological school’s service to church and

⁴² Scharen, *Public Worship and Public Work*, 65. Others who use Bourdieu quite well in the field of practical theology include Mary McClintock Fulkerson in *Places of Redemption* and Elaine Graham in *Transforming Practice*.

⁴³ Scharen, *Public Worship and Public Work*, 60.

⁴⁴ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 141, cited in Scharen, *Public Worship and Public Work*, 61.

society.⁴⁵ I have become suspicious of this “special function” of the field given the ways that the practice of the church has contributed to domination, particularly in the field of education. The softening of language, the focus on how religious practice contributes to the passing on of virtue rather than its ambivalent role in sharing wisdom and maintaining domination rests in this sense that our field’s job is to build up the church and not tear it down. Subtly, that critique of the potential violence and search for control in the church is passed off to non-white religious communities, to those who critique the church on the basis of gender or sexuality, to religious studies scholars, or to secular critics of the church. Practical theology implicitly aligns itself with maintaining the power of the church. For the purposes of this conference, I wonder if maintaining the virtue discourse of practice without attention to the domination and control of bodies through embedded knowledge and pre-rational consideration that is also a part of religious practice may align the discourse of religious practice with white normativity, even white supremacy.

One direction I thought about going with this paper was to suggest that the field abandon the idea of practice for a while. I turned to some wise colleagues in the field who are using different metaphors entirely to frame religious education. For example, Courtney Goto has taken up the metaphor of play as a primary metaphor for understanding religious education as a way to facilitate “revelatory experiencing.”⁴⁶ In focusing on play, she draws attention to the aesthetic and improvisational dimensions of “leaning into God’s new creation,” focusing on “local” and “contextually sensitive” conditions that are “conducive to revelatory experiencing” rather than passing down the wisdom of the tradition.⁴⁷ This metaphor seems highly promising in terms of pointing away from embodied formation as maintaining control that is a part of the metaphor of practice.

Mai-Ahn Le Tran explores an entirely different set of metaphors in her recent book, *Reset the Heart*. One is contained in the subtitle: “unlearning violence and relearning hope.” It seems to me that unlearning violence is so central to the work of white Western Christianity at this point in time that we should be listening deeply to her work, particularly its critique about the erasure of memory, organized forgetting, and a habitus of *disimagination*.⁴⁸ Her metaphors of educability, redeemability, and communicability offer a new language for thinking about formation.

But, in the spirit of unlearning violence that is central to Tran’s work, I think that one of the things that is a part of my work is re-thinking practice and the way that it is not a neutral metaphor for the work of formation. It does not automatically create connection to God or enliven the church, even when it is deeply steeped in the Christian tradition. As a human practice that draws upon the mixed human experiences of being created in the image of God and being sinners who have fallen far short from that glory, we can never form a *habitus* that is only focused on salvation and not in danger of seeking to maintain our own power. Practice, even

⁴⁵ Bass and Dykstra, “Introduction” to *For Life Abundant*, 7.

⁴⁶ Goto, *Grace of Playing*, 5.

⁴⁷ Goto, *Grace of Playing*, 13.

⁴⁸ Tran, *Reset the Heart*, 57.

Christian religious practice, can also be a form of symbolic violence that recruits those who are dominated by a system to perceive the world through the lenses of the most powerful. Maybe especially Christian practice. As a White Western Christian, one who takes the legacy of my people's participation in dominating forms of Christian practice seriously, I think taking a good hard look at the ambivalent nature of the practices that I advocate for, how they participate in domination and supremacist forms of seeing the world, and trying to unlearn those habitual forms of practice is critical, even when inviting others into the practice of faith. To insist on the virtue of Christian practice when historically retrieved carefully in the name of enlivening the church puts white dominant Christians in a potentially dangerous place where we are replicating a kind of good/bad binary with ourselves in the position of the good and others in need of replicating that good for the sake of God. This understanding flirts with a kind of reliance on purity as a sign of goodness...that we can't engage in things that are tainted, because our own supremacist logic relies on others recognizing our purity to maintain authority.

Why would we give ourselves to practice at all if we hold it ambivalently? Ambivalence about our own certainty, the value of a practice, and humility about human wisdom is also a longstanding value of the Christian tradition. The demand for practice to be effective, to scale up, to save the church and stop the hemorrhaging of members is more of the capitalist side of "best practices," and some of the literature on practice tends towards that conclusion, at least in its popular usage. Instead, we must enter practice with the sure knowledge that we may be learning dominance as well as virtue: "Recovering a rich and life-giving practice requires attention to good stories, wise mentors, and hard questions."⁴⁹ Hard questions that include whether or not this historic form of the church that has participated through its practices in cultural genocide, the alienation of humans from their given habitat, justification for slavery and the oppression of women and sexual minorities, creating a culture with great economic disparity, is something our scholarly efforts should be serving to maintain or enliven.

Conceiving practice as primarily a way of transmitting virtue backed by God's action on our side pairs too well with the legacy of white supremacy and colonialism that is a part of white Western Christianity. The reality of embodied practice is that it is ambiguous or ambivalent, serving dominant cultural interests within the church as well as potentially creating a way of life that brings us closer to God. As Elaine Graham notes, transforming practice allows for the transformation of doxa⁵⁰, but we always engage practice with the awareness that we might be transmitting domination as well as virtue with it, despite strong theological claims to the contrary in the discourse of practice.

⁴⁹ Pohl, *Making Room*, 14.

⁵⁰ Graham, *Transforming Practice*, 99.

Works Cited

- Bass, Dorothy C. and Craig Dykstra, eds. *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008.
- Bass, Dorothy C. "Ways of Life Abundant" in *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry*, Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra, eds. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008. pp. 21-40.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Brittain, Christopher Craig. "Can a Theology Student Be an Evil Genius?: On the Concept of Habitus in Theological Education." *Toronto Journal of Theology*, 2009, 141–54.
- Butler Bass, Diana. *Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church is Transforming the Faith*. Harper San Francisco, 2006.
- Cahalan, Kathleen A. and Gordon S. Mikoski, eds. *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.
- Farley, Edward. *Practicing Gospel: Unconventional Thoughts on the Church's Ministry*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003.
- Foster, Charles R. *Educating Congregations: The Future of Christian Education*. Nashville, Abingdon, 1994.
- Fulkerson, Mary McClintock. *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Goto, Courtney. *The Grace of Playing: Pedagogies for Leaning into God's New Creation*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016.
- Graham, Elaine. *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty*. London: Mowbray, 1996.
- Harvey, Jennifer. *Raising White Kids: Bringing Up Children in a Racially Unjust America*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2018.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue*. Third Edition. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.
- McLaren, Brian. *Finding Our Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Practices*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008.
- Mercer, Joyce Ann. *Welcoming Children: A Practical Theology of Childhood*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2005.

- Osmer, Richard. "Empirical Practical Theology." In *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, eds. Kathleen Cahalan and Gordon Mikoski. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014. pp. 61-78.
- Pohl, Christine. *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999.
- Richter, Don. "Religious Practices in Practical Theology." In *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, eds. Kathleen Cahalan and Gordon Mikoski. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014. pp. 203-216.
- Scharen, Christian. *Public Worship and Public Work: Character and Commitment in Local Congregational Life*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004.
- Tran, Mai-Anh Le. *Reset the Heart: Unlearning Violence, Relearning Hope*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017.
- Turpin, Katherine. *Branded: Adolescents Converting from Consumer Faith*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2006.
- Turpin, Katherine. "Liberationist Practical Theology." In *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, eds. Kathleen Cahalan and Gordon Mikoski. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014. pp. 153-168.
- Veling, Terry A. *Practical Theology: On Earth as It Is In Heaven*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005.
- Volf, Miroslav and Dorothy C. Bass, eds. *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002.



Tracey Lamont, Ph.D.
Loyola Institute for Ministry,
Loyola University, New Orleans
Sponsored by Loyola's Committee for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
tlamont@loyno.edu
2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4

Safe Spaces or Brave Spaces? Reflections on Practical Theology and Transformative Learning Theories

Abstract

Introduction

In the spring of 2018, two of my graduate students in the Loyola Institute for Ministry (LIM) discussed with me an incident that took place in their class on spirituality, morality, and ethics. Their professor described the reading assignments for the next class on the topic of racism in the United States and offered a definition of racism as prejudice towards people of another race. One student, who is familiar with research on racism and white privilege, raised her hand and offered a correction of the professor's definition, noting that racism includes prejudice and the systems of power that benefit from social and political inequality. Her definition generated a heated outburst by several white students who argued that racism no longer exists in the United States adding that they were deeply insulted and angered at the implication that they might be racist.

Robin DiAngelo recounts a strikingly similar situation, noting the anger that erupted when she and her colleague led a presentation on the topic of race in the workplace. DiAngelo describes these emotional outbursts as examples of "White Fragility," whereby "even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation."¹ The students who came to discuss the incident with me were shocked and upset to find their classmates hold these beliefs so vehemently and with such intensity, that they did not practice the skills of adult communication they learned at LIM, and that they would be graduating from a ministry program believing institutional racism and white privilege did not exist.

This caused me to think deeply about how my own curriculum design might implicitly and explicitly reinforce White normativity and White fragility. Is my curriculum, which includes LIM's method of practical theology and transformative learning theories, perpetuating institutional forms of racism and White normativity?

This study asks, by teaching students to engage in dialogue through transformative learning practices that include creating safe spaces, are we furthering white normativity, protecting White Fragility and; thus, advancing rather than dismantling racism with our students in graduate programs in ministry and education?

Methodology

This paper presents a conceptual analysis of transformative/critical learning theories and adult learning and development in higher education along with multicultural and anti-racism

¹ Robin DiAngelo, "White Fragility," *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 3 no. 3 (2011): 54

pedagogies to explore how LIM's method of practical theology can address White normativity and White fragility by creating brave classroom spaces. The paper concludes by offering practical suggestions to encourage religious educators to understand and embrace the challenges of navigating White fragility in graduate programs in ministry and religious education to ground their curriculum in the context of Creation and extend their pedagogies from classroom to encourage students to work to dismantle racism in their communities.

The method of practical theology begins by observing and describing peoples' lives, their everyday lived experiences, then asks: what is going on, in what contexts do these observations emerge, what are my assumptions about this concern, and why might this be happening? According to Fleischer, "rootedness in a praxis mode of questioning and acting presents religious educators with a way forward for relevantly connecting contemporary life experiences with the full breadth of Christian vision, wisdom, and experience."² This proposal examines the LIM method of practical theological reflection for its capacity to support an anti-racist pedagogy that addresses White fragility and White normativity in graduate programs in ministry.

The LIM Method of Theological Reflection

The Loyola Institute for Ministry offers their Master's degrees (MPS and MRE) and certificate programs in three formats, LIM on campus, LIM online, and through an extension program, or LIMEX (now LIMFLEX). The LIM faculty developed a method of practical theology for ministry professionals and religious educators to engage in more intentionally and theologically on their experiences in ministry. Barbara Fleischer, emerita faculty member and co-author of the LIM method, describes this unique model and method of theological reflection, stating:

Since its inception in 1983, the Loyola Institute for Ministry Extension Program (LIMEX) has relied on an experientially based method of theological reflection grounded in the works of David Tracy and Bernard Lonergan. The LIMEX program asks students to reflect on their ministerial praxis contextually (Bevans 1994) and to view their work as an interplay of influences, including their interpretations of the Christian tradition and the sociocultural, personal, and institutional contexts of their ministry.³

Students explore these four ministry contexts within the wider meta-context of all God's Creation, as manifested through the natural world and the universe, "as the context that makes possible all subsequent contexts."⁴ A Creation-centered spirituality and method of reflection enables students to transcend the limits of human knowing, to open themselves up to learn from Creation by listening for God's voice in the diversity of the natural world. Elizabeth Johnson, a prolific writer not only in feminist theology but also on creation theology, at her presidential address to the Catholic Theological Society of America, chose to discuss the issues surrounding ecology and cosmology. She affirms the centrality of the natural world, stating:

² Barbara Fleischer, "A Theological Method for Adult Education Rooted in the Works of Tracy and Lonergan," *Religious Education*, 95, no. 1(2000): 24.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Kathleen O'Gorman, "The Cosmological and ecological contexts of ministry," *Introduction to Practical Theology*. eds. Fleischer, et al. (The Loyola Institute for Ministry, Loyola University New Orleans 2016), 212.

Through greed, self-interest and injustice, human beings are violently bringing disfigurement and death to this living, evolving planet which ultimately comes from the creative hands of God...social injustice has an ecological face... [that we cannot] just think through a new theology of creation, but that cosmology be a framework within which all theological topics be rethought.⁵

The natural world reveals a deep interconnectivity between diverse species. Attentive listening to the rhythm of God's Creation provides a framework from which students can explore their ministerial concerns, including issues of race, privilege, normativity, and social justice. Students are first introduced to LIM's method of theological reflection rooted in Creation, through the LIM course and course book, *Introduction to Practical Theology*, and this method is embedded throughout our program.

LIM, like many graduate programs in ministry and religious education, draws from a variety of best practices in adult learning and education. Transformative learning theories such as, Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, Jack Mezirow's transformation theory, and Patricia Cranton's self-directed learning models, provide ways for religious educators to engage students in critical conversations that require students to become more aware of their tacitly held assumptions and come to a new understanding about their beliefs and actions in the world. Transformative learning theories encourage educators to create safe, respectful, and trusting spaces in the classroom so students feel comfortable articulating, examining, and critically reflecting on their initial assumptions in dialogue with their classmates.⁶

The LIM course book, *Introduction to Practical Theology*, devotes a chapter to adult learning and communication skills.⁷ This chapter helps students learn and practice the art of facilitating and promoting healthy group conversations as informed by Paulo Freire. Incorporating insights from Freire's critical theory helps students examine the dominant structures of power and oppression in society to work for justice. Critical theory comes to life as method of teaching, or critical pedagogy, in the classroom. Christine Sleeter notes several key features of critical pedagogy as they relate to diversity and multicultural education, including "voice, power, culture, and ideology."⁸ Sleeter notes that "the concepts of voice and dialogue act as tools for uncovering whose ideas are represented and whose ideas have been submerged, marginalized, or left out entirely."⁹ In Catholic ministry and religious education programs, critical pedagogy can be used as a teaching method that encourages students to analyze Catholic social teaching,; for example, and the preferential option for the poor.

⁵ Elizabeth A. Johnson, "The cosmos: astonishing image of God" *Origins* 26, no 13 (September 12, 1996): 206.

⁶ See Nicholas Burbules and Suzanne Rice.. "'Dialogue across differences: Continuing the conversation.'" *Harvard Educational Review* 61, no. 4(1991), Jack Mezirow, "Learning to think like an adult," in *Learning as transformation critical perspective on a theory in progress*, ed J. Mezirow and Associates, (San Francisco, CA Jossey-Bass, 2000), and Michael Cowen, "Sacred Game of Conversation" *The Furrow*, 44 (1993).

⁷ Fleischer et al., 82-86

⁸ Christine Sleeter, "Critical Pedagogy, Critical Race Theory and antiracist Education" ed. Christine E. Sleeter, *Power Teaching, and Teacher Education: Confronting Injustice with Critical Research and Action*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 114-141, 118.

⁹ Ibid.

In LIM, understanding and enhancing student's capacity for dialogue is an important characteristic of healthy communication. "Dialogue," for Freire, "becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence. It would be a contradiction in terms if dialogue - loving, humble and full of faith — did not produce this climate of mutual trust, which leads the dialoguers into ever closer partnership in the naming of the world."¹⁰ Fleischer describes several skills to help facilitate the trust needed for true dialogue and ways to avoid misunderstanding and conflict by teaching them the value of using "I" statements, concreteness, appropriate self-disclosure, gatekeeping, and inviting more information. Barriers to healthy communication include "poor self-concept", or low self-esteem, "Elitism/Prejudice," defined as putting one's own perspective ahead of others, "fear of the stranger," or avoiding those who think differently than we do, "denial/self-deception," when we close ourselves off to experiences we might not want to face, or are hidden from us, and "refusal of responsibility," being responsible for our choices (Fleischer 2016, 80). These practices strive to ensure our learning communities, both online and face-to-face advocate safe spaces.

Embedded in the LIM Curriculum are holistic definitions of dialogue, discussion, and conversation that help students see the deeper meaning to their communication with their onsite or online learning group, those in their ministry context, and others in their lives. Other LIMEX/LIM course books, such as *Pastoral Leadership and Organization*, describe for students the practice of conversation which involves distinguishing between dialogue and discussion. Discussion is defined as talking with someone in a way that affirms or debates another's argument. "Dialogue," according to Fleischer and Grant, "is the slower, deeper running form of conversation that unveils hidden assumptions, evokes discovery and insight, and grafts collaborative relationships based on common awareness and understanding of purpose."¹¹ It is from this premise that learning groups are encouraged to take the risks involved in changing our worldview and be open to a new horizon of meaning, or a "conversion."¹²

It is common for faculty, when mediating a communication issue between students online or face-to-face, to reference these skills and the learning agreement students agree to which outlines these procedures. We remind students of the overarching context of Creation that requires us to listen deeply to voices we are not attuned to, the voices of the natural world that are marginalized and ignored for human gain, to find God in *all* things, and extend this to one another in challenging conversations, no matter the circumstance. By practicing the skills of adult communication described above, students are better prepared to create a trusting atmosphere of deep listening and genuine conversations towards conversion.

Democratic Dialogue in a Learning Community

Stephen Brookfield and Stephen Preskill, scholars in adult learning theory, provide an alternative interpretation of discussion useful to adult learning communities. While noting the distinctions between the meaning of discussion, dialogue, and conversation put forth by scholars like Lipman, Burbules, Dillon, Rorty and Oakeshott, Brookfield argues that discussion can include both concepts of dialogue and conversation. For Brookfield, the term discussion is used

¹⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1970): 77.

¹¹ Barbara Fleischer and Daniel Gast, *Pastoral Leadership and Organization* (Loyola Institute for Ministry, Loyola University, New Orleans, 2013): 130

¹² Ibid., 131. See also Michael Cowan and Bernard Lee, *Conversation, Risk & Conversion: The Inner and Public Life of Small Christian Communities* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

“to explore the theory and practice of group talk...[which] incorporates reciprocity and movement, exchange and inquiry, cooperation and collaboration, formality and informality.”¹³ He situates his understanding all three terms, discussion, dialogue, and conversation in the context of “critical discussion” which encourages people to examine how “different linguistic, cultural, and philosophical traditions can silence voices...to understand how [these traditions] have kept entire groups out of the conversation. For the sake of this paper, Brookfield’s understanding of discussion will be used synonymously with Fleisher, Freire, and Cowan’s understanding of dialogue.

Brookfield moves his analysis of discussion further by warning educators, to be attuned to the dynamics of “engaged pluralism” when using discussion as a the means to create a more democratic method of communication with adult learners.”¹⁴ Engaged pluralism, according to Bernstein, “demands an openness to what is different and other, a willingness to risk one’s pre-judgements, seeking for common ground without any guarantee that it will be found.”¹⁵ Fleischer and Cowen¹⁶ affirm a similar understanding, noting when students are authentically engaged in conversation, they risk putting their own worldview and assumptions at risk.

The Limits of Critical Theory and Transformative Learning

There are several interrelated limits and assumptions in the literature on critical theory for anti-racist pedagogy. First, Freire’s original theory focused largely on class rather than race. Second, there are underlying assumptions to the necessity of ensuring students feel safe and secure in the learning environment. Third, there is a strong the emphasis on cognition for transformation almost to the expense of emotion. Fourth, there are fundamental assumptions about dialogue/discussion that may be barriers to dismantling racism in classroom learning. Finally, the post-structuralist or antimodern critiques of critical theory, while important to our analysis of critical theory, fail to transcend beyond the human community, thus limiting LIM’s program from framing anti-racism in the meta-context of Creation. This section discusses critiques of critical theory, Mezirow’s transformative learning theory, and adult learning as a way of exploring how LIM’s method of theological reflection can be more intentional in dismantling racism.

Classism in Critical Theory

Freire’s developed his critical pedagogy in the sociocultural context of Latin America in a way that does not transfer easily to the United States. Sleeter describes these limits of critical theory on multicultural education, noting that teachers working in traditional or modern institutional schools struggle to put into practice a critical pedagogy that often “directly opens up very difficult and painful issues in the classroom.”¹⁷ Critical pedagogy does ask the teacher to explore his or her own ideology, but it does not, according to Sleeter, “directly address race, ethnicity, or gender and as such has a White bias.”¹⁸ In this way, religious educators may fail to

¹³ Stephen Brookfield and Stephen Preskill, *Discussion as a way of Teaching*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 6.

¹⁴ Ibid., 18.

¹⁵ Quoted with Richard Bernstein, in Brookfield and Preskill, *Discussion*, 18.

¹⁶ Michael Cowen, “Sacred Game of Conversation” *The Furrow*, 44 (1993).

¹⁷ Sleeter, “Critical Pedagogy, Critical Race Theory,” 122.

¹⁸ Ibid., 122.

explore the power dynamics among students in the classroom learning environment apart from the teacher/student power dynamic.

Sharon Welch, in her discussion of a postmodern model of diversity training, also shifts Friere's focus on power dynamics from the external to the internal; that is, she, like Sleeter, highlights the power imbalance between students, not just between students and oppressors in society. She takes this discussion further, stating when "acknowledging the power held by one's own group" the dominant group can leverage that power on behalf of social justice.¹⁹ Both Sleeter and Welch's critiques help religious educators reconceptualize Freire's critical pedagogy to explore not only classism, but White privilege, White bias and asymmetrical relationships among learners.

Safe Spaces?

Theories about teaching and learning in multicultural education and anti-racist pedagogies suggest that by creating safe spaces in the classroom religious educators diminish the capacity for students and teachers to adequately address White normativity, White privilege, and White fragility. I attended a workshop sponsored by Loyola's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion this fall led by anti-racist activist Tim Wise. I asked him about the ability to create safe spaces to foster transformative learning in adult student, and he replied, "Black and Brown folks never feel safe." Explaining what, at first listen, might sound like a broad generalization, Tim writes "this country is never safe for people of color. Its schools are not safe; its streets are not safe; its places of employment are not safe; its health care system is not safe. So why in the hell should white people feel that we have a right to something—in this case, safety—that people of color have never had?"²⁰

Brian Arao and Krisiti Clemens, in their article "From safe spaces to brave spaces," provide us with case study to help unpack Wise's claim. The authors describe how their experience creating a 90-minute workshop on diversity and social justice propelled them to explore the reality of safe spaces. For the workshop, they implemented a visual activity called "One Step Forward, One Step Backwards"²¹ as a way of "illustrat[ing] the phenomena of social stratification and injustice and how participants' own lives are thereby affected."²² The activity produced a series of negative emotions in some participants from both the dominant group and the nondominant group, including feelings of guilt, blame, anger, indignation, and shame.

One limit of this case study is whether the participants' responses in a workshop are consistent with the type of safe space created through critical pedagogy with a classroom learning group. The case study does show; however, that the negative emotions in and of themselves, experienced by members of both the dominant and nondominant group, made each group feel unsafe. The authors argue that, given the research on transformative learning and the "ground rules" needed to create a safe space in a classroom, they still "question the degree to

¹⁹ Sharon D Welch, *Sweet dreams in America: making ethics and spirituality work*. (New York: Routledge, 1999): 115

²⁰ Tim Wise, "No such place as safe." (July 24, 2004). Date accessed September 10, 2018, retrieved from <https://zcomm.org/zcommentary/no-such-place-as-safe-by-tim-wise/>

²¹ This activity has several names, including "The Privilege Walk," or "Leveling the Playing field" To understand this activity, see <https://edge.psu.edu/workshops/mc/power/privilegewalk.shtml> or <http://www.culturalbridgestojustice.org/resources/written/level-playing-field>

²² Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens "From safe spaces to brave spaces," *The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections from Social Justice Educators* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2013): 136, 137.

which safety is an appropriate or reasonable expectation of any honest dialogue about social justice”²³ They argue, with Wise, that by expecting racialized people to conform to a safe space, white people are forcing them to restrict their emotions and fears to conform to the dominant group. This “is the ultimate expression of white privilege.”²⁴

Mezirow’s also theory assumes the participants in a learning environment have reached a certain level of emotional maturity capable of transformation. He states, with Goleman “effective participation in discourse and transformative learning requires emotional maturity – awareness, empathy and control...major social competencies include...self-regulation [which] includes self-control and trustworthiness (maintaining standards of honesty and integrity).”²⁵ Belenky and Stanton critique this pre-condition for discourse noting how it automatically excludes “the immature and the marginalized;” groups who, the authors believe, are capable of entering into discourse communities.²⁶ What is more, committing to practice self-control and keeping one’s integrity is a formative task when discussing power and privilege in racially diverse classrooms. Belenky and Stanton similarly argue that Mezirow’s argument on the prerequisite necessity of emotional intelligence for transformation, “presumes relations of equality among participants in reflective discourse when, in actuality, most human relationships are asymmetrical.”²⁷

Evans and Shearer argue that safe spaces do not enable the type of “principled dislocation”²⁸ necessary for students to understand the realities of White fragility and the “white gaze” that prevents white people from seeing “white identity status” which inevitably makes “white power invisible but not impotent.”²⁹ The authors describe how “White fragility distorts student perspectives on racial subjects... compris[ing] what Frantz Fanon calls the ‘white gaze.’”³⁰ The “white gaze” often occurs when white students base their criticism and anger over learning about race-based topics on the race of the teacher rather than on Whiteness.³¹ To move beyond the white gaze and white fragility, students need to be encouraged, almost pushed to explore their privilege, to grow more inclusive of racial diversity. To move students beyond white fragility towards critical reflection on race and privilege in the United States, what Carol Dweck calls a “growth mindset,” Evans and Shearer, with Deck, argue:

educators must intentionally identify moments of challenge as those with great potential to produce the outcomes desired by teacher and student (Dweck 2013). Providing students opportunities to practice grit in the classroom presents a substantial pedagogical challenge to the popular classroom strategy of ‘safe space.’ What if educators who teach

²³ Arao and Clemens “From safe spaces,” 139.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Jack Mezirow, “Learning to think like an adult,” in *Learning as transformation critical perspective on a theory in progress*, ed. J. Mezirow and Associates, (San Francisco, CA Jossey-Bass, 2000): 11. See also Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1998).

²⁶ Mary Field Belenky and Anne V. Stanton, “Inequality, development, and connected knowing,” in *Learning as transformation critical perspective on a theory in progress*, ed J. Mezirow and Associates, (San Francisco, CA Jossey-Bass, 2000): 74.

²⁷ Belenky and Stanton, “Inequality,” 73.

²⁸ David Evans and Tobin Miller Shearer, “A Principled Pedagogy for Religious Education,” *Religious Education*, 112, no. 1(2017): 12.

²⁹ Ibid., 10.

³⁰ Ibid., 10. See also Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, (New York: Grove Press, 2008).

³⁰ Diangelo, “White Fragility,” 55.

³¹ Evans and Shearer, “A Principled Pedagogy,” 10. The term “Whiteness” will be explained below.

race by emphasizing safety undermine, rather than enhance, their students capability to learn about racial dynamics and gain the tools to challenge racism?³²

The role of Emotion in Critical Theory

Robin DiAngelo describes how the systemic power dynamics of White privilege creates a type of emotional barrier that protects White people from the tension or stress that emerges over the topic of race. Not only are White people less exposed to issues related to race, when, for example, attending a multicultural workshop, DiAngelo argues they typically use “racially coded language such as ‘urban,’ ‘inner city,’ and ‘disadvantaged’ but to rarely use ‘white’ or ‘over-advantaged,’ or ‘privileged.’”³³ This behavior stems from the concept of “Whiteness” or, as defined by Sensoy and DiAngelo, “the specific dimension of racism that elevates White people of over all peoples of color. Basic rights, resources, and experiences that are assumed to be shared by all, are actually only available to White people.”³⁴

When the language of race, racism, privilege, white normativity do enter the discussion, many White people respond emotionally with angry outbursts, guilt, and indignation, or even leaving the discussion all together.³⁵ This “White fragility,” according to DiAngelo, manifests for several reasons, including but not limited to:

Suggesting that a white person’s viewpoint comes from a racialized frame of reference (challenge to objectivity); People of color talking directly about their racial perspectives (challenge to white racial codes); A fellow white not providing agreement with one’s interpretations (challenge to white solidarity); [and] An acknowledgment that access is unequal between racial groups (challenge to meritocracy)³⁶

These were some of the triggers that brought about White Fragility, noted above, in one LIM class last spring.

Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning focuses largely on the cognition of participants more so than role of emotion. Edward Taylor, in his analysis of transformative learning theory, notes how critical reflection often receives more scholarly attention than affective learning.³⁷ He goes on to state:

it is our very emotions and feelings that not only provide the impetus for us to critically reflect, but often provide the gist of which to reflect deeply....Research should begin focusing on particular feelings, such as anger, fear, shame, happiness, and the like, and explore how they individually inform the reflective process.”³⁸

Critical and transformative learning theories, in their overemphasis on cognition, fail to prepare educators and students for the type of emotional reactions, or White fragility, that can emerge over race-related topics in learning groups. This begs the question, by creating safe spaces, are

³² Evans and Shearer, “A Principled Pedagogy,” 11.

³³ DiAngelo, “White Fragility,” 55.

³⁴ Özlem Sensoy and Robin DiAngelo, *Is everyone really equal*, 2nd ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2017):142, and DiAngelo, “White Fragility,” 56.

³⁵ DiAngelo, “White Fragility,” 55.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

³⁷ Edward Taylor, “Analyzing Research on Transformative Learning Theory,” in *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. Ed. by Jack Mezirow and Associates, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 2000): 305.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

religious educators inhibiting the self-actualization needed to confront white normativity and expose white fragility?

The Limits of Dialogue

Dialogue and dialogical teaching, for Freire, Fleischer et al., and Brookfield, are ways to create a democratic, trusting space that welcomes, encourages, and listens to all voices. Nicholas Burbules, in tracing the history of dialogue from Plato through contemporary theory, explores the limits of Freire's understanding of dialogue through critical theorists such as Alison Jones and Elizabeth Ellsworth. For Jones, similar to Belenkey and Stanton, the assumption that dialogue brings equal parties into conversation ignores the asymmetrical relationships between dominant and nondominant groups, often in favor of the dominant group.³⁹ "Dialogue, according to Jones, "and recognition of difference turn out to be access for dominant groups to the thoughts, cultures, lives of others." This will lead members of the nondominant group to "remain silent" in these spaces of dialogue.⁴⁰

Brookfield likewise explores Elizabeth Ellsworth's post-structuralist critique of critical pedagogy and engaged pluralism by examining the relationship between historically marginalized voices, power, and dialogue in the classroom. Based on her experience as a student engaging in classroom dialogue centered on critical pedagogy, Ellsworth states:

Acting as if our classroom were a safe space in which democratic dialogue was possible and happening did not make it so. If we were to respond to our context and the social identities of the people in our classroom in ways that did not reproduce the oppressive formations we were trying to work against, we needed classroom practices that confronted the power dynamics inside and outside our classroom that made democratic dialogue impossible."⁴¹

Barbara Fears and Sharon Welch affirm that safe spaces will not be free from conflict and may not enable people to learn to work with conflict. Fears discusses how religious educators can draw from "other critical/emancipatory/engaged pedagogies that encourage student autonomy, agency and authority" based on the Underground Railroad.⁴² Fears, with Harris, believes instructors can encourage students to "feel comfortable...examining, questioning analyzing, assessing evaluating, disagreeing, even challenging the hegemonic powers that be"⁴³ Often safe spaces reinforce comfort rather than safety. It is noteworthy that feeling comfortable and feeling safe are not interchangeable emotions or reactions.

³⁹ Nicholas Burbules, "Dialogue," *Encyclopedia of Educational Theory and Philosophy*, no.1, (2014): 229.

⁴⁰ Qtd in Burbules, "Dialogue," 229.

⁴¹ Elizabeth Ellsworth, "Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy." In *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, eds. Carmen Luke, Jennifer Gore (New York: Routledge, 2013): 107

⁴² Barbara Fears, "Freedom Train: The Underground Railroad as a Model of Christian Education, Antiracism, and Human Rights Advocacy, *Religious Education*, 112 no. 1 (2017): 20

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 25.

Welch also states that when we claim a classroom or workshop is a “safe space” we are suppressing disagreement that can emerge from difference.”⁴⁴ She instructs her participants that there will be painful and difficult moments, but these teaching moments mirror and learn from rather than hide from “the external world of injustice and mistrust.”⁴⁵

Limits on Transcendence

Discussions about race often default into binary thinking such as oppressor/oppressed, male/female, privileged/nonprivileged, human/nonhuman and white/black, and as such, minimize the reality that people live among dynamic intersections of social, cultural, and spiritual realities. Belenky and Stanton highlight this awareness in their critique of Mezirow’s transformative learning theory. They state:

We argue that people also find it difficult to think about asymmetrical relationships because the issue gets mired a dualistic thinking, that is, the persistent tendency of human beings to divide their experience into dichotomies or nonoverlapping categories of polar opposites”⁴⁶

This binary thinking imposes an unnatural way of categorizing human relationships in a dualistic way that ignores the interconnectedness of the natural world and our human relationships to the world. It prevents people from seeing any value in the experience of the nondominant opposite, such as female, oppressed, nonprivileged, black, or nonhuman. What is more, it prevents us from fully listening to the voice of God in all who are marginalized.

Similarly, Welch’s research on multicultural education warns that critical or emancipatory pedagogies that focus on binary thinking; such as, oppressor/oppressed are too limiting in postmodern education. Welch’s model of multicultural education explores these dualistic categories to “see the capacity for justice among ‘oppressors,’ the capacity for injustice among the ‘oppressed.’”⁴⁷ In this way, religious educators and ministers can learn to leverage White privilege and power to dismantle racism to, as Welch notes, “challenge other whites as individuals...to change structures, to put in place power relations that are more equitable.”⁴⁸

The research from DiAngelo, Evans, and Shearer argue that White privilege and White fragility prevent when unnoticed and ignored over time, do not enable White students to practice the skills necessary, “or grit,” to handle the emotions that emerge from race-based discussions. “Whites, according to DiAngelo, “are often at a loss for how to respond in constructive ways. Whites have not had to build the cognitive or affective skills or develop the stamina that would allow for constructive engagement across racial divides.”⁴⁹

Reconstructing Brave Spaces and Transformative Learning

⁴⁴ Welch, *Sweet Dreams*. 83-85.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 107

⁴⁶ Belenky and Stanton “Inequality,” 75.

⁴⁷ Welch, *Sweet Dreams*, 117.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 115.

⁴⁹ DiAngelo, “White Fragility,” 57.

Arao and Clemens argue that we do not have to eliminate safe spaces, rather equators can transform them to become “brave spaces.” Even the act of telling students this will be a “brave space” sets some ground rules that this is not a space where “anything goes,” rather there are ground rules in place when engaging in race-related conversations.⁵⁰ LIM’s adult communication skills still serve as a method for engaging in respectful dialogue, but by turning the space from one of safety to one of bravery, encourages students from the start to see this conversation from a different perspective. Students, for example, are still expected to use “I” language, and ground their reflections in their own experience rather than making generalizations about race or privilege. By taking the language of “safe” off the table, White students can practice the “grit” or affective skills needed to go back to their White communities and work to end racial injustices and marginalized voices are not told they are in a safe space when they may struggle to feel safe in any space dominated by Whites.

Belenky and Stanton, drawing insight from Gilligan’s ethic of care, believe transformation learning can occur through procedures established around “Connected Knowing” rather than Mezirow’s cognitive or communicative learning. Procedures for Connected Knowing encouraged participants to embrace difference or disagreement as an indication for more dialogue, deeper listening, increased openness to understanding others perspectives, and practicing empathy, rather than presuming these skills are already established.⁵¹

Elizabeth Johnson explores the cosmological implications of injustice and human exploitation, noting that “economic poverty coincides with ecological poverty, for the poor suffer disproportionately from environmental destruction...the exploitation of the Earth also coincides with the subordination of women within the system of patriarchy,” noting the maternal and paternal language.⁵² The framework of Creation through a process of Connected Knowing helps us to see diversity in the natural world as an invitation to listen, to learn more from the harmony in the natural world. Just one coral reef can teach us lessons about life, death, communion, harmony, empathy, and transcendence.

LIM, Practical Theology, and Anti-Racist Pedagogy

Religious educator, scholars, activists, theologians, and church leaders are documenting the drastic need to dismantle racism in Christian ministry and education programs. Hosffman Ospino, citing the research from Russel Moy on racism as the null curriculum in religious education, argues that too “often our classes, projects, and programs of formation are sanitized insofar as they do not focus directly on issues of racial inequality and other forms of social injustice.”⁵³ In 2004, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) commissioned research report for the twenty-fifth anniversary “Brothers and Sisters to Us.” Bishop Murry, in his 2018 address at the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering in Washington, discussed this report, stating:

The results of that study painted a disheartening picture of the church’s relationship with the black community...the study noted that many diocesan seminaries and ministry

⁵⁰ Arao and Clemens, “Safe Spaces to Brave,” 142.

⁵¹ Belenky and Stanton, “Inequality,” 87.

⁵² Elizabeth A. Johnson, “The cosmos,” 210.

⁵³ Hoffmann Ospino, “Educating Christians to Confront Racism,” *Journal Of Catholic Social Thought*, 3 no. 1 (2006): 197. See also Russell G. Moy, “American Racism,” *Religious Education* 95 no. 2, (2000).

formation programs were inadequate in terms of their incorporation of the history, culture and traditions of the black community.⁵⁴

Ospino notes “It is easy to think that discourse about God can happen in neutral terms, rather than look at faith from the perspective of social, economic, and political conflicts.”⁵⁵ LIM’s method of theological reflection in each ministry context has the capacity to do just this.

LIM’s method of practical theology places our curriculum in a unique position to explore one’s faith from multiple ministry contexts. LIM’s method of Practical Theology, grounded in Creation, can become more intentional about the dynamics involved in exposing white students to white normativity and white fragility to dismantle racism, to use the language of brave spaces over safe spaces. When LIM students explore their concern within their personal ministry context; for example, they often analyze their personality type and explore the strengths and weakness in their communication skills. Transforming the LIM curriculum to dismantle racism would include exploring one’s own position in society, or positionality (teachers and students). The curriculum texts can include a list to check through, noting their race, ability, ethnicity, gender, identity and class to encourage them to see the larger context from which their lives take shape. Positionality, according to Sensoy and DiAngelo, “asserts that knowledge is dependent upon a complex web of cultural values, belief, experiences, and social positions,”⁵⁶ and, to which I would add, the natural world. Exploring one’s or positionality opens students up to see beyond their social location to their ecological location, thus, grounding the personal context more fully in the framework of Creation.

The LIM curriculum can add to the literature on the sociocultural ministry context to include reflections from Peggy McIntosh’s article, “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women’s Studies” and ask White students to explore their own unexamined privilege as it relates to their ministry concern. This privilege plays out for all students in the human community when we elevate humans above creation and ignore the voices of the natural world, the streams, the wetlands, coral reefs, the owls, the deer. Students can then explore the systemic and institutional systems of oppression using case studies on diversity in their Institutional/Organizational ministry context.

Finally, Bryan Massingale’s research and reflections in his work *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*, particularly his chapter on racism and culture,⁵⁷ and articles from Black Catholic theologians can break open students’ limited racial experiences with Catholicism to explore the tradition in a more racially diverse way as it informs their praxis. The curriculum can include not only scholarship from feminist theologians, but womanist theologians as well. As Johnson notes, “the turn to the cosmos in theology needs to cut through the knot of misogynist prejudice in our systematic concepts, shifting from dualistic, hierarchical and atomistic categories to holistic, communal and relational ones.”⁵⁸ A Cosmic postmodern curriculum of

⁵⁴ George V. Murry “The church must ‘speak and live in truth’ to combat racism, bishop says,” *America* (Feb 1, 2018): 62.

⁵⁵ Ospino, “Educating Christians,” 197.

⁵⁶ Sensoy and DiAngelo, *Is Everyone Really Equal*, 29.

⁵⁷ Bryan N. Massingale, *Racial Justice and The Catholic Church*, (New York: Orbis, 2017). The first chapter, “What is Racism” also includes a case study on unconscious bias by discussing the events surrounding Hurricane Katrina.

⁵⁸ Johnson, “The Cosmos,” 210.

theology, filled with wonder and unknown territory, moves beyond the dualistic, binary humanistic theology, inspires religious educators and ministers and fills them with a spirit of communion that listens to the natural world in order to imagine a better home for all God's Creation.

It is no longer enough to expect White students to uncover the systems of power and oppression to which they do not experience. If White fragility insulates students from understanding their racial privilege, then graduate programs in ministry have a responsibility to help White students build the skills and competencies to engage constructively in dialogue to leverage their privilege for the work to dismantle racism and uplifting of all God's creation. Leavening the LIM curriculum to focus more intentionally racism and privilege in the context of Creation not only enables white students to understand Whiteness, but also helps them develop the cognitive and affective skills necessary to engage in challenging discussions in their own communities and ministry contexts. It may also help marginalized students engage with more voices from their race and culture more fully in the curriculum to develop a Creation-centered spirituality that advances ecological justice in the name of God's Kingdom.

Bibliography

- Arao, B., & Clemens, K. 2013. "From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces: a new way to frame dialogue around diversity and social justice." *The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections from Social Justice Educators*, edited by Landreman, L. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 135-150
- Belenkey, M. F., and Stanton, A. V. 2000 "Inequality, Development, and Connected Knowing" In *Learning as transformation critical perspective on a theory in progress*, edited by J. Mezirow and Associates 71-102, San Francisco, CA Jossey-Bass.
- Bevans, S. B. 1994. *Models of contextual theology*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books.
- Brookfield, S., and Preskill, S. 2010. *Discussion as a way of teaching: tools and techniques for university teachers*. Buckingham: Open Univ. Press.
- Browning, D. *Fundamental Practical Theology*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1991.
- Burbules, N. and S. Rice. 1991. "Dialogue across differences: Continuing the conversation." *Harvard Educational Review* 61 4: 393-416.
- Cranton, P. 1996. *Professional Development as Transformative Learning: New Perspectives for Teachers of Adults*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- DiAngelo, R. 2011. "White Fragility," *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 3 no. 3: 54-70.
- Evans, D. and Miller-Shearer, T. 2017. *A Principled Pedagogy for Religious Education, Religious Education*, 112:1, 7-18.

- Fanon, F. 2008. *Black Skin White Masks* New York: Grove Press.
- Fears, B. A. 2017. Freedom Train: The Underground Railroad as a Model of Christian Education, Antiracism, and Human Rights Advocacy, *Religious Education*, 112:1, 19-32.
- Fleischer, B. 2000. "A Theological Method for Adult Education Rooted in the Works of Tracy and Lonergan, *Religious Education*, 95:1, 23-37
- . 2006. "Mezirow's Theory of Transformative Learning and Lonergan's Method in Theology: Resources for Adult Theological Education." *Journal Of Adult Theological Education* 3, no. 2: 147-162.
- . 2000. Practical Theology and Transformative Learning: partnership for Christian Religious Education. In *Forging a Better Religious Education in the Third Millennium* ed. James Michael Lee, 203-225, Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press.
- Fleischer, B., ed., Cowan, M. Fagin, G., Goulding, G., Lee, B. and O’Gorman, K. 2016. *Introduction to Practical Theology*. The Loyola Institute for Ministry Loyola University New Orleans.
- Freire, P. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc.
- Johnson E. A., "The cosmos: astonishing image of God" *Origins* 26, no 13 September 12, 1996, 206–212.
- Mezirow, J. 2000. Learning to think like an adult. Core concepts of transformation theory In *Learning as transformation critical perspective on a theory in progress*, edited by J. Mezirow and Associates 3-34, San Francisco, CA Jossey-Bass.
- Moy, R. G., "American Racism the null curriculum in religious education" *Religious Education* 95 no. 2, 2000.
- Murry, G. V. "The church must 'speak and live in truth' to combat racism, bishop says," *America*, Feb 1, 2018: 62.
- Ospino, H. "Educating Christians to Confront Racism," *Journal Of Catholic Social Thought*, 3 no. 1 2006, 195-208, 197.
- Sensoy, Ö. and DiAngelo, R. 2017 *Is everyone really equal*, 2nd ed. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sleeter, C. 2013 "Critical Pedagogy, Critical Race Theory and antiracist Education." In *Power Teaching, and Teacher Education: Confronting Injustice with Critical Research and Action*, edited by Christine E. Sleeter, New York: Peter Lang, 114-141.

- Taylor, E. 2000. "Analyzing Research on Transformative Learning Theory *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. Edited by Jack Mezirow and Associates, 285-328.
- Wise, T. 2004. No such place as safe. July 24. Date accessed September 10, 2018, retrieved from <https://zcomm.org/zcommentary/no-such-place-as-safe-by-tim-wise/>
- Welch, S. D. 1999, *Sweet dreams in America: making ethics and spirituality work*. New York: Routledge.



Soonjong Choi

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

soonjong.choi@garrett.edu

2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4

White America's Self-help Tradition as A Master Narrative

Abstract

In this RIG paper, I primarily employ Kate McLean and Moin Syed's (2015) idea of master narrative to explore how Korean American Christians conform to white normativity in their ecclesial settings. The concept of master narrative is a useful approach for understanding how Korean American parents not only follow the white American self-help tradition, but also share this tradition with their children. Particularly, the self-help narrative motivates Korean American Christians to draw upon Christianity as a source for their success stories. Against this dominant discourse, I argue that Korean American Christians should construct an alternative story to critically evaluate their marginal experiences in the United States.

1. The Link Between Culture's Master Narratives and Personal Stories

In every human life, people cannot dismiss the unique cultural contexts as important factors that influence their personal lives. In this regard, McLean and Syed's (2015) master narrative framework can provide insights into the dynamic processes of negotiation between a person and his or her culture. According to McLean and Syed, every culture has its own master narratives that include values, beliefs, and social norms (p. 323). To participate in a certain culture means, therefore, that a person first knows a master narrative - the group's ubiquitous, dominant discourse - and then composes his or her personal story based on the master narrative. McLean and Syed argue that master narratives are useful frameworks that guide personal story construction (p. 320). Because master narratives involve culturally shared stories, members of the culture author their personal stories by selectively choosing themes from master narratives. But master narratives can also constrain group members when these narratives do not provide resources that align with their own experiences (p. 330). The members then resist these master narratives and construct an alternative narrative to realize who they are and how to live in their culture.

However, creating an alternative narrative is not easy because it may risk losing social acceptance and social status. McLean and Syed write that one of the key features of master narratives is that they are compulsory. Master narratives of culture inherently constrain individual agency, for individuals who do not adhere to master narratives are likely to be in the "subordinated, oppressed, less powerful positions in society" (p. 328). Master narratives carry a value-laden framework about what is a good life story, and, as a consequence, the members of a culture are likely to construct their life stories that align with these master narratives. That is, master narratives function as a cultural standard of what is acceptable; thus, people adopt these master narratives

consciously. However, McLean and Syed point out that the level at which these master narratives influence individuals is below the threshold of conscious awareness: the majority of people internalize and promote master narratives unconsciously and are even “unaware of how much they rely on master narratives” to make sense of their lives (McLean & Syed, 2015, p. 325).

2. The Master Narrative of Asian American Identity

In today’s ethnically diverse American society, what is America’s master narrative for Asian Americans and how do Asian Americans engage with this master narrative? Some people think America is a multi-ethnic nation, for they consider America as quintessentially a country of immigrants. Others say that, in reality, American equals White (Devos & Banaji, 2005). In their minds, other ethnicities are considered secondary in America. Regarding the case of Asian Americans, personality and social psychological research shows that Asian Americans were perceived as being less American than both White and African Americans (2005). Moreover, they were often excluded from the concept “American” (2005). In American history, the Asian American experience of being foreigners is ubiquitous, for American society often considers Asian Americans to be sojourners who could never be assimilated into mainstream American society.

It is no longer controversial to claim that the master narrative of Asian American identity significantly influences Asian Americans’ personal stories. Moreover, it sometimes motivates Asian Americans to adopt white American culture in order to feel like they fit into American society. Nguyen and Hoskins argue that Asian Americans reify their American identity as a reaction to the American perception of Asian Americans as “perpetual foreigners” (Hoskins & Nguyen, 2014, p. 19). In line with this proposition, Devos and Banaji report that Asian and White Americans “displayed equally strong American identity” even though Asian Americans, at the same time, acknowledged that they do not fully belong to the norm of being American, i.e. White (Devos & Banaji, 2005, p. 463). Maintaining a strong yearning for inclusion, Asian Americans emphasize the Americanness of their experiences and naturally downplay their Asian ties. In an endless effort to integrate themselves into mainstream American society, Asian American Christians often embrace white Christianity and unquestionably accept the narratives of white Christians as their own.

3. White America’s Self-help Tradition as A Master Narrative

Throughout history, one master narrative structure that has been powerful in the United States is self-help structure – focusing on the power of the inner self. This story is framed within white culture and provides Americans with guidance about how to *live appropriately* in American society. Many Americans value self-help stories and internalize them as part of their personal stories. In this master narrative, the inner self is considered as something good and even sacred, as opposed to “the outer world [that] cannot be trusted” (McAdams, 2013, p. 109). When having a family dinner, white parents are thus likely to say to their children, “Think of the starving kids in Ethiopia, and appreciate how lucky you are to be different from them” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In the hope of raising successful children in American society, many white parents tend to believe that children should find their own uniqueness and develop it to their fullest potentials. Children

from an early age, therefore, are more likely to believe they have unique attributes that distinguish them from others, and children's own recognition of self-uniqueness becomes the resource for their personal stories. This positive emphasis upon the inner self presents a viewpoint about self-development as a normative value and highlights upward and onward progression of life for the better. In this story, it becomes a sacred obligation to “feel good, happy, secure, and at peace” about the self (Smith & Denton, 2005).

In a church setting, the actualization of the inner self is closely linked with material blessings from God, which in turn is understood as a spiritual growth. Many American Christians view material success as an external manifestation of God's blessings. McAdams explains this is how Americans learned to be “crassly materialistic and deeply spiritual at the same time” (McAdams, 2013, p. 130). Against this backdrop, it comes natural that an image of a good Christian in popular imagination contains the picture of hard-working and successful self-made individuals. Smith and Denton maintain, “Faith and spirituality become centered less around a God believed in and God's claims on lives, and more around the believing self and its personal realization” (Smith & Denton, 2005, p. 175). In the self-help narrative that focuses on the power of the inner self, many American Christians have replaced God with self-reliance, and Christian faith has been reduced to a personal, private and individual faith.

American self-help narratives also pervade throughout Korean American churches and set standards for the behaviors and thinking of Korean American Christians. Soong-Chan Rah asserts that Korean immigrant Christians embrace elements of white American culture, such as individualism and materialism, and these elements have considerably affected their faith system (Rah, 2009, p. 22). Religious activities in Korean American churches are increasingly personalized, diverging from the original purpose of communion and fellowship. To wit, worship becomes an exercise of personal self-fulfillment, and church life becomes a fulfillment of individual desires. Korean American youth and parents especially uphold hard work and success as godly thing, and their worship serves the purpose of advocating individual academic efforts and achievement. Even though Asian cultures pursue the values of the family and community over against individualism, Korean American Christians are less likely to consider homeland culture regarding their own faith development because they do not want to be perceived as foreigners in American society. This sheds light on why Korean American Christians struggle to find their own language for translating faith into their marginal experiences. In other words, white images of God and the narratives of self-help ultimately precipitate the disconnection between their religious identity and their experiences of marginality in the States.

4. Conclusion

In American society, the narrative of self-help is a traditional master narrative that functions as a driving force behind human development. The one thing needful for North American Christians is to ask themselves whose stories are included or excluded in the self-help story. For example, the self-help story does not provide Korean Americans with a framework for making sense of their marginal experiences; rather, it only offers guidance about how to be happy and successful. In this self-help master narrative, Korean Americans become manageable beings who are subjected to those in power. Against this oppressive force, Korean American Christians should formulate an alternative story to remind themselves and teach their children that Christian faith is

not about getting what they want. Rather, the true meaning of Christian faith is radically oriented to the service for others. In this respect, Jesus' story in the New Testament can be a great resource for the alternative story because his hospitality not only gives hope to the oppressed, but also empowers them to seek their own liberation. Through deeply understanding the person of Jesus as the most hospitable person, Korean American Christians can realize that they are oppressed and can also become responsible members of American society who critically perceive the master narrative which oppresses them. In fact, Jesus' story is the representation of the true Christian culture, the purpose of which is to encourage people to develop a critical consciousness about their larger cultural stories.

Bibliography

- Devos, T., & Banaji, M. R. (2005). American = White? *J Pers Soc Psychol*, 88(3), 447-466.
- Hoskins, J., & Nguyen, V. T. (2014). *Transpacific studies : framing an emerging field* (1 edition ed.): University of Hawaii Press.
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*(98(2)), 224-253.
- McAdams, D. P. (2013). *The redemptive self : stories Americans live by* (Revised and Expanded Edition. ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- McLean, K. C., & Syed, M. (2015). Personal, Master, and Alternative Narratives: An Integrative Framework for Understanding Identity Development in Context. *Human Development*, 58(6), 318-349.
- Rah, S.-C. (2009). *The next evangelicalism : releasing the church from Western cultural captivity*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books.
- Smith, C., & Denton, M. L. (2005). *Soul searching : the religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.

Michal Opatrný

University of South Bohemia, České Budějovice

Faculty of Theology, Department of Ethics and Charity Work

E-mail: mopatrný@tf.jcu.cz

2018 REA Annual Meeting, Nov 2-4

“White Normativity” and Eastern Europe: Old victims or new oppressors?

Abstract: Countries of Central and Eastern Europe are not as familiar with the phenomenon indicated by the concept of “white normativity” as countries of so-called Western Europe. The main reason for this is that the thesis of so-called colonial history of Europe does not hold for Central and Eastern Europe. As a result, significant segments of society in countries of Central and Eastern Europe a priori reject a focus on the world and social reality of which concepts such as “white normativity” are representative. It is rather necessary to consider other models of interpreting the current situation of these countries. It therefore seems more feasible to work with the anti-oppressive theory, as it is developed in sociology and especially in social work. Thus the history of Central and Eastern Europe in the course of the 20th century can be interpreted as a history of oppression generating further oppression, a history in which the victims become new aggressors, a history in which the abuse of elementary principles ultimately leads to abusing them further.

Countries of so-called Eastern Europe, although it would be more appropriate to speak of Central and Eastern Europe, are not as familiar with the phenomenon indicated by the concept of “white normativity” as countries of so-called Western Europe. The main reason for this is that the thesis of so-called colonial history of Europe does not hold for Central and Eastern Europe. As a result, significant segments of society in countries of Central and Eastern Europe a priori reject a focus on the world and social reality of which concepts such as “white normativity” are representative. Thus, in this study I am aiming at clarifying the roots and context of such scepticism to concepts such as ‘White Normativity’. Using examples of several other terms I show that in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe there exist completely different narratives and ideological concepts. The second part of the study focuses on interpreting these Eastern European narratives with regards to specific forms of spirituality and religiosity in Eastern Europe. Despite the secularisation pressure of former communistic regimes in Eastern Europe, religiosity and spirituality, or rather their specific forms, continue to play a very important role in the formation of people’s feelings and stances in the population. The third part of the study, a discussion, focuses on a possible interpretation of the previous analysis, especially with regard to the examples of ‘small islands of strength’.

1) Speaking of “White Normativity” in Eastern Europe is problematic

The former Austro-Hungarian Empire and its successor states in middle and east Europe have never been colonial superpowers in the same sense as Great Britain, France, Spain or the Netherlands. Their experience with overseas was always merely commercial and thus mediated. This held also at the time when Austria-Hungary controlled important ports of South Europe such as Trieste, Pula and others. The narrative of Central and Eastern Europe is therefore different (Brix, Busek 2018). From the point of view of the colonial history of Europe it could rather deal with the question of the extent to which individual European countries, such as the Czech lands, Croatia, Slovakia, etc., were Austro-Hungarian colonies. Going into older history, we may ask whether

countries such as Croatia, Slovakia, Poland or Austria were Czech colonies when at the time of the High Middle Ages Czech kings such as Ottokar II or Charles IV ruled from Prague over an area comparable to or even larger than the later Austria-Hungary. But in Central and Eastern Europe this question is not and cannot be posed in this way. The relationships between states and nations were ordered differently than they were in the colonies of the states of Western Europe. An exception is modern history which allows us to ask whether countries such as the former Czechoslovakia, former Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary, etc., were colonies of the Soviet Union. However, in the past decade we have seen that within the context of this narrative a colonial role is ascribed to the European Union and its leader states, especially Germany. While for example within the so-called Visegrad Group (Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) and in the relationships of its member states to states such as Slovenia or Croatia and partially also to Austria, the EU is conceived as a desired and expedient coexistence of different national states in one geographical area, with respect to the central authorities of the EU and its dominant states the colonial narrative is applied. The EU is also compared to the Soviet Union and its “colonial” effort (Adler 2018), even though most countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which were members of the Warsaw Pact and are today members of the EU and NATO, never were part of the Soviet Union. An important conclusion follows from this, namely that the mentality prevalent in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe is rather the mentality of colonial oppression victims, which has an entirely practical impact on the public and political discourse on key issues and on interpreting the events of the present world.

So opening the issue of “white normativity” in the contemporary social context of Central and Eastern European countries, standing up for accepting refugees, or merely regarding refugeeism and migration as one of the gravest problems of the contemporary world gets one in an awkward situation. As the results of various social investigations as well (i.e. Standard Eurobarometer 89 2018 or European Demographic Datasheet 2018) as the results of various kinds of elections have shown, the societies of the individual states are polarised into two basic positions (Mijnssen 2018). One can be characterised as a position immuring itself against everything foreign, a priori rejecting social change and the impacts of world development, rejecting the findings of humanities and social sciences – e.g. regarding the social construction of reality. The other position is open both to foreign influence and to social change and development, striving for rational and objective assessment of these and of information. The first position fears “colonisation” on the part of the EU, the other position points out the “colonising” efforts of present-day Russia. This polarisation leads to a positional fight in the whole-society discourse and political debates.

In Czech colloquial usage several neologisms have appeared in recent years, labelling and defaming the second – open and critical – position. These are terms such as “sunny-boy”, “Havlist” or even “good-shitter”, which are difficult to translate to a foreign language and explain.

- “Sunny-boy” – The concept is intended as a parody and caricature of the principally positive attitude to one’s environment, which is also manifested by active involvement for the benefit of others. It is a shift in the meaning of the adjective “naive”, as if it was an imaginary fourth degree beyond “most naive”.
- “Havlist” – The concept derives from a critical interpretation of the activity of Václav Havel, the former president of Czechoslovakia and then of the Czech Republic. Even at the time of his active political career Václav Havel did not have only positive renown in the Czech Republic. It is logical and understandable that he was criticised by his opponents within legitimate political discussion. When time has elapsed it is also evident that not all of his decisions and of the measures he took as head of state were always the most felicitous solution. But at the same time a part of the population projects onto him, as on a former

head of state, its frustrations brought about by the process of the transformation of state, economy and society from the socialist order to a democratic state with a market economy and a democratic division of power. These changes had a number of “victims”, i.e., persons who lost their social status or work, who had to give up their former way of life, or were brought by their former way of life to the margins of society. Even though the president of ČR even today has no factual influence over processes of this kind and his role as head of state is in fact representative and ceremonial, at least a part of the population still projects their frustrations and hopes of the type described above onto the person of the president as head of state. This fact is still abused by the opponents of Václav Havel from among politicians, especially by those who set their stakes on populism. So the term “Havlist” labels and defames those who feel akin to Václav Havel in their opinions and/or principally agree with the political direction he represented.

- “Good-shitter” – The concept is in fact vulgar, or is derived from a vulgar word. That unequivocally determines its meaning as an aggressive term, intended to offend those who are labelled by it. It is close in meaning to the generally better known term “good-doer” characterising the effort to do good at all cost: without premeditation, without proper reflection, subjectively and on a purely emotional basis, i.e., without clear and justifiable criteria regarding what is good and what is not, and without evaluating what particular impact the action will have. When the concept of “good-doer” is shifted to the vulgar level, it again becomes a means of attacking others and a principal expression of disagreement with interest in others and helping others.

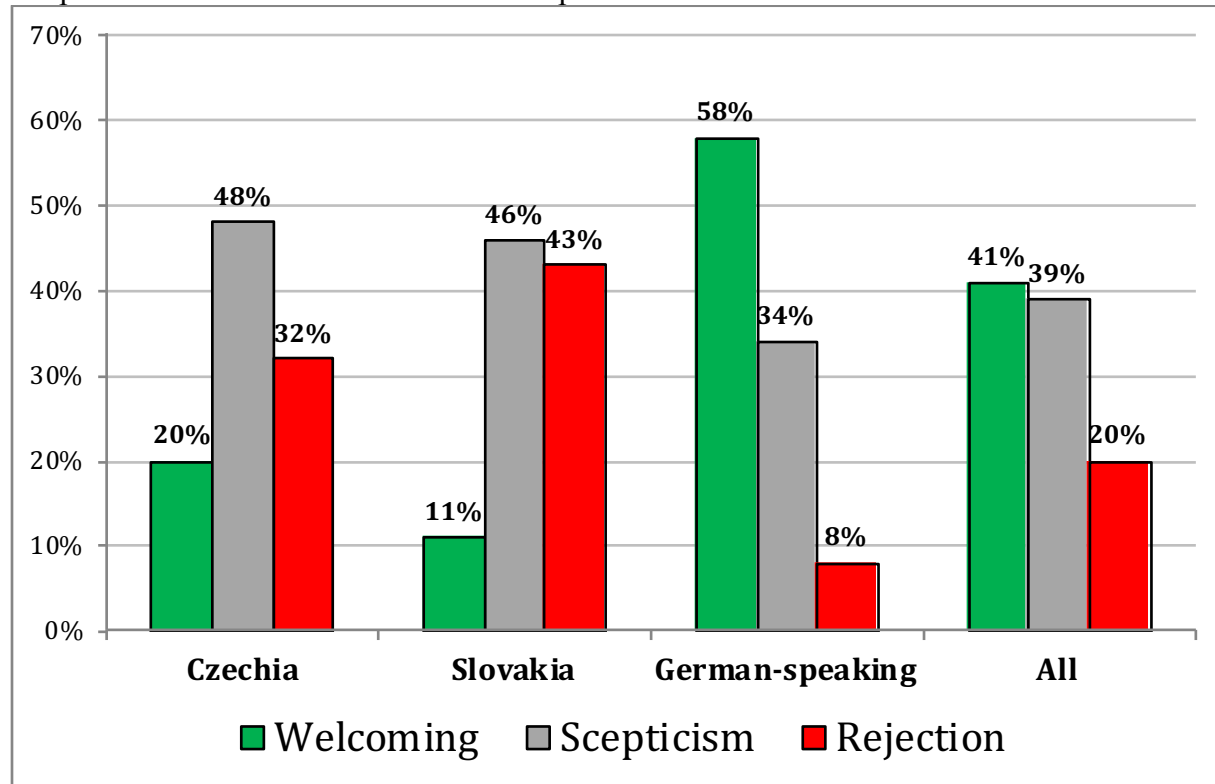
With respect to the colonial history of Europe it therefore holds that in the EU states of Central and Eastern Europe a narrative of colonial oppression victims prevail, having no factual justification, and also that this narrative leads the persons involved in it to take aggressive positions calling for the oppression anything that differs from the traditions and customs of Central and Eastern Europe (Pew Research Center 2017). So when societies in the EU states of Central and Eastern Europe are confronted e.g. with a phenomenon such as the culmination of the migration crisis in 2015, they do not perceive it through the prism of the colonial history of Europe, because they are not even capable of such perception. Rather, they perceive it through the prism of a victim who, having overcome the greatest problems, i.e., the period of transformation, must face new colonisation attempts. One of these may even be the refugee crisis itself, interpreted as a colonisation of the EU by Muslims (Zulehner 2016), or disputes between old and new, Western and Eastern EU states, interpreted as the colonial dictate of Brussels and Berlin (Opatrný 2016A). With respect to what has been said it is necessary to state that the differences between so-called Western and Eastern Europe even within the EU almost thirty years after the Iron Curtain fell are greater than they may have seemed to be in recent years.

2) Secularity and religiosity in Eastern Europe

The claim that the differences between Eastern and Western EU are greater than they at first glance seem to be is confirmed also by comparing the results of three surveys regarding migration and the refugee crisis carried out in 2015 and 2016 in Austria, Germany, Czech Republic and Slovakia (Opatrný 2016A), (Zulehner 2016). These surveys were mutually inspired and worked, among others, with the issue of spirituality and religiosity in the individual states in which the surveys were carried out, aiming especially at establishing the attitudes of Christians. Processing the results into clusters labelled Welcoming, Scepticism and Rejection has shown that there are significant differences between the Czech Republic and Slovakia on the one hand and Austria and Germany

on the other, but also that, unlike Austria and Germany, there are also differences in attitudes between the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Graph 1 show how the individual clusters compare.

Graph 1 – Division of clusters in the three partial studies



In Graph 1 the differences as to which of the clusters is dominant are worth noticing. While in Austria and Germany the attitude of Welcoming is clearly dominant, in the Czechia and Slovakia it is not the opposite attitude of Rejecting, but the attitude of Scepticism. Another significant difference is that while in Slovakia the difference between the attitudes of Scepticism and Rejection is negligible, in the Czechia it is more than 15%. These differences, and the attitudes expressed by the clusters Scepticism and Rejection, are caused by several different kinds of fears, as the study has shown.

Already older investigations into spirituality and religiosity in countries such as the Czechia and Slovakia, but also in Poland, Hungary or states of the former Yugoslavia confirmed that certain kinds of fear are present in the societies of those states, regardless of whether it is a Catholic state, such as Poland, or a secularised one, such as the Czechia. These are fears associated with the process of transformation and a lower standard of living, as well as existential fears, especially the fear of death, the fear that I will come up short in my life, the fear of one's own futility and uselessness (Tomka, Zulehner 2000), (Tomka, Zulehner 1999).

Similar conclusions were reached by the recently published investigation of the American Pew Research Center (2017) focusing on religion and national belonging in post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Its results have shown that differences in opinion on particular issues are not always associated merely with professing a religion, but also with a certain historical experience. This is clear in the case of the Czechia, which is the *only one* of the investigated post-communist countries where no religious denomination prevails. *72% of the population do not profess a religion*. In the other countries Orthodox or Catholic Christianity is dominant, or they

are religiously pluralist countries where Orthodox and/or Catholic Christianity exist side by side with a Protestant tradition or with Islam. The opinions of the inhabitants of the Czechia differ significantly from the views of respondents in other countries only regarding attitude to religion and regarding issues to which a moral significance is assigned by religions. These are especially pre-marital sexual relations, use of artificial contraception, tolerance to homosexual relationships and an open attitude to their legalisation (in the Czech Republic registered partnership has existed since 2006) and tolerance to abortion and divorce, or in other words rejecting a morally negative evaluation of abortion and divorce. 87% of Czechs also believe that it is not necessary to believe in God in order to live a moral life and adhere to good values. On the other hand, in issues such as accepting refugees, trust in democracy, positive attitude to national, religious and cultural plurality among citizens of the state, etc. the views of Czechs do not differ from the views of respondents from other post-communist states in any way. Much more positive stances on these issues are taken e.g. by the inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula from countries of the former Yugoslavia, in particular Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. As a result of their history, all these states are strongly religious and at the same time nationally, culturally and religiously pluralist.

In countries of Central and Eastern Europe religion used to serve as a means of delineating borders in a cultural and national sense. It is particularly clear in the case of Poland, which is well known for the close interconnection of national culture with the Catholic religion. This is due to Poland's position between Orthodox Russia and the predominantly Protestant eastern part of Germany. Thus the Catholic identity of the nation has to do with its self-definition against its geopolitically dominant neighbours. The prevalent secular worldview in the Czech Republic must be understood along similar lines (Václavík 2010). Czech culture is too far removed from the culture of Russia and the culture of other traditionally Orthodox countries. But at the same time it had to bear up against the much stronger influence of Catholic and Protestant culture in the course of its history. This is due, among others, to its position, as it is wedged in the German space between two of its constituent states which are traditionally different – the traditionally Catholic Bavaria and the traditionally Protestant Saxony, which until the end of World War II reached deep into the area of the present Poland, so that the present Czech Republic bordered in the north mostly on Saxony. In the modern era the Czech lands belonged to the traditionally Catholic Habsburg monarchy. The self-definition of Czech national identity in the 19th and 20th centuries was therefore based on an opposition to everything German, even to the German language itself, which was the main official language of the multi-national state. That is why ultimately the self-definition of Czech national identity necessarily meant defining itself both against the Bavarian and Austrian Catholicism and against the Saxon Protestantism.

So if religion or a particular Christian denomination and possibly also a secular worldview in Central and Eastern Europe serve as means of defining own identity, it is plain enough that regardless of the level of religiosity refugees from Muslim countries, or refugees of Muslim religion, will be rejected in these countries. Of course, it is not merely a matter of rejecting Muslims as such, rather of rejecting anything that is unknown and foreign.

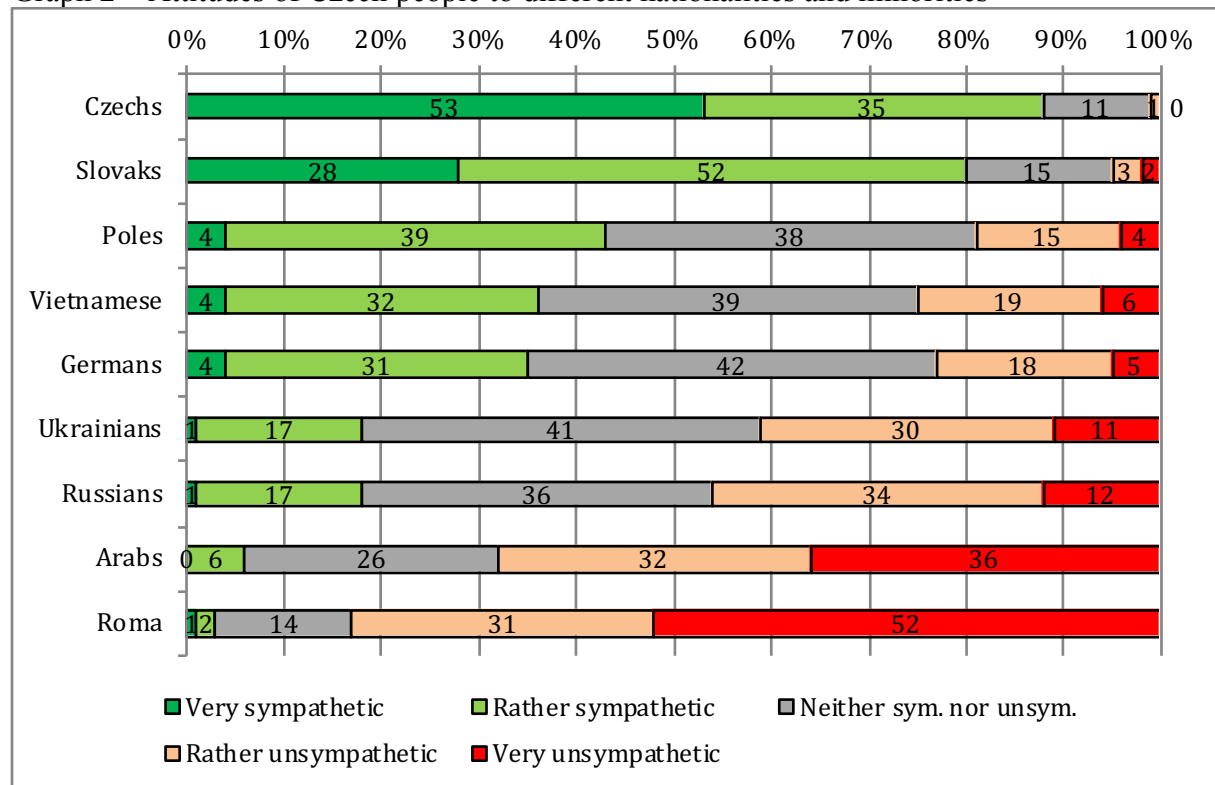
3) Old victims – new tyrants

It is evident that the contemporary opinion currents in Central and Eastern Europe necessarily have to do with interpreting the history of these states. This issue was skilfully handled, among others, by the communist propaganda, which was able to cultivate the post-war aversion to all that is German for decades and transfer it to the rest of Western Europe and the USA. At that time religions played the important part of an ideological counterbalance to communist ideology (Weis

2013). That, however, reinforced their role as a well-established means of defining identity. Today this phenomenon can be observed in the traditionally Catholic countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the unconcealed and public opposition to the attitudes and opinions of Pope Francis. It can be even more significant that it is mostly not so much opposition as an elementary misunderstanding of the Pope's conception of the Church and its mission in the world (Scavo, Beretta 2018). Religion, which in Central and Eastern Europe, especially in the modern era and the 20th century, helped to form and reinforce, develop and defend the identity of those who found themselves in the wheelwork of history and of the disputes of their more powerful neighbours, or merely became the object of their desire for power, is becoming an instrument of oppressing all that is different (Snyder 2012).

In the case of the Czech Republic, where this part is taken by the secular worldview, it is evident in various surveys, for example in the survey commissioned in 2015 by the public service Czech Television (Fokus Václava Moravce 2015). The survey was carried out at the beginning of the year, i.e., before the refugee crisis broke out. As Graph 2 shows, already at that time the Czechs had the worst attitudes to Arabs and Roma, whereby only several hundreds of thousands of Roma, i.e., 1.2-2.2% live in the Czech Republic (Hlaváček 2014) and less than 1% of Arabs (Pew Research Center 2017).

Graph 2 – Attitudes of Czech people to different nationalities and minorities



Source: Median for Czech Television, Broadcast: Fokus Václava Moravce, March 2015

So rejecting or downright oppressing all that is different and foreign in countries of Central and Eastern Europe is not and cannot be interpreted through the prism of colonial history. Similarly, it is not quite appropriate to apply the concept of “white normativity” to Central and Eastern Europe.

It is rather necessary to consider other models of interpreting the history of these countries, especially the one in which the victim of oppression becomes the oppressor when the situation changes. Of course, normal psychological categories cannot be applied to collective and cultural consciousness or to the history of a nation. It therefore seems more feasible to work with the anti-oppressive theory, as it is developed in sociology and especially in social work (Matoušek 2012). The anti-oppressive theory is based on three principles: justice, equality and participation. The first of these – justice – places emphasis on protecting the dignity and respecting the rights (human and civil) of the client. The second principle – equality – states that no one may be intentionally disadvantaged; it therefore wants to emphasise not only respecting rights, but also equality of opportunities. The last principle – participation – assumes an active attitude; the client must participate in solving his life situation, he must cooperate with the helper (Thompson 2000). It is significant that the former communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe never observed any of the three principles of anti-oppressive theory, but always loudly professed them and extensively interpreted them to support their power claim (Courtois 1999). Thus, justice was understood as class justice, i.e., a justice denying any rights to those who did not belong to the elect class of workers and peasants. The principle of equality was also frequently emphasised, but in practice it was always understood in the Orwellian sense that even though all are equal, some – e.g. Communist Party members – are more equal. Finally, participation was a highly desired principle, when the active and conscious involvement of citizens in public happenings and community activities was expected, but always and exclusively only according to the priorities stipulated by the governing Communist Party, or by its local and regional representatives.

Thus all these principles, which it is desirable to apply in modern liberal democracies in order to integrate the marginalised into society, were robbed of content by the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe (Svoboda 2013). That is why people in Central and Eastern Europe are distrustful of them in the spirit of the principle of preliminary caution. Further, if they are extensively interpreted today, for example in the critical theory of sociology or by some activists, the old communist rhetoric seems to come alive again in the eyes and ears of inhabitants of Central and Eastern Europe – a rhetoric that never wanted to observe the principles it professed. This suspicion is then transferred for example to EU authorities. Thus the a priori distrust of the principles of justice, equality and participation disables their balanced grasp and adequate application, and consequently leads to negating them as a principle. As a result, Central and Eastern Europe has again seen the rise of an understanding of these principles which is adapted to the benefit of those who hold power in the democratic state, i.e., the citizens of a national state. Hence, justice and equality hold only for those who are at home here, participation is abandoned in favour of supporting populist politicians or is transformed into efforts to set up and arm illegal patrols and militia.

Thus the history of Central and Eastern Europe in the course of the 20th century can be interpreted as a history of oppression generating further oppression, a history in which the victims become new aggressors, a history in which the abuse of elementary principles ultimately leads to abusing them further.

4) Small islands of strength

Nonetheless, even in Central and Eastern Europe small islands of strength can be found, in which religion has played an important part, e.g. even in the secularised milieu of the Czech Republic. As already indicated, Czechs have least sympathy for Roma and Arabs, and for refugees. Despite

that there are purely secular organisations, as well organisations founded by Christians, which have been able to successfully work with Roma and refugee issues.

In the case of Roma it is the organisation *Český západ o.p.s.* (Czech West),ⁱ active in the Carlsbad region, which carries out successful community work with unemployed Roma living in social excluded localities in the country. This organisation is based on the effort of the Trappist order, which found a place for its first monastery in the Czech Republic in West Bohemia and strives to revitalise the region (Havrdová 2013), badly marked by the expulsion of Germans from the Czech Republic after World War II.

In the Protestant milieu the foundation Generation 21ⁱ was established to help refugees. It was able to negotiate the transport of more than a hundred Christians from Iraq with the government with the vision that this will open up the way to the Czech Republic for refugees from the Near East and Africa. Since a part of the transported families returned to Iraq or illegally crossed the border to Germany, the state withdrew moral and legal support from the project. Nonetheless, the project gained extensive support among Christians of all denominations (Opatrný 2016B).

The two examples show that even in the secularised milieu of a European region where religion, or the secular worldview, has always served in defining the own identity against the surroundings and against everything foreign, it is still possible that religion becomes a solidarizing and transformative power (Zulehner 1996) and that individual projects gain public respect and support.

Bibliography

Adler, K. 30 January 2018. Visegrad: The clash of the euro visions. BBC News. Available at (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42868599>). (Cit. 8 August 2018).

Brix, E., Busek, E. 2018. Mitteleuropa revisited: Warum Europas Zukunft in Mitteleuropa entschieden wird. Wien: Kremayr & Scheriau.

Courtois, S. et all. 1999. The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Fokus Václava Moravce. 2015. Public-law Czech Television program broadcasted at March 3 2015. Available at (<http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/11054978064-fokus-vaclava-moravce/215411030530002>). (Cit. 15 August 2018).

Havrdová Z. et all. 2013. Mít život ve svých rukou: O oblastech a postupech práce komunitního pracovníka ve vyloučených lokalitách. Praha – Toužim: Český západ – FHS UK.

Hlaváček, K. 2014. Romové v České republice. Study No. 5.341 of Czech Parliament Institute. Available at (<http://www.psp.cz/sqw/ppi.sqw?d=1&t=8>) (Cit. 15 August 2018).

Matoušek, O. et all. 2012. Základy sociální práce. Praha: Portál.

Mijnssen, I. 31 July 2018. Die Wanderbewegung von Ost nach West ist Europas verdrängte Revolution. Neue Zürcher Zeitung. Available at (<https://www.nzz.ch/international/die-wanderbewegung-von-ost-nach-west-ist-europas-verdraengte-revolution-ld.1407868>) (Cit. 8 August 2018).

Opatrný, M. 2016A. Die Skepsis im Osten: Das Beispiel Tschechien und dessen Blick auf die Migrationswelle in Europa. *ET Studies* 7/2 (2016): 277-294.

Opatrný, M. 2016B. The Views and Attitudes of Czech Christians on the Refugee Crisis: Results of a Survey Among Czech Christians. *Caritas et veritas* 2(2016): 99-114.

Pew Research Center 2017. Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe: National and religious identities in a region once dominated by atheist regimes.

-
- Scavo, N., Beretta, R. 2018. Fake Pope. Le false notizie su papa Francesco. Alba: Edizioni San Paolo.
- Snyder, T. 2012. Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin. New York: Basic Books.
- Standard Eurobarometer 89. 2018. Report: Public Opinion in the European Union. Fieldwork: March 2018.
- Svoboda, R. 2013. Abuse of the Topic of Wealth by the Communist Regime: The Case of the Journal Charity. *Caritas et veritas* 2(2013): 81-90.
- Thompson, N. 2000. Theory and Practice in Human Services. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Tomka, M., Zulehner, P. M. 2000. Religion im gesellschaftlichen Kontext Ost(Mittel)Europas. Ostfildern: Schwabenverlag.
- Tomka, M., Zulehner, P. M. 1999. Religion in den Reformländern Ost(Mittel)Europas. Ostfildern: Schwabenverlag.
- Václavík, D. 2010. Náboženství a moderní česká společnost. Praha: Grada.
- Vienna Institute of Demography (VID) and International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA). 2018. European Demographic Datasheet 2018. Wittgenstein Centre (IIASA, VID/OEAW, WU), Vienna. Available at (<http://www.populationeurope.org/index.php>). (Cit. 8 August 2018).
- Weis, M. 2013. Praktiken des kommunistischen Regimes in der Tschechoslowakei. *Dike kai nomos: Quaderni di cultura giuridico-politica* 5: 47-61.
- Zulehner, P. M. 2016. Entängstigt euch: Die Flüchtlinge und das christliche Abendland: Ostfildern: Schwabenverlag.
- Zulehner, P. M. et al. 1996. Solidarität: Option für die Modernisierungsverlierer. Innsbruck: Tyrolia.



Multi-voiced-ness of Religious Identity

Contribution of Ömer Faruk Gürlesin to the Collaborative Session of REA 2018

Introduction

Over the past three decades Islam has become increasingly visible in the European public space. Despite Islam's rapid growth in Europe and the Netherlands, many in the West know little about the religion. The reality of European Islam is very diverse. The differences are related to national, cultural, religious and linguistic elements and these elements. In the present study, we were explored the inner differences of Dutch-Turkish religiosity in relation to social, economic, and cultural aspects. By means of this exploration we examined the possible directions Islam is taking in Europe. We seek a middle ground between two types of essentialist argumentation: one is to theorize incompatibility between Islam and European culture, and the other is to theorize compatibility between them. As many scholars who study Muslim society have noted, Islam, like any other religion, does not develop in a monolithic form, whether it is hostile to European values or assimilated, as the term 'Euro-Islam' suggests. It develops in a multiplicity of forms, such as political Islam, official Islam, popular Islam, spiritual Islam and radical fundamentalism, combining both radical and moderate religious voices.

One of the main objectives of this study is to contribute to the body of knowledge about the characteristics of religiosity of Turkish-Dutch Muslims in plural Dutch society, in relation to socio-economic aspects of the Dutch plural society.

The main research questions are (1) 'What forms and motivations characterize elite and popular religiosity, what are the patterns in the relationship between elite and popular religiosity, and how does this relate to the socio-economic status of Dutch-Turkish Muslims living in the Netherlands?' (2) 'What are the socio-psychological differences in behaviour and attitudes among Dutch-Turkish Muslims who experience elite and popular religiosity, respectively?'

In this presentation I give information about preliminary findings of a PhD project on religiosity among Dutch-Turkish muslims. My research question was 'Which forms and motivations characterize elite and popular religiosity, what are the patterns of relationship between elite and popular religiosity and how is this related to the socio-economic status of Dutch-Turkish Muslims in the Netherlands?' To answer this question I started with a literature review on the concepts of elite and popular religiosity. Next to that I interviewed key persons (instrument of qualitative

research). The literature review and the interviews gave information for the construction of the questionnaire, the main part of this research (instrument of quantitative research). In this presentation in section 1 I first discuss the general characteristics of elite and popular religiosity in Islam, and see in what way both concepts show similarity and differences. Then, in the second section, I give information about the survey. In the third section I present a summary of the major findings. In paragraph 3.1 I pay attention to a promising theoretical framework that might help to understand the complexity of religiosity of Dutch-Turkish muslims in the Netherlands. And last but not least, section 4 is the discussion-section, including recommendations for further research.

1. General characteristics of elite and popular religiosity in Islam

This study sheds light on the notion of elite and popular religion and its acquired meaning and content in the social scientific study of religion. We explain Weber's status stratification and rational choice theories in order to clarify elite and popular religion from a sociological perspective. In this study it is then proposed adding a different definition of 'elite' based on a synthesis approach. It holds that: 'Popular religion' is constituted by specific types of religious praxis and belief exercised by generally socially and economically non-privileged strata. The definition of elite religion takes shape as follows: 'Elite religion' is constituted by specific types of religious praxis and belief exercised by strata that are generally socially and economically privileged. Thus, according to this definitions we assumed that certain objective positions within the social field generally 'go hand in hand with' certain forms of religiosity.

The literature and our sample suggests a number of demographic and socio-economic factors that might explain why Dutch-Turkish Muslims generally experience popular religiosity. The focus is on the dynamic interrelationship of elite and popular religiosity and its relation to the socio-economic situation in the Netherlands in the light of our findings. Several factors will be discussed that possibly are related to elite and popular religiosity, like 'Immigration and religiosity' and 'Educational status and religiosity', 'Age', 'Gender and religiosity' and 'Economic status and religiosity'. Last but not least we discuss the issue of Imam education and Diyanet's position of producing Islamic knowledge in relation to elite and popular religiosity.

2. Methodology

The design of the present study has been shaped by a ‘mixed-methods’ approach, in which quantitative and qualitative methods are merged into one research project. Within a four-year period (2010 - 2013), the project began with qualitative research to explore the various forms and motivations of elite and popular religiosity and the social location of these religiosities, focusing on Dutch-Turkish Muslims. One of the essential instruments we used was participant observation. The research design also included an extensive literature review, so that the results of the qualitative research and literature review could serve as a basis for aspects of the quantitative approach. The second method was a questionnaire survey that formed the main part of the project. Inspired by Allport’s definition of the two ideal types intrinsic/extrinsic (1967), our definition of elite/popular shows a clear development towards viewing the phenomena as types of motive, i.e., we zoom in on the motivations associated with religious beliefs and practices. We use the term ‘form’ to refer to the cognitive styles of religious beliefs and practices. In this study, then, the elite/popular distinction is operationalized as a measurement of two different kinds of motivations or cognitive styles in each of the dimensions (ideological, ritualistic, experiential and intellectual) which divide each of these dimensions in two sub dimensions, ‘elite’ and ‘popular’. For instance, within the ideological dimension of religiosity, what will be measured is not the belief-content itself, but elite/popular motivations or cognitive styles shaping the belief. These two different kinds of motivations or cognitive styles measured within each of the dimensions can be called ‘elite motivations and cognitive styles of religiosity’ and ‘popular motivations and cognitive styles of religiosity’.

A survey was conducted among Turkish Muslims from all parts of the Netherlands. There were 649 male and 516 female Turkish Muslim participants, ranging in age from 18 to 68. Before the quantitative part of this study, observations and informal interviews took place with 60 parents whose children attended Qur’ān weekend schools. The first part of the questionnaire was designed to establish further demographic characteristics of the participants. The second part was designed to obtain information regarding the ideological, ritualistic, experiential, intellectual and consequential aspect of religion. The third part of the questionnaire consists of two scales: The Elite Religiosity Scale and the Popular Religiosity Scale, both developed especially for the Dutch-Turkish Muslim communities.

3. Major findings

Factor analyses and correlation analyses performed on the Elite Religiosity Scale and the Popular Religiosity Scale, showed that participants who experience elite religiosity tend to stress doubt and dynamism within the ideological aspect of religiosity. Within the ritualistic aspect, they tend to emphasize the intrinsic value of rituals (i.e., focus on quality). Within the intellectual aspect, they underline the importance of doubt about the validity of their current religious knowledge, and the dynamism of religious learning. Within the experiential aspect of religiosity, they consider miraculous religious experiences (special gifts from God in exchange for their religious effort) to be relatively unimportant: for them it is essential to keep these private. Participants who experience popular religiosity tend to stress the sureness and the stability of their current beliefs within the ideological aspect of religiosity. Within the ritualistic aspect, they emphasize the extrinsic value of rituals (i.e., focus on quantity) and they express material expectations. Within the intellectual aspect, they tend to be sure of their current religious knowledge and place intellectual stability at the centre. Within the experiential aspect of religiosity, they consider miraculous religious experiences to be an appropriate and necessary part of religious commitment, and they are eager to report such experiences to others.

Based on the analysis of the survey and the interviews, some structural characteristic of a new Muslim religiosity scale are suggested, which range from popular religiosity at one end to elite religiosity at the other. These two extremes reflect several components, which include belief (*īmān*), practice (*ʿamal*), knowledge (*ʿilm/maʿrifah*), experience (*maʿūnat/ilhām*) and consequence (*natījah*). The present study identified several characteristics distinguishing elite religiosity from popular religiosity: Dynamism versus stability, critical versus uncritical, without material expectancy versus material expectancy, differentiated versus undifferentiated, experiential inessentiality and privacy versus experiential desirability and shareability, tolerant versus intolerant, unprejudiced versus prejudiced.

Factor analyses and correlation analyses within the two scales show that respondents in this research project who experience *elite religiosity* tend to emphasize doubting and dynamism within the ideological aspect of religiosity. They tend to emphasize the intrinsic value of the ritual (quality) within the ritualistic aspect of religiosity. They also highlight doubting about the validity of their current religious knowledge and dynamism of religious learning within the intellectual aspect of religiosity. They also see miraculous religious experiences (special divine gifts from the

God in exchange for their religious effort) as relatively unimportant and for them it is essential to keep these private within the experiential aspect of religiosity.

Respondents in this research project who experience *popular religiosity* tend to emphasize the sureness and stability of their current beliefs within the ideological aspect of religiosity. They emphasize the extrinsic value (quantity) of ritual and material expectations within the ritualistic aspect of religiosity. They also tend to be sure of their current religious knowledge and centralize intellectual stability within the intellectual aspect of religiosity. They see religious experiences as appropriate and necessary parts of religious commitment and they are eager to report such experiences within the experiential aspect of religiosity.

Interesting is the group of respondents that shows characteristics of both types of religiosity: popular and elite religiosity. The present study acknowledges the ‘muddleheadedness’ (Allport, 1967, p. 439) of some of the respondents’ religiosity and suggests that the DST offers an interesting theoretical framework for an explanation and further exploration of this phenomenon.

4. Discussion and recommendation

In this study we also explored ‘What are the patterns in the relationship between elite and popular religiosity with regard to Dutch-Turkish Muslims living in the Netherlands’. We hypothesized that ‘Elite and popular forms of religiosity are negatively correlated with each other’. We indeed found a negative correlation between elite religiosity and popular religiosity ($r = -.72$), as expected. However, this does not mean that there is a clear differentiation between the two forms of religiosity, since we found that 66 (7.3%) respondents experienced aspects of both types simultaneously. Moreover, the respondents who are labelled as displaying ‘elite religiosity’ are not completely opposed to popular forms of religiosity, and vice versa. So there is an important aspect that needs to be stressed before the relationship between elite and popular religiosity can be discussed. This concerns the simultaneous experience of both types of religiosity that appears to be characteristic of a significant number of respondents, as described in the previous chapter. Allport, faced with comparable results in his studies, criticized the logic of these respondents and tried to resolve this puzzle by describing the endorsement of both ‘intrinsic’ and ‘extrinsic’ positions as “muddleheadedness” (Allport, 1967, p. 439). Pargament et al. reacted to this blunt statement by stating that scoring high on the two orientations is not necessarily logically

inconsistent, in the sense that people both “live” (intrinsic) and “use” (extrinsic) their religion (Pargament, 1997, pp. 65-66). Based on the findings of this study, we would rather speak of a contextualized domination of one type of religiosity over another type, or in Hermans’ conceptualization, of the dominant position of one ‘voice’ over others at a given time and under specific circumstances (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). The concepts of religious ‘voice’ and position, and the Dialogical Self Theory (DST), can shed new light on the way in which individuals orchestrate their various voiced religious positions in so-called I-positions in the ‘society of mind’ (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). Hermans defines the dialogical self as a dynamic multiplicity of *I*-positions.

In the most succinct way, the dialogical self can be conceived of as a dynamic multiplicity of *I*-positions. In this view, the *I* emerges from its intrinsic contact with the (social) environment and is bound to particular positions in time and space. As such, the embodied *I* is able to move from one position to the other in accordance with changes in situation and time. In this process of positioning, repositioning and counterpositioning, the *I* fluctuates among different and even opposed positions (both within the self and between the self and perceived or imagined others), and these positions are involved in relationships of relative dominance and social power. As part of sign-mediated social relations, positions can be voiced so that dialogical exchanges among positions can develop. The voices behave like interacting characters in a story or movie, involved in processes of question and answer, agreement and disagreement, conflicts and struggles, negotiations and integrations. Each of them has a story to tell about their own experiences from their own perspective. As different voices, these characters exchange knowledge and information about their respective me’s, creating a complex, narratively structured self (Hermans, 2016, pp. 2-3).

A strong key metaphor in DST is that of ‘voice’. When people take different positions, they tell different stories about themselves originating from different so-called *I*-positions. All voices are coloured by the ideas, values, expectations and behavioural patterns of the different social and cultural groups of which an individual is a member. Other persons and cultural groups manifest themselves as voices speaking in the self (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010).

For Hermans, ‘religion’ seems to have two meanings: ‘traditional religiosity’ and ‘individual spirituality’. Hermans connects the traditional religious view with the traditional model of the self, and individual spirituality with the modern and postmodern model of the self. These conceptualizations include characteristics and motivations which are similar to those included in

our conceptualizations of elite and popular religiosity, such as: reflective versus uncritical, openness to change versus closedness to change, associational versus communal, universal versus parochial, differentiated versus undifferentiated, personal versus institutional, and humility versus dogmatism. According to the traditional model of the self, “the self is not an autonomous entity but rather an integral part of a sacred whole” (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 84). “The God of the traditional model is a sovereign who wishes humans to obey him, instead of getting involved in a mutual dialogue” (ibid., p. 85). Within this model “the hierarchical system suppresses individual autonomy and freedom” (ibid., p. 86), and “there is a strong belief in fate and destiny” (ibid., pp. 98-99). The modern model of the self questioned these characteristics and found its justification not in a sacred order, but in the self as a sovereign, reflexive self. In the postmodern model of the self, the sovereign self is deconstructed as a multiple, fragmented, and decentred self, under the influence of diverse and constantly changing cultural forces (Zock, 2013, p. 19).

Hermans does not see a strict distinction between these three models. He argues that a previous model of the self does not become completely obsolete in a subsequent stage, emphasizing that aspects of the traditional self are still present in the modern and postmodern self. He claims that traditional religion can easily go off the rails - reducing, contesting, and even replacing the reflexivity, autonomy, and openness that are dominant characteristics of the modern and postmodern self. Hermans draws attention to the ontological insecurity accompanying the complexity and diversity of the postmodern condition humaine. According to Hermans, religious fundamentalism is an emotional and defensive coping mechanism to deal with the insecurity caused by the plurality and the fragmentation of the postmodern world. The voice of “fundamentalism” can be strong or weak depending on the context. According to Hermans, traditional religion is an important source of defensive localization (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 114).

This study acknowledges the ‘muddleheadedness’ of the religiosity of some participants, and suggests that DST provides a promising theoretical framework for an elaboration and further explanation of this phenomenon. Our quantitative analysis focused mainly on participants who strongly experienced either elite or popular religiosity. In our research we mainly analyzed the data of those individuals who disagreed with or were in conflict with the other religious voice. But this does not mean that the other religious voice is completely absent and rejected in such individuals. On the contrary, certain circumstances led respondents to express themselves with certain religious voices and these expressions may change as circumstances change. If we look,

for example, at the participants who simultaneously expressed elite and popular religiosity, we can say that these different religious voices can, to a certain extent, be reconciled, even if they show very different and contradictory forms and motivations - just as postmodern relativism has drawn attention to the coexistence of disparate views and interpretations, even within one and the same person (Droogers, 2012, p. 72). More research is recommended for the phenomenon of what was called ‘muddleheadedness’ or in DST terminology ‘multi-voiced-ness’ to arrive at a better understanding, which is expected to help us in the prevention of radicalization of young muslims in the Netherlands.

Allport, G. W., & Ross, J. M. (1967). Personal religious orientation and prejudice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 5, 432–443.

Droogers, A. (2012). Paradise lost: The domestication of religious imagination. In A. Droogers (Ed.), *Play and power in religion collected essays (Religion and Reason)* (pp. 69–89). Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter.

Gürlesin, Ö. F. (2018). *Elite and Popular Religiosity among Dutch-Turkish Muslims in the Netherlands*. PhD thesis, Leiden University.

Hermans, H. J. M. (2016). Introduction. In H. J. M. Hermans (Ed.), *Assessing and Stimulating a Dialogical Self in Groups, Teams, Cultures, and Organizations* (pp. XIII–XXVI). Sw: Springer.

Hermans, H. J. M., & Hermans-Konopka, A. (2010). *Dialogical self theory: Positioning and counter-positioning in a globalizing society*. Cambridge University Press.

Pargament, K. I. (1997). *The psychology of religion and coping: Theory, research, practice*.

Zock, H. (2013). Religious Voices in the Dialogical Self: Towards a Conceptual-Analytical Framework on the Basis of Hubert Hermans’s Dialogical Self Theory. In M. Buitelaar & H. Zock (Eds.), *Religious Voices in Self-Narratives - Making Sense of Life in Times of Transitions* (pp. 11–36). Göttingen: De Gruyter.

'Black' and 'white schools' in the Netherlands: Toward a pedagogy of belonging, inclusivity and normality

Duncan Wielzen and Monique van Dijk-Groeneboer

Introduction

As in many European countries, the Dutch education system is largely based on public and private schools. In general, public schools are accessible for all children regardless of their (parents') religious, philosophical or worldview orientation. These schools provide education on behalf of the State. Private schools, on the other hand, offer education that is grounded in a particular religious or ideological belief. Among these are Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Hindu and Jewish schools. These type of schools can either accept or refuse children depending on their parents' willingness to endorse the religious conviction of the school. In practice, Catholic and Protestant schools accept children from all creeds when parents agree to endorse the religious identity of the school. Furthermore, there are non-religious private schools with a specific educational or philosophical orientation, such as the Montessori, Dalton or Jena Plan schools.

All schools in the Netherlands are government funded. Article 23 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of education. Thus, individuals or groups are free to found schools based on their particular worldview orientation, and to establish curricula for their education. Nevertheless, all schools are subject to quality standards set by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

The current narrative on 'black' and 'white schools' is embedded within the educational structure of the Netherlands and pertains only to the Dutch society as compared to other European countries (Gelder van, 2016). There are, however, different understandings of these notions. Generally speaking, 'black schools' refer to schools where 70 or more percent of the children come from non-Western migrant backgrounds. 'White schools' on the other hand refer to schools with predominantly white Dutch children (also 70 or more percent of the total school population). These notions are rather contested, as we will illustrate further on.

The first part of this paper discusses the contested notions of 'black' and 'white schools' to a certain length, by therefore reviewing different literary sources. These sources seem to suggest that freedom of education, dovetailed with parents' freedom to choose a particular school for their children (*vrije schoolkeuze*) may perpetuate the existing dichotomy between 'black' and 'white schools'. This binary occurrence upholds ethnic-cultural segregation in the Dutch education system to various degrees, irrespective of several attempts at desegregation, at municipal level.

The second part of this paper looks at how RE, in tandem with a 'pedagogy of belonging, inclusivity and normality' may contribute to a counter narrative vis-à-vis social exclusion and segregation in education (Karstens, 2005). In other words: **how can religious pedagogy contribute to creating brave spaces that supersede the notions of 'black' and 'white schools'?** Between these two parts we present a case as a best practice

example, which also serves as a counter ‘narrative’ to the so called ‘black school’ and constitutes excellence in education. Next, we examine the notions of belonging, inclusivity and normality as key constructs for a transformative pedagogy. In addition to these notions, we shall highlight the value of RE for such a transformative pedagogy, or pedagogy about hope (Winter, de, 2017). And in the final section we present our preliminary conclusion and recommendations for further research.

The origin of ‘black’ and ‘white schools’

The phenomena of ‘black’ and ‘white schools’ has its origin in the 1960s and 1970s. In those years, the Netherlands, like many other European countries, was in dire need of cheap laborers. West-European industrial companies needed unskilled personnel to fuel their factories and to keep pace with the economic demands of that time. These laborers, very often poorly educated, were recruited from countries around the Mediterranean, from former colonial territories and later from Northern Africa. Hence, in the Netherlands, many Turkish, Moroccan and Algerian immigrants arrived. The arrival of these guest laborers not only led to increased ethnic pluralism, it also sharpened the existing socio-economic segregation, both in society at large, and in education in particular (Bakker, 2012).

In the early 1970s member countries of the European Community (EC) began adopting a restrictive policy towards non-EC citizens, which affected guest laborers from these non-EC countries. Hence, in the Netherlands, in particular, a policy was adopted to reunite these laborers with their families who had stayed behind in their home countries (Lucassen and Lucassen, 2011). Due to their weak socio-economic status, Turkish and Moroccan families often resorted to disadvantaged areas, both in cities and other communities, where cheap, but poor housing was available. The immigrant children began visiting schools in their new neighborhoods, but had to overcome a language barrier. The Dutch government then presupposed that these children would eventually repatriate to their country of birth. To avoid any disconnection with their culture and native language, the Dutch government introduced *Onderwijs in Eigen Taal en Cultuur* (Education in Original Language and Culture – OETC). This education policy, as can be argued, led to a concentration of immigrant children – mostly Muslims – in schools that were traditionally populated by white Dutch children. But as the number of children from ethnic minorities increased, white Dutch parents began withdrawing their children from these schools and enrolling them in schools with none to less immigrant children, located in other districts. The motive behind such a decision is often linked to fear of quality loss, from which poor education results ensue. As a result of this so called ‘white flight’, schools in concentrated areas – i.e., districts where, according to the definition of the *Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau*, the population of the minorities is greater than their share in the urban population as a whole – have over the years turned into ‘black schools’. In such districts, relatively many low-educated immigrants with a social disadvantage live, usually mixed with native Dutch people with lower income. Statistics from *Onderwijsinspectie* (Inspectorate of Education, [2007]) show that children visiting ‘black schools’ often perform poorly. One main contributing factor seems to be deficiencies in the command of the Dutch language.

Since many 'black schools' were in a rather disadvantaged position (high repetition and drop-out rates, poor education performance, and frequent replacements within the teaching staff), the Dutch government provided financial support for non-Western migrant school children. Until 2006 that support was based on the number of migrant children. It enabled primary ('black') schools to hire extra personnel who were assigned to help these children to perform better. But from 2006 onwards there has been a change in government policy, thereby shifting focus from migrant children to the educational level of *all* parents. And at secondary education level general socio economic terms related to residence in deprived areas became the criterion for receiving additional government funds. This change of policy ensued re-allocation of funds from 'black schools' to schools with disadvantaged white Dutch pupils (SCP, 2009; Simons, 2011; Altinyelken and Karsten, 2015).

The policy change in view of extra governmental support for schools with disadvantaged children – measured according to their parents level of education – has added differentiations in the understanding of the notion of 'black schools'. From this latter vantage point 'black schools' are still perceived in the original sense, meaning schools with 70 or more percent children from non-Western migrants. 'Black schools' can also refer to (mixed) schools of which the majority of the children are from parents with a low education level. And it can also refer to schools with a majority of white Dutch children from parents with a low education and living in a deprived area (Simons, 2011). However, public discourse has not engaged into considering these latter two connotations as such.

As we have seen, the distinction between 'black' and 'white schools' entered public discourse after large numbers of migrant children were getting enrolled in schools in concentrated areas. Moreover, several studies point out that in general, white Dutch parents often choose a school for their child(eren) that connects to their own social and cultural background (Ladd, Fiske, and Ruijs, 2009; Karsten et al., 2006). Whenever the number of non-Western migrant children is increasing in a particular school, it raises concerns about the quality of education, which explains why white Dutch parents avoid such a school, even if it is located in close vicinity of their home. Therefore, these parents take their child(eren) out of such a school and choose for a 'white school', which in their opinion matches their social preferences. When large numbers of white Dutch parents follow this pattern, it is labelled as 'the white flight'. However, this pattern also occurs with parents of colour who have climbed the social ladder resulting from their own high level of education. It seems as if they too have a preference for 'white schools' since these are considered to offer better or higher study prospects for their child(eren). Therefore, some have come up with the notion of a 'black flight' to describe this latter phenomenon.

Furthermore, the housing policy of the Dutch government in the 1980s enabled white Dutch families hitherto living in deprived areas, but with access to financial resources, to move to privileged districts. The migrant families were left behind and when newly arrived migrants settled into the vacant houses, schools in these areas became almost fully populated by migrant children. The very few white Dutch parents who had remained often felt that their children would be excluded, thus deteriorating their chances for success. That

eventually caused them to move altogether, choosing to place their children in a 'white school' elsewhere.

These social dynamics have engendered ethnic-cultural segregation in education. Such is the case when a 'white school' is located in a particular district with predominantly non-Western migrants, or with the reverse situation. Hence, segregation in education implies that children from a specific ethnic-cultural background are spread disproportionately over schools in their districts or city. In response, 16 Dutch municipalities implemented policy towards desegregation in education with little to no success (Peters and Walraven, 2011). One reason therefore seems to be the inability of municipalities to convince white Dutch parents to choose for a school with many non-Western migrant children so that ethnic-cultural balance and diversity could be attained. But a more fundamental reason has to do with the prerogative parents have for making a free school choice (*vrije schoolkeuze*), which is legally embedded.

Ethnic-cultural segregation in education

The integration of non-Western migrant children into the Dutch society through their education has been on the political agenda since the 1980s (Altinyelken and Karsten, 2015). An underlying motive therefore seems to be the close relationship between, on the one hand 'black' and 'white schools' and, on the other, a growing concern about ethnic-cultural segregation in the Dutch education system (Stevens et al., 2011). The majority of pupils with a non-Western migrant background is concentrated in the Randstad. In 2006 about half of the total school population consisted of children with a non-Western migrant background (CBS, 2006). Little more than half of the total number of schools in the Randstad were considered to be 'black schools' (CBS, 2007).

Research conducted by the 'Kenniscentrum Gemengde Scholen' (Wolfgram et al. 2009) demonstrated at one point that one third (33.4 %) of schools in the Randstad were considered to be 'black schools'. The research data illustrates both a decline of the numbers of 'black schools' and an increase of the number of schools with lesser percentages of pupils with a non-Western migrant background.

Irrespective of a decreasing trend of segregation in education, notions such as 'black' and 'white schools' still persist in current public discourse. Against this background a group of educational scientist from the University of Amsterdam, recently demanded in an op-ed in the Dutch newspaper *Volkskrant* to abandon these terms (Altinyelken et al., 2017.) Moreover, a 2015 NRC report indicates that in several districts with a mixed population in Amsterdam, not all schools reflected the ethnic-cultural diversity of those districts. Thus, in 2008 'black' and 'white schools' were still a common feature of the educational landscape of districts such as Oud-West, de Pijp, IJburg and Noord (Weeda, 2015).

However, studies conducted by FORUM (2014), a former Institute for Multicultural Affairs, corroborate this decrease in segregation in schools in the Netherlands of recent years. By comparing data about the development of segregation in 38 major municipalities, from 2005-2006 with data collected from 2009-2013 this decrease became visible. The data illustrates that in the major cities of the Netherlands, known as the 'Randstad' – i.e.

Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht – segregation in education had a higher decrease compared to other municipalities. These results echoed another study by Ladd, Fiske en Ruijs (2009) in which they employed multiple criteria that demonstrated a downward trend in educational segregation across the board. Therefore they compared data from 1997-2005 indicating an increase in segregation in all 38 municipalities with data from 2013, showing a decrease in segregation in the same municipalities studied.

't Palet, example of good practice

Gijsberts en Dagevos (2005) have demonstrated that there is no necessary causal relation between 'black schools' and poor quality education. 'Black schools' too can be innovative in leading their pupils to excel in a particular life domain. An example hereof is the 't Palet primary school. It is located in what is considered to a deprived area, the Schilderwijk in in the city of The Hague. After the schoolboard had decided upon making adaptations to the school's curriculum the pupils educational performance improved. In 1978 't Palet was a so called 'mixed school' with 50% of the schoolchildren from white Dutch parents and the other 50% from migrant parents. In 2017 the school had 0 children whose both parents are white and it is now considered to be a 'black school'. In 2010 the management opted for lengthening the school time with one extra hour that was reserved for sports, arts and music education. In 2016 the school was labeled 'excellent school' due to its outstanding performance in music education.

Toward a pedagogy of belonging, inclusivity and normality

The best practice example above illustrates that excellence is not the pivotal domain of a few core subjects such as math and language. More importantly is pupils' motivation to learn. Researchers point out that a sense of belonging is fundamental to human motivation (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Moreover, being connected to a social peer group can enhance young people performance in formal education. They become more interested in school and enjoy their schooling even more (Wentzel and Caldwell, 1997). At the same time a link exists between not being part of a social group, thus being excluded, and rather poor school engagement (Hymel *et.al.*, 1996). Hence, a sense of belonging seems to be intertwined with feeling included, valued and accepted. It is in such an atmosphere that children develop a positive self-image. Healthy character building then becomes feasible. The implication of these study results is that the teacher must be equipped to facilitate a safe space where children not only feel comfortable with themselves, but also with one another, irrespective of the diversity of cultural, religious or philosophical backgrounds. Hull (2002) calls this the contribution of religious education to religious freedom, for religion can help make safe spaces in classrooms when treated in the right way of allowing freedom and respect towards all values based on very different religions and spiritualities. Then the feeling of 'we' will grow and allows all people involved to be empowered and the entire community to excel.

Context of Diversity

The core question now becomes: How can teachers in RE help create safe spaces that enable children to excel? The underlying assumption is that when children feel at home in a particular school, parents may be more keen to get involved and be supportive of the school. We think that RE teachers can utilize Bible stories to engage children in

conversations about the value of hospitality toward strangers (e.g. The Good Samaritan; The Lord's visit to Abram, etc.) and parallel stories in Quran or Vedas. Creating such safe and brave spaces where children experience a sense of belonging will ultimately engender a transformation from 'black' and 'white schools' into promising schools. That, we hope, may change public discourse and opinion of schools in general in the Netherlands.

We would like to teach students to look with an open mind at all those different people and customs in the classrooms. And then discover where they recognize themselves in, what can be of value to them in life. And that can be started in that diverse class group at school. The group is also diverse at a confessional school, like a Protestant or Catholic school; none of them are homogeneous. Go face to face with open eyes, go into real open dialogue. And then let all religions and philosophies come in. We need broad education in this area. Above all, apply knowledge, because pupils know very little about religions and philosophies. Often it is only the very limited and colored information that they get through the media so that their opinions are superficial and the nuance is lost; religions and religious groups are shaved over. There is a lot of ignorance among young people about religion, so cognitive knowledge is needed. Vermeer points out in this context that concepts and thinking skills must be taught. This allows students to interpret, understand and reflect religious phenomena (Vermeer 2012). And teach them the function and value of religions and philosophies through the lived faith. It is about gaining religious experiences yourself by observing what happens in you when you participate as completely as possible in religious rituals and, above all, that you connect with the other person and his convictions from your deepest values. This is preferably done with activating teaching methods, personal stories and excursions, so that religion can really be experienced. Because only 'looking at religious items, like a photo of candles with a statue of Mary or at the insight of a mosque in a movie', is static and looking from the outside. Then you look at the 'practice' as a kind of tourist. You have to look further, you have to experience something like that, or in other words: learn with all your senses what religion is. And share that in turn with people who really experience it: learning from each other's religious roots.

The teacher must therefore be an authentic teacher who is open to the experience of all those unique students in his or her class. In doing so, I connect with what Roebben calls "learning in diversity and interspiritual dialogue" (Roebben 2015, 70). It is important to know that in communication in religious education both sender and receiver must open themselves to the other; the expert, the teacher with her or his knowledge, attitude and skills, and the pupil who is taught with her or his knowledge, attitude and skills. Only when there is a real connection between teacher and pupil, can one truly learn.

Cognitive training, as mentioned before, is necessary to overcome this gap, but even more important religious education has to focus on the unique qualities of each pupil in the classroom. We, as RE teachers, have to keep trying to enhance his and her roots, make them strong human beings to face the challenges in their full everyday life. A genuine dialogue and well-designed activating exercises is what we hope to develop to fulfil this obligation as teachers at all primary and secondary schools, whether black or white, private or public. We work on developing evidence-based methods of interreligious learning to realize a change of perspective in the pupils themselves and in their class (Kienstra et al. In press).

We offer refresher courses for teachers to develop further here. We as teachers jointly create professional learning communities to share experiences, inspire each other and continue to develop methods together. Then the school becomes more excellent, as the example t Pallet, and the genuine core values of all pupils will be respected and empowered.

Nobody can make choices for the good life alone and nobody can stand firm without roots. Those roots can be found and developed by young people themselves. And that will work if we jointly deliver that too! Let students who want to become teachers experience what empowers them. Then they can teach pupils the rich traditions of religions and philosophies, and let them also experience what can help these young people to make choices for the good life. Than they can later make those choices as adults and become responsible citizens. Than, hopefully, there are so many brave spaces that even the suggestion of white or black school completely disappears in our vocabulary and way of thinking.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Altinyelken, H. K., & Karsten, S. (2015). The Netherlands: Structure, Policies, Controversies. In T. Corner (Ed.). *Education in the European Union: pre-2003 Member States* (pp. 305-324). (Education around the world). London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Altinyelken, H. K., & Volman, M. (2017). Wetenschappers: stop met de termen 'zwarte' en 'witte' school. *Volkskrant* 26/2/17.

Bakker, J. (2012). 'Cultureel-etnische segregatie in het onderwijs: achtergronden, oorzaken en waarom te bestrijden' [Cultural-Ethnic Segregation in Education: Backgrounds, Causes and Why to Combat]. *Pedagogiek*, 32(2), 104-128.

Baumeister, R.F. & Leary, M.R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497-529. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.49

FORUM. (2014). Factsheet Basisscholen en hun buurt: ontwikkeling van afspiegeling en segregatie. Utrecht: FORUM.

Gelder, L., van. (2016). 'Zwarte en witte scholen, het lijkt wel apartheid' [Black and White Schools. Sounds Like Apartheid]. Retrieved on Februari 16, 2018: <https://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/-zwarte-en-witte-scholen-het-lijkt-wel-apartheid~a4433206/>

Gijsberts, M. & Dagevos, J. (2005). De invloed van etnische concentratie op integratie en Beeldvorming. Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.

Hull, J.M. (2002). Religious Education in Schools: 'School Education in Relation with Freedom of Religion and Belief, Tolerance and non-Discrimination' in: *Religious Education in Schools* Essays at the International Association for religious Freedom in 2001 in Madrid, Spain, 4-11.

Hymel, S., Comfort, C., Schonert-Reichl, K., & McDougald, P. (1996). *Academic failure and school dropout*. In I. Iuvonen & K.R. Wentzel (Eds.), *Social motivation: Understanding children's school adjustment* (pp. 313-345). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Inspectorate of Education. (2007). *The state of education in the Netherlands*. 2005/6. Brussels: the European Commission.

Karstens, S. (2005). De zwarte en de witte school [The black and the white school] (2005). B en M – Tijdschrift voor Beleid, Poliek en Maatschappij. Retrieved on Februari 16, 2018: <https://www.nemokennislink.nl/publicaties/de-zwarte-en-de-witte-school/>

Karsten, S., Felix, C., Ledoux, G., Meijnen, W., Roeleveld, J., & Van Schooten, E. (2006). Choosing Segregation or Integration? The Extent and Effects of Ethnic Segregation in Dutch Cities. *Education and Urban Society*, 38(2), 228-247.

Kienstra, N., M. van Dijk-Groeneboer en O. Boelens (in press). 'An Empirical Study of the training of Interreligious Classroom Teaching' in: *Religious Education*.

Ladd, H., Fiske, E., & Ruijs, N. (2009). *Parental choice in the Netherlands: Growing Concerns about Segregation*. Durham: Duke University.

Lucassen, L., & Lucassen, J. (2011). *Winnaars en Verliezers; een nuchtere balans van vijfhonderd jaar immigratie*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker.

Peters, D., & Walraven, G. (2011). The Netherlands: Interventions to Counteract School Segregation. In J. Bakker, E. Denessen, D. Peters, & G. Walraven (Eds.), *International Perspectives on Countering School Segregation* (pp. 131-149). Antwerp/Apeldoorn: Garant.

Roebben, B. (2015). *Inclusieve godsdienstpedagogiek*. Leuven: Acco.

Ruiter, J.J. de & Vermeulen, J. (2007). *Religion und Religionsunterricht in den Niederlanden*, in: *Religionen in der Schule. Bildung in Deutschland und Europa vor neuen Herausforderungen* (pp. 188-200). Frankfurt: Societäts-Verlag.

Simons, J. (2011). *Zwarte scholen en vrijheid van onderwijs. Taal, denken en werkelijkheid rondom segregatie in het onderwijs (Black Schools and Freedom of Education. Language, Thinking and Reality About Segregation in Education)*. Retrieved on April 4, 2018: https://www.vosabb.nl/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Essay_Jo_Simons.pdf

Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau. (2009). *Making up the Gap. Migrant Education in the Netherlands*. The Hague: SCP.

Stevens, P. A., Clycq, N., Timmerman, C. & van Houtte, M. (2011). Researching Race/Ethnicity and Educational Inequality in the Netherlands: A Critical Review of the Research Literature between 1980 and 2008. *British Educational Research Journal* 37(1), 5-43.

Vermeer, P. (2012), Meta-concepts, thinking skills and religious education, in: *British Journal of Religious Education*, 34 (3), 333-347.

Weeda, F. (2015). Wie mag er naar de witte school? Retrieved on April 4, 2018: <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2015/04/25/wie-mag-er-naar-de-witte-school-1491891-a704320>

Wentzel, K.R. & Caldwell, K. (1997). Friendships, peer acceptance, and group membership. *Child Development*, 68, pp. 1198-1209.

Winter, M. de (2017). Pedagogiek Over Hoop: Het onmiskenbare belang van optimisme in opvoeding en onderwijs. Rede ter gelegenheid van het afscheid als Faculteitshoogleraar Maatschappelijke Opvoedingsvraagstukken aan de Universiteit Utrecht. Retrieved on April 4, 2018: https://www.ris.uu.nl/ws/files/33028988/Afscheidscollege_mei_2017_webversie_definitief_30_5_2017.pdf



Hannah Arendt's concept of natality – inspiring to go 'beyond'

Ina ter Avest, contribution to collaborative session, REA 2018

Introduction

Once I was invited for a meeting at one of my Turkish colleagues home. However, before we could start the meeting (some very urgent points had to be discussed) we were asked to share some thoughts in an informal way. This informal part of the meeting was accompanied with some food. Eh, some food ...??? My colleague's wife had prepared a pile of lovely food: home baked bread, soups, salads, tomatoes, sweet peppers and cookies and cakes, fruit and curds for sweet as a desert. This all to create a good and relaxed climat for the harsh discussions that had to follow. I felt somewhat irritated, knowing that this informal part would take much time, time at the expense of the time needed for the discussions and decisions to be taken during the formal part. Beyond Dutch white normativity I walked the path and went 'beyond'. We had a lovely lunch, with inspiring conversations, and took unanimous the right, fair decisions during the formal part of our meeting. How can we teach and learn walking the path of 'beyond'? In this contribution and with the help of Hannah Arendt en Dorothee Sölle I arrive at the concept of Normative Interreligious Leadership Consultation, a possible way to go 'beyond' – as a person becoming a leader in 'something surprisingly new'.

1. Arendt's natality – the start of 'something surprisingly new'

In her inspiring work 'Vita Activa' Hannah Arendt specifies the concept of natality (Arendt 2004, p. 173-190). Natality is the potency of a new beginning with every new baby that is born, every newcomer. Every child enters the world as a highly receptive being (Oosterwegel ..., p. 106). Being receptive is a very important characteristic of every newborn baby to get to know this world and to turn it into her/his world. Together with the child's being receptive, preconditional is a context/a parent/an educator that allows the child to enter the world, who invites the child, to make the world accesible and enable the child to make her/his appearance in the world. Making the world accesible also requires an attitude of hospitality. Natality for the educators means that 'we immerse ourselves into the world at first through the good will and solidarity of those who nurture us' (Oosterwegel, 2016, p. xx) and later as the child grows up through the own deeds and words.

Arendt extends her ideas about natality to the position of leaders. A leader can change a situation due her/his own way of reframing the situation from ‘Things cannot go on like this’ to ‘I cannot go on like this.’ Her/his power then is no longer related to the hierarchical position, but to the risk s/he dares to take – independent of whether or not the initiative ever can/will be realised (Arendt 2004, p. 188). The statement ‘I cannot go on like this’ shows that a person takes responsibility for her/his ‘rebirth’.

In what way can Arendt’s thought on natality help us in our thinking about ‘beyond white normativity’, becoming ‘leaders’ going ‘beyond white normativity’? Does ‘beyond’ find its foundation in ‘respect’ for the other? Arendt states: “respect is a kind of ‘friendship’ without intimacy and closeness; it is a regard for the person from a distance”. Friendship for Arendt means an ongoing dialogue with the other who is different from me (De Kesel, 2008, pp. 71 ff). For whom can we be(come) a ‘friend’ in the Arendt-ian sense? I interpret Arendtian friendship as characterized by: surfing flexibly on the waves of empathy of being close to standing aloof. No way for entanglement; strong need for disentanglement. An articulated interpretation of the meaning of the word ‘respect’ may help us. Respect comes from the latin verb ‘*respicere*’, that is: to look conscientiously at something, to consider something thoroughly, and to care or to provide for something. Distance is needed for a respectful attitude, and at the same time a genuine interest in something or someone. An association comes to my mind of ‘being a good neighbour’, as this is worded in the English sayings of ‘*good fences make good neighbours*’ and ‘*love your neighbour, yet pull not down your fence*’.

From a perspective of the need for disentanglement the different ways in which we our selves are involved in ‘white normativity’ need to be analysed. We ourselves have to be willing to ‘surfing flexibly on the waves of empathy of being close to standing aloof’. To allow ourselves and to enable others to start ‘something new’ and ‘beyond’, context analysis is necessary. In addition to that initiatives for workshops are needed for external dialogues (with others, equals, biblical texts) and internal dialogue (thinking) problematizing the issue(s) that urge the start of ‘something new’. Dorothee Sölle’s ecological spirituality offers an inspirational foundation for such a dialogue.

2. Sölle’s ecospirituality – ‘down to earth’ spirituality

In the Christian tradition the German theologian Dorothee Sölle (1929-2003) developed what is coined as ‚eco-spirituality’. Taking the journey as an age old metaphor for the experiences of the soul on its way to deep understanding of the self, Sölle invites the reader in her publication, *‘Die Hinreise’* (The Inward Journey; 1975) to break the outward journey into the world and the responsibilities that go with being in the world. In her view people should create space for a stop over for an inward journey; a stop over in meditation on religious narratives strengthening the soul, and subsequently permeating every day life. People, according to Sölle, during their life time journey can not live on bread only, that would result in their death. In her interpretation ‚bread only’ refers to a structural lack of community that goes with anxiety, rivalry, loneliness. ‚Bread only’ is a composition of violence and misunderstandings. It is the conviction of Sölle that it is the focus on combatting these phenomena that causes people’s death, in a metaphorical sense. „The world is a supermarket and a industry of ‚bread only’ and for ‚bread only’. That’s how we die every day again a terrible death“ (Sölle, 1975, p. 11). ‚Death’ in biblical narratives is understood in a metaphorical way, pointing to situations in which inhumanity and injustice reign, according to Sölle. In the Christian tradition the announcement of the victory over ‚death’, according to Sölle, not only starts at the resurrection of Jesus but is present in each and every parable and story of his life. „The world is the stage of ongoing resurrection“, according to Sölle (in Van den Dool, 2017, p. 88). The narratives in the Gospels, as well as the narrations in the Hebrew bible, touch upon existential experiences of wonder, suffering and injustice; as such equalling what is called ‚disruptive moments’ (Ter Avest, 2014) – moments of perplexity, putting a person off his/her stroke. These moments occur for example when a friendship is suddenly and unexpectedly on edge, in case of being fired or at the death of a beloved person. Such disruptive moments can be induced as part of a teaching and learning process. In dialogue with the narratives in Holy Scriptures people are encouraged to have faith and share their positive and negative feelings and feelings of doubt. Identification with narratives’ protagonist and/or opponent facilitate people to lay bare their soul and express their sorrow but also to celebrate life. Such experiences and feelings are in need for language as this is given in poetic sights, in songs and in prayers; anyway, words that transcend the language that provides information about mere facts and describes logical relations between given facts. Religious traditions provide for a language to stand the challenges of life, according to Sölle (Sölle, 1976, p. 30; see also Sölle 1984).

Sölle's understanding of religion bears great resemblance with the description given by Paul Tillich as 'the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concerns as preliminary and which itself contains the answer to the question of a meaning of our life' (Tillich, 1957, I). Such a 'state of being' cannot but have consequences for daily life, according to Sölle. Her theological line of thought is 'firmly socially engaged and has an explicit spiritual perspective. It suggests that we encounter the transcendent particularly in everyday reality, i.e. in fighting for a more just world' (Van den Dool, 2017, p.58). This relationship of social engagement by Angela Roothaan (2007) is explicitly named as a spiritual attitude. According to Roothaan spirituality concerns a person's whole attitude to life, her/his orientation in life keeping to the middle between experience and action (Roothaan, 2007, p.43ff.). A spiritual life orientation takes as its starting point the revitalizing power of a person's context – in our case the revitalizing power of a religious tradition as part of a person's cultural context.

Sölle's spirituality and its relation to 'disruptive moments' in life is characterized by three aspects, that is cultural criticism, self-criticism and personal transformation (Van den Dool, 2017, p.93). Her hermeneutical praxis is a reading practice of 'double contextualization: the context of the reader is brought into dialogue with the context of persons from biblical texts.' (ibid., p.105). An analysis of the socio-cultural situation, and a person's positioning in this context, in dialogue with texts from Holy Scriptures awakens a hunger for change and liberation of 'death' provoking circumstances. According to Sölle this is a spiritual journey, a journey inward strengthening the journey outward and taking responsibilities in everyday life. A journey in needs workshops as 'stop overs' as a safe space facilitating external dialogues (with others, equals, biblical texts) and internal dialogue (thinking) problematizing the issue(s) that urge the start of 'something new'. In the section below we offer Narrative Interreligious Leadership Consultation (NILCo) as a promising 'stop over'.

3. Narrative Interreligious Leadership Consultation (NILCo)ⁱ

The model of 'Narrative Interreligious Leadership Consultation' (NILCo) – inspired by Van den Dool's PhD-thesis (Van den Dool 2017) - starts with an inventory of issues that keep a person busy (step 1). The focus is on concrete situations, 'critical incidents', related to inclusion-exclusion. With the help of the interviewer, the responses of the interviewees are summarized in so-called *valuations*: short statements representing the core of the response. Then (step 2) the person is invited to relate each single valuation to a list of validated affects (like tenderness,

loneliness, care, anger). From this a pattern emerges giving insight in a theme connecting concrete issues that worry the interviewee. This results in a feeling of ‘Things cannot go on like this!’, followed by the awareness ‘I cannot go on like this!’ The next step (step 3) is to empower the person by bringing vividly into mind moving moments, situations in which the person showed her/his strength to change an unwanted situation, related to her/his theme that keeps her/him busy. In step 4 one of these powerful situations (in SCM-terminology: one of these *valuations*) is selected to reflected upon in depth, because “we assume that this occasion, action or experience has taken the participant to some degree beyond the borders of human existence, as if he has gotten a glimpse from another side; from a ‘beyond’ to some degree” (Van den Dool 2017, p. 141). This reflection is in step 5 deepened by way of a mirroring tekstⁱ, that is placed next to the selected valuation of step 4. This text is expected to challenge the interviewee to leave her/his comfort zone - a rebirth. This natality and – the motivation and inspiration for change strengthened – is the start the innovative action. Repetition of this kind of reflective processes – on an individual and on a group level - on recurring moments during the year results in an entirety of insights of potential actions to bring into practice innovations in situations characterized as ‘Things cannot go on like this!’. This ‘entirety of insights’ is coined as ‘moresprudence’ (see also Wirtz, 2004; see also Stolper et al, 2016). Moresprudence acts as a point of orientation for future decisions – life orientation on a personal and organizational identity on a group level.

For this ‘moresprudence’ a coaching style of invitation and care is needed, which I bring together in the concept of ‘provocative guidance’. The concept ‘provocative’ can be read as a hyphenated concept, consisting of the Latin *provocare* which means challenging and ‘care’ – the same care that is included in the concept of respect, as we have shown above. Central in NILCo is the dialogue with religious and secular texts dedicated to similar paradoxical situations as the person or the group meets in every day life. Such a dialogue is in need of empathy - whether developed to a certain extend, of developing through the dialogue. Empathy as more than mere sympathy; ‘only when you are prepared to connect your self with the other, and turn this connection into a relationship of attachment – with real persons or with characters in a narrative - only then they will tell you something you did not know yet and you will open up for change’ (Otten, 2018, p. 9; translation of the author).

A dialogue with the potency to facilitate becoming a courageous person going ‘beyond’ by deepening the motivations and motives to go ‘beyond’. NILCo is a promising way – a way to go ‘beyond’ exclusion and expulsion; a way characterized by togetherness. Nevertheless: a long way to go.

References:

Arendt, H. (2004). *Vita Activa*. Amsterdam: Boom.

Avest, I. ter, C. Bakker (2009). Structural Identity Consultation: Story telling as a culture of faith transformation. *Religious Education*, 105(3), 257-271.

De Kesel, M. (2008). ‘Een tempel voor de Chariten’: Over politiek en vriendschap bij Hannah Arendt. Hannah Arend Cahier. Radboud University Nijmegen/Damon.

Dool, van den E. (2017). *Spiritual Dynamics in Social Innovation*. PhD thesis Radboud University Nijmegen.

Oosterwegel, G. (2016). *Christelijk geloven in een seculiere wereld* [Christian belief in a secular world]. Eburon.

Otten, Ch. (2018). *Als een vis* [Like a fish]. De Gids, nr. 4, pp. 8-9.

Roothaan, A. (2007). *Spiritualiteit begrijpen: Een filosofische inleiding*. Amsterdam: Boom.

Sölle, D. (1984). *God heeft mensen nodig; een theologie van de schepping* [God is in need of people; a theology of creation]. Baarn: Ten Have.

Sölle, D. (1975). *Die Hinreise* [The Inward Journey]. Stuttgart: Kreuz-Verlag.

Stolper, M., B. Molenwijk, B. ter Meulen (2016). Bespreek ethische dilemma’s in moreel beraad. Medisch Contact. Januari. pp. ...

Ter Avest, I. (2014). *Disruptive moments*, presentation at the conference of Higher Education in Bloemfontein, South Africa.

Ter Avest, I. (2018). Provocative Guidance – a Practice of Narrative Leadership. In H. Alma & I. ter Avest (Eds.). *Moral and Spiritual Leadership in an Age of Plural Moralities*. In press.

Tillich, P. (1957). *Dynamics of Faith*. New York: Harper & Row.

Wirtz, R. (2004). Moresprudence. *Audit Magazine*.



