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growth



Association for Christians
in Student Development

Mission and Introduction to The Association for Christians in Student Development:

The Association for Christians in Student Development (ACSD) is comprised of professionals who seek to bring their commitment to Jesus Christ together with their work in college student development. Through the exchange of ideas, encouragement of networking, regional and annual conferences, and application of scriptural principles to developmental theory, ACSD seeks to enable its members to be more effective in ministering to students.

The roots of ACSD go back to the 1950s with the formation of the Christian Association of Deans of Women and the Association of Christian Deans and Advisors of Men. The two groups merged in 1980, reflecting a commitment to work together with mutual respect. ACSD has grown and currently represents more than 1,100 individuals from more than 250 institutions. While membership originally centered in Bible institutes, Bible colleges, and Christian liberal arts colleges, the Association has committed itself to linking up with colleagues in all institutions of higher education, both public and private. In support of this emphasis, the Association has sponsored prayer breakfasts and workshops in conjunction with annual conferences presented by major student affairs associated organizations.

Membership in ACSD is open to all persons who have or are preparing for responsibilities in student development areas in higher education and who are in agreement with ACSD's doctrinal statement, constitution, and bylaws. Members receive the Association's newsletter, free access to placement services, reduced rates at annual conferences, and copies of *Growth: The Journal of the Association for Christians in Student Development*.

In keeping with the mission and goals of the Association, the purposes of *Growth: The Journal of The Association for Christians in Student Development* are:

- To provide a forum for members to publish original research.
- To encourage the membership to be active in scholarship.
- To provide members with access to beneficial resource material intended to inform good practice.
- To stimulate research in Christian student affairs.
- To promote the ideals of ACSD and Christian student affairs



Dear Readers:

We are pleased to share with you the sixteenth edition of *Growth: The Journal of the Association for Christians in Student Development*. For sixteen years, *Growth* has strived to provide readers with relevant original research and pertinent professional development to aid in our work with college students. We trust you have found this information useful to your work and that you will find the articles and book reviews in this current issue to be helpful in informing your work as educators.

This year you will discover five feature articles including research on spiritual formation for resident assistants, the experience of sexual minorities on faith-based campuses, conflict resolution in cross-cultural contexts, service learning embedded in academic course content, and faith integration for student development faculty. These articles are followed by a collection of book reviews intended to introduce us to new publications that will guide and shape our efforts as student development practitioners.

We are grateful to those who work to make *Growth* possible, including Dr. Jason Morris, Assistant Professor of Higher Education at Abilene Christian University, who serves in the role of Book Review Editor. We are also grateful to four graduate students from Taylor University, David Adams, Shelby List, Rebecca Tervo and Madeline Trudeau, who have served as editorial associates supporting *Growth* this year. They, along with our peer review team, have put forth great effort to produce an edition that represents strong scholarship and is diverse in its coverage of topics.

We particularly want to encourage you, the reader, to consider submitting manuscripts for possible inclusion in future issues of *Growth*; the next edition will be published in the spring of 2018. Publication guidelines are included in this issue on the inside of the back cover and are also available via the Association for Christians in Student Development web site: www.acsd.org/participate/write-for-growth-journal/. We are especially interested in manuscripts presenting original or basic research and encourage anyone who has recently completed a graduate thesis or dissertation to submit an article.

The publication team would like to thank you for your support of *Growth: The Journal of the Association for Christians in Student Development*. We hope your read will be both engaging and challenging.

Sincerely,

Dr. Skip Trudeau, Co-Editor
Dr. Tim Hermann, Co-Editor

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Seeing God Clearly: Meaning-Making and Attributions to God Made by Resident Assistants

John Macikas, M.A.

John Brown University

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Abstract

Resident Assistants (RAs) at a Christian college in the Midwest were interviewed in order to explore the nature, reasoning, and complexity of attributions to God from their RA-related experiences. Resulting themes found that RAs made attributions to God for experiences of identifiable goodness, which included positive developmental experiences and experiences of deep unity and spirituality. Though RAs often saw themselves as God's intermediary agents, they also claimed they were limited in their ability to affect deep change. The relationship between their agency and God's was complex, but RAs sought solace in God's ultimate control in the midst of their efforts. Implications for practice include facilitating opportunities for RAs to reflect on their experiences to impact spiritual development. Moreover, professionals can teach conceptual and theological tools to help RAs think about how God works in the world and to develop RAs as leaders to better influence wholesome and growing experiences.

Introduction

In his article, “The Development of the Leader and the Spirit,” Stonecipher (2012) showed the importance of reflection for leadership. Student development professionals seek to foster student learning through asking questions that encourage students to reflect on their experiences. Christian college educators not only acknowledge students can and do make spiritual meaning, but they also affirm God works in various experiences (S. Reese, 2012; Searle, 1994). Furthermore, educators desire for students to discover how God is working and to perceive their learning experiences through a spiritual framework.

Student development professionals would benefit from research that explores the nature, complexity, and nuance of when and why resident assistants (RAs) attribute experiences to God for at least three reasons. First, this research increases awareness of the experiences salient to RAs with respect to God’s working. Such awareness influences professional practice and the development of students’ spirituality and meaning-making.

Second, this study illuminates why experiences of God’s agency are especially meaningful for RAs. Based on their research, Spilka, Shaver, and Kirkpatrick (1985) developed a theory of religious attributions explaining the motivations and circumstances by which people make religious attributions. In essence, this research helps examine how RAs understand and make sense of the experiences they attribute to God.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, this study reveals the perceived effects of attributions on the spiritual and leadership development of RAs. Since RAs are student leaders on campus, their own formation and development is modeled to the greater student body (Cumings, 1997). To summarize, this research helps professionals better understand how RAs see God’s work in their residential areas, and such understanding greatly influences student development practice and understanding as well as student learning and spiritual growth.

Literature Review

To explore how a group of RAs at an evangelical Christian college describe how God works, two areas of research are beneficial to review: (1) emerging adult religiousness and spirituality and (2) conceptions of God’s agency and attributions made to him. Smith (2009) stated that emerging adulthood, broadly speaking, refers to adults 18–29 years of age. It should be noted that while there is literature on spirituality and meaning-making in higher education, there is a dearth of research on those topics with specific reference to RAs and student leadership (Lehr, n.d.). For example, Gehrke (2008)

claimed her empirical study was one of the first and only which sought to show the relationships between spirituality and leadership among college students. This study qualitatively explored spirituality and meaning-making in the context of RAs who are student leaders on campus.

Emerging Adult Religiousness and Spirituality

God and religiousness. Emerging adults (EA) can be broadly characterized by transition and declining religious distinctiveness. In comparison to adults, Smith (2009) found that EA in contemporary America were less likely to pray, attend religious services weekly, and affiliate with their faiths. Though a plurality of religious portraits among EA were found, the prevalence of selective adherence and an individualist mindset revealed that EA, in general, are apathetic and indifferent to faith and do not locate their identities and actions within particular religious frameworks (Smith, 2009). Smith (2009) also found the religious outlook of many EA corresponded to Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD), a theological grid that affirms five points: (1) there is a watchful God who (2) wants people to be good and who (3) does not need to be involved except when there is a problem; (4) the primary goal of life is to be happy; and (5) good people go to heaven when they die.

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Evangelical sub-culture. Among evangelical college students, research shows evangelical students believe God is involved in their lives. For example, studies by Lowery (2000), Cumings (1997), Brelsford and Mahoney (2009), and Kimball, Boyatzis, Cook, Leonard, and Flanagan (2013) demonstrated that evangelical Christian students in college (at both Christian and non-Christian institutions) emphasized a personal, friendly, dynamic and vibrant relationship with God. This God can be sought for help and is often seen as caring and desiring their moral best. Finally, God is provident in everyday circumstances like grades, and he acts through vehicles such as the Bible or other people. The present study adds to the field of research by providing college students with the opportunity to talk about how they view and interpret God as an agent who acts in certain events.

Development of faith and spirituality. Emerging adults can be characterized as having a new set of thinking enabling them to see the world, themselves, and their place in the world with increased complexity and awareness. This capacity equips EA to develop “faith,” which was defined by Parks (2011) as “the activity of seeking and discovering meaning in the most comprehensive dimensions of our experience” (p. 10). The development of “spirituality,” an oft-criticized term for its breadth of meaning (Setran & Kiesling, 2013; Smith, 2009), involves essentially the same process. Faith/

spiritual development occurs from crises, challenges or transitions that cause one to rethink their beliefs, own them, and to make meaning and purpose in the world (Astin, Astin and Lindholm, 2011; Fowler, 2000, Gehrke, 2008; Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004; Parks, 2011; Stonecipher, 2012). Reese (2012), researching from a distinctly Christian perspective, claimed that for college students to develop spiritually, they must (1) be ready to hear God's voice and leading and (2) be given opportunities to tell where God has acted in their own story.

God's Agency and Attribution to God

Understanding God's agency. According to Gray and Wegner (2010), agents are "things that act" (p. 9). One general theme is that people exhibit a tension between conceiving of God as an abstract figure versus more familiar analogues to a human agent with intention. Studies by Lalljee, Brown, and Hilton (1990), Knight, Sousa, Barrett, and Atran (2004), and Gray and Wegner (2010) showed that subjects expressed sophisticated conceptions of God's agency not identical to human causation or experience. In contrast, Grysman and Hudson's study (2014) found that participants expressed a functional concept of God for situational explanations that was limited by perceptions of a human person. Furthermore, studies by Gilbert, Brown Pinel, and Wilson (2000) and Gray and Wegner (2010) found that many people consider God to be an agent of intention whose actions and purposes can be known. Interestingly, Grysman and Hudson (2014) showed college students added intentional and agentive terms of God when retelling a story, even when such descriptions were not given in the story, indicating that it may be intuitive for people to make God as an agent more integral to their stories.

Attributions to God. When people invoke God's agency with respect to activities in the world, they are making attributions, which Spilka et al. (1985) defined this way: "People seek to explain experiences and events by attributing them to causes—that is, by 'making causal attributions'" (p. 2). Three main motivations drive people to make attributions: (1) to make meaning out of their experiences, (2) to control or predict their environment, and (3) to maintain positive self-esteem, which for some includes religiosity (Gray & Wegner, 2010; Mitchell, 1997; Grysman & Hudson, 2014; Spilka et al., 1985). Spilka et al. (1985) gave four contextual elements that interact with each other when one makes an attribution: the event, the event context, the attributor, and the attributor's context. For someone to make an attribution to God, the following pre-requisites must be present: (1) a belief in an agentive God that is available and understandable, (2) anomalous, extraordinary, or moral experiences that cause either harm or good, and (3) an attribution

to God must be more satisfactory than a naturalistic attribution (Gray & Wegner, 2010; Spilka et al., 1985). Characteristically, people make attributions to God for positive events and for seemingly inexplicable negative events (Gray & Wegner, 2010; Lalljee et al., 1990; P. Mallery, Mallery, & Gorsuch, 2000; Ritzema 1979), and some do so in order to reinforce religious beliefs (Sharp, 2013).

This study seeks to expand upon the research of Ritzema and Young (1983) by qualitatively exploring the nature and extent to which a group of RAs acknowledge or understand the interaction between God's causation and other possible natural attributions, as their study was based off a single spectrum continuum model. It also should be noted that the qualitative nature of the present research is well-timed, as Wright (1983) and Lalljee et al. (1990) noted the prevalence of attribution studies from hypothetical scenarios but a lack of attribution research from people's own actions and observations. Finally, an axiomatic theory of attribution developed by Spilka et al. (1985) and the taxonomy of attributions by P. Mallery et al. (2000) proved relevant in data analysis.

After conducting a review of the literature, questions for the present research were as follows: For a group of RAs at an evangelical Christian college, what are the in-depth RA-related experiences on their floor that they attribute to God as a causative agent whose intentions can be known? As it relates to attribution, how do a group of RAs at an evangelical Christian college describe the relationship between divine agency and other possible agencies, particularly their own agency?

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Methodology

Participants

This study was conducted with former RAs at a small evangelical Christian college in the suburban Midwest. Students who were RAs the prior school year were studied because they had an entire school year of RA experiences and the benefit of time and distance on which to reflect with depth and acuity. The researcher asked seven RAs who worked on a single staff team in a residence hall to be interviewed, and six participated. This group of RAs was asked to participate because the shared participation on the staff team between them and the researcher was predicted to encourage greater participation due to the establishment of trust. There was a range of relationships among the participants and no longer any staff or supervisory relationship. Thus, sampling was both convenience and purposive sampling (L. R. Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012).

Procedure, Validity and Data Analysis

Structured interviews were implemented. In order to allow students to make attributions to God naturally, initial questions did not explicitly name God. The reason for this omission was to prevent immediate priming of responses (Dijksterhuis, Preston, Wegner, & Aarts, 2008). The researcher also asked follow-up questions that would better or more deeply obtain information pertaining to God (see Appendix). In order to promote descriptive validity (Johnson, 1997), the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed.

Next, the researcher read, noted, and coded the transcribed interviews to analyze the data inductively and decipher themes (L. R. Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). As an evangelical who has worked in Christian student development, the researcher expected to find three things: (1) that RAs would “know” both (a) that God did certain things and that (b) they would “know” the purpose behind those things; (2) RAs would attribute either particularly positive experiences or difficult ones framed positively to God alone; and (3) RAs would tend toward simplicity and dualism rather than complexity in terms of instrumentality or of the relative responsibility of their actions on their floors. Thus, to resist researcher bias, the researcher engaged in participant feedback throughout the interview to promote interpretive validity (Johnson, 1997). The researcher also enacted negative case-sampling to resist bias, looking for information in data interpretation that was contrary to the expectations and viewpoints of the researcher (Johnson, 1997).

Results

RAs Attributed Identifiable Goodness to God

One of the most pervasive themes from the stories of the RAs when they made attributions to God was the theme of identifiable goodness. God was regularly attributed for experiences that either were good or some good came out of them. There were two kinds of goodness attributed to God’s doing: positive developmental learning and deep spirituality and unity, the latter of which came especially in the midst of limitation.

Positive developmental learning. Sarah’s story illustrated God’s intent for positive developmental learning. She was unique in that she referenced God’s intent in a difficult experience without being asked to do so:

As I’ve just reflected on the things I feel like God was trying to teach me last year ... God gave me the floor I needed to have for what he was trying to do in my life and the lives of my girls. ... Number

one a lot of humility. ... [Emily] very much has the floor that I wanted to have. ... There are a lot of times where I'm still very much like "God, why couldn't I have had that floor? ... And like realizing "OK no, I still have a lot of pride that I have to keep in check thinking that."

If I had had the floor I wanted, if ... everything had gone right in that way that I had expected, I wouldn't have realized how prideful I was. So even though it was like really, really hard, I'm very thankful for it because it's a very big part in what God is doing in my life and who he's shaping me to be and helping me to become more like Christ.

Reflection was the means by which Sarah was able to discern God's action and intent in the dynamics on her floor. God taught her humility by giving her that particular floor of students. She at times still questioned God's intent because her experience was very difficult and did not align with her positive expectations. Yet she made meaning by concluding that God intentionally gave her that floor so that she would learn humility. She determined that such learning would not have happened otherwise. In this way, Sarah constructed a positive reappraisal of the year from her difficult experiences.

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Deep unity and spirituality. Zack's story, on the other hand, clearly illustrated depth in spiritual fervor. When asked if there was another experience of God's agency, he shared that he put on a forty-hour prayer event and was initially hesitant about his expectations because he did not give his residents much notice. However, the slots for prayer were filled, and though it was late at night on a Saturday, he went on to share,

We had I don't know maybe like 30 guys or whatever and we just kind of closed it out in prayer. ... You know that sometimes you get a sense that there's a real spiritual fervor—kind of sense of the Spirit. ... Everyone was not just there physically, but everyone was there to pray. ... And that's just the type of thing that you have no control over, you know what I mean? You can be super persuasive and get people to sign up and even get people to come to the lounge, but you have no control over that. And that was a really sweet and really enjoyable time.

Zack went on to say that God worked in the event by giving people the spiritual hunger to commune with people in prayer. In this experience, Zack's perceived control over the success of the event was mitigated partly

because he did not have control over the inward, spiritual desire of his residents. Thus, he thought that such numbers and spiritual fervor in that particular environment were not something that came from his control but from God's.

The Relation of God's Agency to Other Agencies

RAs seen as God's intermediaries. Some RAs felt God was using their efforts and their agency to accomplish his purposes or to do his work as an intermediary. For example, consider Will's experience of spiritual righteousness and zeal among the students on his floor. When asked to elaborate on what he meant by the Lord using his personality, he connected his gifting and work to that of a prophet from the Bible:

I think I learned that I'm very charismatic, and I can get a following really quickly, you know, and I think that that's something that the Lord has gifted me with and is going to hold me responsible to in my life. I really resonate with the call of Ezekiel and Ezekiel 3, like "[paraphrasing Bible] I have called you to be a mouthpiece for my people, if I give you a word and you don't tell them I will hold you accountable and the blood will be on your head, and if I give you a word and you do then you will be righteous and they will be held accountable." ...I think in many ways I was able to practice that [personality gift] last year and be that [mouthpiece] and also practice to be sort of the Lord's agent in leading this floor.

Will saw within his personality qualities that were needed to be the Lord's mouthpiece, and he considered himself to be the Lord's agent when he utilized his own gifts to bring forth righteousness among the students on his floor. In this way, he clearly identified his own actions as being integral to the results of the experience.

God is the one who affects the heart. While some RAs acknowledged their efforts to be fundamentally related to the results of their experiences, they also thought their own efforts could not sufficiently constitute causation for their experiences. RAs held this view because they were convicted that they were simply not capable of affecting the depth of goodness they experienced. Though some simply expressed a general lack of confidence, other RAs identified specific weaknesses or limitations which served as further proof that God himself had to have caused the deep goodness. For example, when asked how he knew that the Lord was working in his

experience of deep unity and love among his floor, Roy shared the following:

I think I know it was of the Lord because it was certainly not something I was capable of creating or facilitating. I know how sinful and selfish my motivations are. But what happened was not of me. I could not facilitate what was going on in terms of real friendships that were happening, in terms of really positive, encouraging, edifying things that were going on. If God was not involved, [then] it would have not looked like that.

At least partially because of Roy's perceived sinfulness, selfishness, misguided desires, and failures, he lacked confidence in his own ability to cause deep unity, and he knew God must have been involved in the experience of "real friendships." He thus attributed the experience to God.

God's ultimate control provides comfort. In short, RAs described a difficult complexity for how they understood the holistic relation between God's agency and other agencies, such as the RA or the environment. For example, Will shared that his realization of God's grace in everything and his conviction of God's work on the human heart caused him to explain human responsibility using the following analogy from his experience in an orchestra:

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[The conductor's] air was very authoritative and very straight but real sparkly joy in his eyes. ... Then he was just like "Let's have fun with this. Let's play well." And then he just like starts this [hand motion], and we've never sounded better. Like I've literally never heard our orchestra sound that good. And it was like this simultaneously like "Do your best and have fun." And I think the Lord has the same expectation and presence about how he communicates a challenge to us. Our responsibility is huge, and at the same time, he's like "Be holy, as I am holy. Also it's not you. It's me. So just rest and commune with me."

It's your responsibility to play your part to the best of your ability. But honestly, no pressure. There's like this real, incredible tension.

From Will's perspective, there was a tension between the actions that an RA would take in his or her residential area and God's work, which was involved in everything. For Will, though he had a large responsibility, God had the ultimate responsibility, which included Will's efforts as his "part" in the "orchestra" of factors.

The conviction that God had ultimate responsibility and caused deep goodness also meant that RAs like Will could truly “have fun” and not despair. Indeed, this conviction provided RAs with a sense of solace, comfort, and trust in God that guarded against hopelessness or guilt when expectations were not met or when desired results were not achieved. For example, when Will was asked what the phrase “all God’s grace” meant, he had the following to share:

For me, it entirely takes the pressure off. Because if it’s based on my talents and my giftings, if I don’t feel it—I’m done! Then it’s all my responsibility that this floor is tanking, you know? And if that’s the case, then [another RA’s] the failure, or I’m a success. Like, are you joking me?!

And the knowledge that it’s the Lord’s work, these are his guys, it’s his year--[this knowledge] is what got me through. You know? And the reality that this is not ultimately mine. ... It’s based on joy, not based on fear ... not based on a fear of messing up and [God] being mad at you.

Will was relieved of the pressure of bearing all the responsibility for difficult things happening in his residential area because of his understanding that God was the one working in the students. His conviction of God’s control alleviated the fear of failure for both him and a fellow RA, but his conviction also relativized his role in the desirable results he experienced. One was only responsible for joyfully trying one’s best—not for the result, which may or may not happen. Katie summed it up best when she said: “I think the ways I most clearly was able to see [God’s] blessing was when I was doing my part I guess, and then he took care of the rest.” Consequently, one cannot be attributed for that which they are not ultimately responsible.

Discussion

The RAs of this study attributed experiences of identifiable goodness to God as they processed some of their most meaningful experiences as RAs in their residential areas. As Spilka et al. claimed (1985), language shapes the relevancy of an experience and thus transforms the experience itself for the individual. This study further justifies the need for student development professionals to create times and contexts for RAs and student leaders in general to engage in reflection in order to make meaning out of their experiences, to develop spirituality (Astin et al., 2011; Stonecipher, 2012), and to see where God has acted in their own story (S. Reese, 2012).

Moreover, other RAs at Christian colleges and universities who are asked similar reflective questions upon their residential experiences will likely make similar attributions to God, even if the setting may not be one of research. There are three reasons to claim generalizability (Johnson, 1997) of God-attributions among these RAs. First, student development professionals will have trust-filled relationships with RAs. Second, the practice of providing sufficient time for student leaders to reflect and verbally process is readily available for professionals. Third, RAs will likely be similar in broad theological outlook, for considerable unity was found among the RAs studied regarding their view of God: God is a good God who works for the good in their experiences, both in and beyond the RAs' efforts; God works in the heart, brings about unity and spiritual fervor, intends positive development from challenging experiences, and responds to human sincerity and weakness. This finding differs from the theological outlook of MTD (Smith, 2009) and confirms previous claims that spiritual development arises from challenges and provides transcendent meaning (Astin et al., 2011; Fowler, 2000; Gehrke, 2008; Holcomb & Nonneman, 2004; Parks, 2011; Stonecipher, 2012).

The present study asked general reflective questions to prevent subliminal priming. Christian institutions can explicitly name God with the reflection questions they ask to a greater degree than the present study in order to provide more opportunities to make attributions to God. It has been found that language availability and priming, among other factors, influence attributions to God (Dijksterhuis et al., 2008; Spilka et al., 1985). Administrators and staff can purposefully have a spiritual effect on students through this kind of work (S. H. Reese, 2001).

The researcher also found that participants realized their limitations as RAs and that this realization influenced their attributions to God. Student development professionals have an opportunity to teach the concept of God's providence and the concept of relative responsibility as a response to this finding for the sake of Christian leadership development. For example, student development professionals can teach from the Bible about God's ultimate control of situations and how he affects heart change, and they can engage in spiritual practices such as prayer to reinforce those teachings. Practitioners can then utilize the concept of God's providence to explicitly challenge prevailing expectations that RAs may consciously or subconsciously have about their role, such as: (1) the RA is capable of affecting heart change in a simple and unitary fashion, (2) the RA will have no negative experiences in his or her residential area or will resolve every problem that occurs in the residential area, and (3) the RA contains sufficient efficacy and resources within himself or herself to bring about a deep and positive result in every situation that he or she encounters.

The teaching of God's providence should then be coupled with the corollary teaching of the concept of relative responsibility. Interestingly, when RAs were asked to share about a good experience and why it happened, they often identified *conducive* factors to the experience that God *used*; this finding expands upon Ritzema and Young's (1983) single continuum model by adding intermediary factors to God-attributions. When RAs were asked follow-up questions that *explicitly* asked for experiences where they saw God work, they usually told of experiences of which preceding factors were *not conducive* to the result; this discovery accords with previous claims that people attribute experiences to God when natural explanations seem insufficient (Gray & Wegner, 2010; Spilka et al., 1985). Student development professionals can capitalize on these findings by teaching RAs the concept of relative responsibility, which says that though God is in ultimate control of experiences, he uses people and environments to contribute to experiences. Indeed, he has ordained that environments and people within environments are factors that can (a) contribute to experiences and outcomes or (b) hinder or prevent potential experiences or outcomes. These factors are identifiable and able to be influenced to a certain extent. This critical awareness gained from the theological concept of relative responsibility could influence leadership development by bolstering conscious attempts to enact change and influence people and environments more acutely and effectively.

Conclusion

This research study was conducted in order to explore how RAs understand how God worked in their RA-related experiences in their residential areas. Resulting themes found demonstrate that RAs made attributions to God from experiences of identifiable goodness, which included positive developmental experiences and experiences of deep unity and spirituality. Additionally, though RAs often saw themselves as God's intermediary agents, God was in ultimate control, and they were limited in their ability to affect deep change. The relationship between their agency and God's was complex, but RAs sought solace in God's ultimate control and causation in the midst of their efforts. For RAs to develop spiritually, student development professionals need to give RAs regular opportunities to reflect on the experiences that matter deeply to them, for it is in those opportunities that RAs can and often do identify where they see God working. Professionals can also teach RAs conceptual and theological tools to (1) think from within a Christian framework about how God works in the world and (2) to develop as leaders who can identify environmental factors, reflect on those factors, and determine action steps to better lead toward wholesome and growing

experiences. Professionals can influence the thinking and practice of the RAs toward these ends with spiritual practices, training and curriculum. Through training and opportunities for reflection, RAs can better discern their purpose, demonstrate their faith, and practice leadership for spiritual edification and for the common good.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

Exploring attributions of cause/intent.

1. What was one overall positive result or experience that you had as an RA on your floor last year?
 - (Cause/Result) Why do you think _____ happened?
2. What is one moment that stood out to you as an RA on your floor last year?
 - (Cause) Why do you think _____ happened?
 - (Result) What do you think resulted from ____? (In other words, what do you think came of ___? What do you think were the effects of ___ happening?)
3. What was an experience that was very difficult for you as an RA on your floor?
 - (Cause) Why do you think _____ happened?
 - (Result) What do you think resulted from ____? (In other words, what do you think came of ___? What do you think were the effects of ___ happening?)

- (Purpose) Do you think there was any purpose for ____? Could you talk more about that?
- (Cause) Follow-up question if the Christian God is not invoked or is not invoked often: Do you think God in any way could be an explanation to ____? If so, how would you explain that?
- (Purpose/Intent) Follow-up question if the Christian God is not invoked or is not invoked often: Do you think God had any intent or purpose in that experience? Could you talk more about that? How do you know?
- (Confidence) Follow-up question: What is it about these experiences that incline you to know that God acted in the ways that you said he did?
- (Frequency) Follow-up question if the Christian God is invoked often: I've noticed that you have talked a lot about God's action. Why do you think God is so involved in these experiences? How would you say that you know that?

Exploring the relationship between God as actor and other possible actors.

4. Why do you think God was __ (use their wording) __ of/in _____ and not (merely) you/some other cause (e.g. you, other students, cultural environment, some combination of those things)?
5. How do you understand the relationship between what God did and what you did on the floor/some of the other factors you named?

Exploring possible other experiences of attribution.

6. Is there one other kind of experience as an RA on your floor that you would say God did? What was that experience? Why do you think God did it?

If they did not talk about God beforehand.

7. I'm going to preface this final question by saying that there is no right/wrong answer to it and that it doesn't imply anything for or against all of the things you have said previously. This is simply an exploratory question: I noticed that you didn't mention God when you talked about your experience as an RA until I asked you about him. I'm curious: What do you think were the reasons why God didn't come up?



A Survey of Sexual Minorities Who Attend Faith-Based Institutions of Higher Education

Mark A. Yarhouse, PsyD – Regent University

Janet B. Dean, PhD – Asbury University

Stephen P. Stratton, PhD – Asbury Theological Seminary

Michael Lastoria, EdD – Houghton College

Emma K. Bucher, PsyD – Regent University

Abstract

This research considers the intersection of sexual identity and religious/spiritual identity in the context of faith-based institutions of higher education. One hundred and sixty students identifying as sexual minorities from fifteen Christian colleges and universities with Association for Christians in Student Development affiliations provided information on their experiences in these unique settings. The findings suggest sexual minorities on faith-based campuses are navigating religious/spiritual aspects of their identity as well as same-sex sexuality and sexual identity development. Both sexuality and religiosity/spirituality are two salient, interacting and multi-level variables for these students, particularly as they relate to doctrinal matters and policies at faith-based institutions of higher education. Campus climate was found to be a complicating factor for those students living at the intersection of these variables, but improving relational conditions, particularly with faculty and staff, were noteworthy in light of past research. Impact on developmental milestones and psychological health were also examined.

Introduction

In 2009, Cole launched a pivotal discussion about the complexity of living at the convergence of multiple identities related to gender, race, class and sexuality. She used the term “intersectionality” to highlight how awareness, experiences, and opportunities are impacted by living in more than one of these social and cultural categories. More than “either/or,” Cole (2009) noted how the “both/and” of intersectionality contributed to greater complexity for researchers and presumably a more complicated identity development process for those living in these overlapping social worlds.

This current research considers the intersection of sexual identity and religious/spiritual identity in the context of faith-based colleges and universities around the United States. Wentz and Wessel (2011) reported from their qualitative interviews with students from Christian colleges and universities on the identity conflict that exists at this intersection, particularly related to enrollment information, institutional values/culture, and codes of conduct. However, other research with Christian college and university students (Yarhouse, Stratton, Dean & Brooke, 2009) suggested positive aspects exist alongside the conflictual elements of identity and context at the intersection of sexuality and religion/spirituality. Indeed, in a larger sample in the general population, Rosenkrantz, Rostosky, Riggle, and Cook (2016) found qualitative evidence for a positive synergy associated with intersecting religious/spiritual and LGBTQ identities. It seems reasonable to conclude Christian colleges and universities may be unique contexts that can enhance and/or hinder development at the intersection of sexual identity and religious/spiritual identity. Moreover, the timing of this investigation may represent an opportune cultural moment to engage the unique way that these identities overlap and entwine, and faith-based institutions may be ground zero for this pivotal example of intersectionality.

Sexuality and Sexual Identity

An emerging body of research suggests sexual identity development or the act of labeling oneself based upon one’s sexual preferences among sexual minorities (e.g., lesbian, gay) is actually a developmental process. Identifiable milestone events in sexual identity formation include first awareness of same-sex attraction, first sexual behavior to orgasm, first labeling of oneself as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB), first ongoing same-sex relationship, and so on.

Previous reports on the experiences of sexual minorities on Christian college campuses suggest lower rates of meeting some milestone events, particularly those that are volitional (Yarhouse, Stratton, Dean, & Brooke, 2009). It has been suggested these lower rates may be influenced by a student’s

religious beliefs and values informing them whether or not to pursue specific behaviors identified as milestones (e.g., ongoing same-sex relationship). It may also be possible that other factors (e.g., environmental) are at play, or that students are otherwise delayed in achieving specific milestone events.

Climate and Support

Whatever the case, sexual minority students do not navigate sexual identity milestones in a vacuum. Rather, they do so in the context of a campus community. Previous research of sexual minorities on Christian college campuses suggest the climate is difficult for navigating sexual identity questions (Watson, Campbell, Yarhouse, & Doolin, 2012; Stratton, Dean, Yarhouse, & Lastoria, 2013; Yarhouse et al., 2009). Much of what appears to set the climate are micro-aggressions among fellow students, such as derogatory language about the LGB community or indirect insults (e.g., the use of “that’s so gay” to convey how “stupid” something is) (Watson et al., 2012). When present in ample amounts within a community, it is reasonable to predict an adverse effect upon the psychological health and emotional well-being of sexual minorities in general, and particularly in religiously-affiliated institutions. Health and well-being are also presumably related to campus climate and support.

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This study will examine the general climate in which sexual minority students navigate sexual identity pathways by examining four variables in the process: 1) milestone events in sexual identity development, 2) general impressions of the perception of campus climate, 3) student’s religious attitudes and beliefs regarding sexual orientation and behavior, and 4) self-report of student’s emotional well-being.

Method

After receiving support from the Association for Christians in Student Development (ACSD) to conduct a study of the experiences of sexual minorities at Christian colleges and universities, student development officers affiliated with the ACSD were approached about functioning as gatekeepers to the study. Over 40 schools initially showed some interest in participating in the study, and of these, 15 schools (representing 10 states) elected to participate. There was broad geographic representation with two participating schools in the Northeast, six in the Midwest, two in the South, three in the Central region, and two in the West. Likewise, participants live broadly across the United States, with 30 from the East (18.8%), 43 from the Midwest (26.9%), 36 from the Central region (22.5%), 32 from the South (20.0%), and 16 from the West (10.0%), with 1 from outside the U.S. and 2 unknown.

Schools first announced the study to their students in their chapel services by a brief verbal announcement and/or a short video presentation. Following the announcement, invitations to participate, along with confirmation the study had been approved by their institution and a link to the online survey, were emailed to all students. Participants in the study required online interaction with a survey¹; no contact with any campus personnel was required. Due to the longitudinal design of the study, participants provided their names and contact information for follow-up. An initial combined sample of 807 students from these institutions responded to campus-wide requests for students who experience same-sex attraction to complete the online survey.

For the purposes of this study, “sexual minorities” were those “individuals with same-sex attractions or behavior, regardless of self-identification” (Diamond, 2007, p. 142). Of the initial 807 respondents, 24.7% ($n = 199$) refused to participate in the study by directly indicating their refusal, closing out of the survey before providing their names, or not answering any of the qualifying questions. Another 49.9% ($n = 403$) were disqualified from participating because they indicated that they did not experience same-sex attraction ($n = 374$), they did not identify as a Christian ($n = 13$), they did not attend a Christian college or university ($n = 6$), or they gave nonsensical identifying information ($n = 10$). Of those who participated to some degree, 3.1% ($n = 25$) gave their contact information but did not respond to any other item on the survey, and 2.3% ($n = 20$) stopped answering at various points of the survey, completing on average a quarter of the items. The final sample of 160 participants (19.8% of initial responders) completed the entire survey (35 pages in length, electronic format).

The final sample looked similar to the typical population across Christian colleges and universities, except with regard to gender. The gender distribution included 45% female respondents ($n = 72$), 51% male respondents ($n = 81$), and 4% respondents indicating “other” ($n = 7$). Their average reported age was 21.4 years ($SD = 4.58$). Respondents tended to identify as single, never-married (94%). Among the four student classifications, junior and seniors were over-represented (freshmen, 16%, sophomores, 20%, juniors, 22%, seniors, 33%, fifth-year seniors, 2%, and graduate students, 6%). The ethnic/racial make-up of the sample was primarily Caucasian/White (81%) with African-American (7%), Hispanic/Latino (4%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (3%) making up the remainder of the participants.

All participants identified as Christian to be included in the study. When asked about how spiritual and religious they are, participants rated themselves as more spiritual ($M = 8.46$, $SD = 1.94$) than religious ($M = 6.74$, $SD = 2.22$), $t(158) = 10.33$, $p < .001$.

¹SurveyMonkey™ with encryption was used to collect the data.

Survey

The online survey was created by the authors for the purposes of the current study. The survey was based on a previously-published survey used in two national studies of sexual minorities at Christian colleges and universities (Stratton et al., 2013; Yarhouse et al., 2009). The constructed survey included a number of previously published measures.

Yarhouse Sexual Orientation Thermometers (Jones & Yarhouse, 2007; Doolin, High, Holt, Atkinson, & Yarhouse, 2011). These two items asked participants to independently rate the degree of other-sex attraction (OSA) and same-sex attraction (SSA) they experience. Using a 10-point Likert scale, the ratings of OSA and SSA vary from 1 = *no attraction* to 10 = *strong attraction*.

Attitudes about SSA (Stratton et al., 2013). These 9 attitudinal statements were created to measure attitudes about theological, biological, and sociological belief statements regarding SSA, based on perceived controversial discussions on Christian college and university campuses. Approximately half of the items were written to reflect a perspective intended to be consistent with the worldview of conservative Christian colleges and universities. The remaining items were crafted to reflect a perspective at variance with that worldview to some degree. Participants indicate their degree of agreement with each attitudinal statement on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*.

Duke University Religiosity Index (DUREL; Koenig, Parkerson, & Meador, 1997). This modified seven-item scale measures frequency of church attendance (one item; organizational religiosity, OR), frequency of three personal religious practices (one item; non-organizational religiosity, NOR), and personally motivated spirituality (three items; intrinsic religiosity, IR). Participants indicate the frequency of their religious practices on the first two items using a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 = *never* to 5 = *more than once a week*. Participants also rated their agreement with three attitudinal statements on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = *definitely not true* to 5 = *definitely true of me*. The intrinsic religiosity (IR) score was created by averaging ratings across these three items: “In my life, I experience the presence of the Divine (i.e., God),” “My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life,” and “I try hard to carry my religion over into all other dealings in life.”

Participants were divided into groups based on their reported degree of IR. Those scoring between 12 and 15 were assigned to the *High IR* group ($n = 181$, 73.3 percent), those scoring 7 to 11 to the *Moderate IR* group ($n = 52$, 21.1 percent), and those scoring 6 or less to the *Low IR* group ($n = 13$, 5.3 percent).

In the current study, the DUREL items had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.76, and

the three IR items, which are more similar to one another, had a Cronbach's alpha of .79. IR was moderately correlated to OR with a Pearson product moment correlation coefficient of $r = 0.38$, $n = 160$, $p < .001$, and to NOR, $r = 0.47$, $n = 160$, $p < .001$. OR and NOR were fairly correlated, $r = 0.29$, $n = 160$, $p < .001$. The original DUREL has good test-retest reliability (Storch, Strawser, & Storch, 2004) with good internal reliability, factor structure, and convergent validity (Plante, Vallaeys, Sherman, & Wallston, 2002; Storch et al., 2004). It is not assumed separating the one NOR item into three will make a substantial difference, but no empirical testing has confirmed this assumption.

Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms (CCAPS-34; Center for Collegiate Mental Health, 2012; Locke et al., 2011; Locke et al., 2012). This abbreviated form of the original CCAPS has 34 items that measure psychological symptoms or distress in college students. Participants indicate the degree to which each item describes them on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 = *not at all like me* to 4 = *extremely like me*. In addition to a Distress Index, its seven subscales include: 1) Depression, 2) Generalized Anxiety, 3) Social Anxiety, 4) Academic Distress, 5) Eating Concerns, 6) Alcohol Use, and 7) Hostility. The subscales of the CCAPS-34 are highly correlated with the full CCAPS-62 (Locke et al., 2011), with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.92 to 0.98 (Center for Collegiate Mental Health, 2012). In addition, initial validation research found the CCAPS-34 to have strong convergent validity, good discrimination power, and fair test-retest stability over 1-week and 2-week intervals (Locke et al., 2012).

Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being (Ryff-54; Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The Ryff-54, a shortened form of the original Ryff Scales, assesses six theory-guided dimensions of psychological well-being by asking participants to rate their agreement with each of its 54 items on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*. Each subscale consists of 9 items; only 3 subscales were utilized in the current study: 1) Personal Growth, 2) Purpose in Life, and 3) Self-Acceptance.

In the current study, the Ryff-54 subscales had Cronbach's alphas of 0.72 (Personal Growth), 0.80 (Purpose in Life), and 0.89 (Self-Acceptance). Personal Growth was moderately correlated to Self-Acceptance with a Pearson product moment correlation coefficient of $r = 0.46$, $n = 160$, $p < .001$, and to Purpose in Life, $r = 0.30$, $n = 160$, $p < .001$. Purpose in Life and Self-Acceptance were moderately correlated, $r = 0.49$, $n = 160$, $p < .001$. The original Ryff Scales had good test-retest reliability with good internal reliability, factor structure, and convergent validity (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The Ryff-54 was highly correlated to the original Ryff Scales with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.97 to 0.99 (Ryff & Keyes).

Milestones of sexual identity development. The remainder of the interview focused on milestones of sexual identity development, from earliest memories of same-sex attractions to current feelings about one's sexual identity (for review, see Savin-Williams, 1998; Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2000). For purposes of this project, only data concerning the transitions of first same-sex attractions, first same-sex sexual contact, first self-labeling, and first disclosure were analyzed.

Results

Sexual Attraction

Current levels of sexual attraction varied among participants, who rated their degree of OSA and SSA on the 10-point Yarhouse Sexual Orientation Thermometers (Jones & Yarhouse, 2007; Doolin et al., 2011). The mean rating of OSA was 4.68 ($SD = 3.25$), indicating moderate attraction to the opposite sex. Only 15.0% of the sample ($n = 24$) reported 1 = *strong OSA*; whereas, 26 participants (16.3%) denied experiencing any OSA. Students also were grouped according to their reported level of OSA. Those who responded 1 to 6 on the scale were categorized as *low OSA* ($n = 108, 67.5%$), and those indicating 7 to 10 were placed into the *high OSA* group ($n = 52, 32.5%$).

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The mean rating for SSA was 8.09 ($SD = 2.23$), suggesting a fairly strong degree of attraction to the same sex. *No SSA* was indicated by 1.3% of the students ($n = 2$), and *strong SSA* was reported by 40% of the sample ($n = 64$). Participants again were divided into two groups based on their self-reported current degree of SSA. For those who responded 1 to 6 on the scale, they were categorized as *little SSA* ($n = 34; 21.3%$), and those responding with a 7 through 10 were placed in the *high SSA* group ($n = 126; 78.8%$).

Sexual Milestones

Participants were asked to report the age at which they experienced, if they did so, several milestones of sexual development (e.g., Yarhouse et al., 2009; Dubé & Savin-Williams, 1999). While most participants recalled making an initial attribution they were same-sex attracted (98.8%; $n = 158$), experiencing same-sex feelings (99.4%; $n = 159$), and feeling confused about this attraction (95.0%; $n = 152$) around the average age of 13, other sexual milestones were less common and tended to happen later. See Table 1 for the numbers of students experiencing each milestone, mean ages for each milestone, and the corresponding standard deviations.

Table 1. *Number and Mean Age for Sexual Milestones.*

Sexual Milestones	Mean Age (SD)	<i>n</i>	Percent of Sample
<i>Same-Sex Milestones</i>			
Awareness of same-sex feelings	12.92 (3.91)	159	99.4%
Initial attribution that I am same-sex attracted	13.08 (4.39)	158	98.8%
Confusion about same-sex feelings	13.26 (3.54)	152	95.0%
Been fondled (breasts or genitals) by someone of the same sex (without orgasm)	16.18 (4.55)	97	60.6%
Fondled (breasts or genitals) someone of the same sex (without orgasm)	16.22 (4.37)	93	58.1%
Intimately/romantically kissed by someone of the same sex	16.79 (3.99)	94	58.8%
First disclosure of same-sex attraction	17.20 (2.83)	130	81.3%
Initial attribution that I am gay/lesbian/bisexual	17.34 (2.35)	135	84.4%
Took on the label of gay privately	17.89 (2.40)	118	73.8%
Same-sex sexual behavior (to orgasm)	18.09 (3.31)	68	42.5%
First same-sex relationship	18.22 (2.68)	64	40.0%
Took on the label of gay publically	19.47 (1.89)	64	40.0%
<i>Opposite-Sex Milestones</i>			
Intimately/romantically kissed by someone of the opposite sex	15.53 (3.18)	99	61.9%
First opposite-sex relationship	15.74 (3.07)	106	66.3%
Been fondled (breasts or genitals) by someone of the opposite sex (without orgasm)	15.77 (4.06)	74	46.3%
Fondled (breasts or genitals) someone of the opposite sex (without orgasm)	15.97 (3.85)	69	43.1%
Opposite-sex sexual behavior (to orgasm)	17.51 (3.09)	51	31.9%

When divided into two groups by sexual attraction, only three milestones varied by the level of attraction. The *high SSA group* ($n = 124; M = 12.71, SD = 4.44$) reported an earlier age at which they made an initial attribution of being SSA as compared to the *low SSA group* ($n = 34; M = 14.41, SD = 3.96$), $t(156) = 2.03, p = 0.045$; however, the *high SSA* students ($n = 77; M = 17.22, SD = 3.70$) tended to intimately kiss someone of the same sex at a later age than the *low SSA* students ($n = 17; M = 14.82, SD = 4.76$), $t(92) = -2.29, p = 0.024$. These groups also varied in when they first disclosed their SSA, with the *low SSA* students ($n = 25; M = 16.20, SD = 3.07$) typically sharing this attraction earlier than the *high SSA* students ($n = 105; M = 17.44, SD = 2.73$), $t(128) = -1.99, p = 0.049$.

Private and Public Sexual Identity

When asked about their sexual identity labels ($n = 160$), participants showed significant differences in how they identify publically and privately, $X^2(9) = 70.2, p < 0.001$. Half of the students reported having a public identity as heterosexual ($n = 80, 50.0%$), yet only 5.6% ($n = 9$) identify as such privately. Conversely, only 20% ($n = 32$) publically claim to be lesbian or gay, whereas, 46.9% ($n = 75$) hold this identity privately. Even so, more students than statistically expected held a consistent identity of lesbian/gay ($n = 32; 20.0%$) or bisexual ($n = 11; 6.9%$) in both public and private spheres². See Table 2 for frequencies and percentages.

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Table 2. *Frequencies of Public and Private Sexual Identity Labels (n = 160).*

R Private Sexual Identity	Public Sexual Identity								
	Heterosexual		Bisexual		Lesbian/ Gay		Other/ Questioning		Total n
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Heterosexual	8	5.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.6%	9
Bisexual	28	17.5%	11	6.9% ^a	0	0.0% ^b	7	4.4%	46
Lesbian / Gay	23	14.4% ^b	1	0.6% ^b	32	20.0% ^a	19	11.9%	75
Other/Questioning	21	13.1%	1	0.6%	0	0.0% ^b	8	5.0%	30
Total n	80		13		32		35		

^aHigher frequency than expected, ^bLower frequency than expected

²While the aggregate rows are clearly significantly different, cell differences identify if the difference between rows is due to one cell value in particular. Non-significance suggests that no cell was more different than what would have been expected by the difference in the rows.

Same-Sex Sexual Attitudes

Students were asked to rate their degree of agreement with several attitudes about same-sex attraction and behavior on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (with 1 being *Strongly Disagree* and 5 being *Strongly Agree*). See Table 3 for means and standard deviations. When the last three items were reversed scored so high scores across all items would represent a more gay-affirming mindset, the average attitudes score was 3.18 ($SD = 0.72$), suggesting more of a neutral to very slight agreement to this perspective.

Students' degree of intrinsic religiosity was related to their sexual attitudes, with 8 of the 9 statements showing a significant difference between students low in IR and those high in IR. As follows, the overall attitudinal score differed between these two groups, $t(152) = 4.72, p < .001$, with students low in IR ($M = 3.55, SD = 0.51$) being slightly more gay-affirming and nontraditional in their views than students high in IR ($M = 3.00, SD = 0.74$), but still very close to a neutral position.

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations for SSA Attitudes by Level of Intrinsic Religiosity ($n = 160$). * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Sexual Attitudes	Total Sample $M (SD)$	Low IR $M (SD)$ ($n = 51$)	High IR $M (SD)$ ($n = 109$)	$t (df)$
Persons can choose who they are sexually attracted to.	1.83 (1.07)	1.59 (0.78)	1.95 (1.16)	-1.99 (158)*
Sexual behavior between members of the same gender is morally acceptable.	3.29 (1.49)	3.94 (1.27)	2.98 (1.49)	3.98 (157)***
Being attracted sexually to members of the same gender is morally acceptable.	4.15 (1.05)	4.51 (0.81)	3.98 (1.11)	3.41 (130)***
Monogamous sexual relationships between members of the same gender can be blessed [or receive God's grace and love].	3.50 (1.51)	4.12 (1.78)	3.21 (1.56)	4.07 (127)***
Same-sex experimentation among adolescents to try out this form of sexual expression is morally acceptable.	2.67(1.31)	3.35 (1.23)	2.35 (0.92)	4.82 (158)***
Persons who experience same-sex attraction could have been born with this predisposition.	4.10 (1.17)	4.47 (0.73)	3.92 (1.30)	3.38 (153)***
Experience [environment] plays a greater role in the development of same-sex attraction than does biology.	2.74 (1.12)	3.35 (1.23)	2.35 (1.23)	-2.17 (157)*
Persons who experience same-sex attraction can change this aspect of their attractions to the opposite sex.	1.88 (1.07)	1.53 (0.86)	2.05 (1.12)	-3.20 (125)**
Persons can live a sexually chaste life (abstinent) [celibate life] while they have same-sex attraction.	4.18 (1.06)	4.04 (1.08)	4.25 (1.05)	-1.19 (156)

Campus Climate

When asked how they would describe their campuses' view of same-sex attraction, behavior, and the person who experiences same-sex attraction (on a scale from 1 to 5 in which 1 was *unacceptable* and 5 was *acceptable*), respondents reported a mean score of 1.5 ($SD = 0.81$) for same-sex sexual behavior, suggesting little to no acceptability of such behavior. While participants viewed their campuses as not being particularly accepting of same-sex behavior, same-sex attraction ($M = 2.5, SD = 1.81$), and individuals who identify as having same-sex attraction ($M = 2.5, SD = 1.11$), they viewed their campuses as being significantly less accepting of same-sex sexual behavior than of the attraction and the persons with that attraction, $F(2, 318) = 125.23, p < .001$.

When asked about the frequencies of negative remarks, jokes that “put down” sexual minorities, or use of the term “gay” inappropriately heard on campus, 60% of participants indicated they have never heard course instructors make negative comments and 66.9% indicated they never heard staff members make such comments. However, the reverse was true in the case for peers making negative comments: 64.4% of participants indicated they had heard other students make negative comments four or more times during the previous year. The Chi square analysis, $X^2(4) = 11.60, p = 0.021$, found an overall difference in distribution, but there were no significant cell differences (see Table 4).

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Table 4. *Frequencies of Negative Comments Heard on Campus.*

	0 Instances <i>n</i> (%)	1 Instance <i>n</i> (%)	2 Instances <i>n</i> (%)	3 Instances <i>n</i> (%)	4+ Instances <i>n</i> (%)
Course Instructors	96 (60.0%)	32 (20.0%)	14 (8.8%)	7 (4.4%)	11 (6.9%)
Staff Members	107 (66.9%)	23 (14.4%)	13 (8.1%)	10 (6.3%)	7 (4.4%)
Students	12 (7.5%)	12 (7.5%)	17 (10.6%)	16 (10.0%)	103 (64.4%)

When asked about what typically happened if a student made a derogatory remark or told a joke that “put down” people who experience same-sex attraction, 81% of participants indicated they have never heard negative remarks made in the presence of course instructors and 66.9% indicated they never heard negative remarks made in the presence of staff members. When such comments were made in the presence of other students, 47.5% said the other student typically did not challenge the statement. The Chi square analysis, $X^2(3) = 14.65, p = 0.002$, again found overall differences in frequencies, but there were no significant cell differences (see Table 5).

Table 5. *Frequencies of Responses Witnessed to Negative Comments Heard on Campus (n = 160).*

	Statements were not made in their presence. <i>n</i> (%)	They typically agreed. <i>n</i> (%)	They typically did not challenge. <i>n</i> (%)	They typically did challenge. <i>n</i> (%)
Course Instructors	81 (50.1%)	12 (7.5%)	46 (28.8%)	21 (13.1%)
Staff Members	107 (66.9%)	10 (6.3%)	32 (28.8%)	11 (6.9%)
Students	11 (6.9%)	60 (37.5%)	76 (47.5%)	12 (7.5%)

When asked about the participants' awareness of potential campus resources for sexual identity, same-sex attraction, and related issues ($n = 160$), about a third of the sample indicated they were aware of various resources on campus. See Table 6 for more specifics. While some participants reported they were aware of resources, much fewer indicated they would actually utilize the resources. More students have used the counseling center (33.8%, $n = 54$) or have spoken to a faculty or staff person (28.7%, $n = 46$) than have used residence life (9.4%, $n = 15$), campus ministries (10%, $n = 16$), or student development (3.8%, $n = 6$). The department least known as a possible resource to students was student development (54.4%, $n = 87$), although many participants were also unaware of the other resources. The fewest number of participants were unaware of the counseling center (12.9%, $n = 20$).

Table 6. *Frequencies of Awareness of Campus Resources for SSA (n = 160).*

	Counseling Center <i>n</i> (%)	Residence Life <i>n</i> (%)	Campus Ministries <i>n</i> (%)	Faculty or Staff (%)	Student Development <i>n</i> (%)
Not aware of this area as a resource	20 (12.9)	66 (41.3)	60 (37.7)	34 (21.3)	87 (54.4)
Aware of this area as a resource	62 (38.8)	66 (41.3)	63 (39.4)	51 (31.9)	56 (35.0)
Aware of this area as a resource & would use it	24 (15.0)	13 (8.1)	21 (13.1)	29 (18.1)	11 (6.9)
Have used this as a resource	54 (33.8)	15 (9.4)	16 (10.0)	46 (28.7)	6 (3.8)

The students ($n = 160$) were asked how satisfied they were with the social support they received both in general and, more specifically, in regard to their same-sex attraction. They ranked their social support on a Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 6 = *Strongly Agree*. Participants reported feeling more general support as compared to support regarding same-sex attraction across all social relationships, except for their LGB-identified friends who supported them similarly whether it be in general issues ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.24$) or in issues related to their SSA ($M = 4.99$, $SD = 1.29$), $t(53) = 1.12$, $p = 0.267$ (see Table 7).

Table 7. Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of General Social Support Versus Support Regarding Same-Sex Attraction ($n = 160$).

	General Social Support <i>M (SD)</i>	SSA Support <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t</i> (df)
Family	4.61 (1.56)	3.06 (1.81)	10.53 (156) ^{***}
Church	3.93 (1.66)	2.68 (1.61)	9.75 (156) ^{***}
Faculty or Staff	4.51 (1.43)	3.22 (1.43)	10.25 (156) ^{***}
Heterosexual Friends	5.18 (1.24)	4.38 (1.57)	6.58 (155) ^{***}
LGB-Identified Friends	5.08 (1.24)	4.99 (1.29)	1.12 (153)

^{***} $p \leq .001$

When asked to describe their relationship to campus policies regarding sexuality and sexual behavior, 38.5% ($n = 60$) indicated they came to a Christian university but quietly disagree with the policies, 30.8% ($n = 48$) indicated they came to a Christian university because they agreed with the existing campus policies, 16.7% ($n = 26$) indicated they came to a Christian university but vocally disagree with the policies, and 8.3% ($n = 13$) indicated they came to a Christian university but were unaware of what the policies were. These responses were compared to the participants' levels of intrinsic religiosity, and IR was found to be correlated with opinions about campus policies, $F(3, 156) = 9.71$, $p < .001$. Those who indicated they came to a Christian university but vocally disagree with the policies had the lowest average levels of intrinsic religiosity ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.01$), whereas those who indicated they came to a Christian university because they agreed with the existing campus policies had the highest average levels of intrinsic religiosity ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 0.47$). Those who indicated they came to a Christian university but quietly disagreed with the policies had an average intrinsic religiosity score of 3.97 ($SD = 0.89$), and those who indicated they came to a Christian university but were unaware of the policies had an average intrinsic

religiosity score of 4.04 ($SD = 0.75$). Bonferroni post-hoc analyses showed those who indicated they came to a Christian university because they agreed with the existing campus policies reported significantly higher levels of intrinsic religiosity those who vocally disagreed with the policies, $p = .001$, and those who quietly disagreed with the policies, $p < .001$. The participants' relationship to campus policy was also compared to the participant's level of sexual attraction (see Table 8).

Table 8. Mean Sexual Attraction Scores and Campus Policies Regarding Sexuality and Sexual Behavior ($n = 160$).

	Opposite-Sex Attraction M (SD)	Same-Sex Attraction M (SD)
Agree with policies	5.08 (2.96)	7.28 (2.12)*
Unaware of policies	4.33 (3.75)	8.07 (2.87)
Quietly disagree with policies	4.33 (3.19)	8.58 (1.87)*
Vocally disagree with policies	4.94 (3.61)	8.42 (2.36)

*OSA and SSA significantly different at $p < 0.05$.

Psychological Health

There were no significant differences by level of SSA (high and low SSA) on any subscale of psychological symptoms (depression, anxiety, academic distress, etc.) (see Table 9). In addition, while about half of the subscale scores fell in the Mild range, none fell in the Elevated Score range as determined by the Center for Collegiate Mental Health (2012).

Table 9. Mean Scale Scores of Psychological Symptoms by Same-Sex Sexual Attraction (SSA) ($n = 160$).

	Low SSA ($n = 34$) M(SD)	High SSA ($n = 126$) M(SD)
Depression	1.22 (0.97) ^a	1.36 (1.03) ^a
Generalized Anxiety	1.37 (1.02) ^a	1.36 (1.03) ^a
Social Anxiety	1.72 (1.06) ^a	1.85 (0.96) ^a
Academic Distress	1.19 (1.09)	1.42 (1.08)
Eating Concerns	0.87 (1.01)	0.97 (1.21)
Hostility	0.55 (0.62)	0.76 (0.92) ^a
Alcohol Use	0.25 (0.39)	0.58 (1.03)

^a Scores fell in the Mild range.

Further analysis investigated the relationship between intrinsic religiosity and psychological symptoms in this sample. Those students with lower intrinsic religiosity reported significantly higher levels of depression, generalized anxiety, social anxiety, academic distress, eating concerns, and alcohol use than did those with higher intrinsic religiosity (see Table 10). Again, while many of the subscale scores fell in the Mild range, only one, depression in those with low intrinsic religiosity, fell in the Elevated Score range as determined by the Center for Collegiate Mental Health (2012).

Table 10. Mean Scale Scores of Psychological Symptoms by Intrinsic Religiosity (IR) ($n = 160$).

	Low IR ($n = 51$) <i>M(SD)</i>	High IR ($n = 109$) <i>M(SD)</i>
Depression **	1.85 (1.07) ^b	1.23 (0.98) ^a
Generalized Anxiety *	1.97 (1.00) ^a	1.48 (1.02) ^a
Social Anxiety *	2.20 (1.04) ^a	1.74 (0.96) ^a
Academic Distress **	1.88 (0.97) ^a	1.27 (1.07)
Eating Concerns *	1.37 (1.23) ^a	0.87 (1.15)
Hostility	0.97 (1.04) ^a	0.67 (0.82)
Alcohol Use **	0.96 (1.16) ^a	0.42 (0.87)

^a Scores fell in the Mild range. ^b Scores fell in the Elevated range.

National average 1.58 for depression

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$ for differences between IR groups.

Discussion

The findings from the present study may be best understood in the context of a few other surveys that have previously been conducted with sexual minority students who attend faith-based institutions of higher education (Stratton et al., 2013; Yarhouse et al., 2009). These include findings suggesting sexual minorities on faith-based campuses may value the religious/spiritual aspects of their identity and may hold these values more centrally than those who attend other institutions. However, even from this point of commonality, diversity can still be found. We organize our discussion around the three areas of sexuality and sexual identity, climate/support, and psychological health.

Sexuality and Sexual Identity

The majority of participants reported experiencing strong levels of same-sex attraction with some also experiencing varying levels of opposite-sex attraction.

For example, over two-thirds of the participants reported strong levels of same-sex attraction, while a quarter of participants indicated they experience strong levels of opposite-sex attraction. These findings indicate sexual feelings for the opposite sex vary amongst those who experience same-sex attraction, which may stand in contradiction to cultural pulls labeling people in distinct sexual categories without nuance. Further, participants tended to identify as spiritual rather than religious, which is in concert with previous literature (Dahl, 2011). Participants may tend to engage in individual spiritual practices rather than the traditional religious services that have been historically condemning of their sexual identity.

Participants in this study appear to be navigating sexual identity development that is in some ways similar to what is seen in the broader literature, but there appear to be differences in milestones that require choice or volition. For example, most respondents did not report adopting a public gay identity, engaging in same-sex behavior to orgasm, or entering into an ongoing same-sex relationship. This is similar in some ways to previous reports of milestone events among sexual minorities on Christian college campuses (Stratton et al., 2013; Yarhouse et al., 2009).

There is quite a lot of diversity in public and private labels associated with a sexual minority identity as LGB. This is likely related to the milestone events noted above and may reflect difficulties in feeling “safe” to be known by a sexual identity label in a public way at a Christian college. The matching or non-matching of an individual’s public and private identities is an aspect of the developmental nature of the sexual identity process and may be an indicator of the surrounding climate as well (i.e., one being less likely to “match” LGB identities if environment is perceived as non-affirming).

In terms of attitudes toward same-sex attraction and behavior, our sample was remarkably diverse in their views. In terms of mean scores, however, they appear to reflect more permissive or gay affirming positions with, again, a significant amount of diversity of attitudes reflected.

Climate and Support

In terms of campus climate, our sample did not, on average, view their campus as a place in which students who experience same-sex attraction are viewed positively or supported. Same-sex attraction, behavior, and the person were all, on average, on the “unacceptable” side of a 1 to 5 scale, with a difference between the person/attraction and the behavior. Of potential further interest is the fact that not even the person was viewed as acceptable.

How is climate established? We can consider others who are on campus as well as campus policies. When it comes to faculty, staff, and other students, it appears as though negative comments that likely set campus climate are heard primarily

from other students (rather than faculty or staff). In terms of policy, we see great variability in attitudes toward existing campus policies, suggesting this sample is not a monolithic group when it comes to policies at a Christian college.

Participants reported they received the most general support from their heterosexual friends and the most support regarding same-sex attraction from their LGB-identified friends, which seems logical. Unfortunately, they received the least amount of support, both in general and in regard to their attraction, from their churches. Additionally, participants received more general support from all social groups in comparison to support regarding their same-sex attraction. This indicates that all social groups, including LGB-identified friends, need assistance providing empathy and compassion toward those investigating their sexual identity. The church, in particular, appears to provide limited support to sexual minorities, as participants listed this group as lowest both in providing general support and in providing support regarding same-sex attraction.

Psychological Health

Participants in our study reported mild psychological symptoms, including depression, anxiety, and social anxiety. These scores were not in the Elevated range (with the exception of depression among those who also scored low in intrinsic religiosity). This is an interesting finding in light of concerns for the psychological well-being of sexual minorities nationwide and especially in religiously-affiliated institutions.

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Limitations

Limitations to this study include the convenience nature of the sample. Also, a significant difference between this study and previous studies of sexual minorities as Christian college campuses was the lack of anonymity to participate in this study. It is unclear whether respondents would be representative of students who did not wish to share their identity or of sexual minority students more broadly.

Conclusions

The findings from the present study suggest sexual minorities on faith-based campuses are navigating religious/spiritual aspects of their identity as well as same-sex sexuality and sexual identity development. Our findings suggest sexual minorities on Christian campuses are a unique blend of persons for whom sexuality and religiosity/spirituality are two very prominent interacting and multi-level variables, particularly as they relate to doctrinal matters and policies at faith-based institutions of higher education.

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When Conflict Crosses Cultural Lines: How Culture Informs Conflict

Joel Perez, PhD
Whittier College

David M. Johnstone, EdD
George Fox University

Abstract

Diverse cultural experience provides tremendous educational value. At the same time, it presents the possibility for increased misunderstanding and conflict. While conflict can happen with students of the same background, cross-cultural dynamics tend to add complexities to tension. Using a tool such as the Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory, we have helped college student leaders build stronger teams, with a better and deeper ability to navigate, mediate and mitigate conflict among their leadership teams and peers.

Introduction

A large part of our institutional student-leader training is focused on cultivating student competencies in relational and personal development. Of equal importance has been encouraging students to develop cultural humility. With these priorities in mind we, as trainers, want students to understand their own personal responses to conflict. We want to help students discern how their own approach has been shaped by their cultural community – and to recognize that as they matured, they may have attained attitudes and strategies for responding to conflict prevalent in their culture. Of particular importance has been how we train student leaders to mediate and help resolve conflict as our campus becomes more culturally diverse. Traditionally, our university has been a fairly white, middle-class, rural/suburban, evangelical and regional campus. With a large influx of international students and a growing number of domestic students from urban settings, our campus is changing. Peer institutions are on similar trajectories and we believe our experiences may be of benefit to others.

Literature Review

We believe this diverse cultural experience provides tremendous educational value. At the same time, it presents the possibility for increased misunderstanding and conflict. While conflict can happen with students of the same background, cross-cultural dynamics tend to add complexities to tension. Previous writers have described the complexity of what is unseen behind our cultural dynamics. In her research on multicultural conflict, Francine Kemp (2009) divided the world into two spheres: *Low-context* cultures and *high-context* cultures. In low-context cultures, communication is verbal with strong face-to-face interaction. These are cultures that emphasize autonomy, individual rights and responsibilities. High-context cultures tend to be communal and interdependent societies that are often hierarchical and highly traditional. The concepts of shame and honor rank high in a high-context group, while they do not in a low-context group. The behavior of one from a high-context group, due to the culture's communal focus, can affect the lives of many members within their societies. Unspoken elements (such as symbols, body language, etc.) are also important in high-context cultures.

In their early conflict resolution work, Elizabeth Chua and William Godykunst (1987) noted those from low-context cultures are able to maintain their friendship by separating the individual from the reason behind the quarrel in moments of conflict. By contrast, those from a high-context find it difficult or are unable to separate the person from the conflict because of the community impact of the tension.

When high- and low-contexts cultures interact, their meanings, intentions and values are often misunderstood and perceived in a manner not intended. Mitchell Hammer (2009) defined conflict as a “form of social interaction in which substantive disagreements arise between two or more individuals, which gives rise to an affective or emotional reaction, often based on a perception of threat or interference by one [or] more other parties to the disagreement” (p. 222). The word *perception* should be noted, as this is a major component of conflict, including cross-cultural conflict.

Martin Davidson (2001) observed that cultures tend to approach conflict in distinctive manners. Most relevant to our situation, Deborah Cai and Edward Fink (2002) noted how different cultures become associated with certain types of responses to conflict. Of course, even within the same culture, there may be diverse responses to conflict. As Kamil Kozan and Canan Ergin (1999) observed, cultures are hardly homogenous entities; frequently, subcultures form responses to tension based on region, religion, or language.

Conflict is often viewed as negative and destructive, yet, as Anne Nicotera (1995) emphasized in *Conflict and Organizations*, conflict can go a long way toward helping members of an organization accomplish its goals. Conflict within a team can be particularly valuable for an organization trying to be creative in responding to its mission and goals. Culturally diverse teams can strengthen their ability to innovate by understanding and developing strategies on how to manage their differences. Dean Tjosvold and Alfred Wong (2004) found a team is more than just a grouping of individuals; members need to be able to interact and function with one another with high levels of efficiency. For multicultural teams, cross-cultural understanding is particularly important, as the potential for confusion is higher. These teams must be focused on cooperation, not competition. Kozan and Ergin (1999) noted when team members share *cooperation* as a value, it has significant bearing upon conflict behavior, leading to greater understanding and communication.

Our challenge and goal was to train student-leaders to move beyond the traditional conflict mediation skills we had used. We wondered how to train student leaders to consider the dynamics of culture and background as they encountered conflict and sought to provide mediation. We desired they develop more complex skills and understanding in order to maneuver through cross-culturally informed conflict with confidence. Such training involved developing skills and competencies in self-awareness, relational development, and a sense of cultural humility. From our viewpoint, the competency of cultural humility was particularly critical.

We determined our conflict resolution training for student-leaders was limited in its success. Our traditional training was strong but very mono-cultural in focus and to some extent, culture-bound. We realized there could be no standard response to the unsettling aspects of conflict affected by culture. As Nancy Evans, D. Forney, F. Guido, C. Patton, and K. Penn (2010) described in *Student Development in College*, providing individuals with accurate feedback about self is a vital method of promoting self-learning on college campuses. Subsequently, we turned to a tool called the *Intercultural Conflict Style (ICS) Inventory* (<http://hammerconsulting.org/>) developed by Hammer Consulting. The inventory seeks to assist students in understanding how their own heritage, communities, and families have shaped how they respond to conflict. We viewed the tool as a way for our student-leaders to understand themselves in order to begin to discern how their peers respond to conflict.

The ICS inventory is a 36-question survey that initially divides an individual's preferences into two core approaches for responding or resolving conflict: (1) *direct* or *indirect* communication, and (2) emotionally *expressive* or emotionally *restrained* styles. For instance, the preference for a direct approach to conflict encourages an individual to speak their mind and rely on face-to-face resolutions of disagreements. Someone who prefers the indirect conflict style would most likely be discrete about voicing their opinions and tend to utilize a third party to help resolve disagreements. In addition to the direct/indirect dichotomy, there are emotionally expressive or restrained preferences that inform the direct and indirect styles. Individuals choose to display or disguise their emotions, visibly use their nonverbal cues (expressive) or minimally display their feelings through nonverbal behavior (restrained). The inventory then goes beyond these four general styles to begin identifying combinations of the styles to assist, specifically, the individual in understanding his or her approach to conflict.

As Hammer (2003) explains, the ICS inventory takes the information gathered from the questions and categorizes it into a focused understanding for the individual. For instance, the direct style can be sub-divided into two more precise styles – those who prefer discussion (direct but emotionally restrained style) or engagement (direct and emotionally expressive approach) responses to conflict – and the indirect style can be divided into accommodation (indirect and emotionally restrained) and what the inventory calls a dynamic (indirect and emotionally expressive) style. See Table 1 for a visual representation of how the direct/indirect and emotionally expressive/restrained styles interact.

Table 1. ICS Conflict Resolution Style Matrix

Communication Style	Emotional Expression	
	<i>Expressive</i>	<i>Restrained</i>
<i>Direct</i>	Engagement	Discussion
<i>Indirect</i>	Dynamic	Accommodation

The discussion style is both verbally direct and emotionally restrained. The engagement style also emphasizes being verbally direct but is infused with an emotionally expressive manner. In contrast to these two (discussion and engagement), the indirect style of accommodation emphasizes approaching the conflict in a circuitous (indirectly responding to tension) manner. Individuals using the accommodation style seek to resolve conflict by maintaining calm, practicing emotional control, and pursuing harmony. The dynamic style is often defined by hyperbole and characterized by emotionally intense expression. The inventory is a tool for identifying preference and responses to conflict; it affirms that styles of response are often informed by worldview, heritage, and culture. It is not a tool for measuring culture, but it does acknowledge patterns that are very beneficial for students to discern when their background and culture informs their own response to tension.

Methodology

Originally, ICS was presented to student leaders at a private faith-based West Coast university in their fall leadership training. They took the inventory individually during a presentation by the university's chief diversity officer. After debriefing the results in a larger group, they divided into their individual staffs of about 12 students. In these groups, they explored the possible scenarios they might encounter and the possible implications of the assessment for their interaction with one another.

Over a two-year period, we surveyed 50 undergraduates who participated in these sessions. Thirty-three of the respondents were women, and 17 were men; all were between the ages of 19 and 23. All were student leaders responsible for areas of residential students. All were domestic students (none were international students); 18 identified themselves as students of color, including multiracial, while 32 identified themselves as being Caucasian. The interviews were conducted three or more months after their initial training, as we desired to see if students were able to incorporate any of the teaching in their leadership roles.

Results

Having administered the ICS Inventory for six years, we noted some common features. Not surprisingly, considering the profile of students we hire, most of our student leaders tend to prefer the *discussion* style of conflict. Each year, they have comprised 60-70% of our student staff. *Accommodation* is the next highest preference (18-22%), with a handful of students preferring the *engagement* style. Over the years as we gathered data, we only had two students (of two hundred) who identified themselves as having a *dynamic* conflict style.

As we began to reflect on the data, three trends stood out: (a) Respondents noted a greater awareness and understanding of their own responses to conflict and tension (Student respondent #7 [S7], S11, S25) ; (b) There was a greater awareness of the dynamics within their own residential staff teams (S9, S11, S16, S35); (c) There was a growing understanding of how their residents responded to conflict and a discernment of how to respond to student conflict and mediation (S2, S22, S37).

Awareness of Self

According to many of our respondents, the primary value of completing the ICS was in a growing self-awareness and increased relational competency. A female Pacific Islander noted, the teaching compelled her “to learn more about it and how [she] can better deal with the cultural differences” (S3). In terms of growing cultural humility, one respondent observed, “I found that by understanding the way I handle conflict, and putting it in the perspective of how other cultures might handle conflict, I was better able to deal with a larger range of people effectively” (S48). The most common reflection was, “It helped me see how I handle conflict in ways I never really had thought about before” (S11). One student summed up one of the principle aims of this training: “I think it was good to hear that there isn’t a right way to communicate, and we should appreciate everyone’s communications” (S21).

Awareness of Team Dynamics

A Latina junior observed the ICS inventory was helpful in understanding her teams and peers: “We realized that we all have differences that could cause problems, but if we worked together and recognized those problems, we could go far as a team” (S35). One student noted, “Every person deals with conflict differently, and by learning what each one means and that it’s not meant to be offensive or pushover – we can deal with conflict better” (S19). A Latino senior commented, “It’s important to be flexible in the ways that we confront others. I don’t think we can always use our preferred conflict style, because

not everyone will always respond well to that, and may even take offense” (S20). Discerning the differences on her team, one commented, “The conflict styles have manifested in our area staff in a variety of ways. It was helpful to identify how I approach conflict and how my duty partner approaches conflict so that we could better lead as a team and not as separate individuals” (S38). She went on to note, “Knowing the conflict styles of the staff members I know less well has helped me to work better when faced with indecision or hurt feelings” (S38). Another noted the value of the ICS for team building, understanding, and cohesions: “The biggest takeaway was seeing the conflict styles of my team. It was surprising and opened up conversation for about half of the group” (S41). A peer observed, “Those on our staff that are ‘engagement’ were viewed as overbearing and judgmental, but once we recognized their style we understood that it was not a judgmental attitude, those conflicts went away” (S21).

Awareness of Peers

One student observed, “seeing conflict styles as something cultural has helped me to identify why a resident may react in a way totally opposite of what I expect” (S38). However, most importantly for our purposes, a Caucasian senior acknowledged, “residents handle conflict differently, and this knowledge can help me mediate their tensions” (S50). As the student leaders began to understand their residents, another Caucasian student noted, “I have a heck of a lot of variation between my residents, and if I did not know this chart ahead of time, I would think a few my residents were actually crazy. This is absolutely invaluable” (S19). Further, another observed, “Some of my residents have been very indirect in approaching conflict. They have used me to help settle their conflict without first attempting to settle it themselves. This is really different from how I approach conflict, so it was a learning experience for me” (S2). One Caucasian male remarked, “I have realized that most of the people on my floor have very different conflict styles than my own, which initially was very difficult to deal with, but with help from my staff who have different styles together we have come up with resolutions to these problems” (S27). A Caucasian woman commented, “Seeing conflict styles as something cultural has helped me to identify why a resident may react in a way totally opposite of what I expect. It gives me insight into her upbringing and family dynamics. And that gives me an opportunity to ask about those family norms” (S38).

Implications

Recently, a student leader reported a conflict that arose among eight students living together in campus housing. At first glance, it appeared to be a simple cleanliness concern tied to failure to complete chores. As the RA coached the residents, it became clear that there were also cultural dynamics at play. Half the residents were Chinese nationals; half were white domestic residents. The two groups brought cultural differences to the situation. The RA helped the students understand their tensions are not as simple as they may have perceived. Taking the ICS inventory provided the student leader with a common vocabulary and paradigm to begin understanding how his residents were interacting. Simultaneously, the ICS has primed the students to ask themselves deeper questions when encountering conflict amongst their team members or peers. The ICS has helped them to begin developing questions that will enable them to see behind the manifestation of conflict. As Hammer (2009) wrote,

Developing awareness of these style differences begins with oneself. How an individual profiles on the ICS Inventory provides a clear window on how that person will likely frame and respond to a problem that arises. ... Recognizing how one's own approach differs from others then becomes the basis for increased sensitivity to difference and an improved ability to better bridge across these intercultural style patterns of difference. (p. 230)

Conclusion

We are in this journey to understand how to respond to conflict in better ways. Whether volatility or passivity is present in a conflict, one's responses are often tied to background, heritage, and style. Conflict is challenging, particularly if assumptions are made simplistically or purely based on outward appearances. The ICS Inventory provides a tool to broaden our understanding of conflict, its resolution, and even ourselves. There is much we do not understand, and most likely we don't even know the questions that could be asked. As our campus continues to diversify, the potential for misunderstandings will also grow. However, this inventory provides a launching point for responding to conflict. Particularly at institutions that see encouraging a diverse community as part of reflecting God's kingdom, pursuing reconciliation in all its forms is a beneficial piece. The ICS inventory is a tool to begin approaching that reconciliation. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

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Christian Service: Learning to Serve and Serving to Learn

Bill Kuhn, Ed.D.
Scott Moats, Ph.D.
James Zapf, Ph.D.

Crown College

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Abstract

Small, private higher educational institutions have played a significant role in American society. Historically, these institutions have emphasized the role of teaching and service. With this in mind, this article reports on the effects of service-learning embedded in an existing course at an institution with an extensive co-curricular service-learning program. This research reveals the results of a creative partnership between Student Development leadership and faculty to investigate the effects of service-learning on students when embedded in an existing class. Using in-depth interviews, the researchers seek to discover the student experience of making a co-curricular program curricular. Results indicate students showed an increase in leadership capacity and professional affinity. This study indicates there is promise to embedding service-learning projects in existing course work. While this endeavor creates additional work for Student Development professionals and faculty, the additional work appears to enrich the student experience.

Keywords: service-learning, Christian service, student experience

Introduction

Much has been written about service-learning and its effects (Brandell & Hinck, 1997; Eyer & Giles, 1996; Giles & Eyer, 1998; Kendrick, 1996; Markus, Howard & King, 1993; Myers-Lipton, 1996; and Shumer & Belbas, 1996). However, not much attention is devoted to service-learning in a context where it has been historically a part of an institution's culture for almost 100 years.

Small, private colleges have played a historic and critical role in American higher education in the past 300-plus years. However, today the very essence of these unique institutions is being threatened in the changing and complex higher education landscape. While these colleges pursue their specific mission, their leadership is struggling to find relevant research, practical advice, and educated individuals that are trained in culturally relevant tactics to sustain institutional health.

This study provides one component of a foundational research base in the differences between small, private institutions and large, public institutions. The Research I institution in higher education is the most studied institutional set in America. However, there are a greater number of small, private institutions that have not been studied at the same level. The educated professor and administrator, in order to apply the research to his or her institution, must do an "institutional hermeneutic." This study is one attempt to do an institutional hermeneutic with the well-known concept of Christian Service. Christian service at many small, historically faith-based colleges have been doing service components since their beginnings. However, not much research has been done on the impact upon students when Christian service is embedded into a student's academic coursework. It is the hope of the researchers that this study will generate interest and more studies on the benefits and detractions of embedding Christian Service expectations and requirements into existing courses.

Literature Review

Christian Service has been a foundational component of the American Bible College movement since its early beginnings (Hunt & Carper, 1996). The foundation for today's service-learning was evident in some of the earliest American educational institutions. However, the debate on the value of Christian Service, more commonly called service-learning, in the academic classroom continues. The debate centers on several different themes. For this review, three areas will be addressed, finally centering on one area that will focus the study. The three areas that will be briefly addressed are: benefits to the students, benefits to the faculty member, and benefits to the course

outcomes. Admittedly, the categories are not mutually exclusive, but the framework provides a structure for the literature review.

Benefits to the Students

Strage (2000) suggests that “Participation in service-learning experiences has been demonstrated to benefit students in several important ways” (p. 50). The documented benefits that have been discussed include a greater student awareness of their civic responsibilities (Brandell & Hinck, 1997; Eyler & Giles, 1996; Giles & Eyler, 1998; Kendrick, 1996; Markus, Howard, & King, 1993; Myers-Lipton, 1996; and Shumer & Belbas, 1996). With regard to internal enhancement, studies have shown that students’ moral, cognitive, and emotional development have been positively affected by completing service projects (Batchelder & Root, 1994; Eyler & Giles, 1996; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Kendrick, 1996; Ostrow, 1995, Rhoads, 1997).

Other internal enhancements have come in the area of commitment to the academic process (Sax & Astin, 1997) and greater critical thinking skills (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Benefits to the Faculty

Hammond (1994) conducted a study of 130 faculty members in Michigan. One reported finding suggested that faculty believed that service-learning clearly represented their discipline, enhanced students’ critical thinking, and helped in self-motivation. Hesser (1995) reported that faculty believed that service-learning projects enhanced students’ written communicative skills and students’ course concept recognition. Faculty from the Hesser study also reported that the quality of learning increased. However, there was not much definition surrounding the operationalization of the concept.

Benefits to Course Outcomes

While the literature is plentiful on the benefits of course outcomes, it is also mixed. Based on an analysis of course grades, Kendrick (1996) suggested no measurable difference in course grades. Others like Sugar and Livosky (1998) reported a slightly higher final course grade in Child Development for students who self-selected a service-learning option. However, Shastri (1999) documented that the course grades in a Foundations of Education course were not different. She did report an increase in engagement among some assignments that required student reflection. Markus, Howard, and King (1993) reported specific differences on what students believed they had learned in the course, specifically on whether they felt like they performed to their potential.

In this study, the researchers are primarily interested in what student impacts are realized when a service-learning component is attached to a class. The researchers are seeking a greater understanding of the experience of students by embedding service-learning components into existing classes.

Methods

This study specifically sets out to discover the experience of students when Christian Service projects are embedded in existing college classes. In the context of this research, Christian Service projects run parallel to the curriculum. Christian service is administered by Student Development staff with little input or intersection with college faculty. Students are required to complete Christian Service credits in order to graduate. However, some students never connect their Christian Service obligations with their chosen field. This experiment sets out to combine the two curricula to see if there are enhanced benefits. Specifically, the research question that guides this study is: What are the experiences of students when Christian Service projects are embedded into existing classes?

Definition of Variable

For this study, “Christian Service” is used interchangeably with “service-learning.” The researchers believe that there are nuances between the two; however, for the purpose of this study, the nuances are non-material. Therefore, service-learning is being defined as field-based application of the material being discussed in class. The field-based work in this case was closely tied to the course calendar as well as the course outcomes.

Study Setting

This study is situated in a small, Midwestern, private institution belonging to the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCCU). This institution is small and informal (i.e. administration is flat with little designation between faculty, staff, and administration). The students are typically first-generation college students from smaller communities. Christian Service is offered out of Student Development and is required for graduation.

Data Collection and Methodological Approach

Qualitative research provides a lens whereby researchers can distill core benefits of the service-learning experience in the lives of the students. In this case, in-depth interviews were conducted with each of the six students. An interview protocol was developed in consultation with relevant literature and stated research goals. The protocol was reviewed by a panel of experts for construct validity. Individual interviews were recorded and careful

interviewer notes were taken. Confidentiality was preserved by using student-selected pseudonyms throughout the research and report. A constant comparative model of analysis of both the notes and recordings was pursued providing an iterative process of data review. Comparing interview notes with recorded interviews, the researchers catalogued repeated words and ideas. These words and ideas were then clustered into themes to form constructs and relationships of ideas (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). These constructs were then compared to relevant literature to confirm research validity. This research design generates reliable themes in keeping with standard qualitative research practices (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2006).

Participants

The analysis below is based, in part, on one section of students in a senior-level psychology class. The gender breakdown was primarily women (83%, n=5) with a minority of students being male (17%, n=1). The participant headcount is low due to the fact that this is an elective senior-level course for psychology majors.

The Course

PSY 442, Marriage and Family Counseling, is a three-credit class that is offered every spring. The catalog describes the course as, “[a] course [that] provides an overview of key theories in marital and family therapy along with an introduction to techniques used in marital and family counseling. Students will develop an integrationist approach to marriage and family counseling. Prerequisite PSY 330” (College Catalog, p. 186).

The course met three times each week for 50 minutes. It was a typical class with tests and assignments that followed along with a published textbook. For the spring 2013 class, a field component (service-learning) was introduced to the students. While participation was optional, everyone in the class volunteered to be in the study and chose the service-learning option.

The service-learning component was fully integrated into the course. The service-learning assignments were based on fieldwork. Students were assigned a group and a community family. Each assignment was built upon what was being taught in the class. Once the students were introduced to the textbook material, they followed up that week with testing the theories in the field with an assigned family. Families were specifically chosen based on a willingness to participate. The specific field-based assignments were collected and used to calculate final grades for the class. It should be noted that students were not providing clinical counseling services to the families, as this would not be within their scope of practice as undergraduate psychology students.

Results

The research question is: What are the experiences of students when Christian Service projects are embedded into existing classes? The research interviews generated core themes outlined according to (a) personal development, (b) class engagement, (c) professional development, and (d) project process and motivation. These categories provide the researchers a lens from which to assess the liabilities and benefits of embedding the service-learning into existing classes. Participant quotes are provided in order to capture the language and authenticity of the student voice.

Personal Development

Personal disequilibrium. All six participants referenced anxiety associated with the service-learning project. Students had to interact with community families in real-life “counseling” scenarios. This brought the students a level of uneasiness since the stakes were higher, albeit the real risks were minimal.

Pat noted the discomfort of stepping into an unfamiliar setting stating that he had to work to “overcome fears; I felt blind at first, facing unknown limits and expectations.” Anna felt the experience was “intimidating at first” but grew more excited about the experience as she had opportunity to apply the course content. Ally admitted to feeling “nervous, even resistant” to the service project, but had a “conquering feeling” afterward for having succeeded. The reality of serving “outside your comfort zone” (Pat) seemed to have been the catalyst for the lessons learned by students. Even if the student “felt pushed to participate since it was required of the class” (Ally), the presence of a palpable disequilibrium generated by the out-of-class experience is something difficult to impossible to manufacture in the classroom and heightened the learning considerably.

Increased leadership capacity. The “on-site” experiences seem to have pushed students to elevate their personal leadership capacity. Molly mentioned learning about “organizational skills and leadership” through the experience. She referenced issues such as faithfully scheduling meetings with others as a benefit. Working in pairs helped the students handle team conflict (Maria, Molly). Pat noted the practical benefits of the experiences which made [him] think about everything from personal hygiene to punctuality. “In a sense,” he said, “I felt forced to grow up; helped me mature as an adult.” Students were able to expand their self-awareness and leadership through these real-life learning opportunities.

Class Engagement

Integrated learning. The opportunity to serve outside the classroom provided students with an evident association for classroom material. Students repeatedly spoke of the value of integrating classroom theories with their service. Ally stated, “[the service-learning assignment] helped me recognize and incorporate several counseling models.” Pat agreed, “[the service-learning assignments] helped synthesize theories to develop my own approach through application.” Ally felt motivated to learn the class content stating, “I was forced to take in the material knowing it was going to be used.” Molly specifically spoke about the collaboration with a peer through assignments which allowed for “honest critique” of each other following their family sessions. She felt the debriefing moments with her peer after the sessions were among the most educational components of the course. Molly simply added, “the entire experience allowed us to go deeper with experience.” Service-projects are intended to aid the learning via associational experiences. This project accomplished that educational aim well.

Class participation. Students indicated through the interviews that the outside-the-class experiences enriched their inside-the-class experience. Students spoke of increased attendance knowing that they were going to have to utilize counseling theories with families (Anna, Pat). Students stated that their engagement in class discussions increased due to their learning project involvement (Maria, Molly). Anna felt the project “pushed [her] to go to class and led me to take better notes.” The discussion in class was enhanced by having real-life examples to draw from. Pat declared, “I came to some ‘eureka moments’ in class discussion when I realized there were other ways to approach family issues.” Students felt the debriefing moments in class enriched their service-learning experience, helping them to make sense of the material. Thus, the class and the project complemented each other in the lives of students.

Professional Development

Affirmation. Four of the six students mentioned the value of the experience as one that was affirming to their career goals. Students in this class were comprised of mostly seniors with professional aspirations on the horizon and they believed this experience re-affirmed their desire to work in the counseling field. Anna may have captured the sentiment most directly when she stated, “This project helped refine my passion for counseling.” She added that it gave her a “positive view of the future.” Paige was excited about the experience as it “affirmed that [she] want[s] to work with people in these settings.”

Professional growth. Students spoke about the increased professionalism born out of their field experience. Wurr & Hamilton (2012) suggest that service-learning projects help a student feel better prepared for future professions. Students indeed felt that the opportunity provided a framework for better knowledge and use of counseling skills. For example, Ally believed that over the sessions with the family, students “developed their own style of relating in a counseling session.” Similarly, Maria remarked that the experience “refined [her] counseling skills” and Paige stated, “it gave me an opportunity to explore different lenses of family counseling.” Molly felt strongly that she learned about how to conduct oneself in a professional manner in counseling settings. Students spoke about the positive benefits of the service-learning project such as ability to handle complex situations (Paige), punctuality (Pat), organization skills (Molly), leadership growth (Molly), and how to handle “conflict in the field” (Molly). These represent transferable skills that will aid the students in maturing into the professional workforce.

Project Process and Motivation

A word about the process of the service-learning project is in order based on student feedback. Students utilized strong language to describe their feelings to the class assignment. Despite the fact that students were told that they could opt out of the service project and signed a participation statement declaring they could discontinue at any time, two students expressed concern that they felt “pushed to do it” (Ally, Anna). Anna elaborated, “I felt like I couldn’t get out of the assignment and that created a lot of stress for me.” Ally stated that the project was a “hassle at first, like another hoop to jump through, but [she] did learn from it in the end.” Maria expressed similar thoughts saying the project “seemed like a chore [she] had to get done.” Maybe it was for such reasons that Anna felt the project was “artificial for both [her] and the family.” In addition, four out of the six students related difficulty with scheduling meetings. These comments reflect the extrinsic motivation provided by the course requirement toward the project, though alternate assignments were available for any who chose not to participate.

Discussion

Service-learning holds promise for students’ personal and professional growth as evidenced by student interviews and relevant literature (Schaffer, 2004). Data culled from the interviews suggest the need for further research on student motivation. Fascinatingly, the personal disequilibrium created by the service project (which often prompts intrinsic motivation) was matched

by an exposed frustration from the students toward the “required” nature of the assignment. Students were aggravated by the “hassle” of scheduling meetings with community families, and felt “pushed” into the assignment. These speak to an extrinsic motivation often viewed as a deterrent to student learning (Wlodkowski, 1999). How does a faculty member interact with the realities of scheduling conflicts and expectations in service-learning requirements to move students toward intrinsic motivation? How does the “required” status of the assignment relate to the intent of the assignment? How should a course be arranged with a service-learning component which minimizes the artificial nature of the service? In a sense, the assignment is given with the hope that it increases intrinsic motivation, say a genuine concern for others, in future settings. Yet, the convergence of factors makes student motivation for such projects slippery. This could benefit from more research.

Also, the integrational nature of service-learning toward holistic development of students urges a strong praxis model of education. Students expressed the value of class discussion to help them process their experience. Writing and videotaping sessions helped students reflect on the project. How do faculty arrange class times and assignments to aid students in reflection? To optimize student learning, students indicate a high need for reflection through discussion and faculty feedback which may cut into faculty desires for lecture. How much reflection is necessary? At what point does the class discussion reach a saturation point in which reflection is no longer profitable? Additional research could shed needed light on how to capture course time and assignments to maximize student reflection and growth.

Finally, the scheduling conflicts and required nature of the assignment created stress points for students toward the assignment. It was hoped that connecting the service-learning with upper-level course work would increase intrinsic motivation. However, student feedback does not reflect that supposition. This is a critical issue for educators seeking to enlist service-learning in classroom settings. Helping students navigate their busy schedules in order to prioritize outside-the-classroom experiences must be considered when developing such assignments. Further, one must not assume that moving the “requirement” from a non-curricular setting to a curricular context improves the student motivation for service.

Conclusion

This study provides foundational reflections on the experience of students when service-learning is conjoined with the classroom experience. Clearly these results should not be used to derive policy for small, private institutions

that have engaged in Christian Service projects since their inception, but it does enrich the understanding of how service-learning opportunities linked with academic courses can impact the student. Student Development professionals should seek creative partnerships with faculty to align Christian Service requirements with course offerings.

One may speculate about the effectiveness of a Christian Service program that does not build on a student's interests or developmental needs. It would appear from this study that using a student's curricular program as a foundation for service-learning brings certain benefits to the student, namely, its potential to confirm (or disconfirm) a student's choice of profession, its effects on personal and professional development, and the potential for increased academic engagement. The creation of individualized or class-based service-learning projects for every student would take time and resources, but the benefits could be most profound.

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Faith Integration: Curricular Considerations for Student Affairs Faculty

Jeannine Kranzow, Ph.D.

Azusa Pacific University

Abstract

There is an expectation that faculty members teaching in Christian colleges will integrate the Christian faith into their disciplines. In spite of the willingness and desire to do so, many faculty members who attended secular institutions are not sure how to approach academic faith integration in their discipline. This qualitative study examines new and experienced faculty perspectives on courses and topics within the student affairs curriculum that provide opportunities for academic faith integration. Results can assist student affairs faculty members in their professional development as it relates to academic faith integration.

Introduction

It is widely recognized that faculty members working in Christian institutions are generally expected to integrate faith and learning in the college classroom (Rasmussen, & Hernandez Rasmussen, 2005). This integration extends beyond courses in religion to all disciplines. For many faculty members who are educated in secular institutions, this concept of formally and intentionally integrating faith into the discipline is new (Beers & Beers, 2008). Part of the difficulty involved in becoming competent in academic faith integration (AFI) is the recognition that Christians and scholars are not in one accord as to what faith integration should look like (Jacobsen & Hustedt Jacobsen, 2004; Matthias, 2008; Ripley, Garzon, Lewis Hall, Mangis, & Murphy, 2009). An additional layer of complexity involved in understanding AFI pedagogy is that while all disciplines in faith-based institutions have the responsibility to participate in AFI, it takes on a different form within each discipline.

While literature on AFI as it relates to social work (Seitz, 2014), psychology (Grauf-grounds, Edwards, Macdonald, Mui-Teng Quek, & Schermer Sellers, 2009), marketing (Starcher, 2013), English as a second language (Lessard-Clouston, 2012), and many other disciplines is available to guide faculty members in their AFI, scholarly sources to guide those in the discipline of student affairs (SA) are largely absent. Student affairs faculty members who are new to AFI or those wishing to examine their integration at a deeper level presently have few resources available; therefore, the purpose of this research is to identify curricular areas in SA which faculty members feel are fruitful for AFI consideration and application. By identifying course content and application areas for AFI, faculty seeking to better understand or further develop their ability to do AFI will have material that the author hopes will be useful for teaching, reflection, and professional growth.

Literature

As noted earlier, there is limited research on the topic of integrating faith and spirituality into SA programs (Love & Talbot, 2009). Present research addresses the broad topic of faith, religion, and spirituality as they relate to extending the development of students to the spiritual sphere (Astin, 2016; Love & Talbot, 2009; Smith, 2004). Estanek (2008) expands her focus to examine SA work in a Catholic context, making suggestions for transformative student experiences; however, her work is not focused on integrating faith into the professional preparation curriculum. Rather, much of her work examines ways that SA professionals can engage with students in ways that are in keeping with the Catholic mission specifically. A specific

literature gap exists in terms of integrating the Christian faith with the disciplinary pedagogy of student affairs professional preparation.

Faculty members preparing Christian educators for the field of SA must equip students to work in a variety of institutional contexts with significant variance in the institutional mission. There are role expectations for the profession and role expectations of the specific campus, and the two are not always in alignment, especially at faith-based institutions (Estanek, Herdlein, & Harris, 2011). Furthermore, at these institutions “faculty and staff hold to Christian faith beliefs amidst students, and even a profession, that may not share the same values” (Grauf-grounds et al., 2009, p. 4). AFI should engage the student mind and guide the student into meaningful consideration of how they can reconcile worldview perspectives, role expectations, and personal values (Hall, Ripley, Garzon, & Mangis, 2009).

AFI can be considered from three primary vantage points – curriculum, the role of the teacher, and scholarship (Bailey, 2012). While there is much opportunity to discuss integration in the discipline of student affairs from each of these perspectives, this research will focus on the curricular potential.

Methodology

This research is part of a larger exploratory case study involving the AFI learning process for faculty members in student affairs. This smaller portion of the qualitative study focuses specifically on the curriculum in the discipline, and examines courses and topics which faculty believe are rich for faith integration discussions or activities. Three faculty members who teach in SA or higher education master’s programs at institutions in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities department as well as the author (also a faculty member in the discipline) responded to the following questions in an individual interview:

- What areas of opportunity for AFI do you see in the courses you teach?
- What, if any, opportunity do you see for AFI to happen across the curriculum at a broader (student affairs disciplinary) level?

All four participants have been through or were completing professional development sessions for new faculty on the topic of AFI. The length of time in a full-time faculty role ranged from one year to over 13 years. Faculty members taught some similar and a few different courses, providing insight into a range of AFI opportunities in the discipline.

Because responses pertained to very specific curricular questions, data analysis consisted of examining the responses and determining whether they related to overlapping/common curricular ideas or were unique to specific courses. In each case, content analysis allowed responses to be organized by themes, which will be highlighted in the Results section. In order to increase the validity of the study, member checking was conducted with two of the faculty members (not including the author). Participants were asked to consider whether their perspectives were captured accurately as well as if other ideas or thoughts had come to mind since the original interview. While member checking is not without criticism, it can serve as a way both to check for accurate interpretation of statements and also to provide a means for transformational practice (Koelsch, 2013). The author hoped that this member checking process would allow an opportunity for faculty to consider how this study may have affected their thoughts or behaviors on the topic of AFI. Since the present research is intended to be useful for reflection and support for those teaching in SA programs, this process for addressing validity was deemed appropriate.

Findings

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The data illuminated four common areas in student affairs that are fruitful for discussions of AFI. These four areas were identified as natural intersections in every course within the professional preparation program. The data also revealed areas where further discussion and deeper learning might take place within a course-specific context. Taken together, these findings offer faculty in this discipline considerable opportunities for discussions of faith in the classroom.

Points of Intersection & Integration Across the Curriculum

The four identified areas that appeared to be the best natural junctures for AFI in any course within student affairs professional preparation programs were: connecting faith, values, and beliefs to the profession including the concept of the whole person/holistic view of humanity; seeking excellence as a way to honor God; approaching leadership through a lens of faith; and examining the role of an institutional counselor or leader in light of social justice and diversity. Some might suggest that the final two categories should be combined. While this perspective is not without merit, considering them separately is helpful due to the emphasis that faculty placed on them as distinct areas and because of the nuances of the discussions in the interviews.

Connecting faith, values, and beliefs with the profession and its goals. This theme is the anchor of the AFI discussions in SA preparation

programs because although the range of content in SA programs is typically broad (topics from counseling foundations, law and ethics, and student development to administration and technology), consideration of the profession's values and core beliefs in each of these areas is essential. One of the professional competencies recognized by both the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), is to “connect the history, philosophy, and values of the student affairs profession to one's current professional practice” (ACPA/NASPA, 2015, p. 12). It is a natural extension of this expectation to engage students in a conversation about how the Christian faith affects and influences their values and practice (Estanek et al., 2011).

One of the essential concepts in the field of SA is that of viewing students from a holistic perspective. Since AFI dictates that disciplinary content be examined in light of Biblical teachings (Beers & Beers, 2008), students can examine the stated philosophy of the discipline while also examining scripture. In addition, relevant denominational or institutional documents based on theological perspectives might be discussed. Asking students to integrate their faith and academic work in this way prepares them to be able to articulate how they will put their faith into practice.

Whether teaching about the origins of the field and foundational documents, discussing approaches to counseling, planning student learning opportunities, or examining theories of student development, identity development, spiritual, and moral development, faculty can engage students in discussions or thought-provoking assignments related to the impact on that particular topic in relation to the Christian idea of holistic personhood. Other values and beliefs ascribed to in the field and discussed in seminal documents such as the Student Personnel Point of View (1937) and the Student Learning Imperative (1994) provide further opportunities for students to examine their own values and consider ways that the Christian faith and beliefs are in alignment or discord with the philosophies of the field. These documents open the dialogue about how SA professionals see students and impress upon those new to the field the importance of including conversations about spiritual topics as an essential component of their work.

Seeking excellence. Another concept that came out of the interviews which is applicable across all areas of student affairs curriculum (in addition to other disciplines) is the idea of seeking excellence in everything as a way to honor God. This applies to individual courses, to programs broadly, and extends further as students prepare to enter the profession and examine their own work. The literature indicates that students correlate a faculty member's perceived striving for excellence with their ability to integrate their faith into

their practice (Matthias & Wrobbel, 2015). In SA courses, faculty members have AFI opportunities to discuss not only the perspective of doing excellent work, but also the responsibility to reflect on their own excellence and example. Student affairs professionals can reflect on the ways that their work is a model of leading and living in accordance with scripture and bringing honor and glory to God. If practitioners strive for excellence, students perceive this as authentic integration.

Leadership. As the student affairs profession trains those who will work in higher education in various capacities in roles of administration, teaching, and counseling, the topic of leadership is frequently discussed. Topics such as theories addressing perspectives on leadership to considerations for how and when to revise policies or budgets were mentioned as areas fruitful for AFI work. Using a Christian lens, faculty can ask students to consider questions such as: What does it look like to lead a unit on campus from a Christian leadership perspective? What does Christian supervision look like? What does “not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5: 3, ESV) mean in terms of leading Christianly?

AFI in the context of leadership has almost unending potential. From examining current events in light of Christian administration and leadership (such as student athletes being accused of sexual assault) to case studies involving challenging scenarios (such as a racial incident during preview weekend), the wisdom of Jesus provides insight that is worthy of scholarly attention. Further, faculty members can help students examine leadership texts and articles for Biblical alignment or discrepancy. Students’ consideration of leadership texts and Christian leadership principles in the context of today’s higher education challenges is a practice that all faculty members have ample opportunities to encourage.

Diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice. The final common curricular area identified which offers plentiful occasions for AFI is that of diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice. Although many SA programs offer specific courses on diversity and multiculturalism (where further AFI can occur), the topic is too important, from both a Christian and a higher education perspective, to be relegated into a single term. As such, when faculty members teach any course, there are abundant opportunities to discuss how a Christian perspective affects the way Student Affairs professionals approach diversity and social justice in their field.

The Biblical perspective on diversity can be discussed in terms of God’s view of man and/or a picture of the coming kingdom. Scriptures such as “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27, NIV) and “...a great

multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes...” (Rev. 7:9, ESV) can provide opportunities to discuss how these ideas influence the philosophy and work of Christians in the field of student affairs. These scriptures also open the door to discussion about what professionals can do in their practice to advocate for social justice and diversity. For example, AFI discussions or assignments centered around the topic of admissions and financial aid policies could ask students to ponder such things as: How might a college display its commitment to diversity and access through its admissions and financial aid policies (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009)?

Beyond AFI opportunities that occur within the framework of a specific class topic, selected readings can support a commitment to diversity and social justice. Identification of readings from authors of various racial, gender, and ethnic backgrounds is something many faculty members put great effort into, but without discussion of that work as intentional AFI work, students may fail to see the connection between the faculty member’s selection of texts and his/her commitment to diversity and Christian responsibility. Faculty members have an opportunity to discuss the reasons they do what they do so that students can see a commitment to diversity issues through their pedagogy.

Course-Specific Intersection and Integration in the Curriculum

The focus of the research findings now shifts beyond the four primary areas for consideration across the curriculum to the ways that faculty members mentioned intentional AFI in specific courses. While not all programs have the same courses, the content is generally in areas of administration, counseling, research, diversity, and student development. With this idea in mind, courses in each area will be discussed here with a mention of specific considerations for AFI efforts.

Diversity and multiculturalism. The topic of diversity was mentioned above in terms of its universal ability to link the Christian faith with course content in the field of student affairs. As a specific course, there are opportunities to look deeper and build on earlier learning in the area of diversity. Examining diversity from the perspectives of race, ethnicity, gender, and religion is important for students. One consideration for AFI is to examine the institutional position statement on diversity and discuss the ways in which the position is informed by scripture (Slavin Miller, n.d.). Another possibility is to discuss economic diversity from a Christian worldview and to consider, as Hughes (2005) challenges, the role Christians play in serving those who have less.

Through self-reflection and in community with others, students learn to more clearly recognize their privilege and the responsibility that Christians have to be a blessing to others. While a full description of the deep learning that takes place in this type of course in the professional preparation curriculum is beyond the scope of this writing, the central curricular concepts include examining privilege, entering into the discomfort that comes along with examining it, and processing those thoughts and feelings in light of the Christian faith. Practitioners in the field of student affairs are called to serve students from underprivileged and underrepresented backgrounds (Grier-Reed & Ganuza, 2012; Hughes, Gibbons, & Mynatt, 2013). Students of the profession must therefore consider deeply how they can serve the underprivileged and underrepresented Christianly.

Vocation, calling, and work. Another area of significant overlap of faith and academic discipline content had to do with the discussion of vocation and calling. One of the reasons that many students attend college is so they can find meaningful and financially gainful employment (Pryor et al., 2012), and college is a time when many students question their purpose and search for meaningful work (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010). Student affairs programs either have courses in career counseling or integrate aspects of career counseling into their other courses as they discuss topics like academic advising, student success, and high-impact practices. In discussions of career and vocation, students can consider whether or how their own faith informs decisions about work and vocation. Further, because many of the students in SA programs will guide, support, or counsel students on career-related issues in their future work, those in career planning courses should examine how counseling can be considerate of the calling that others often seek (Adams, 2012). Students can also consider together in class (or individually in an assignment) how the Christian worldview overlaps or strays from the literature on career, calling and vocation.

Theoretical courses. Whether focused on student development, counseling theory, or leadership, courses with high theoretical content are rich with opportunities for AFI. Whenever theories are introduced, students have an opportunity to consider the theory's relationship to their own worldview. "Worldviews shape what is presented to you as fact" (Harris, 2004, p. V) and "theories are also laden with values and world-view assumptions about the nature of personhood, social relationships, and society" (Watson & Eveleigh, 2014, p. 200). Theories therefore offer organic opportunities for critical thinking about beliefs and ideologies, and student affairs faculty members noted these topics to be meaningful in preparing students for professional practice.

Research courses. At first glance, a course on research methods or statistics might seem more difficult in terms of AFI, yet these courses also offer natural linkages. Deep ethical questions lie in the midst of research. Perhaps closely aligned to seeking excellence in all that is done, giving consideration to what characterizes a Christian researcher is significant. From research topics selected to methods of data collection to reporting of findings and attributing credit as due, the research process is full of steps worth discussing in light of a Christian worldview.

The Chronicle of Higher Education and other major newspapers are often reporting breaches in ethical research protocol in the higher education community (Johnson, 2012; Kolowich, 2015). AFI discussions or reflective writing about standards of conduct in relation to ones of faith and worldview can flow out of topics related to current research happenings in various institutions.

Courses addressing student conduct and discipline. AFI allows student conduct to be examined from a Biblical perspective through lenses of grace, justice, reconciliation, and the impact of behavior on community. In many ways, this topic leads logically into a discussion of the gospel itself. “Indeed, there is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins” (Ecclesiastes 7:20, NIV).

There may be multiple courses that have an opportunity to discuss student conduct, the bad choices that humans often make, and the impact of sin on the community. Courses introducing students to the functional areas in SA, student development courses, and legal and ethical issues courses have the potential to explore the topic of student discipline, policy, and concepts of faith, redemption, and restorative justice (Slavin Miller, n.d.). Since it is often student affairs educators interacting with students throughout the discipline process when violations of student codes of conduct arise, philosophies and approaches to student conduct work make for meaningful discussions about the intersection of faith and practice. From both a case study perspective and a philosophical perspective, AFI discussions of punitive versus developmental approaches to student violations of the code of conduct can be significant.

Co-curricular planning and student affairs experiential learning. In some ways, the topic of co-curricular programming could fall under the broad areas of connecting faith with the profession’s goals because the large majority of SA practitioners would identify co-curricular education as their primary role; however, there are specific opportunities for AFI in courses which focus on programming development and student learning. As students hone their abilities to develop programming, they must intentionally consider ways to foster student spiritual growth and development (Astin,

2016; Keeling, 2006). AFI allows students to consider and discuss the types and variety of programs that respond to the call of the field and align with institutional mission and Christian worldview.

Discussion

This study identified topics and courses within the field of student affairs that serve as opportunities for AFI. Identifying intersections of disciplinary content and Biblical perspectives that are fertile for integration into work is one way to consider approaching faculty professional development within programs of SA in Christian institutions.

As faculty discussed points in the curriculum that make for organic linkages between student affairs content and Biblical teachings, it became apparent that the opportunities, while plentiful, tend to feel more natural in some areas than others. While all the areas discussed in the findings are possible junctures for AFI to occur, it is likely that individual faculty members will focus on specific areas that intersect with their research interests and experiences. Passion about one's discipline has shown to be significant in faculty faith integration in other disciplines (Matthias, 2008), and this appears true in the discipline of student affairs as well.

While this study focused on the curricular aspect of AFI, it seems important to emphasize two closing suggestions at this point. First, academic faith integration should focus on preparing the students to integrate their faith once they are in their future jobs (Bailey, 2012).

Too much focus on the instructor as expert denies the students opportunities to be responsible for their own AFI learning; therefore, students must be challenged, encouraged, and supported to do the difficult AFI work (Bailey, 2012). Second, AFI research highlights the importance of quality interactions and relationships with students (Burton & Nwosu, 2003; Sherr, Huff & Curran, 2007). In a multi-institutional, qualitative study, "students indicated that faculty who provided effective IFL [integration of faith and learning] in the classroom expressed sincere care and concern for all aspects of their lives – physical, emotional, and spiritual" (Sherr et al., 2007, p. 22). Faculty credibility as a scholar able to integrate faith and learning appears limited when students fail to sense that the faculty member has a genuine concern for them holistically.

In closing, while viable curricular areas for AFI have been identified in this research, it is crucial to remember that without proper rapport between the faculty member and the student, even the most strategic attempt at integrating disciplinary content with Biblical knowledge will likely fall flat.

AFI requires students to engage their spirit. However, in order to create a fertile environment, it is essential for faculty members to remember the reason for this work.

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America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America.

Wallis, J., 2016
Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press

Reviewed by Emily L. Callon

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Numerous books have been written under the broad canopy of “diversity” in higher education, including but not limited to, addressing microaggressions, educating underrepresented student populations, and nurturing inclusive campus environments. In *America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America*, author Jim Wallis helps readers understand the complexities of diversity in a succinct analysis of the foundational issues. His central argument is that the way to break the cycle of racism is “by telling the truth about our history and genuinely repenting of its sins, which still linger, [and then] we can find the true road to justice and reconciliation” (p. 10). Toward this end, Wallis focuses on historical and current contexts, the importance of repenting of the sins of racism, and finding a way to move forward. Although applicable in numerous settings, *America's Original Sin* is a necessary read for educators in Christian higher education.

Wallis begins by discussing our nation's history and current context in regards to issues of racism. He says,

American diversity began with acts of violent racial oppression that I am calling “America’s original sin”—the theft of land from Indigenous people ... and the enslavement of millions of Africans who became America’s greatest economic resource—in building a new nation. (p. 9).

It is more common to think about the concept of “racism” as a tangible and specific act of discrimination—and it is, such as the 2014 shooting in Charleston, South Carolina. However, racism is also embedded in various systems, such as the criminal justice system, and is evident in the context of current events, including the protests in Ferguson and Baltimore. While visiting these cities, Wallis saw numerous community members emerge as leaders from the community and recognized their transformation as impactful in ending the systematic cycle of racism. He says, “I realized America would be converted by these young people’s honest and earnest conversation—they would clearly win a national debate about our criminal justice system’s response to young people of color—if the nation could really see and hear them” (p. 25). What if colleges and universities were empowering students to have honest and earnest conversation and equipping students to be transformational leaders?

Wallis believes that the answer to addressing racism is authentic repentance. Repentance, he argues, is “more than just saying you’re sorry, or even just feeling guilty” (p. 57), but rather “about turning completely around and going in a whole new direction” (p. 58). Wallis highlights five obstacles that must be overcome in order to truly repent. First, one must become aware of the idea of “whiteness” or white privilege, which is “often unconscious” (p. 79) or seen as “normal,” and can easily “become more about how we help people who are black and brown than how we confront our own white racial privilege” (p. 79). The second obstacle is the need for a welcoming community, or as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. describes it, “the beloved community” (p. 97) which offers “a most powerful vision of new coming together” and a space in which “every group, clan, and tribe is included and invited in” (p. 97). The third obstacle exists within our criminal justice system, in which Wallis describes the police culture as functioning like “warriors [whose] mission is to conquer” instead of “guardians [whose] mission is to ‘serve and protect’” (p. 127). The fourth obstacle is overcoming the “New Jim Crow” in order to embrace “restorative justice.” The “New Jim Crow” is the crisis of mass incarceration in the country, often a result of racial profiling and “stop-and-frisk” laws (p. 156-160). Embracing restorative justice

means focusing on “repairing the harm caused by crime” (p. 164). And finally, the fifth obstacle is the biblical charge to accept immigrants, and those who have been alienated and are seeking refuge. These immigrants are “people [who] take very risky and illegal journeys across borders ... all in an often-desperate attempt to find a better life” (p. 168). Wallis suggests that these five obstacles currently stand in the way of the nation’s ability to move forward toward repentance.

Wallis asserts that “we look back in order to look forward” (p. xxiii). The nation’s history of racism is the platform that must launch it into repentance. The nation is shifting and “by the year 2045, the majority of US citizens will be descended from African, Asian, and Latin American ancestors,” meaning that “the United States will no longer be a dominant white nation but a multiracial nation, which will make the assumptions of white privilege ... increasingly less assumed” (p. 188-189). With such a major change, “the question becomes, who will help navigate this fundamental demographic change?” (p. 189). Colleges and universities can empower students to be leading members in a shifting society as the nation moves toward a deeper understanding of ethnic diversity.

Wallis’ book is a necessary resource for those in Christian higher education. Institutions are key players in a national shift as they continue to respond to an evolving global context, one in which institutions should “accommodate diversity, for diversity is clearly our present and our future” (Smith, 2009, p. 3). As colleges and universities seek to integrate diversity into core mission and identity, it is important to remember that there are clear “educational benefits of diversity” and that building “institutional capacity” for diversity is a process (Smith, 2009, p. 178). Institutions must fulfill their role in a national shift toward acceptance, repentance, and reconciliation. To do so, they must recognize that they too are a product of systematic racism, living in the same context with the rest of the nation, built upon this original sin. As such, institutions must first recognize the barriers they face, and then identify the ways in which the college or university can strategically work to deconstruct them. Only then can higher education be a pivotal space in transforming the minds of students and be able to educate them on how they too can dismantle racism and truly repent. Colleges and universities have a unique opportunity to empower young people to be leaders that are seen and heard, similar to the young people Wallis noticed through the events in Ferguson and Baltimore, but they must first be able to recognize these barriers in their own system.

Christian colleges and universities are called to a deeper sense of reconciliation; Wallis highlights this calling by using the language of “sin”

to describe racial discrimination as “something that seeks to undermine the very creation of human beings as being equally valued, loved, and cared for in the eyes of God” (p. 104). Wallis says that “when racism is tolerated, the reconciling work of Christ on the cross is contradicted” (p. 125). In order to empower students of faith, there must be a call to action from Student Affairs professionals in Christian institutions. These educators have the opportunity to foster open and honest dialogue around issues of racial segregation, tension, and discrimination—to truly deconstruct and move forward out of sin. In the end, *America’s Original Sin* is a jarring but truthful call for Student Affairs professionals to educate, empower, and equip students to do the hard but crucial work of reconciliation.

Emily L. Callon will complete her Master of Arts in Higher Education with an emphasis in Strategic Leadership from Messiah College in May 2017.

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Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance.

Duckworth, Angela, 2016
New York, New York: Scribner

Reviewed by Emilie K. Hoffman

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In her six-minute *TED Talk*, Angela Duckworth concluded, “We need to be gritty about getting our kids grittier” (Duckworth, 2013). Her presentation took the education world by storm, and since 2013, over nine million people have listened to Duckworth’s words in order to better understand what grit entails and its relationship with success. With the release of her new book, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, Duckworth presents an in-depth look at her research on how grit, not talent, is the most influential trait in an individual achieving her or his potential.

Simply put, grit is “passion and perseverance for long-term goals” (p. 269). Duckworth refutes the common assumption that natural talent or intelligence, such as IQ, is the most determinative factor in student achievement. Not only is grit critical to success, but it is also a trait that can be grown and developed in any person. These two ideas provide the framework for her argument about the importance of encouraging grit in the realm of education as well as all areas of a person’s life. I found the book worthwhile and challenging, as it caused me not only to carefully consider my own commitment but also reflect upon the long-term vision I have for myself and for the students I serve.

Grit begins with a personal story in which Duckworth recounts a conversation with her father from her youth. Duckworth describes her father's obsession with being talented or smart. She shares his bluntness in telling her and her siblings, "You know, you're no genius!" (Duckworth, 2016, xiii). Years later, when Duckworth received the MacArthur Fellowship, also known as a "genius grant," she flips the title on its head by not attributing her success to any natural ability but instead to her intentional passion and perseverance for her research. Following the preface, the author divides the book into three parts with the first section outlining the essence of grit and its importance, followed by the two latter sections describing internal and external processes to grow grit. Duckworth constructs her argument by intertwining her own empirical research and other psychologists' findings. Alongside the research, she uses personal narratives throughout, drawing from her own life and the lives of participants from her studies.

Duckworth acknowledges that talent and skill matter, but not as much as effort. She breaks down the concept into two formulas. First, in order to build skill, invest effort in your talent. Then, if you want to achieve, "take your acquired skills and use them" (Duckworth, 2016, p. 42). So talent plus effort results in skill, and skill plus effort becomes achievement. She moves on and provides a version of the Grit Scale, allowing readers an opportunity to reflect upon their own grittiness. After the reader determines his or her score, Duckworth concludes the first part by reminding readers that grit is built over time and with life experience.

In the second part of the book, Duckworth provides four psychological assets for growing grit from the inside out: (1) identify an interest; (2) practice a lot; (3) find purpose in it; and (4) lean into hope, which she defines as the belief one's efforts can improve the future. The final part of the book focuses on growing grit from the outside in, or in other words, the external influences on grit, such as teachers, mentors, context, and culture. This last section reinforces the means of developing grit and the understanding that grit is a characteristic capable of being encouraged and fostered in others.

Duckworth's research has implications for individuals attempting to develop their own grit as well as for parents, educators, and leaders who are seeking to empower others to pursue their long-term goals. The author challenges the promotion of talent or an innate x-factor. As an alternative, Duckworth emphasizes the mundane ability to engage in attitudes and practices to attain one's goals.

While achievement matters, is it the end Christian educators ought to desire above all others on behalf of their students? As Christians, we must carefully consider the cultural obsession with competing, winning, and being better. Today's college students describe feeling overwhelmed from the rising pressure to perform (Schwarz, 2015). We notice a generation wrestling between the cultural infatuation with résumé virtues or seeking meaning and purpose over the grind of climbing the ladder (Brooks, 2015). Does grit encourage *doing* over *being*? Duckworth admits that if forced to choose, she wants her children to develop goodness over greatness. In this case, how might parents or educators promote both character (being) and grit (doing) in the journey of intentional living? Duckworth acknowledges early in the book that her theory of achievement is not complete, nor is it all that matters. Perhaps, future research might seek to understand the importance of goodness (being) alongside greatness (doing) and its relationship to human flourishing.

Grit challenges educational structures that are blindly committed to knowledge transmission or to rewarding natural intelligence and instead reinforces the importance of education, which promotes social and emotional formation in students. While Duckworth touches on her concern for students with a relative lack of parental support or opportunities, specifically students of low socioeconomic status, she does not fully address a plan for helping such individuals in improving their grit and life circumstances. She plainly states, "They need all the things you and I give to our own children. What poor kids need is a lot" (p. 238). Rather than being overwhelmed by this conclusion, let us as educators respond with a deeper commitment to developing relationships with marginalized students and transforming structures to empower them.

As Christians in higher education, Duckworth's research has implications not only for developing our students but also for improving our leadership and campus culture. In the changing landscape of higher education, faith-based institutions face concerns over funding, meeting the needs of the changing demographics of students, and maintaining mission amid fears over religious freedom. Carefully clarifying our long-term vision while simultaneously improving our grit will benefit Christian higher education. At the same time, being gritty does not negate the need for wisdom as institutions discern next steps toward helping students meet their goals. In a world where small actions toward long-term commitments may not be making headlines, Duckworth reminds us that the quiet work of effort and practice is imperative for achievement.

Emilie K. Hoffman will complete her Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development from Taylor University in May 2017.

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Life's Too Short to Pretend You're Not Religious

Dark, D., 2016
Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press

Reviewed by Josiah Hatfield, M.A.

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When I was entering college as a first-year, one's religion status on Facebook was prominently displayed right there alongside one's birthdate and the much-scrutinized relationship status. In line with my generation's tendency to eschew definitive labels, one of the more popular religious statuses among my circle of Christian college friends and acquaintances was the ever-non-committal phrase, "spiritual, but not religious." David Dark's book, *Life's Too Short to Pretend You're Not Religious*, is for those trying to avoid religious labels but are nevertheless defined by their "likes."

Dark beckons the reader to reconsider how they define and practice religion, to recognize our relatedness to each other, and to practice liturgies of embodied curiosity. By way of communicating these ideas, Dark writes with a level of openness and authenticity, willing to self-disclose his own journeys as a longtime thinker and follower of Christ that are relevant to the reader. Literary and pop culture references abound, less so as a gimmick to relate to any specific audience as much as, simply, Dark's way of synthesizing the world he perceives. Likewise, the introduction and nine chapters move along with wit and charm without creeping into the saccharine. The book serves as a model for how one might interact with and relate to college students.

Core to Dark's thesis for the book is a broadening of one's definition of "religion." Moving beyond a particular worldview, Dark parses out his nuanced understanding of the term. First, he proposes that our religion is passed down through tradition, whether it is caring for the earth by environmentalists, practicing spiritual disciplines within the Christian tradition, or the avid football fan's Sunday afternoon ritual. While few of these traditions may constitute one's entirety of belief, they are all manifestations of religious behavior. Closely tied to this idea of tradition is the idea of being formed by one's ancestors. Dark references the idea that "...we may very well be stuck with our relatives, but we get to choose our ancestors" (p. 67). Inherent in this idea is that we are born or placed within a specific context with its specific beliefs and practices, but we get to choose (ideally, at least) who and what influences our religious habits. From there, Dark proposes that the way our religion is played out is within the context of relationship and, in a rightly ordered world, we might participate in learning from others. The mutual exchange of relationship is a "...gift economy upon which we've all along depended" (p. 136).

Within Dark's gift economy is the idea that there is no such thing as an individual life. Despite our best efforts to distance and protect ourselves from vulnerability and harm, we are inevitably held up by each other or, to use a phrase co-opted from Scooby Doo via Dark's son, by 'chother (the abbreviated version of "each other"). Throughout the entirety of the book, Dark hammers home the idea that we need our 'chother to exist, to play out our beliefs, and to accurately view the world. As Dark sees it, "...it takes a village to perceive a reality" (p. 93). Inherent in our interrelatedness is to whom we direct our attention. We often give our attention to a lifelong friend, an up-and-coming thought-provoking auteur, or our most trusted poet. With that in mind, Dark writes, "If we're begging to accept the work of always cultivating our attention collections with care as a kind of cultural obligation, I'd like to push the notion even further by observing that it might be more helpfully held as a sacred necessity" (p. 56). The result of such an idea provides a call for a greater awareness of our media and thought consumption liturgies, both personal and corporate. Perhaps by broadening our attention collections, we might also strengthen the bond with others, and perhaps by unpacking the world with others, we might better understand the world.

Upon broadening one's definition of religion in the context of relationships, a strange curiosity develops. At least this is the way that I, as a reader, responded to the book. As mentioned before, Dark models curiosity well by using source material ranging from pop music to twentieth-century

literature to moments in recent U.S. history. Truth, though perhaps not complete, is found all around us. This sacred curiosity should be nourished and fed, and it encourages us to cherish and value our relationships with others or, even better, with the Other. Dark concludes the book with a charge to “...*give* voice anytime at all by listening to someone else” with the admonition that “...you can’t fix what you won’t join” (p. 183). These words challenge us to develop liturgies of unplugging from the virtual world and take the time to understand others through joining in the conversation and giving others a voice.

In *Life's Too Short to Pretend You're Not Religious*, Dark eloquently and complexly models what we try so hard to instill in students in the college setting: important ideas can be complex and nuanced and thus require complex and nuanced explanation. The themes of broadening our understanding of religion, emphasizing our interrelatedness and sparking one’s curiosity are all important to consider when working with college students. Many of these themes can be found useful as we, as practitioners, determine our posture in working through the tumultuous times in which we live and interact with students. As we aim to better perceive reality, *Life's Too Short to Pretend You're Not Religious* could also serve as a valuable source of material for a book club with a group of students. The material is approachable, though dense, and students could learn much from Dark’s call to rewrite our definition of religion and reconsider our connectedness with curious minds.

In a time where we want so badly to shed labels and boxes, it is vitally important to understand our inability to do so as humans. Rather, all of our actions, attention, and conversations point towards some sort of religious habit. Dark’s *Life's Too Short to Pretend You're Not Religious* expertly and charmingly allows the reader to think through how we order our attention, structure our liturgies, and join the curious conversations happening all around us.

Josiah Hatfield serves as a Residence Director at Messiah College, where he has worked since 2012. He holds a Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development from Taylor University.



Campus Sexual Assault: College Women Respond

Germain, L. J., 2016
Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press

Reviewed by Haley Williamson

How do we prevent cases of campus sexual assault? By conducting bystander training, installing safety poles, and educating students about why they should not walk home alone at night? These are questions many higher education professionals are asking. Lauren J. Germain agrees these questions and actions are good-faith efforts at reducing the number of campus sexual assaults, but, she suggests, maybe we are approaching this all from the wrong angle. In her book, *Campus Sexual Assault: College Women Respond*, Germain presents the idea college educators and administrators should not focus solely on what leads to rape, but what women do after they experience sexual assault (Germain notes both men and women experience sexual assault but that she chose to focus on women, who experience sexual assault at higher rates, in her research). Maybe by considering the hours, days, and years following sexual assaults, institutions can learn where the faults in their systems lie, and start to make more effective changes.

Germain begins by providing background for why she conducted this research and how the research unfolded. Additionally, she outlines what higher education professionals may not know when it comes to campus sexual assault. She starts with the history of campus sexual assault and describes federal intervention efforts,

including the Clery Act and the *Not Alone* report issued by the White House Task Force, to protect students from sexual assault. Germain also presents rape myths common on college and university campuses. Once Germain lays the foundation for her work and shows where the gaps in our current knowledge prevail, she explains the research she conducted.

At an unnamed institution (referred to as “the University”), Germain interviewed 26 undergraduate students presenting 28 unique cases of campus sexual assault. From those 26 interviews, eight forms of post-assault agency emerged: Embodied agency; managing identity; silence; self-expression; pursuit of individually defined justice; transitive (formal); transitive (informal); and empowerment. Germain divided these eight themes into five sections, each presenting blended stories of the women interviewed: becoming an embodied agent; managing identity; telling friends and family; seeking justice; and taking part in the empowerment of others. The book concludes with what Germain calls “the way forward,” which seeks to answer the questions: What do we do with the stories, numbers, and convictions that fill the pages of her book? How do we process, engage, and put to action the lessons that emerged from the honesty and vulnerability of women who faced campus sexual assault?

In discussing the paradox of an embodied agent in the second chapter (the first theme of post-assault agency), Germain introduces a key idea for college leaders to recognize: the perfect victim. Germain presents the idea that many women compare themselves to what a perfect victim would do if they experienced campus sexual assault. For instance, a perfect victim would be appalled by the act, immediately collect the physical evidence, report the incident to authorities, and then seek medical attention and undergo a rape kit. Germain argues women who hold this view of the ideal victim may believe they are unable to seek justice, closure, or help, if, after experiencing sexual assault they fail to respond as the perfect victim would. They may believe if they respond as their instincts suggest – by showering, sleeping, or choosing not to report the assault immediately, for example – they have somehow done something wrong. This view of a perfect victim is widely held on college campuses by students, educators, and administrators. The idea of perfect victimhood is perpetuated through campus rape myths, which are harmful and untrue and are discouraging women from seeking help, guidance, or justice. Germain’s point is for college administration to recognize the existence of the perfect victim myth, give language to the myth, and begin working to undo it.

Why should Christian college leaders read Germain’s work? The perception at many Christian colleges may be that students are discouraged

from talking about sex or that sexual assaults ‘don’t happen here.’ Yet Germain exposes the reality of campus sexual assault, which is a critical if uncomfortable topic to address. The names, statistics, and stories Germain describes shed light on cases of campus sexual assault that are prevalent on every college campus, even those that are religiously affiliated. Administrators and educators at Christian institutions must create spaces where students feel able to address campus sexual assault, in order to heal the wounds caused by the myth of the perfect victim. Germain offers professionals at both faith-based and non-faith-based institutions language to empower and to give voices to those who experience campus sexual assault. In her description of her research, Germain models what all educators should strive for when sitting with students who have experienced campus sexual assault: she listens. She provides a safe space for women to come, share their stories and receive what they often feel they need most: to be heard.

As higher education professionals, we cannot go back in time and erase the damage of sexual assault, right the terrible wrong victims experience, or take their pain away. But we can listen. We can sit in the grief, confusion, and emotion, and listen. We can stand alongside individuals and empower them to use their voices, as they in turn empower others. If you walk away from this book with nothing else, walk away with a new understanding of the power of a story and how important it is to listen to our students in the days, months, and years following a campus sexual assault. I am grateful for the honest, challenging, and convicting words of Germain and for the stories she brought to light. I am grateful for the women who were brave and vulnerable, sharing their stories in the hopes they would empower others.

Haley Williamson will complete her Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development from Taylor University in May 2017.

Write for Growth

Growth is published during the spring each year and solicits manuscripts and or book reviews that fall within content areas that relate to purposes of the journal. Those content areas include Foundations, Leadership and Professional Development, Student Culture, Student Learning and Assessment, Spiritual Formation, Diversity and Global Engagement, and Book Reviews.

All articles should be consistent with the Doctrinal Statement, Article III of the Constitution and By-Laws of the Association for Christians in Student Development. Material in the following categories will be considered for publication:

- Research articles that have relevance to the field of Christian Student Development.
- Theoretical or applied articles that have relevance to the field of Christian Student Development.
- Research, theoretical or applied articles dealing with the integration of faith and learning within the field of Christian Student Development or within the broader field of Christian Higher Education as a whole.
- Reviews of articles in other journals relevant to Christian Student Development.
- Reviews of books relevant to Christian Student Development practice.
- Reactions to current or past journal articles.

Submission Guidelines

Authors submitting a manuscript should:

1. Follow the guidelines on format, style, and submission procedure provided in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.).
2. Adhere to the following length parameters:
 - a. 10-15 pages for original research articles
 - b. 7-10 pages for applied research articles
 - c. 3-4 pages for book and article reviews
3. Avoid submitting manuscripts which have been previously published or that are being considered for publication in other journals. If an article has been rejected by another journal it may then be submitted to Growth.
4. Submit completed manuscripts to ACSD-growth-submissions@taylor.edu, as follows:
 - a. Send two digital copies in Word format (one with author identification and one without identification for review purposes)
 - b. Include an abstract of no more than 150 words in a separate file.
 - c. Include, for each author, institutional affiliation and degree(s).
 - d. Include, for submitting author, phone number and email address.

All submitted manuscripts will be promptly acknowledged and processed in a timely fashion. The review process generally requires a minimum of three months, after which authors will be informed of the status of their submissions. Please note submissions may be rejected for failing to adhere to the guidelines above, or authors may be asked to revise and resubmit articles.

Article submissions will be accepted until December 1 for the spring issue.

Contact the Growth co-editors with any questions about the review process:

- Tim Herrmann, Taylor University, tmherrmann@taylor.edu
- Skip Trudeau, Taylor University, sktrudeau@taylor.edu

ACSD Journal
C/O Skip Trudeau
Taylor University
236 West Reade Avenue
Upland, IN 46989-1001

