Justice, Spirituality, and Education: Working Definitions from Secular, Judeo-Christian, and Biblically-Based Perspectives

June Hetzel (Biola University, La Mirada, California)

June Hetzel, Ph.D., earned her Ph.D. from Claremont Graduate School. She currently serves as the Dean of Education at Biola University in La Mirada, California. Dr. Hetzel has served in public, private, homeschooling, and international educational settings. She is passionate about the role of the Christian educator to live a Spirit-led life in right relationship with God and others, and the centrality of the gospel message as the central hope of all educational endeavors.

Rachel Beck (Biola University, La Mirada, California)

Rachel Beck is a recent graduate of Biola University and the Torrey Honors Institute in La Mirada, California, holds a degree in Communications. Beck was educated in Germany during her K-12 years, speaks conversational French, and has assisted Dr. Hetzel in teaching in a trilingual setting in North Africa. Beck currently serves as a research assistant and is completing her first novel.
Achieving an Ethnically and Racially Diverse Student Population in Higher Education

Christie Curtis (Biola University, La Mirada, California)

Christie Curtis (BA UC Riverside, MA Biola University) is an assistant professor at Biola University pursuing her Ph.D. degree in higher education. As part of her doctoral program, she has written a paper addressing spirituality and student outcomes. Included in Christie's submission are her preliminary findings on the spiritual needs of several ethnic groups. A native Californian, Curtis specializes in grammar and writing curriculum development. Curtis has been married for forty years to her husband Bob. They enjoy spending time with their children and grandchildren, whether surfing, going to national parks, or their annual week of summer camp at Forest Home.

Do National Curricular Standards Ensure Educational Equity?

Albert Cheng (University of Arkansas)

After graduating from the University of California, Berkeley in 2006 with a degree in pure mathematics, Albert Cheng taught algebra, statistics, and pre-
calculus at James Logan High School in Union City, California. In 2010, he enrolled in Biola University to pursue graduate studies in education with a focus on policy. Since earning a Master’s of Education in 2012, he has moved from his native California to Fayetteville, Arkansas where he is currently a Distinguished Doctoral Fellow and a Ph.D. student in the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas. Some of his research interests are civic values, moral formation, and school choice.

**Western Philosophical Conceptions of Justice**

Fred Ramirez (Biola University, La Mirada, California)

Dr. A.Y. “Fred” Ramirez was born and raised in Santa Barbara, California. He obtained his degree in curriculum studies at Indiana University, and served as an associate professor of education at California State University, Fullerton from 1998-2008, and currently is an professor of education at Biola University. Prior to this he worked as a high school teacher in both public and private schools teaching a variety of subjects. His research interests include families and schools, international education, social justice, and diversity. He has spoken at national and international conferences and has published his research in journals such as Educational Leadership, Multicultural Education, International Education, The School-Community Journal, the Journal of Thought, and others. Fred Ramirez is also a master scuba diver trainer (instructor), and president and founder of EdActs Global, Inc. ([www.edactsglobal.org](http://www.edactsglobal.org)). While he is not working in these three areas, he enjoys spending time with his family, reading, and traveling.
**Eric Twisselmann** (Biola University, La Mirada, California)

Eric Twisselmann earned his BA in English at Biola University (‘95) and his MA in the Philosophy of Religion and Ethics from Talbot School of Theology (2003). Eric has taught high school for the last 16 years at La Serna High School in Whittier, where he teaches English literature and philosophy. He has also taught philosophy as an adjunct lecturer at Biola University for the past 10 years. He and his wife Mandi (Biola class of ’97) live in La Mirada and are the proud parents of 4 beautiful children. They are active members of Grace EV Free Church in La Mirada.

---

**The Role of Christian Higher Education in the Promotion of Restorative Justice**

---

**Stephen Winterberg** (Biola University, La Mirada, California)

Steve Winterberg is a PhD student in Intercultural Studies at Biola University and is currently serving at a local church in southern California. He spent several years working in Christian higher education in a role designed to integrate faith and mission with all areas of knowledge. He has served in various roles in local churches and in roles overseas, most extensively in South Asia.
ABSTRACT

The issue of justice and social justice has been and still is a controversial topic in society today. A struggle exists both to define and to enact it. The same can be said of the concepts of spirituality and education. The concepts of justice, spirituality, and education intersect in community responsibility, the topic of this journal. A brief examination of the secular, Judeo-Christian, and Biblical definitions of the terms justice, spirituality, and education lends insight, not only into how communities compare and contrast one another in their working definitions of these terms, but also serves to identify commonalities and points of agreement between diverse perspectives which can serve as a platform for further dialogue. Furthermore, this paper hopes to bring about a deeper understanding of God and His desire for humankind, bringing into sharper focus how we ought to conduct ourselves as a community of grace, in a fallen world, as we equip the next generation.

INTRODUCTION

This article seeks to define justice, spirituality, and education from secular and Judeo-Christian perspectives, with the intent of defining biblically-based community responsibilities for the body of Christ. As followers of Jesus and professionals who have dedicated our lives to the education field, we come to the intersection of justice, spirituality and education with the experiential pain of our own brokenness and the brokenness of the children, adolescents, and adults with whom we have worked in the North America, Asia, Africa, and Europe. As humans, we have limited, myopic vision, and so we ask that Jesus, through the work of His Holy Spirit, expand our vision beyond ourselves to see the pressing urban and global vision that will stretch us beyond our own capacities, humble us in the recognition and need of the Savior and the work of His Holy Spirit, and grow us into not just recognition of justice, spirituality, and educational needs all around us, but unrelentingly compel us to take up the banner of personal and community responsibilities, as we seek to bring together the body of Christ in providing an intersection of hope for the world that can only be found in Christ.

As we connect for change, we are reminded of a statement by Pastor Dan Crane of the First Evangelical Free Church in Fullerton, California, who stated that the greatest injustice in the world is people not hearing the Gospel and knowing Jesus as Savior (2011, personal communication). The JSE Conference (pronounced “Jesse”) echoes back to the root of where all hope lies, that is in our Savior, Jesus Christ. Isaiah tells us, “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord,” Isaiah 11:1-2. This is our hope and prayer – that we would intimately know our Savior, who sprang forth from the root of Jesse, and that we would be His hands and feet, demonstrating wisdom, understanding, counsel, and might as we serve our community in the fear of the Lord.

Isaiah also reminds us,

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.” - Isaiah 61:1
We, as a community, have important work to do in justice, spirituality and education. It is the authors’ desire to build a definitional foundation for each of these terms upon which we can organize intellectual exchange and spiritual pursuit of knowing God and owning responsibilities in connecting for change in our communities so that we might introduce our brethren to the Lord Jesus Christ, the true arbiter of love and justice.

**DEFINITIONS OF JUSTICE**

In order to properly compare the contemporary secular and Judeo-Christian approach to the treatment of justice in education, it is first necessary to understand how the two groups define justice in the context of education. The categories “secular” and “Judeo-Christian” are extremely broad, but a literature review of articles and books in the last decade point to recurring themes in each of these groups.

**Secular Definitions of Justice**

The topic of justice in education is addressed in the literature primarily, though not exclusively, in terms of social justice. Social justice seems to be tacitly understood to mean an equality of rights between all people and people groups, regardless of their gender, ability, age, faith, ethnicity, cultural, or socioeconomic status.

Dixon, et al (2010) lists examples of social justice as, “equity of services, access to services, harmony in educational setting, and equitable participation” (p. 103). Dixon, et al (2010) also defines socially just schools as “environments in which all students receive equitable access to resources and services, resulting in educational settings with school professionals who advocate for the needs of individual students and the needs of the student population as a whole” (Dixon, et al., 2010, p. 103).

Gewirtz (2006) breaks down understanding of justice into three distinct types: distributive, recognitional, and associational justice. Distributive justice can be defined as, “the principles by which goods are distributed in society” (p. 74). Distributive justice can also be referred to as economic justice. Recognitional justice is “the absence of cultural domination, non-recognition, and disrespect” (Gewirtz, 2006, p. 74). Finally, associational justice is defined as “patterns of association amongst individuals and amongst groups which prevent some people from participating fully in decisions which affect the conditions within which they live and act” (Power & Gewirtz, 2001, p. 75).

Justice in education is also discussed in the literature in terms of restorative justice. Restorative justice is, “a distinctive philosophical approach that seeks to replace punitive, managerial structures of schooling with those that emphasize the building and repairing of relationships” (Vaandering, 2010, p. 145).

Finally, Zaijda, et al (2006) chose to discuss the question of social justice in education by viewing it in terms of this question, “How can we contribute to the creation of a more equitable, respectful, and just society for everyone?” (p.13). Zaijda points out that this is a question not only of importing social justice values into education, but also of finding ways for education to export social justice into the culture. One of the fundamental exports should then be to make the knowledge produced and preserved by the university more accessible to society (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008).

**Faith-Based Definitions of Justice**

In the literature, religious groups do not speak of justice directly in terms of social justice as frequently as secular groups, but many of the same principles are assumed. Jorgenson (2010) defines justice in terms of righteousness. He states that, “righteousness and justice are about right relationships. Jesus is our justice because he demonstrates that a right relationship with God implies and entails a right relationship with our neighbors” (p. 22). This right relationship
then dictates the proper distribution of resources both in terms of the tangible, such as food and clothing, and the intangible such as respect and education (Jorgenson, 2010, p. 22). For example, the rich man who came to Jesus had maintained a right relationship with those around him in terms of the intangible but not the tangible. He had never murdered, committed adultery, stolen, lied to or defrauded anyone, and he had given proper honor and respect to his parents. In doing so, he had exercised proper “distribution” of human rights and dignity. He lacked, however, proper distribution of tangible resources, as he was wealthy and living among the poor (Mark 10:17-22).

A study conducted on a Jesuit school’s methods for bringing about an awareness for justice, in this case social justice in particular, defined justice as the belief that, “every student can positively contribute to the common good. It is vital, therefore, that no student be denied the opportunity or motivation to contribute to a just world (to do so would be unjust)” (Scibilia, Giamorio & Rogers, 2009, p. 57).

Justice in a Biblical Context

From the beginning, God’s plan for His people was to “live an ethic or lifestyle of doing what [is] right and just” (Hill and Walton, 2009; Gen. 18:19). Israel, it is noted, “is charged to practice righteousness and justice with each other as members of the covenant community” (Lev. 19:16-18). Righteousness and justice are the pillars of God’s throne (Hill and Walton, 2009; Psalm 89:14). As you read through the Old Testament, you see that God has a heart for certain people groups that are potentially vulnerable: widows (James 1:27, Mark 12:40), orphans (Exodus 22:22 – 24, Isaiah 1:17), poor (Jer 22:3, Prov 29:7), aliens (1 Peter 2:11, Exodus 22:21). Certain groups of individuals were singled out in the Old Testament because they were susceptible to being marginalized or oppressed.

In the call to social justice, Scriptures recognize poverty in terms of material poverty, social poverty, and spiritual poverty. In terms of material poverty, there are continued references to the poor and a large body of legislation in the Old Testament structured to serve the poor. For example, there were gleaning laws (Lev. 19:9-10), a tithe for the poor (Deut 14:28-29), and a sabbatical year where the poor could eat off the land (Lev. 25:1-7). Additionally, the poor were not to be charged interest (Ex. 22:25), and “the Year of Jubilee made provisions for redemption of property and the poor and the enslaved” (Lev. 25:8-55) (Hill and Walton, 2009, p. 737). These Old Testament laws reveal God’s heart for those in need. God’s heart is echoed again in the New Testament, linked to Jesus’ teaching on loving others – “whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

Social poverty relates to those in a social stratum where they are marginalized or disadvantaged. Scripture notes some of these social categories, such as the widow (Acts 6:1; I Tim 5:5), the orphan (Psalm 68:5, Jeremiah 49:11), the foreigner in the land (Deut 24:17 - 18), slaves (Deut 23:15 - 16), or those who are physically disabled (John 1:9 – 11, John 5:1-18). Our call, in both the Old and New Testaments, is to cross the social barriers as Jesus did, such as when he spoke about the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25 - 37), when he ate with tax collectors (Mark 2:15 - 16) and prostitutes (Luke 7:37 - 50), and spoke to women (John 4:4 - 42). As Christians we also seek to reach out toward those who would be the modern day tax collectors. We see modern examples, such as Kevin Blue and Richard Twiss, both Christian evangelicals and both working toward a just society for the poor and for all members of society.

A third category of poverty where social justice and action is required is spiritual poverty. Spiritual poverty calls out the need to know God and to invite the Lord of Lords to be King in one’s heart. To be spiritually poor is to be lacking in the knowledge of God. To be spiritually rich is to know God and know the Savior, that is, to be in right relationship. Jesus came to bring Good News and that same Good News was carried out by the words of His disciples who were rich in the knowledge of God and right in relationship to God. Jesus clearly taught that material riches are often an obstacle to
knowing God and that the calling of a true disciple involves a duty to give away what one has (i.e., spiritually and materially) in order to care for others. In fact, the litmus test of your faith is this: “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world” (James 1:27, ESV). Further clarity about remaining unstained by the world comes from Jesus’ teaching when he underscores repeatedly throughout the gospels the need for the heart to love God only, not mammon (i.e., material goods) (Matt 6: 21 – 24, Matt 9:13, Mark 10:23 – 27, Luke 12:15).

**SUMMARY OF JUSTICE DEFINITIONS**

Overall, the secular and Judeo-Christian beliefs concerning justice appear similar with a few subtle, but important differences. Both agree that justice is in large part comprised of a proper distribution of power and resources, and it could also be argued that both parties view justice in terms of proper relationships. The difference lies in how those relationships are defined.

Secular literature seems largely to view relationships in terms of equality. Resources ought to be divided evenly because no individual has any more intrinsic value than another, thus equal distribution is “fair”. Likewise, everyone ought to respect one another because everyone is of equal worth.

The Judeo-Christian community, on the other hand, though it would not necessarily dispute the concept of equality of value, finds its basis in right relationships, not equal ones. The difference is that under the Judeo-Christian definition, if there are right relationships, then there can also be wrong relationships; whereas, the only “wrong” relationship under the secular definition would be one that did not assign equivocal value to all walks of life.

Those coming from a biblically-based ideology would argue that justice in both the Old Testament teachings of the covenant community of Israel, as well as the New Testament teachings of Jesus, comprises a consistent calling to social justice in terms of serving those who are materially, socially, and spiritually poor. Hence, this is our calling as believers. “Social concern across the Old and New Testament [are] rooted in God’s character, especially His compassion, generosity, hospitality, and acceptance. At one level, the practice of social justice is the basis for separating the wicked from the righteous in the divine judgment at the end of the age” (Matt. 25:31-46; Hill and Walton, 2009, p. 738); this is the ultimate judgment of God as He judges the heart of each person in the final day. While true justice would be for all to pay for the penalty of their sins, the wages which would be death (Rom. 3:23; 6:23), Jesus modeled the ultimate sacrifice of love for all humankind by giving Himself completely to others, providing the gift of grace or undeserved favor (Ephesians 2:8,9). And then what do we do with this grace offered so freely by Jesus? We give it away as “we were created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph. 2:10). We were created to serve others, love others, and do good works (Ephesians 2:10). Hence, followers of Jesus should be at the front lines of social justice.

**SPIRITUALITY DEFINITIONS**

The term spirituality has a wide array of definitions in secular and sacred literature, its meaning more often assumed than stated. In order to promote a conversation on spirituality, it is necessary to examine secular and sacred definitions of the word spirituality. The literature review that follows considers the last decade of conversation.

**Secular Definitions of Spirituality**

The definition of spirituality in secular conversations is varied and vague, yet generally pertains to people’s engagement in the world, especially their search for meaning in life. Some in the secular conversation advise divorcing spirituality from religion or statements of specific belief, especially when pertaining to a Higher Power. Everyone has spirituality;
whereas, the choice to have religious affiliations or beliefs associated with that spirituality is considered a personal one.

Many definitions emphasize depth of meaning and purpose, such as Wright (2000), who suggests that spirituality is “our concern for the ultimate meaning and purpose of life” (p. 7), and Starratt (2004), who claims spirituality is “a way of being present to the most profound realities of one’s world” (p. 67). For Kumar (2000), however, spirituality is the concept of connection that is central to his definition. He states that, “People think that spirituality means that you have to be a Christian or a Hindu or a Buddhist or have a blind faith in God. That is not spirituality. Spirituality is a deep feeling of compassion and unity and relatedness and connection with all of existence” (p. 4). Others in the field, such as Emmons (2000), include morals and values in their definitions, as inextricably linked to spirituality, such as “the capacity to engage in virtuous behavior (to show forgiveness, to express gratitude, to be humble, to display compassion)” (p. 3). Still others (e.g., Claxton, 2002; Piechowski, 2003) argue that the moral dimension is not associated with spirituality at all. Instead of attempting to define what spirituality is, they focus more on the psychology of the spiritual experience, which includes “a sense of belonging, awe, timelessness, vitality, and bliss” (Fraser, 2007, p. 291).

In examining a study by Alexander and McLaughlin (2003), “McLaughlin and Alexander have identified interrelated strands which they argue, characterize the ‘spiritual domain’. They are: (i) a search for meaning; (ii) the cultivation of ‘inner space’; (iii) the manifestations of spirituality in life; (iv) distinctive responses to the natural and human world; and (v) collective and communal aspects” (2003, pp. 359-360). Radford (2011) discusses McLaughlin and Alexander’s distinction of spirituality being “either ‘tethered’ to, or ‘untethered’ from religion” (p. 328).

Other authors support this idea of religious context within the discussion of spirituality. Walker and McPhail (2009) state that academicians have an interest in spirituality because “they are seeking meaning in their lives” (Walker & McPhail, 2009, p. 323). Some researchers prefer to make a more generalized statement about spirituality that includes the concept of a deity or higher power. “Spirituality is often understood to be a highly individualized, ongoing, and integrative process of the self (body, mind, and soul) and, ultimately, a way to gain communion with a Higher Being (as cited in, Livingston & Cummings, 2009, p. 224).

Though not directly pertaining to the definition of spirituality, but to the telos (end goal) of spirituality, a recurring theme that surfaced in the secular literature was the tendency to treat spirituality as a method for coping with life. For example, “In spirituality, we find ways to understand and work through our fundamental human limitations to deal with those things that may be beyond our control, such as accidents, abuse, environmental disaster, and death” (as cited in, Dobmeier, 2011, para. 6). In other words, there seems to be the recognition that humans are fundamentally limited in their understanding and that spirituality is reaching out to something or someone beyond finite humans for assistance, understanding, and healing.

**Judeo-Christian Perspectives on the Definition of Spirituality**

Some authors coming from a Judeo-Christian background also draw the distinction between spirituality and religion; others assume their theology in the definition. Fredrick (2008), in exploring discipleship and spirituality from a Christian perspective, states that, “Spirituality considers how an individual lives and practices transcendent beliefs at its most basic and generic form. Spirituality may be concerned with a particular religious affiliation, but it need not to” (p. 553). Fredrick goes on to state, however, that Christian spirituality “concerns the quest for a fulfilled and authentic Christian existence, involving the bringing together of the fundamental ideas of Christianity and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of the Christian faith . . . religious life determines the ways in which one practices spirituality” (Fredrick, 2008, p. 556). Fredrick (2008) concludes that, “Christian spirituality is in stark contrast
with secular spirituality . . . [Christian discipleship] provides a belief set, a narrative framework for understanding spiritual experiences, and most importantly, a community outside of oneself that may confront and support one to develop a deeper, more complete relationship with the Divine” (p. 559).

Many Christian writers currently define spirituality in terms of spiritual formation. For example, Ma (2003) stated that, “Spiritual formation is defined as the process of becoming conformed to the image of Christ, for the purpose of fellowship with God and the community of believers” (p. 325).

Dallas Willard, philosophy professor at the University of Southern California and evangelical believer, states that, “Spiritual formation in Christ is the process through which disciples or apprentices of Jesus take on the qualities or characteristics of Christ himself, in every essential dimension of human personality. The overall orientation of their will, the kinds of thoughts and feelings that occupy them, the ‘automatic’ inclinations and ‘readinesses’ of their body in action, the prevailing posture of their relations toward others, and the harmonious wholeness of their soul--these all, through the formative processes undergone by his disciples, increasingly come to resemble the personal dimensions of their Master” (Willard, 2008, p. 79).

Steve Porter (2008), professor at Talbot Seminary and Rosemead School of Psychology, as well as co-director of the Center for Christian Thought at Biola University in Los Angeles County, defines spiritual formation in a similar way, but also acknowledges that it is a contended term within the Christian community. He states that, “the topic of spiritual formation within evangelicalism is simply the Protestant doctrine of sanctification in a new key. (1) The Protestant theological category of ‘sanctification’ has traditionally referred to the process of the believer being made holy, which is ‘to be conformed to the image of Christ’ (Rom 8:29). (2) While there have been various conceptions of this sanctification process within Protestantism, the underlying unity to these divergent views has been the attempt to spell out the nature and dynamics of growth in holiness (cf. 1 Pet 1:14-16). (3) Partly due to distorted treatments of sanctification, alternative terms such as ‘spiritual formation,’ ‘spiritual theology,’ and ‘Christian spirituality’ have become common within evangelical circles. While these terms and the plethora of viewpoints which accompany them often sound much different than typical evangelical presentations of sanctification, this should not detract us from the realization that what is being discussed under the heading of ‘spiritual formation’ (at least within evangelical Protestantism) is none other than views regarding the nature and dynamics of growth in Christian holiness” (Porter, 2008, p. 129).

Spirituality in a Biblical Context

While the term spirituality is not used in the Old or New Testament Scriptures, a plethora of passages throughout the Scriptures explain and illustrate what it means to live a Spirit-filled life. Jesus taught His disciples that when He left a Comforter would come, the Holy Spirit, who would teach them all things (John 14:25 - 27). This Spirit, the third member of the triune God (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) would abide in them, the disciples of Jesus, and teach them. And, reciprocally, the disciples of Jesus were to abide in Him, the True Vine, that is Jesus (John
Jesus said, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:4-5, ESV). Scriptures are clear on the essential nature of living the Christian life in conformity to Christ, not the world. Romans 12:2 (NIV) tells us, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Spirituality would then be the lived out experiences of disciples of Christ following after the leading of the Spirit in their lives, nesting their lives in the One who is greater, their Lord, Savior, Creator, YHWH. Educators, who are believers, then, walk in the Spirit and live lives characterized by love (I Corinthians 13). Their lives emanate a variety of fruit, nourished by the cultivation of the Spirit in their lives, as described in Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV), “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” Biblical spirituality then has in its root meaning, the Spirit of God, the imitation of God, the abiding in His Spirit, the living out of the Spirit-led life. Biblical spirituality is indeed the sanctification process whereby we become conformed to the image of Christ through obedience (Romans 12:1-2; John 15; Galatians 5:22-23; I Peter 1:14-16), and serve others (Eph. 2:10) in imitation of the Master and from the rich storehouse of grace and love of which we are recipients.

Summary of Spirituality Definitions

There seems to be no single definition for spirituality that is agreed upon in either secular or Judeo-Christian academia. Secular academia tends more towards a definition involving some form of introspection, often leading to a feeling of unity of connectedness with the world at large. Secular perspectives emphasize a search for meaning in life. Secular viewpoints often seek to divorce the term spirituality from any religion, deity, or metaphysical power. In some cases, however, spirituality is implied or treated directly as a coping mechanism. In the Judeo-Christian conversation, however, there is much more ready application to theological implications to the term spirituality. Definitions of spirituality in large part relate to the relationship a person holds with the Divine, and, in some perspectives, also dictates relationships with other people.

Though both sets of definitions obviously differ from one another, especially in their relation to a Higher Power, it is interesting to note that the stated logical outcome of both sets of definitions seems to involve an increase in community, unity, or healthy relationship with self and the world at large. Additionally, both sacred and secular definitions appear to recognize human limitations and seek to reach out to metaphysical aspects of one’s spiritual world that go beyond what one can see and measure in the “scientific” realm.

Finally, the biblical perspective of spirituality is firmly rooted in relationship to the Spirit of God (John 15) and the working out of the Spirit-led life in the sanctification process of becoming more like Him (Romans 12:1-2), walking in obedience (I Peter 1:14-16) and leading a Spirit-led life (John 15) in the pursuit of holiness and service to others (Eph. 2:10).

DEFINITIONS OF EDUCATION

Education is nearly a universal value, but what societies mean by education dramatically differs. For some, education is the preparation for vocation, while for others, education is the study of the liberal arts. Still for others, education is the pursuit of truth – or a combination thereof. To refine dialogue in the area of education, a literature review sheds light on the broad perspectives of secular, Judeo-Christian, and biblical perspectives of education.

Secular Definitions of Education
Education as an isolated term is rarely defined within secular academic journals. Terms such as special education, gifted education, higher education, and so forth are defined, but the stand-alone term, education, is rarely explicated. Historically, education in the liberal arts was considered education. However, “across many advanced industrial economies, there is a shift in the emphasis within university programs towards those that are primarily concerned with the preparation for specific occupations, and away from the liberal arts” (Billet, 2009, p. 827). This transition has led to descriptions, sometimes pejorative, of universities now primarily being involved in ‘higher vocational education’” (Billet, 2009, p. 827). One author states that, “All education is broadly vocational, and, where the educational purposes are about occupational preparation, then these purposes and those of specific vocational education are one and the same” (Billet, 2009, p. 828).

Debra Humphreys, a Vice President of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, when, stating her own views, defines liberal education as including, among other achievements, “creative thinking, teamwork and problem solving, civic knowledge and engagement, ethical reasoning and action, and synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies” (Mulcahy, 2010, p. 203). She goes on to speak about Newman and his “cultivation of the intellect” which, “recognizes the importance of practical knowledge and education for action, accommodates the view that education of the whole person brings into play emotional, moral, and spiritual formation; and adopts a pedagogical stance that gives full recognition to the experience, capacities, and interests of the individual” (Mulcahy, 2010, p. 212).

Duderstadt (2009) believes that education is about an accumulation of skill sets or vocational knowledge. He states “To provide our citizens with the knowledge and skills to compete on the global level, the nation must broaden access to world-class educational opportunities at all levels: K–12, higher education, workplace training, and lifelong learning. It must also build and sustain world-class universities capable of conducting cutting-edge research and innovation; producing outstanding scientists, engineers, physicians, teachers, and other knowledge professionals; and building the advanced learning and research infrastructure necessary for the nation to sustain its leadership in the century ahead” (p. 347). Education, from Duderstadt’s perspective, entails readying people to serve in their chosen vocations and to be useful to their immediate and global communities.

Others educators consider education to be more about collaborative inquiry learning in a democratic environment, rather than accumulation of knowledge. For example, one author states that, “Democratic education... is characterized by children and teachers working together to make better sense of themselves and their world by listening to, challenging, testing and critiquing each other’s ideas. He argued that this freedom and ability to democratically inquire has far more educative value than the accumulation of any body of knowledge” (Webster, 2009, p. 93).

Other researchers point to education as a somewhat fluid idea. Barnett (2004) points to the ambiguity concerning the definition of education and states that, “We have moved into an age of supercomplexity, which is characterized essentially by conceptual turmoil. We have no sure grip on who we are, how we relate to the world and, indeed, what the world is like” (p. 72). He adds, however, that, “under these conditions, the world needs the university more than ever and large purposes open up for it. These are the purposes of compounding our conceptual turmoil, enabling us internally (ontologically) to handle the uncertain state of being that results and assisting the world in living purposively amid that turmoil” (Barnett, 2004, p. 72). Others agree. Another article asserts, “that rapid social and technological change can or should necessarily be paralleled by radical change within the education system” (Pirrie & Lowden, 2004, p. 526) . . . but to what type of change and to what end?

Judeo-Christian Definitions of Education
Spears and Loomis (2009), educational philosophers at Biola University (California) and Wheaton College (Illinois), identify education as “a pursuit of truth” (p. 31). Spears and Loomis (2009) state that “… as adults, we find we are not well equipped to wrestle with some of the more difficult questions of parenting, life, death and our own fragile existence . . . the formal activity of education can better equip us to deal with such questions when grounded in a theological and philosophical foundation that is integrated with the Christian faith. Only then can we better understand (for ourselves and to teach others) who we are within God’s created universe” (Spears & Loomis, 2009, p. 30). Furthermore, Spears and Loomis (2009) also state that in order for “learning to contribute to human development and flourishing, including important dimensions of freedom, education as an institution requires conditions of knowledge and practice that are grounded in the Christian liberal arts tradition (p. 35).

Other authors seem to agree. Love (2001) defines education as, “the process of providing the knowledge and experience for persons to acquire the skills and information needed to become truly committed disciples, working to make other disciples for Christ” (p. 15). The Biola University website (2012) states, in regard to education, that, “Our business is to inspire students’ learning so that they are empowered to think and practice from a Christian worldview in their fields of service.”

Biblically-based Definitions of Education

Education from a biblical perspective begins and ends with God. Teachers, from a biblical perspective, are mothers and fathers and grandmothers and grandfathers (Deuteronomy 6:6-8; Psalm 78:4-6), and those who are given the gift of teaching to assist the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:10-12). Jesus was called Teacher and Lord (John 13:13-15), and the ultimate teacher that resides in each believer is the Holy Spirit who leads all His children into truth (John 14:25-27). The outcome of receiving His grace is good works (Ephesians 2:8-10). The curriculum and standards are His Word (Psalm 119) and the context is life.

Education Begins and Ends with God

Education begins and ends with God. A true education is about life; a true education is not about arbitrary standards, scatter knowledge (Barzun, 1992), or skillful responses to multiple-choice questions on standardized exams. Education is about knowing God and walking in His precepts (Psalm 119: 1, 9 – 16, 33 – 40). Education is about loving God and loving others (Luke 10:27, Matt 22:37). Education is about living the life God intended you to live and walking the path He prepared for you before the foundations of the earth (Psalm 139: 13 - 16).

Psalm 25:8-10 tells us “Good and upright is the LORD; therefore He instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in justice, and He teaches the humble His way. All the paths of the LORD are loving-kindness and truth to those who keep His covenant and His testimonies,” (NASB). God is good and He loves His children. He desires for His children to intimately know Him and walk in His way. God’s plan is a path of loving-kindness, not suffering, pain, and death.

True Education Nourishes Souls

True education nourishes souls. Parents and educators who teach God’s Word nourish children’s souls with the life-giving Word, pointing them to God. Their teaching, because it is infused with God’s Word, is like drops of rain that water the earth or dew that moistens the grass. The Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:13 states, “Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak; and let the earth hear the words of my mouth. Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, as the droplets on the fresh grass and as the showers on the herb. For I proclaim the name of the LORD: ascribe greatness to our God!”
When parents and educators teach from the Word of God and infuse His principles into all that they teach, their teaching is life-giving because human souls thirst for the Living Water that can only be found in God Himself. When Jesus spoke to the woman at the well (John 4: 1 - 42), He told her that He could give her water where she would never thirst again. While, observations of children and adolescents would tell us that the nature of humankind is curious and thirsts for knowledge (Lewis, *Our English Syllabus*), a biblical perspective underscores that the thirst extends beyond simply knowledge curiosity to a desire for knowledge that extends into the deep of the soul, a thirst to fill the vacuum that exists in all of us, that is to know God and all the truth, beauty, and goodness that He has for us (2 Thess. 1:11; Romans 15:13). To know God, to be one with God, to live in the complete fullness for which He designed us is the purpose of humankind (Genesis 1:26, Ecclesiastes 12:13).

**Parents are the First Educators**

Parents are the first educators. *Our responsibility as parents and educators is to teach God’s Word on a daily basis.* In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 6:6-8 states, “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead” (NASB). God’s Word is to be reflected in parents’ and educators’ words and actions throughout the day, influencing children and adolescents in the daily activities of life.

*Our responsibility as parents and educators is to tell the generations to come of God’s wondrous works.* Psalm 78:4-6 describes “We . . . tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children, that the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children,” (NASB).

**The Holy Spirit is Comforter and Teacher**

The Holy Spirit is the Comforter and Teacher. In the Gospel of John, chapter 14, verses 25- 27, Jesus said, “These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful,” (NASB).

**Jesus Calls Us to Lay Down Our Lives**

Jesus, our Savior, was called Teacher and Lord (John 13:13-15). He stated, “You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you,” (NASB). So as we consider where justice, spirituality, and education meet, we find this intersection in the Person and work of Christ Jesus who humbly laid down His life as a ransom for sin. As believers, we are to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, humbly laying down our lives for others as we live a Spirit-filled life and fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

Discipleship is costly. As Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 16:24-26 (NASB), “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

**Conclusion of Definitions of Education**
Both the secular and Christian communities define education in terms of learning and the accrualment of knowledge and skill sets. Both believe that education should in some way equip its students for the world, be that vocationally or otherwise.

Secular and sacred definitions of education differ in that secular literature seems to treat the definition of education in a more fluid or evolving way. Faith-based communities, on the other hand, view education in the context of an unchanging Christian worldview, grounded in biblical theology.

Biblical perspectives on education are primarily non-institutionalized descriptions. Biblical perspectives on education involve: the heightened importance of parents 1) training their children (Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4), 2) passing along Scriptural truths and precepts to the next generation whether through home or church teaching (Deut. 6:7, Psalm 34:11), 3) utilizing one’s intelligence for the needs of the community (e.g., artisans building the Temple), and 4) utilizing one’s gifts (e.g., teaching, administration) for the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4: 25-32; Acts 6:1-3), and living the Spirit-led life (John 15; Romans 8).

THE INTERSECTION OF JUSTICE, SPIRITUALITY, AND EDUCATION

As educators, we are to love our students, acknowledge their giftedness, and cultivate just educational practices that assist all students in human flourishing, virtuous living, and bringing glory to God. A just education, from a biblical perspective, supports a Spirit-led life, grounded in biblical theology, assisting and equipping students to fulfill the purpose for which they are created. As student fulfill their purpose, parents, educators, and community members encourage students to love and good deeds through service to their community. In this process, students learn to be givers of all that they are, becoming sensitized to the needs of the poor, the hurting, the disenfranchised . . . being led by the Spirit in service to others . . . in the same way that Jesus, the Master Teacher, served the world. To consider the intersection of justice, spirituality, and education, one must reframe one’s thinking and place the Spirit-led life at the center (Romans 8; John 15). This “connection for change” necessitates a paradigm shift, placing Christ at the center of all we do in educational arenas, rather than being driven by secular agendas.

Implications of the intersection of justice, spirituality, and education are many:

- Sacrificial love for our students and others in our community
- Biblically-based training in righteousness and what it is to live a Spirit-led life
- Pursuit of truth
- Full acknowledgement of, respect for, and accommodations for individual differences
- Openness to multiple paths of education to meet the needs of individual learners (e.g., public, private, mission, homeschool, magnets, charters, etc.)
- Compassion projects integrated throughout the curriculum
- Full inclusion of students and parents in the educational process
- Compassionate education for those with special needs
- Equitable distribution of educational resources
- Home, church, and schools working hand-in-hand to create coherency in students’ lives
- Training in how to think, read, write, debate, listen, and serve one’s community well
- Training in virtuous living
- Serious gatekeeping in the Schools of Education at the university to allow only the best, brightest, most compassionate loving and insightful teachers into the profession
• Well-rounded, robust curriculum that acknowledges all areas of giftedness including the visual and performing arts, as expressions of beauty
• Serious inclusion of physical fitness and health at every level, acknowledging our bodies as the temples of God
• Shedding practices that harm children and youth, such as the overemphasis on testing and assessment and the scatter approach to knowledge and truth
• Shedding ineffective employees and programs and use of funds that dilute equitable services to support the educational needs of students and families
• Ensuring safe procedures are in place at all schools to protect our most valuable resources, our youth

While the preceding list is not comprehensive, we must acknowledge that as we put on the new, we must also shed the old ways of doing things. This means shedding practices that are self-serving and acknowledging that God is at the center of all. To promote justice and spirituality in the educational setting, one must be an imitator of God and, at the core, God is love (Corinthians 13:11; John 14:31; Matthew 3:17).

Erickson (1988) describes four dimensions of God’s love including: benevolence, grace, mercy, and persistence. “Benevolence is simply the idea that God does not seek his own good, but rather that of others” (p. 321; Matt. 5:45; Romans 5:6-10). He seeks out the “lost sheep,” “the lost coin,” and the “prodigal son.” Whereas, grace is that dimension of love where “God supplies us with undeserved favors” (p. 321; Eph. 2:8-9). In that while we were sinners, Christ died for us. His act on the cross was the greatest form of love.

Mercy is God’s “tenderhearted compassion for His people” (p. 322; Psalm 103:13). He sees both our physical and spiritual needs (Matt. 9:35-36) and responds. And, the persistence dimension of God’s love is how Erickson (1988) describes God’s “withholding judgment and continuing to offer salvation and grace over long periods of time” (pp. 322-323; Psalm 86:15; Romans 2:4; 9:22; I Peter 3:20; II Peter 3:15). It is amazing that God may actually have delayed the flood (I Peter 3:20) and continues to delay His return (II Peter 3:9) so that more might come to repentance and knowledge of salvation.

God’s love is not fully understood, however, without examining God’s attribute of justice. “The justice of God means that he administers his law fairly, not showing favoritism or partiality” (Erickson, 1988, p. 315). In the Old Testament, God condemned judges who took bribes or showed partiality (I Sam. 8:3; Amos 5:12). However, sometimes God does not seem to Be acting out His just nature in this world. For example, sometimes the wicked flourish while the righteous suffer. Sometimes crime does pay - at least it appears to pay for some in this life. The important thing about God’s nature and His attribute of justice is to remember that God is not on a human timeline, nor does He work exclusively within human dimensions and understanding. “But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Peter 3:7-9) (ESV). This patience, or persistence, is an aspect of love in tension with how many perceive God’s justice.

The justice of God must be examined with an eternal perspective. God is working out His will over time. He desires for all to come to repentance. The wicked will ultimately be destroyed (Ps. 73:17-20, 27); however, God, being loving, desires for all to come to repentance. In time, judgment and justice will ultimately come.

In considering the ultimate purposes (telos) of our lives here on earth, undeniably we are here to give God glory, to serve Him, to serve others, and to fulfill our intended purpose, living a life of virtue. Educators and community
members must be wary of what Pastor Ken Bemis calls humanitarian distraction (2012). We are to be about our Father’s business, which is to serve others. However, when Jesus served the poor and disenfranchised, He served them by meeting, not just physical needs, but most importantly spiritual needs. Jesus Himself asked, “What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul?” (Mark 8:36) Is our purpose as Christian educators to relieve suffering and pain alone? Or, is our purpose to relieve spiritual suffering and pain that is far greater with more eternal consequences than momentary affliction on this earth. Our response is that we are called to do both. Jesus healed the sick and fed the hungry (Mark 12:15 – 21, John 6:1 - 14), but He also brought the living water so that people would never thirst again (John 4:1 - 26).

As we consider the intersection of justice, spirituality, and education, we consider Christ as the Center and Christ as the Savior. Our role is to be about His business every day, serving Him, serving others, and pointing to the Way. There should be no humanitarian distraction, no economic distraction, no sin distraction, no self-centered distraction, but serving Him alone. Ultimately, the role of the Christian educator is to live a Spirit-led life in right relationship with God and others, serving each parent and child assigned to us whether we serve in public, charter, private, mission, or homeschool.

May God bless each of you in this journey as you continue to explore personal and collective responsibility as it relates to the intersection of justice, spirituality, and education.

REFERENCES


**JUNE HETZEL**

June Hetzel, Ph.D., earned her Ph.D. from Claremont Graduate School. She currently serves as the Dean of Education at Biola University in La Mirada, California. Dr. Hetzel has served in public, private, homeschooling, and international educational settings. She is passionate about the role of the Christian educator to live a Spirit-led life in right relationship with God and others, and the centrality of the gospel message as the central hope of all educational endeavors.

**RACHEL BECK**

Rachel Beck is a recent graduate of Biola University and the Torrey Honors Institute in La Mirada, California, holds a degree in Communications. Beck was educated in Germany during her K-12 years, speaks conversational French, and has assisted Dr. Hetzel in teaching in a trilingual setting in North Africa. Beck currently serves as a research assistant and is completing her first novel.
ACHIEVING AN ETHNICALLY AND RACIALLY DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION
BY CHRISTIE CURTIS AND ALEXANDER JUN

ABSTRACT

Leaders in higher education continue to pursue the lofty goal of diversifying their college and university environments. Although improvements are evident in larger percentages of racially and ethnically diverse students and faculty on campuses, college and university leaders have much work left to do. The benefits associated with diversifying higher education environments have yet to be fully achieved. This article provides an overview of the diversity issue and identifies its importance not only to the welfare of those invested in higher education but also to the health and well-being of all people groups, nationally and globally. To illuminate the current condition of diversity, this paper includes an examination of past and present key policies and laws. To address and analyze the diversity problem, this exam presents existing research. Finally, this paper concludes with suggestions for embracing and affirming difference in college populations that leads to achieving the benefits of diversity for higher education institutions and society.

Although higher education leaders can point at the admission of more racially and ethnically diverse student bodies as evidence that ethnic and racial diversity is being accomplished on college campuses, university administrators have yet to achieve the best possible educational environment for students. When institutions provide a “microcosm of the equitable and democratic society” for which many citizens of the United States strive, then university leaders may acknowledge some success (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002, p. 362). College and university leaders must do more than justify ethnic diversity and support its link to educational outcomes. The challenge facing higher education leaders is to “achieve the benefits of diversity for [their] institutions and for society” (Smith, 2009, p. vii) by increasing their efforts to attract, retain, and graduate ethnically and racially diverse college students.

DIVERSITY PROBLEM

Public and private higher education institutions alike are increasing their efforts to diversify their student populations. Research data show that the overall percentage of ethnically and racially diverse students has increased from 16.6 percent in 2003 to 19.9 percent in 2009 in private schools. For public schools, the rate of diversity increased from 20.5 percent in 2003 to 23.2 percent in 2009 (CCCU News, 2011). Higher education leaders acknowledge some success in diversifying their student populations; however, college and universities administrators admit that the increases in the overall percentage of students of color do not reflect the demographic shifts that are occurring across the Nation.

Overview of the Problem

Many college and university leaders across the Nation articulate diversifying their campus populations as one of their priorities. Some higher education institutions, such as the University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB), have been successful at this endeavor. In the 1970s and 1980s, UCSB was known as one of the “whitest campuses” in the UC system. In the 1990s and 2000s, UCSB has reported enough significant growth in its proportion of underrepresented minority students that the Quality of Education for Minorities (QEM) has recognized the institution (Castro, Fenstermaker, Mohr, & Guckenheimer, 2009, p. 210).

Other higher institutions share the same goals as UCSB; however, these colleges and universities have not been nearly as successful at diversifying their campus communities. To benefit both their universities and society, higher education leaders must increase their efforts to achieve a more diverse student body.

Diversity as a Critical Issue
The population of most college and university campuses does not reflect the color and texture of their surrounding communities. This situation underscores the limited access that students of color have to a higher education and the white privilege that continues to be exercised on higher education institutions today.

Rationale for diverse student population. Because college and universities acknowledge that their campus populations have not reached an optimal representation of ethnic diversity, and that a diverse campus community benefits everyone, exploring possible options to improve the percentage of students of color justifies the endeavor. Higher education institutions can become “more vital to the health and well-being of their communities and to the issues that challenge society as a whole” (Smith, 2009, p. xii) by implementing initiatives that encourage an ethnically and racially diverse student population. Because a robust body of knowledge from research links diversity to cultivation of citizens who are successful in a pluralistic society, higher education leaders must embrace and weave diversity into the institution’s very core if they are to achieve the central goals of higher education (Smith).

Evidence of Disparity in Student Diversity

According to Largo (2005), two government reports (“School Enrollment -- Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 2003” and “The Condition of Education 2005”) claimed major gains in the number of ethnically and racially diverse students enrolled in higher education institutions. Largo agrees that there have been gains in minority enrollments; however, he emphasizes that there have been larger gains in the enrollment of majority students. Largo suggests: “The uncritical reporting by The Chronicle of the facile interpretation of these enrollment statistics contributes to the national denial of the urgent need to publicly address racial inequality in access to higher education” (p. A35).

Largo (2005) identifies two critical elements that are not acknowledged in these reports. First, for several decades, the birthrates of the majority population have decreased in comparison to minority birthrates and immigration of young people from minority groups. Despite this decline as a proportion of the population, the number of white students enrolled in higher education institutions has still increased. “Majority students have made greater relative gains than minority students, the exact opposite of the conclusion based simply on enrollment statistics” (p. A35). Second, to accurately interpret the statistical enrollment figures, racial enrollment need to be broken down by institutional characteristics. Largo emphasizes that an examination of institutional characteristics reveals that minority students are “disproportionately enrolled in historically black institutions, institutions in Puerto Rico, and second-tier urban institutions, while white students are disproportionately enrolled in higher-quality institutions in the suburbs” (p. A35). These statistics expose massive geographic and institutional racial segregation in higher education.

Evidence of Potential Problems

A number of issues underscore the urgency of diversity and the problems it poses for higher education institutions. Without the adoption of diversity initiatives that address the needs of all diverse students, negative social, educational, political, and economic consequences will result.

Social threat. Students must learn how to interact with and understand people who are ethnically, racially, and culturally different from themselves. “The United States and the world are becoming increasingly more diverse, compact, and interdependent” (Gay, 1994, p. 18). The formative years for most students are ethnically and culturally isolated and do not adequately prepare them to function effectively in ethnically different and multicultural settings” (Gay).

Educational threat. Research studies have found that an ethnically diverse campus community benefits every student, regardless of his or her skin color. There are many positive outcomes of diversifying the campus population, but the following outcomes directly benefit the students: critical thinking skills are sharpened; creativity is stimulated; and reflection time on inner thoughts is increased (Diaz, 2011). For these outcomes alone, higher education leaders must continue their efforts to increase the proportion of ethnically and racially diverse students.
**Political threat.** Diversity gains more urgency because of its importance nationally and globally. Very few successful examples exist of diversified societies; therefore, American higher education institutions are offered the challenge of becoming “models of diverse institutions that function well” (Smith, 2009, p. 4). Colleges and universities can contribute to creating “a world lived in common’ rather than a world lived in chaos and hate” (Knefelkamp & Schneider, as cited in Smith).

**Economic threat.** Around the world and in the United States, diversity plays a part in the “themes of economic and other inequities, racism, and historic and continuing injustice” (Smith 2009, p. 5). For example, poverty and race are impossible to untangle in America, and poor citizens increasingly view their economic status as proof of “structural or institutional racism” (Hollinger, 1995, p. 168). In higher education, the economic inequity found among potential students of color makes the affordability of a college degree an insurmountable barrier.

Assisting these economically challenged diverse students presents another problem facing higher education leaders and other invested parties if the benefits of diversity for their institutions and society as a whole are to be realized.

**AUTHENTICITY OF PROBLEM**

As concerned individuals assess the state of society in the United States, they point at these indicators of poor health: “the embedded aspects of society that disadvantage some groups and advantage others (structural inequity), poverty, and uneven access to power” (Smith, 2009, p. 8). If one adds the inequities in housing, banking, and employment to race, ethnicity, and gender, the result suggests an unhealthy democracy in America. Yet, people around the world continue to hope that the United States, the most racially and ethnically diverse country in existence, will “demonstrate both the power of diversity and the possibility of developing a pluralistic society that works” (p. 10).

Most research supports diversity “as essential to the organization for the variety of perspectives and contributions that can be made: The outcomes are much more positive than when diversity exists simply to increase representation or to gain legitimacy in outside communities” (Smith, 2009, p. 16). Smith suggests: “Engaging diversity, building diversity, and taking diversity seriously are imperative for organizations” (Smith). Critics of higher education institutions challenge colleges and universities to become role models of diverse organizations that can effectively fulfill their mission of producing citizens who are successful in a pluralistic society.

**Diversity: Its Historical and Current Impact**

Most discussions about diversity begin with the early stages of the Civil Rights Movement and issues of access to higher education. The earliest attempts toward diversity began before the 1960s. These initial diversity efforts focused on opening doors to those who were excluded by law from educational institutions (Smith, 2009). Blacks were not the only people excluded from colleges and universities; access to higher education was denied to Chicanos, Asian Americans, and American Indians as well. Chicano and Asian groups were fighting hard against segregation, especially on the West Coast, as is evidenced in the landmark desegregation case, *Mendez v. Westminster* (1947). This case involving Chicanos on the West Coast is often overlooked, but it provided a precedent for the historic Brown case seven years later (Smith, 2009). The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision made many colleges and universities question whether diversity was a legitimate educational goal in college admissions (Clark, 2004). According to Clark, “*Brown* pushed open the doors of opportunity for citizenship and democratic rights that helped launch the Black social and political movements of the 1950s, ’60s, and ’70s. It helped facilitate a sense of pride and unity among minority groups. We knew we had a right to be in college and to be treated with dignity” (para. 5).

**Key Policies and Laws**

Despite the efforts of other groups for equal access to higher education, much of the early diversity work is centered on the civil rights movement in the South. This movement primarily represented White women and African Americans. The
1960s were a time of unrest and struggle for these underrepresented minorities and White women, and led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This act along with other executive orders for affirmative action focused “on ensuring access to higher education for historically underrepresented minorities (African Americans, Latinos, and American Indians) and for White women in fields in which they were underrepresented” (Smith, 2009, 52).

Ameliorative Attempts

Higher education was pushed by other legal and legislative mandates to make changes. In 1965, the Higher Education Act established need-based financial aid for the first time. The act created TRIO early-intervention programs to encourage underrepresented minorities and low-income students. In 1972, Pell Grants opened access to higher education to people of all classes, and also in 1972, Title IX mandated access for women in athletics. Even people with disabilities received assistance: The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 mandated access and accommodations for people with disabilities.

The 1960s and 1970s aspired to remedy the inequities of exclusion by opening the doors to higher education. However, concern quickly shifted from access to success. In the 1970s and the 1980s, conversations around diversity highlighted the institution and the ways in which colleges and universities were unprepared to educate students of color for success.

In the 1978 case Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, U. S. Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell decided that the educational benefits of diversity support affirmative action. Since the Bakke decision, however, courts across the country have produced conflicting rulings on diversity. Controversy surrounds admissions, and many question whether Bakke is still a good law (Smith, 2009).

A DIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

Initially, diversity was framed around the issues of access, student success, campus climate, curriculum, scholarly research, and hiring. Diversity was often reactive, focused on responding to events and being implemented primarily to serve specific populations. Today, higher education institutions are embracing diversity as central to their missions by building an inclusive institutional culture. Race, ethnicity, class, and gender continue to frame diversity. However, class has moved beyond income and now includes cultural norms and values. The intersections of gender, class, and race have become more significant. Campus climate has caused academic leaders to re-evaluate their curricular offerings so that contemporary societal issues are addressed. Finally, the increase in immigration, concern about undocumented immigrant students, overlap between domestic and international diversity concerns, multiplicity and intersectionality of identities, and educational benefits linked to diversity are now included in framing the diversity issue (Smith, 2009).

Different Theoretical Perspectives

Smith’s (2009) framework offers only one perspective to explain the issue of diversity. Some researchers identify the lack of support of friends and family as the underlying reason for insufficient numbers of ethnically and racially diverse students. Other researchers present frameworks emphasizing student characteristics and behaviors, such as student effort and expectations, as the explanation of diversity. Still other studies suggest that the affordability of pursuing a higher education degree is the explanation for the less than optimum percentages of ethnically and racially diverse students (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckly, Bridges, & Hayak, 2006).

Identity theorists suggest that the cause for the low number of ethnically and racially diverse students is the growing complexity in identities and diversities. Higher education institutions are struggling to meet the needs of all diverse students. When administrators consider the differences in history, culture, and experiences within each people group, then “homogenous notions of identity . . . quickly break down” (Smith, 2009, p. 5).

Critical theorists hold still another perspective: Lack of diversity on college campuses exposes “how economics, capital, and the market drive social progress and processes” (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006, p. 21) in higher
education institutions. The critical race component of this theory challenges traditional societal norms and exposes how social processes privilege certain groups in society, especially as these processes relate to educational opportunity.

**Smith’s Dimensions of Diversity**

The framework chosen to analyze and address the diversity problem shifts the focus from groups to the institution (Smith, 2009). Smith’s framework includes the entire spectrum of identities yet differentiates the concerns related to each. The four dimensions are access and success of underrepresented student population, campus climate and intergroup relations, education and scholarship, and institutional viability and vitality. These four dimensions provide a way to understand an institution’s capacity for diversity and to visualize how that might appear.

**Addressing the Diversity Problem**

**Institutional viability and vitality.** For diversity to be successful, higher education institutions must identify diversity centrally with the institution. The institution must have the people, resources, and expertise to build the institution’s capacity and structures for diversity. How well diverse populations thrive and succeed determines the institution’s health. When committed leaders evaluate how effectively the mission facilitates the process of embedding diversity more centrally, they can strategize ways to develop the institutional capacity to succeed. Administrators must analyze the culture to determine what should remain and what should change in order for people from all backgrounds to thrive. For building institutional capital for diversity, there is a need for competent staff, administration, faculty, and leadership. To determine the centrality of diversity in core institutional processes, these documents can be examined: strategic plans, board reports, accreditation documents, and proposals. Even the morale of minority people can reveal an institution’s commitment to diversity and equity (Smith, 2009).

**Education and scholarship.** The second dimension of this diversity framework describes the academic core of the institution. Framing diversity in academic and educational terms is crucial for the involvement of faculty and for placing diversity in the center of institutional concerns. Higher education administrators should encourage opportunities for faculty to “engage diversity deeply through their own scholarship and/or teaching” (Smith, 2009, p. 73). Getting faculty involved in “leading curriculum-transformation efforts, undertaking new scholarly initiatives, and transforming the hiring process for faculty” are ways to move diversity to the center of institutional missions (Smith). This dimension examines the educational experiences of all students and the scholarly focus of the institution.

**Campus climate.** The third dimension of this diversity framework examines the perceptions of individuals about their institutions. Research findings report campus climate as being a significant indicator of morale, satisfaction, and effectiveness. The climate and interaction-relations dimension examines the degree of interaction between diverse groups of students, faculty, and staff. Intergroup relations have gained urgency because of their ability to build institutional capacity for diversity. With increasing demographic diversity has come encouragement to dialogue among groups.

**Access and success.** The final dimension addresses the access and success of historically underrepresented students. This was historically the first dimension and represents the heart and soul of diversity in higher education. Initially, this dimension focused on African Americans, Latinos, American Indians, and White women. Unfortunately, the problems addressed in literature 40 years ago are the same ones that are addressed in literature today. Granted, there has been some progress, but issues of access and success still remain. The achievement gap has not narrowed significantly, and diversity in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) has not been achieved (Smith, 2009). Bensimon (2004) adds that diversity on college campuses is more than what spectators “see.” The student population may “look” diverse, but “looking” cannot reveal student success, campus climate, institutional effectiveness, graduate-student welfare, or faculty profiles. A visible demographically diverse student population reveals nothing about whether the students are thriving and succeeding.
Strengths

The interconnection of the four dimensions of Smith’s framework is one of its strengths. This interconnection provides an inclusive approach to diversity while still differentiating those aspects of diversity that need to be addressed specifically. The campus climate dimension questions how individuals perceive the institution; the curriculum dimension evaluates the curricular exposure to the experiences of all peoples and illustrates how new forms of scholarship can impact academic disciplines; the student success dimension reflects the institution’s commitment to intergroup relations and climate; and, the institutional dimension attends to faculty, staff, and administrative hiring and retention revealed in its focus on racial, ethnic, and gender diversity as well the climate and organizational culture (Smith, 2009).

Challenges

Critics of Smith’s framework articulate a need for determining diversity success in each dimension. Perez (2011) suggests that the indicators of success in the institutional viability and vitality dimension could be these: the institutional history of diversity issues and incidents, the institutional strategies and dedicated resources, the compositional diversity of the faculty and the staff, and the framework for monitoring diversity with indicators. Educator and scholarship success indicators could be the course-taking patterns of students, the level of faculty expertise on diversity-related matters, and the quantity and substance of student learning about diversity. The effects of diversity on the campus climate could be measured by the type and quality of student group interaction, the students’ commitment to institutional goals, and the students’ quality of experience and engagement on campus. Finally, access and success indicators of diversity progress could be the undergraduate and graduate population by field and levels, the students’ success (graduation, performance, persistence, honors), and the students’ pursuit of advanced degrees (Perez).

Revised Framework

To determine the institution’s success at centralizing diversity in its mission, those in higher leadership could adopt a framework that reflects on the strengths and weaknesses that exist on their campuses and use this knowledge to improve the quality of their education. This framework could appraise educational effectiveness by disaggregating student access and success. This disaggregation would connect diversity to education in a very central way (Smith, 2009). To evaluate the governing structures and financial state of college and universities, this framework could examine the institution’s ability to begin new educational and scholarly programs. To determine if an institution is fulfilling its mission of educating students to thrive in a diverse society, this framework could identify paralleling programs as evidence. To decide if an institution’s mission is truly to address societal and educational issues, then this framework could rate its capacity to bring together diverse groups of people for evaluative conversation on diversity, for engagement of multiple perspectives, and for formulating strategic initiatives as proof of its commitment to diversity. Finally, to ensure that changes for improvement in educational effectiveness are being made, this framework could examine the willingness of organizational leadership to accept feedback from people who are invested in the institution about the successes and the failures of its efforts to address diversity.

Any higher education institution can take a strategic approach to diversity. Three elements are critical for engaging diversity effectively and reflect the influence of critical theory: (a) the context and background for diversity must be established; (b) the framework for monitoring progress must be developed; and, (c) the time and place for reporting and sharing information about progress and changes must be determined. If this type of framework is developed by higher education leaders, then there is a much greater chance that institutional efforts to create change will be sustainable (Smith, 2009).
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

After analyzing the historical past of higher education leaders’ attempts to diversify their student populations, concerned individuals can draw two conclusions: the domain of diversity is expanding and deepening, and higher education leaders have much work remaining. Smith (2009) suggests that administrative leaders focus their efforts on diversifying faculties and on addressing “identity in diversity and all of its complexities” (p. 178). This intentional focus will “embrace and affirm difference for students” and “create an environment that is intentional about learning and interaction across different communities” (A. Jun, HED 7 syllabus, July 25, 2011).

Embracing and Affirming Difference

In order to encourage institutional capacity for diversity, higher education administrators must diversify their leadership. This need for diversity in leadership has become a critical issue for college and university campuses and must be addressed. Granted, some attempts at diversifying leadership have been successful, but even more focus must be directed on hiring a faculty that is representative racially and ethnically. Research findings suggest that there is a direct link between increasing the diversity of the student population and the need for diversifying the faculty (Smith, 2009). This link provides the primary rationale for increasing the diversity of faculty: to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of the student population.

Smith (2009) justifies the need for a diverse faculty by emphasizing its importance to students and their success. As the diversity of a student body increases, the students’ search for an advisor or mentor from a similar background intensifies. Furthermore, a more diverse faculty provides a more diverse student body with “visible models” of possibilities in terms of career (p. 138). In addition, diverse faculty are more likely to be viewed as individuals rather than as stereotypes if there are more opportunities for students to interact with a greater number of diverse faculty members.

Offering mentors with similar backgrounds, providing visible models of career options, and orchestrating opportunities for students to interact with diverse faculty as individuals benefit the students. However, not only students but also higher education institutions benefit from a diverse faculty. First, a diverse faculty prevents accusations of hypocrisy and insincerity. Smith emphasizes “[S]uccess in diversifying the faculty goes to the heart of whether an institution is seen as committed to equity and diversity” (Smith, 2009, p. 140). Second, diverse forms of knowledge can be attributed to the diversity in the faculty. Numerous studies credit underrepresented faculty and White women with “bringing diversity themes to scholarship, increasing diversity in the curriculum, and introducing more and different patterns of pedagogy, including increasing the engagement of students in the community” (p. 140). Third, faculty diversity encourages the development of meaningful relationships with diverse communities outside the campus. Fourth, a diverse faculty makes fully informed decisions possible at all levels. Smith comments: “[D]iversity is essential for the expertise, excellence, and perspective required at the institutional and departmental levels. When key decision-making bodies include members of a diverse faculty, then the power associated with leadership becomes shared.

A diverse faculty benefits institutions in still more ways. If administrative leaders hope to hire persons from diverse backgrounds, then a diverse faculty represents an attractive environment in which others can develop and work. Another way that faculty diversity improves institutional quality is by contributing to the future-leadership pipeline. Almost all higher education administrators come from the faculty ranks. If the faculty is too homogenous, then the opportunities of diversity in leadership are too limited. The final rationale for encouraging faculty diversity is to provide role models from diverse backgrounds who function in faculty positions in all disciplines (Smith, 2009).

The first policy recommendation, diversifying the faculty, fulfills a vital aspiration of each higher education institution’s central mission. The second policy recommendation addresses “identity in diversity and all of its complexities” (Smith, 2009, p. 178). Smith states: “One of the most compelling arguments for the importance of diversity has framed it as an educational opportunity for groups from different backgrounds to learn from and with one another” (p. 178). Watkins
and Gregory (2010) “explain this concept in terms of intergroup (recognition that individuals bring multiple and intersection identities) and inter-group (racial, religious, class, and sexuality issues that may be present with each gender) interaction” (p. 358).

There are a number of conditions that work well for bringing people from different backgrounds together. First, a key condition for achieving the benefits of intergroup interaction is equal status. Members of the intergroup must perceive and experience equality between minority and majority positions (Smith, 2009). Second, members of the intergroup must share goals. Athletics is the obvious example, but shared goals can be encouraged in other settings as well. Third, members of the intergroup must avoid competition and cooperate together toward achieving goals. The intergroup uses collaborate effort to accomplish its purposes. Fourth, members of the intergroup need institutional support. The institution’s customs, laws, leadership, and indisputable commitment help intergroups flourish. Smith indicates: “A living mission with respect to diversity is one vehicle for setting a tome of institutional support and intention:” (p. 180).

For the benefits of diversity to really flourish, students must be encouraged to think of the multiple groups with whom they identify and participate. This identification and participation in different groups allow students to develop relationships with people who may share common characteristics or interests as themselves; however, students discover that they do not share every characteristic or interest as the people in the multiple groups. Smith (2009) stresses: “Supporting a variety of identity groups and building their capacity to engage across identities can only facilitate communication, boundary-crossing, and the development of relationships that are so important today and so underdeveloped in most institutions” (p. 195).

Underscoring the importance of effective intergroup relations and identity leads to greater student success. Smith (2009) offers findings of Project DEEP (Documenting Effective Educational Practice) as key principles that can be drawn from the relationship between diversity and success. The mission statements of higher education institutions should articulate the following principles: a mission linked to student success, a focus on student learning, environments created for educational enrichment, clearly marked paths to student success, an improvement-oriented educational ethos, and shared responsibility for educational quality and student success (p. 205). Commitment to these qualities and refusal to use background characteristics as predictors of student success lead to a “good education that matters” (p. 226).

Other researchers add literature specifically to the educational benefits of diversity. Gurin et al. (2002) identify three levels of diversity: structural (the actual numerical representation of diverse groups), informal interactional diversity (intergroup interaction), and classroom diversity (content knowledge about diverse people). Gurin et al. concur with Smith (2009) that engagement between peers in informal environments and classrooms leads to the greatest post-secondary benefits. Gurin et al. link a wide variety of individual, institutional, and societal benefits of diversity that parallel those benefits articulated by Smith.

Some of the learning benefits include “active learning skills, intellectual engagement and motivation, and a variety of academic skills” (Gurin et al., 2002, p. 334). Some of the democratic benefits include “perspective-taking, citizenship engagement, racial and cultural understanding, and judgment of the compatibility among different groups in a democracy” (Gurin et al.). These researchers suggest that the impact of diversity on these learning and democracy outcomes is especially important during the college years because students are at a unique times of personal and social identity (Erikson, as cited in Gurin et al.).

**SUMMARY**

This article has provided an overview of the diversity issue and its importance not only to the welfare of those invested in higher education but also to the health and well-being of all people groups, nationally and globally. Research findings have revealed a need for immediate, faster change and for locating diversity in the center of institutional missions. Although higher education institutions have implemented some successful diversity initiatives, they are still building
institutional capacity as they go. As the traditions of critical theory reveal, campus leaders have many more barriers to overcome before equity becomes a reality for all students.

Of certain goals all concerned individuals can be confident: Higher education leaders must create campuses that function well in pluralistic societies, that educate effective leaders, that address and solve the critical issues facing society, and that provide models of thriving, diverse communities for the world.

CONCLUSION

Continuing affirmative action and diversity efforts by higher education institutions not only allows more students access to a higher education, but these efforts encourage students’ academic and social growth. On a self-interest note, affirmative action and diversity initiatives reduce the chances of terrible violence that often accompanies “unjust and inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities. . . . As Rothenberg (2008) emphasizes:

A society that distributes educational opportunities, housing, health care, food, even kindness, based on the color of people’s skin and other arbitrary variables cannot guarantee the safety or security of its people. In this sense, all of us, both the victims and the beneficiaries of racism, pay a terrible price. (p. 3)

Clark (2004) reminds the majority group that there are many more minorities that have benefited from a college education than in the past. Further, diversity is intrinsic to almost every mission statement provided by higher education institutions. However, if campus populations are to be truly diversified, administrative leaders must understand that “diversity is simply liberty and justice for all” (para. 6).

REFERENCES


Diaz, P. (2011, October 29). Christian colleges struggle to keep pace with demographic


---

**CHRISTIE CURTIS**

Christie Curtis (BA UC Riverside, MA Biola University) is an assistant professor at Biola University pursuing her Ph.D. degree in higher education. As part of her doctoral program, she has written a paper addressing spirituality and student outcomes. Included in Christie’s submission are her preliminary findings on the spiritual needs of several ethnic groups. A native Californian, Curtis specializes in grammar and writing curriculum development. Curtis has been married for forty years to her husband Bob. They enjoy spending time with their children and grandchildren, whether surfing, going to national parks, or their annual week of summer camp at Forest Home.

---

**ALEXANDER JUN**

Alexander Jun, Ph.D., is a TED speaker and the author of *From Here to University: Access, Mobility, and Resilience Among Urban Latino Youth* (Routledge Press, 2001). He has published extensively on issues of postsecondary access for historically underrepresented students in underserved areas, and recently completed a three-year narrative inquiry research project on the educational mobility and academic resilience of Khmer orphans, which he’s completing a book about. Jun conducts research on issues surrounding higher education globalization in the Pacific Rim, and while studying at the University of Southern California, he earned a Ford Foundation fellowship to conduct research on college preparation programs for urban youth. Jun teaches courses on diversity and social justice in higher education, comparative higher education, and qualitative research methods, and joined APU after 15 years as a faculty member and administrator at USC.
ABSTRACT

On June 2, 2010, new national curricular standards in math and language arts, called the Common Core State Standards, were released by the National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers. As of November 4, 2011, all but four U.S. states have adopted and already begun to implement the new standards in their primary and secondary schools. These developments have become a key subject of widespread debate in the education policy arena. Proponents of the Common Core State Standards argue, in particular, that establishing a single set of national standards is necessary in order to ensure educational equity: a condition in which all students have access to the same educational opportunities and performance expectations. This paper first draws upon the biblical worldview to reexamine this concept of educational equity and then argues that the effort to establish national standards carries a fundamental flaw that prevents the realization of equity. The paper also investigates two other approaches to set curricular standards (i.e., state-level efforts and school-level, parent-driven efforts) and argues that school-level, parent-driven efforts are the most viable approach to promote educational equity.

Do National Curricular Standards Ensure Educational Equity?

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education released A Nation at Risk, an alarming, landmark report, decrying the poor state of American primary and secondary schooling. Among the several recommendations for education reform, the report called for establishing rigorous curricular standards and high performance expectations for all students. Since then, as education historians have documented, extensive efforts by state and federal governments (e.g., the National Education Goals movement, America 2000, Goals 2000, and the No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Act of 2001) have emerged to heed this recommendation (Vinovskis, 2009).

More recently, the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers led a movement called the Common Core State Standards Initiative to create new national curricular standards for math and language arts. The new standards, named the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), were released on June 2, 2010 (National Governors Association, 2010). Since its inception in 2009, the CCSS have moved to the forefront of education reform and policymaking. As of November 4, 2011, 45 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the new standards in their entirety, while one state has adopted only the language arts standards (Gewertz, 2011). With the help of $350 million in federal grant money, two consortia of states are earnestly at work developing new assessment systems to measure student proficiency at the CCSS (Rothman, 2011).

Other federal funds have been offered to promote the implementation of the standards. In 2009, the Obama administration used the Race to the Top program to offer a share of $4.35 billion in federal funds to states who adopted the new standards (US Department of Education, 2009). More recently in 2011, the administration has provided states with waivers from NCLB’s most burdensome mandates if they fulfill requirements such as establish “college- and career-ready standards”; notably, only the only set of curricular standards that the administration presently considers college- and career-ready is the CCSS (US Department of Education, 2011, p. 2). The point is that national standards are a reality in the United States for the first time in its history, and state governments as well as the federal government are vigorously working to implement them.

One of the many arguments in support of the CCSS, and national standards in general, is that they are needed to ensure educational equity (Hunt, 2011, Kendall, 2011). Ravitch (1995), a former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education and prolific writer about education policy, defines educational equity as a condition in which all students...
“encounter the same educational opportunities and the same performance expectations” (p. 27). Rothman (2009) of the Alliance for Excellent Education and CCSS supporter contends that without national standards, students, especially those from low-income or racial minority backgrounds, are often relegated to attending schools with a mediocre curriculum and low expectations. National standards, however, will ensure that the quality of education that students receive will be consistent, not dependent on where they “happen to live” (p. 2).

With national standards emerging in the U.S. education system, it is worth debating its merits and demerits. This paper specifically asks two questions. First, do national curricular standards ensure educational equity as Ravitch, Rothman, and other CCSS supporters contend? And second, what other viable alternatives exist to promote educational equity?

**REEXAMINING THE MEANING OF EDUCATIONAL EQUITY**

Before answering these questions, however, it will be necessary to reexamine the meaning of educational equity. There are important points to glean from the assertions made by Rothman, Ravitch, and supporters of national standards. For example, it ought not to be the case that certain students are relegated to a low-quality education, a proposition that is corroborated by the Christian worldview. According to biblical teaching, the aim of serving others is to “present everyone mature in Christ” (Colossians 1:28, English Standard Version; see also James 1:4). Education, then, entails empowering all children to realize their full, created potential. There is a God-given calling to whom each individual is meant to become. The Prophet Jeremiah writes, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11). An education with meager expectations and diminished opportunities inhibits children from attaining the fullness that God intends for them. Therefore, all children, by virtue of the fact that they are beings created in the image of God, ought to be on the receiving end of others’ best possible effort to educate them (Genesis 1:27). Any lesser effort is inconsistent with the inherent worth of a child as a human.

On the other hand, biblical insight also reveals a key, often-overlooked aspect of equity. Implied by King David’s proclamation that each individual is uniquely “knitted” together is the idea that equity includes meeting the unique needs of each student (Psalm 139:13-16). David himself is said to have “administered...equity to all his people” (2 Samuel 8:15). The original Hebrew word that is translated as equity in 2 Samuel 8:15 comes from the root word for righteousness, suggesting that David gave to each person what he or she ought to have deserved. Educational equity, then, means more than merely giving every student the same thing but tending to the particulars (e.g., their abilities, needs, goals, character, cultures, desires, and life-callings) of every student and, given those particulars, providing what he or she needs.

Volf (1996), a well-known theologian, points out that God Himself tends to the particulars of individuals when dealing with them. For instance, a call to minister to the unique needs of the weak (e.g., the widow, the poor, and the orphan) resounds throughout Scripture, but that same ministry is not due to the strong. Although God, to some extent, treats both the weak and strong as equals because they both share a “common humanity,” God also considers “their specific histories, their particular psychological, social and embodied selves” when dealing with them respectively (p. 222). In other words, equity cannot completely be administered by blind procedure or, as Rawls (2007) has famously proposed, “behind a veil of ignorance” where the particulars of individual people are not taken into account when making judgments about them (p. 631). Rather, people’s particulars have moral bearing when determining what ought to be done for them.

Thus, limiting educational equity to mean ensuring the same opportunities and expectations for each student, as Ravitch (1995) has done, is legitimate only to the extent that it treats all individuals equally and recognizes the “common humanity” which Volf (1996) alluded to (p. 222). Yet equity means more than treating everyone equally. Though unequal treatment may lead to inequities, some measure of unequal treatment is also needed to meet
specific needs and, in so doing, to ensure equity. Ultimately, Ravitch’s notion of equity is incomplete for overlooking the differences among individuals and being blind to particulars. Ravitch’s notion of equity will henceforth be designated as *educational egalitarianism* in order to distinguish it from the term *equity*.

**COURSES OF ACTION TO REALIZE EDUCATIONAL EQUITY**

The goal, then, is to find a way to establish curricular standards in order to ensure educational equity and not just educational egalitarianism. What follows is a discussion and evaluation of three options: They are (a) establishing national curricular standards, (b) letting each state establish its own curricular standards, and (c) empowering parents and other members of local school-communities (e.g., teachers, administrators, community leaders) to establish curricular standards for themselves.

**Option 1: Establish National Curricular Standards**

The impulse behind national curricular standards. The current effort to establish national curricular standards is heavily driven by the desire to address the weaknesses of NCLB. In particular, NCLB does not mandate a national curriculum but only requires states to implement the same curricular standards in math, language arts, and science for all of their own respective students. States, in addition, must create their own assessments to measure student proficiency at their standards and determine their own definitions of what proficiency entails (US Department of Education, 2003).

Unfortunately, many states have manipulated the system and created a facade of high achievement in order to comply with NCLB’s mandates and to avoid federal sanctions. Studies have widely documented how states have (a) lowered their curricular standards, (b) made their assessments easier, (c) used statistical gimmicks to avoid counting lower-achieving students, and (d) lowered their minimum requirements for students to be deemed proficient. These actions have increased proficiency rates, but only nominally. Students are not being well-served in such a system of mediocre curriculum and low performance expectations (Cronin, Dahlin, Adkins, & Kingsbury, 2007; Cronin, Dahlin, Xiang, & McCahon, 2009; McCluskey & Coulson, 2007). In the end, equity is missing as many students are being shortchanged by not having their individual needs met. Nor are these students being prepared to reach their full potential so that they may flourish.

Supporters of the CCSS have argued that a single set of national standards will remedy this problem. By compelling all schools to teach the same rigorous curricular standards and to measure student achievement according to the same high performance expectations, states will be unable to limit educational opportunities and to lower their expectations for students. The wide variation of standards and expectations among states that relegate some students to a poor-quality education would be mitigated, if not eliminated (Finn, Petrilli, & Winkler, 2009; Rothman 2009).

Kendall (2011) of Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, who supports the CCSS, also suggests that national standards will remedy the social and political pressure that drove states under NCLB to decrease the quality of standards and expectations. Instead, national standards will generate the pressure to maintain high-quality standards and high expectations. For with a “critical mass” of states that have agreed to adopt the CCSS, “no district that sends students ignorant of the Common Core to other districts and states will escape the notice of its peers” (p. 55). In other words, there is enough pressure to guard against lowering standards and expectations because no state would want to be found as the one lagging behind other states which are working within the same system. In this case, national standards may at least ensure educational egalitarianism.

**Criticisms of national curricular standards**

*Standardized mediocrity.* However, there is no reason to be certain that national standards will be insulated from
unforeseen political pressures that decrease their quality. For one, Ravitch (1995) concedes that there is a strong, undesirable possibility that standards will have to be watered-down in order to garner support from as many states and stakeholders as possible. Thus, contrary to Kendall’s (2011) assertions, other CCSS supporters acknowledge that “national standards would face the same perils as state standards” (Finn, Julian, and Petrilli, 2006, p. 16). The quality of standards and expectations could still tend to be lowered so that states could more easily attain what is deemed to be success and avoid sanctions for failure. Eventually, as some education policy analysts have explained, “the rigor and content of national standards will tend to align with the mean among states, undercutting states with higher quality standards” (Burke and Marshall, 2010, p. 6). Though educational egalitarianism would obtain, the education system would end up with standardized mediocrity, which is not the outcome that even supporters of national standards desire.

In fact, research is suggesting that the risk of ending up with lower-quality standards is already materializing under the CCSS. Even studies conducted by supporters of the CCSS are casting doubt as to whether the new national standards offer a significant improvement over many existing state standards (Carmichael, Martin, Porter-Magee, & Wilson, 2010; Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang, 2011). Nevertheless, states with existing, higher-quality standards are being relegated to adopting the CCSS due to political and financial pressures (McCluskey, 2010). Other states that are currently making progress in student achievement with their own standards may have their efforts derailed by a new system (Peyser, 2006).

**Inattention to the particulars of students.** Furthermore, establishing national standards fails to address other problems that have surfaced under NCLB. For example, by codifying their curricular standards according to NCLB mandates, states essentially establish a minimum goal that all students need to attain. Studies have reported that some schools consequently exert the most effort to aid students who have not met the standards while neglecting students whose achievement exceeds the standards. Such a system is inequitable towards these higher-achieving students because it overlooks their unique needs (Jolly & Makel, 2010).

Curricular standards need to be both high in quality as well as appropriate to the particular student. Rigorous national standards may or may not achieve the former, but they certainly cannot achieve the latter. National standards cannot ensure that all students are taught according to appropriate standards and expectations: Blanketing every student with a single set of standards results in a uniformity that fails to account for the reality that each student has different needs and learns at varying paces. In an op-ed piece, Coulson of the CATO Institute (2010) writes:

> The whole idea of imposing a single set of age-based standards on all students rests on a false premise: that children are identical widgets capable of being dragged along an instructional conveyor belt at the same pace, benefiting equally from the experience. But kids are different – not only from one another, but when it comes to their own varying facility across subjects as well. Any single set of age-based standards, no matter how thoughtfully conceived, will necessarily be too slow or too fast for most children (para. 2-3).

National standards are too blunt an instrument and cannot be calibrated to account for every relevant detail about each student in order to determine how best to serve them.

More generally, any increase in the scale of standardization pigeonholes students, abstracting them from the particulars which are constitutive to their being and without which their unique needs cannot be met. In their book *Education for Human Flourishing: A Christian Perspective* scholars Spears and Loomis (2009) explain that excessive standardization “[tends] to eliminate student individuality (the particulars) by using the lens of sameness in the means and ends of education” (p. 137). McCluskey and Coulson (2007) make similar remarks; they write that education is a “field that demands, by its very nature, considerable individualization and personal attention,” but increasing the scale of standardization results in a system run by a “sprawling impersonal bureaucracy,” which is “distant” and cannot be
“truly responsive to the unique needs of local communities and individual families” (p. 11).

Large-scale standardization efforts, therefore, have a fundamental flaw: They are unable to pay attention to the fine-grained particulars of students and depersonalize these students into “widgets” (Coulson, 2010, para. 2). As a result, a system of national standards such as the CCSS will be unable to realize the fuller sense of equity that is consistent with the Christian worldview. A more viable alternative must allow for the capability to dynamically establish different sets of curricular standards that are personalized to meet the diverse needs of individual students.

Establishing national curricular standards: A summary. The track record of past national and federal efforts to establish high curricular standards in the name of equity is not promising. Nor does the potential of current efforts warrant any more optimism. At best, establishing a uniform set of national curricular standards can only ensure educational egalitarianism, but even then it is doubtful that a high-quality curriculum for all students can be maintained. Moreover, the inability to account for the particulars of individual students is a fundamental flaw of establishing codified national standards. Without accounting for those particulars, needs remain unmet and the more complete picture of equity as described in Scripture remains elusive. So, if national standards are not a viable course of action, what else can be done? Is leaving states to establish their own standards a better option?

Option 2: Letting Each State Set Its Own Standards

Traditionally, state governments have the authority to create their own curriculum (Essex, 2011). This arrangement is more decentralized than an arrangement in which a single set of national standards is required of all states. Accordingly, states, often nicknamed “the fifty laboratories of democracy,” are able to freely experiment with their own standards and to find better ways of educating students. States are also able to learn from the experiences of other states. For example, a state is able to adopt and to adapt a successful model that other states have created. Likewise, states may harmlessly avoid and learn from an unsuccessful model that others have tried. In contrast, establishing a single national curriculum for all states to teach stymies this learning and discovery process, and as some researchers have noted, a more-centralized system of national standards puts states at risk of having a bad idea imposed on them wholesale (McCluskey, 2010).

Moreover, a state government, being more proximal to its students, is typically more in tune than the federal government with the particulars of its students. States, then, are in a better position to know how to serve their own students well. There also is prudence in allowing states to find their own solutions because viable solutions must be sensitive to each state’s own unique culture and needs. In fact, there are reports documenting that states with a high proportion of rural schools are becoming increasingly critical of the Obama administration and U.S. Secretary of Education Duncan, a former chief executive officer in the urban Chicago public school system, for showing a bias towards policies that are feasible for urban settings but are unhelpful or even harmful for rural settings (McNeil, 2009).

Letting each state establish their own respective standards is an improvement over a establishing a single set of national standards, but leaving reform up to the states has not always resulted in high-quality standards and equity. Indeed, NCLB and other federal efforts aimed at raising standards have been in response to the perceived failure of states to raise standards on their own. Fortunately, there is a third and more effective alternative that enhances the advantages of state-level standards-setting, secures additional benefits, and avoids pitfalls common to the reform efforts of both state and federal governments.

Option 3: Empowering Locally-controlled, Parent-driven Efforts

This third alternative is to devolve authority from state and federal governments to the local level in order to grant parents and local school-communities the autonomy to make their own decisions. This alternative results in several additional benefits that promote a more complete picture of equity. For instance, it (a) allows for a greater familiarity with students so that their needs may be more effectively met, (b) promotes the innovation that is necessary for
improving and expanding educational services, (c) makes genuine accountability possible, and (d) recovers the voice that parents ought to have over their children’s education.

**Greater familiarity with students.** As argued earlier, a necessary condition for effectively and equitably serving students is familiarity with their particulars. Obtaining such familiarity requires a great degree of proximity between students and those who serve them. Local governments, school communities, and parents have this type of proximity, whereas state or federal bureaucrats typically do not. Even Secretary Duncan has often acknowledged that the “[the best ideas in education are] always going to come from great teachers, great principals at the local level,” not from “anyone else in Washington” (Mora, 2011, para. 6).

Local school-communities have access not only to a greater depth of information (i.e., the particulars) about their students but also to a greater breadth of information. Hayek (2007) observes in his classic work of political philosophy, *The Road to Serfdom*:

> The point which is so important is the basic fact that it is impossible for any man to survey more than a limited field, to be aware of the urgency of more than a limited number of needs….the ends about which he can be concerned will always be only an infinitesimal fraction of the needs of all men (p. 102).

State- and federal-government bureaucrats, therefore, can only possess a limited amount of insight about students. Parents, school staff, and local government officials are likewise limited in their knowledge of their own students, but because of their sheer number – a number which surpasses that of a handful of state- and federal-government bureaucrats – they collectively possess a much greater amount of insight.

So, local school-communities are able to process a greater volume and richer type of information about their students, placing them in the most favorable position to best serve those students. In contrast, student needs often go unmet in a centralized education system in which a few, non-omniscient individuals use overly-generalized and an insufficient amount of information to make less-than-optimal decisions on behalf of many.

**Promoting innovation to improve school quality and expand educational services.** With the freedom to establish their own curricular standards, schools also possess the flexibility to innovate, experiment, and discover better ways to meet the unique needs of their students. This is the second benefit of implementing locally-controlled, parents-driven efforts to set standards. Like states, schools can learn from, replicate, or even improve the successful innovations of other schools who serve similar student populations. Conversely, schools can harmlessly avoid bad ideas and learn what not to do by observing any unsuccessful innovations that other schools have attempted. Some schools may even specialize, finding a niche to more effectively serve students with a particular need. In turn, a plethora of curricular standards and associated pedagogical approaches emerge. This expansion of a wide range of different educational opportunities is conducive to ensuring equity because it provides access to more alternatives that are better suited to meet the unique needs of students. Professor John Merrifield (2008) of the University of Texas explains that unlike national or state standards which are codified by cumbersome bureaucracies and modified by drawn-out political processes, individual schools operating on a smaller, more-localized scale are nimble enough to innovate and to dynamically modify their curricular standards so that they may improve their services for all students.

Critics of allowing parents and local schools to implement their own curricular standards argue that doing so will result in a wide range of school quality. They argue that although such a system will result in some excellent schools, other schools will be ineffective because they may implement poor curricular standards. In this case, some children will remain relegated to attending schools that offer a low-quality education; equity will remain elusive as these students are not having their needs met. “Letting a thousand flowers bloom” may result in “weeds” that sprout alongside them (Ravitch, 2010, p.227).

Those critics, however, fail to recognize that locally-controlled and parent-driven efforts operate within a dynamic
system with a mechanism to constantly improve schools. Parents and local schools are incentivized and able to use their autonomy to work towards meeting the needs of the students in better ways. So, being ineffective is not necessarily a permanent feature of any school under such a decentralized system.

If anything, it is centrally-established, uniform standards that threaten to stymie innovation and progress. Hess (2011), a well-known education policy commentator, cautions against the confining nature of centralized standards. These standards drive curriculum and teaching practice itself. Although supporters of the CCSS, such as Rothman (2011), hope and believe that national standards will not stymie innovation, Hess notes that trends suggest the contrary and observes that “assessments and prescriptions” of the CCSS are becoming more “intrusive” (para. 4). If Hess is right and innovation is stymied, then the quality of curriculum may stagnate. Burke and Marshall’s (2010) warning that centralized, uniform standards “eliminate the possibility of competitive pressure for increasing standards of excellence” would come to pass (p. 7). Making improvements to better serve all students will be difficult, and educational equity would then be more difficult to achieve as the unique needs of students remain unmet.

**Making genuine accountability possible.** A locally-controlled, parent-driven system enables a school not only to innovate and to improve its services but also to form a closer partnership with parents. Notably, numerous studies find that educational outcomes for all children regardless of their backgrounds improve as their parents become more involved in their children’s schooling (Lim, 2011). Such a finding certainly bodes well for the potential of locally-controlled, parent-driven efforts to serve students well and thereby ensure educational equity.

More important, locally-controlled, parent-driven efforts provide parents with the opportunity to become more involved with and vested in a school. It is the nurturing of such types of personal relationships between schools and the parents that enable both parties to serve children in good faith. These personal connections between parents and schools create the moral context in which both parties can commit to collaboratively serve the students and to hold each other accountable for doing so. Without such personal connection, individual members of local school-communities are missing the “habits of the heart” (i.e., what Aristotle classically called *civic friendship*) that help them to pursue the good of others (Bellah et al., 1996, p. 116).

On the other hand, the current education bureaucracy follows a rote formula and blind procedures to evaluate schools. The resulting lack of personal connection erodes accountability as schools become “more responsive to the centralized scorekeeper” and policy mandates rather than to parents’ desires (Burke & Marshall, 2010, p. 4). As mentioned before, this type of behavior is already occurring under NCLB where parents are often misinformed about their children’s progress because states distort achievement data in order to avoid NCLB sanctions. Furthermore, there is no personal advocate to inform parents about the available, federally- provided services that they may use to help their children (Vernez et al., 2009). As a result, there is no genuine accountability between parents and schools in a centralized system. A nationalized system of standards and accountability would expand this type of impersonal governing body, making it difficult to ensure that all students are being equitably served.

Moreover, as studies have documented, the test scores that are used by a centralized governing for accountability purposes may not be an accurate indicator of student progress. For example, test scores often do a poor job of accounting for student growth. Students who initially started the school year with very low academic skills may make monumental gains yet still be deemed as unsuccessful for not meeting minimum scores for proficiency. Other times, assessments are poorly aligned with curricular standards, so the assessments do not measure how well a student has mastered the standards (Hamilton et al., 2007).

Invalid evaluations of student achievement are to be expected in a highly-standardized system because as argued earlier, such systems are unable to generate an adequate quantity and quality of information in order to make the most valid judgments. Instead, these impersonal systems make over-generalized, albeit not completely inaccurate, conclusions about student achievement. Parents are consequently hindered from getting a richer picture of their
children’s progress, and holding schools accountable to serve their children then becomes unlikely. Reestablishing locally-controlled, parent-driven efforts recovers the personal touch and proximity that is necessary in order to gather an adequate amount and quality of information to make accountability possible. Accordingly, a more effective and efficient accountability system ensures that students are more equitably served.

**Recovering parental voice.** Recovering accountability helps to recover the parent’s voice regarding the education of their own children. However, parental voice can be muffled in other ways by a highly-centralized system. For instance, the curriculum established by national standards, especially for a nation as diverse as the United States, will inevitably clash with the values and commitments of some parents. These values and commitments are not trivial for they often constitute people’s moral and spiritual identity. For example, there is little agreement regarding numerous curricular issues, such as sex-education, evolution, what should be taught in social studies courses, or constructivist versus traditionalist pedagogy. In fact, Vinovskis (2009) points out that Goals 2000 was derailed due to the inability to agree on history standards. Centralized standards-setting is by nature a political process and a single set of national standards will not be free from political bias (Meier, as cited in *Education Next*, 2009).

Parents are typically unable to voice their desires in a highly-centralized system of national standards because they are unable to compete with other, more highly-organized interest-groups. These other interest groups can easily concentrate their resources towards a single centralized body and promote their own agendas (McCluskey, 2010; see also Ravitch, 2003). Those agendas, notwithstanding their legitimacy, often conflict with the interests of parents and the needs of the parents’ children. Equity is consequently more difficult to realize must act in accordance to what is politically popular rather than respond to student’s needs.

Alternatively, a locally-controlled, parent-driven system allows parents to maintain the reins of control over the curriculum instead of ceding it to a political process over which they have no control or voice. Parents are then empowered to ensure that their children are served in the ways that they deem more suitable.

By giving them a greater voice in their children’s education, parents are empowered to seize their calling to “train up a child in the way he should go,” (Proverbs 22:6). In contrast, state and federal efforts may tend to stifle parental responsibility, as decisions are made in the parents’ stead. Parents become disenfranchised as their voices are suppressed. Yet parents, as the people with the greatest vested interest in their own children, ought to be given a voice to speak on their children’s behalf (Burke and Marshall, 2010). Locally-driven, parent-controlled efforts, by giving parents a voice, align with the biblical call to establish equity by “[opening] your mouth for the mute” (Proverbs 31:8).

**Locally-controlled, parent-driven efforts: A summary.** In summary, locally-controlled, parent-driven efforts avoid the problems that plague centralized standards-setting and secure many benefits that centralize standards-setting cannot. The ways that such efforts bear upon parental voice, accountability, innovation, and being familiar with students make realizing a fuller sense of equity, rather than limited educational egalitarianism, more likely.

**CONCLUSION**

Determining whether establishing national curricular standards ensures educational equity requires a clear understanding of the nuances of equity. There is an important distinction between educational egalitarianism, where all students receive identical educational opportunities and expectations, and a fuller sense of equity, where all students are served according to their unique, individual needs. It is the latter understanding that enables students to flourish according to their God-given potential.

Ensuring educational equity has been a major argument in favor of national standards. However, national standards are more conducive to achieving educational egalitarianism than to achieving equity. Yet even then, there are significant reasons to doubt that national standards will attain the optimistic vision of educational egalitarianism as
supporters of national standards hope. In other words, instead of the same high-quality standards and high performance expectations for all students, there is reason to believe that all students will be relegated to a second-rate curriculum and low performance expectations.

What is more significant is that the effort to establish national standards and further centralize the education system carries a fundamental flaw that prevents the realization of equity: The effort cannot account for a sufficient breadth and depth of information about individual students in order to serve them well. Establishing national standards pigeonholes all students into a one-size-fits-all curriculum, making it impossible to adequately address all their distinct, complex needs. So although the CCSS may rightfully be worthy of some merit, their potential to promote educational equity is slim.

On the other hand, creating policies that devolve more authority to local communities, schools, and parents to make educational decisions is most conducive achieving a fuller sense of equity. Local school-communities are nearest and, hence, most familiar with the fine-grained details about their own students. Thus, they are in the optimal position to meet those students’ needs and ensure educational equity. Locally-controlled, parent-driven policy also help to promote innovation, ensure genuine accountability, and recover the voice that parents ought to have over the education of their children – additional benefits of are also conducive to progressing towards educational equity.

As the US education system appears to be entering a new era of national standards, a dialog about how national standards bear upon the important topic of education equity must be continued. At the very least, the ways in which national standards fall short of attaining educational equity must be considered in policy debates if educational equity is to be an end that the nation’s public institutions want to realize. Indeed, such an end ought to be pursued and achieved. Therefore, it is the hope that this paper has played at least a modest role in providing a framework and some principles — particularly those from a Christian worldview — by which the nation can move forward with the debates, research, and legislation of education policy so that a more equitable system may come to fruition.

REFERENCES


---

**ALBERT CHENG**

After graduating from the University of California, Berkeley in 2006 with a degree in pure mathematics, Albert Cheng taught algebra, statistics, and pre-calculus at James Logan High School in Union City, California. In 2010, he enrolled in Biola University to pursue graduate studies in education with a focus on policy. Since earning a Master’s of Education in 2012, he has moved from his native California to Fayetteville, Arkansas where he is currently a Distinguished Doctoral Fellow and a Ph.D. student in the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas. Some of his research interests are civic values, moral formation, and school choice.
WESTERN PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE

BY ERIC TWISSELMANN AND FRED RAMIREZ

WESTERN PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE

Attempting to survey the various Western philosophical conceptions of justice leading up to recent educational theory within a few pages is a daunting endeavor, to put it mildly. To this end, we will embark on a very brief survey of several key philosophers within the Western tradition, emphasizing with broad brushstrokes the major themes that each have contributed to our current conceptions of social justice. Through this survey, we shall keep a special eye on points of intersection and divergence from a Christian conception of justice in the hope that we can enrich our own tradition with greater understanding and specificity.

Key Historical Figures

Plato

The Republic of Plato (360 BC) is aimed primarily at the question, “What is justice?” However, because it was written mainly in Socratic dialogue, it is difficult to pin down a single definition of justice that may be attributable to Plato himself. Rather, we hear various conceptions of justice being debated between various interlocutors. On the whole, however, Plato conveys the idea that justice is the ultimate virtue: that justice is a supreme “rightness” (the Greek is “dikaiosune,” the same word that is translated “righteousness” in the New Testament) wherein all parts of a society are in perfect balance and aimed at the ‘Good’ (Plato’s “Form of forms”). Society is, at large, what the just man is in miniature: as there are three parts to a man’s soul (temperament, appetite, reason) that ought to be kept in proper balance if that man is to flourish, so also are there three parts to the “soul” of the polis (soldiers, merchants, and philosophers, each being distinguished by either the predominance of temperament, appetite, and reason, above) that must be kept in similar proportion. Plato’s conception of justice, in the end, is utopic: the harmonic balance that characterizes both the just individual and the just society can be achieved if those who are ruled by reason (“philosopher-kings”) are also those who rule society.

Aristotle

In his Nicomachean Ethics (350 BC/1999), Aristotle articulates more precisely the virtue-theory of justice that Plato had begun to explore (Slote, 2010). Similar to Plato, justice is for Aristotle an all-encompassing ethical idea: “justice often seems to be supreme among the virtues...in justice all virtue is summed up” (V.1.15; p. 69), and this conception will be repeated in the philosophical theology of Aquinas, below. For Aristotle, justice is distinctive for its social dimension: “justice is the only virtue that seems to be another person’s good, because it is related to another; for it does what benefits another, either the ruler or the fellow member of the community” (V.1.17; p. 69). Thus, “just is whatever produces and maintains happiness and its parts for a political community” (V.1.13; p. 68).

This conception of justice, above, is what Aristotle distinguishes as “general justice”, in that it reflects a “complete virtue” (V.1.15; p. 68). Aristotle then distinguishes it from “special justice”, that, justice as manifest in particular ways and in particular situations. Under special justice, there is (1) distributive justice, where “it is possible for one member to have a share equal or unequal to another’s” and (2) retributive justice, which “concerns rectification in transactions” (V.2.12; p. 71). He defines the "unjust" person as "unfair," and since the "fair" is, to Aristotle, a Golden Mean between excess and privation, it is possible for injustice to be an action in which there is too much or too little good. Therefore, "Distributions must accord with worth" and, hence, must be "proportionate" (V.3.7; p. 71).
Thus, the practice of justice inevitably leads to the development and use of currency within the economy of a community: community requires exchange, and justice requires equality of exchange, but not all transactions can be just in the sense that they will be equal, simpliciter. Professions are unequal in that the goods they each produce are of differing values, and so they must be equalized through transactions of goods in a way that is fair or proportionate. The rule of proportionate equality, then, requires currency within a highly developed economy (V.5; 74-76).

Aristotle refers to the unjust person as "an overreacher." That is, one who is concerned with only his own good and "without qualification" (Book V, Ch. 1, 9; p. 68). Aristotle distinguishes the unjust in terms of "lawless" and "unfair" (V.2.8; p. 70): one could be lawlessly unjust for failure to obey a law, or one could be unfairly unjust for failure to render to another his/her proper due, whether in accordance with law or not. One entailment of this is that what is lawful isn’t always fair, and what is fair is not always lawful. Aristotle also distinguishes between doing/suffering something that is unjust (i.e., unequal), and committing/suffering injustice, such as someone being treated unequally (V.9.3; p. 81). One difference is that suffering injustice is not voluntary, whereas suffering something unjust is done willingly.

Augustine

Within the thought of Augustine, we see a similar principle of justice-as-proportionality at work, but with the distinctly Christian notion that justice must begin with a love of God that supersedes and subordinates our love for all other things. As he writes in the chapter entitled “The Order of Love” from Christian Doctrine (A.D. 397):

Now he is a man of just and holy life who forms an unprejudiced estimate of things, and keeps his affections also under strict control, so that he neither loves what he ought not to love, nor fails to love what he ought to love, nor loves that more which ought to be loved less, nor loves that equally which ought to be loved either less or more, nor loves that less or more which ought to be loved equally. No sinner is to be loved as a sinner; and every man is to be loved as a man for God’s sake; but God is to be loved for His own sake. And if God is to be loved more than any man, each man ought to love God more than himself. Likewise we ought to love another man better than our own body, because all things are to be loved in reference to God, and another man can have fellowship with us in the enjoyment of God, whereas our body cannot; for the body only lives through the soul, and it is by the soul that we enjoy God.

Further on, Augustine describes how and to what extent we are to distribute justice to others:

Further, all men are to be loved equally. But since you cannot do good to all, you are to pay special regard to those who, by the accidents of time, or place, or circumstance, are brought into closer connection with you. For, suppose that you had a great deal of some commodity, and felt bound to give it away to somebody who had none, and that it could not be given to more than one person; if two persons presented themselves, neither of whom had either from need or relationship a greater claim upon you than the other, you could do nothing fairer than choose by lot to which you would give what could not be given to both. Just so among men: since you cannot consult for the good of them all, you must take the matter as decided for you by a sort of lot, according as each man happens for the time being to be more closely connected with you.

The philosophy of Augustine would later become the leading theological influence on both Thomas Aquinas and the Protestant Reformation. Thus, it has helped form the Christian theory of justice in its broadest sense.
Thomas Aquinas

Like Aristotle, Aquinas defines justice as a *rendering-to-each-his-due*: "Now each man's own is that which is due to him according to equality of proportion. Therefore the proper act of justice is nothing else than to render to each one his own" (ST, SS, Q. 58, Art. 11). Aquinas names justice as a cardinal virtue, of which mercy, liberality, and pity are secondary in the sense that justice would encompass them all. He distinguishes between “commutative justice” from “distributive justice” in the following way: the former refers to the manner in which one individual interacts with another, privately, whereas the latter refers to the manner in which a community acts towards a single person in the way it distributes, proportionately, common goods, such as titles, resources, rights, opportunities (Q61, Art. 1). Aquinas goes on to argue that favoritism is opposed to distributive justice—that justice should be meted out according to the merits of a cause—and he illustrates this with the example of offering a professorship: it would be unjust to offer a position to someone simply because he is a particular man (e.g., Peter); rather, justice requires, by nature of the cause in question, that the position be offered on the merits of the person's knowledge.

Social Contract Theories

In stark contrast to the natural law of justice is the social contract theory of the British materialist Thomas Hobbes. In his famous work *The Leviathan* (1660), Hobbes argues that we find ourselves in a state of nature where “every man is enemy to every man” (Ch. XIII), and thus, we are forced by pure self-interest to lay aside some of our powers and inclinations in exchange for protection under a more powerful magistrate, who metes out “justice” and confers rights in accordance with the rules of a social-agreement. For the atheist Hobbes, “Justice, benevolence, friendship, and love are valued simply for their consequences (Holmes, 1997, p. 97), rather than for any transcendent moral value or intrinsic virtue they may possess. However, Hobbes’ social contract theory was superseded by that of John Locke (1690/1952), who also begins by describing the “state of nature” in which we find ourselves. As a Christian, Locke believed that we are endowed by God with certain natural *rights*, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of property. Here, Locke’s theory of ownership bears on the question of justice insofar as justice asks, “To what are we entitled to claim as our own?” Locke most famously asserted that we may take ownership of something when, upon encountering some element or part of nature, we mix it with our labor (p. 17). However, according to Locke, this principle should not promote reckless acquisitiveness:

> The same law of nature that does by this means give us property does also bound that property, too. “God has given us all things richly” (I Tim. vi. 17)...But how far has he given it us? To enjoy. As much as any one can make use of to any advantage in life before it spoils, so much he may by his labor fix a property in; whatever is beyond this is more than his share and belongs to others. Nothing was made by God for man to spoil or destroy. (p. 19)

On the contrary, then, Locke’s social contract theory is bound by the Christian principle to take care of one’s neighbor in addition to oneself, not out of fear or the need to survive, but out of reverence for God’s natural order:

> Every one, as he is bound to preserve himself...so by the like reason, when his own preservation comes not in competition, ought he, as much as he can, to preserve the rest of mankind, and may not, unless it be to do justice to an offender, take away or impair the life, or what tends to the preservation of the life, the liberty, health, limb, or goods of another. (p. 6)

Fellow British Empiricist David Hume held, like Aristotle, to a virtue theory—that justice is rooted in the passions or sentiments. However, he argues in *A Treatise on Human Nature* (1739) that the concept of “justice” only arises when we are faced with scarcity and we must answer the question of who will get what limited goods/resources are available,
and on what basis. Hypothetically, if resources and benevolence were universally abundant, then the concept of “justice” would not even exist. Contra Aristotle, justice is a social contract that is social constructed but without any theological or natural underpinnings. That is, justice is not discovered, but invented. Likewise, Hume’s contemporary Francis Hutcheson, the eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment philosopher, shared the view that justice is founded on moral sentiment, and is therefore, a virtue (Slote, 2010). However, he disagreed with Hume’s claim that justice was not a natural concept that arises only when human beings are faced with a scarcity of goods/resources. Rather, as a defender of natural law, Hutcheson roots justice sentiments/virtue in the natural order, giving him closer kinship to Aristotle. But even further, Hutcheson asserts Christian benevolence (love) as the cardinal virtue that best serves justice.

It is worth noting, at this point, the implications that one’s metaphysical view of the world has on the construction and defense of a theory of justice: those worldviews which presuppose an objective, transcendent moral order (whether in Plato’s realm of Forms, Aristotelian essences, or the God of Christian theism) have tended to produce, on the whole, cultures with more optimistic, stable, and compelling accounts of rights, obligations, and duties, historically (Sorokin, 1941; Pera, 2011). Indeed, perhaps the greatest western philosopher since Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, believed that God’s existence was one of three necessary “postulates of practical reason”: that the concept of justice was best founded upon the presumption that there exists an all-powerful, benevolent moral authority who will balance the scales of justice, if not in this life, but in the life to come. Only such a being can make sense of the kind of moral duty that justice requires.

**Kant and the Categorical Imperative**

Deontologists like Kant regard duty, and the freedom to fulfill duty for its own sake, as the foundation of ethics. This approach stands against “consequentialist” theories justice, such as hedonism and Hobbesianism, and later, utilitarianism. That is, if it is my duty to perform ‘X’, then I am just if, and only if, I perform ‘X’ for the sake of performing ‘X’ and not for some secondary, contingent reason. How, then, do we determine what it is our duty to fulfill? Kant (1785/1949) famously developed his Categorical Imperative to answer this question, and it states that we must “Always act according to that maxim whose universality as a law you can at the same time will” (p. 94). Thus, to determine whether or not one has a duty towards something, one must ask if we could consistently require it to be followed as law. Stealing, for example, would fail the test, since “thou shalt steal” cannot be universally practiced: property would be meaningless, and, therefore, one would not be able to follow the maxim to steal. Likewise, adultery, murder, and lying fail this strictly logical test. Thus, the ultimate test of whether or not one is fulfilling one’s moral obligations is to ask whether or not one is acting out of “the good will.”

Though Kant’s philosophy has been accused of being too rationalistic in its approach (his Categorical Imperative is designed to be a strictly formal, logical test of ethical action), he leaves us with some important insights regarding the texture of morality and moral actions. For one, he states that we ought to “treat persons as ends, and not as means to some other end” (p. 87). That is, the goods of individuals—i.e., happiness and perfection—are intrinsic, rather than instrumental, to be pursued for their own sake. Further, Kant concludes: “Thus if it is the question of happiness, which is to be my duty to effect as an end, it must be the happiness of other men, whose (permitted) end I thus make my own also. It remains for them to decide what they reckon as belonging to their happiness; but it is open to me to decline much that they reckon to it...” (Kant, 1797/1949, p. 357). However, though it is the duty of each to pursue his own (moral) perfection, Kant regards the idea that one would have a duty to secure the perfection of another as contradictory, since such an enterprise is not under one’s control. Perhaps more than any other philosopher before him or since, Kant stresses the importance of freedom as a metaphysical presupposition to moral duty: I can only be justly obligated to perform a duty unless I am free to do so, and my being free to do so is conditioned by my ability to perform it.
Utilitarianism

In stark contrast with Kant is the utilitarian approach to ethics, begun by Henry Sidgwick and Jeremy Bentham and developed in its most recognizable form by John Stuart Mill. Utilitarianism is a teleological (ends-oriented) ethical theory that seeks to maximize the greatest good for the greatest number. One criticism of many classical approaches to justice—or at least, to retributive justice—is that they are merely backwards-looking: they seek to correct some wrong that happened only after the fact. Utilitarianism, however, invokes a forward-looking principle: “It bids us maximize utility now for a future state of affairs” (Thomas, 1993, p. 79). Justice, then, would be what is most fair for the most people. More recently, it has become common for ethicists to further distinguish between act and rule utilitarianism. Act utilitarianism asks, “Will this action I am about to perform bring about a greater good for a greater number of people?” Rule utilitarianism asks, “Am I following a rule that, when applied universally, tends to bring about a greater good for a greater number of people?” The problem with act utilitarianism is at least three-fold: (1) I can’t possibly know the future, and, therefore, I can’t know what consequences my act (good or bad) will have; (2) even if we could know the immediate “total impact” of our action, we would be hard-pressed to define a limiting principle—how extensively, and how far into the future must I reckon?; (3) it is far too easy to justify an unjust action based on a “greater good” calculus—if what is right is right in and of itself, then ends don’t justify means. In this way, Budziszewski (1997) asserts that utilitarianism rejects common sense and falsely equates the rules of justice with the rules of utility, which he takes to be merely rules of expediency. On the contrary: “If justice is the right and the expedient is the useful, then justice and expediency are two different things...For instance, it may be expedient to hang an innocent man in order to placate the mob and prevent a riot; but it cannot be just, and so it must not be done” (p. 162).

John Rawls

Social contract theories, the discussion of individual liberties and natural rights, and utilitarianism have all thrown into relief the famous “One vs. the Many” dilemma of philosophy as applied to ethics in general and justice in particular: should we put more emphasis on the rights of individuals or on the “happiness of all”? In the 20th century, this question has provoked perhaps the most influential treatise on justice to date, John Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice* (1971). Therein, he has famously proposed two principles of justice. First, each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others. Second, social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all. (p. 60)

He defines injustice as “inequalities that are not to the benefit of all” (p. 62). Rawls argues his conception of justice by asking us to imagine what we would take to be the rational rules of conduct from a perfectly neutral “original position,” where everyone assumes perfect equality, untainted by the knowledge of disparities of wealth, natural abilities, endowments, etc. As he believes that it is what every rational person would choose in “the original position,” Rawls advocates an equality of both liberty and opportunity. Rawls’ original position follows Kant’s categorical imperative “in the sense that [the principles of justice] apply to us whatever in particular our aims are” (p. 253). In stipulating the priority of justice over efficiency, welfare, and “maximizing the sum of advantages” (p. 302), Rawls clarifies his position over and against utilitarianism.

Rawls’s account of justice has been highly influential. In legal philosophy, the application of Rawls’s Difference Principle mirrors the “Pareto Principle”: “that advantage- taking is permissible only if it works to the long-term benefit of the exploited party” (Murphy & Coleman, 1990, p. 170). As we shall see later, Rawls’s theory has also been absorbed into educational theory. However, Rawls’s theory is not without its critics. Wallace Matson (1983), professor at Berkeley, has provided a typical critique. While Mattson approves of Rawls’s commitment to liberty at the personal/local level, he sees a disconnect between this natural, “bottom-up” conception and Rawls’s advocacy of a “top-down” (paternalistic)
approach to distributive justice, as this inevitably limits the practice of personal liberty and freedom. This is because the former is voluntary, whereas the latter is imposed artificially (usually by the government). He, therefore, accuses Rawls of misappropriating the word ‘Justice’ from its classical “rendering-each-his-due” conception and supplanting it with a “doling-out-pleasure- experiences-equally-all-around” (p. 686).

Feminist Theories

It bears mentioning that in more recent years, feminist ethicists, like Carol Gilligan (1982) and Nel Noddings (2003), have begun to critique the historically typical rationalistic “male” conception of ethics in favor of an “ethics of caring.” In subjecting normative ethical questions—such as “What is justice?”—to formal analysis, where we look for the necessary and sufficient conditions under which “X performs some act P which is J” (where “J” is “just” or some other “good” state of affairs), we miss an essential component of what it means to be ethical, namely, the internal qualities of the moral agent that motivate and attend the moral act. Gilligan’s philosophy marks what has been a fairly recent return to a virtue theory of ethics, and by extension, justice. This resurgence includes many highly influential philosophers who are also advocates for social justice, including G.E.M. Anscombe, Martha Nussbaum, and Christina Hoff Summers.

Summary

From the foregoing, we should note several distinctions within justice theory. First, there is the distinction between retributive justice (i.e., administering punishment that is proportionate to a crime) and distributive justice (i.e., everyone getting those goods to which they are entitled). We might also add the idea of restorative or compensatory justice (i.e., that justice which seeks not merely to punish injustice, but to correct such injury and amend circumstances to their original state by demanding some kind of repayment). From this, the concepts of rights (that to which one is entitled) and obligations (duties owed to another) must be acknowledged. Thus, we should keep in mind the differences between individual and civic justice (duties one has to others in one’s community vs. duties the state has to its citizens) and moral and legal justice (following ethical principles vs. merely following the laws of the land). And finally, we should acknowledge that there are various kinds of goods that justice seeks: material goods (e.g., food, clothing, shelter) and non-material goods (e.g., liberty, equality, opportunity, recognition), instrumental goods (pursued for some greater end, e.g., currency, possessions) and intrinsic goods (pursued for their own sake, e.g., happiness, virtue).

NON-WESTERN CONCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE

As we turn to a brief survey of some non-Western conceptions of justice, two caveats are in order. First, asking what is the precise “African philosophy” or the “Chinese philosophy” of justice may be as ill-formed a question as asking, “What is the North American philosophy of justice?” Once again, we must keep in mind that we are using extremely broad brushstrokes, on the theory that to over-generalize is better than to overlook altogether. Second, Christians must listen to these various philosophical voices with discernment. While we may look for what Os Guinness (2010) calls “signs of transcendence” within non-Christian philosophies, we must also note that ethics are always developed alongside metaphysical, epistemological, and, ultimately, theological presuppositions, many of which are at fundamental odds with Christian theism. Though Hobbes and Hume, above, have their insights, we must soberly acknowledge that the denial of the existence of natural justice (e.g., as the Sophists, relativism, pragmatism, postmodernism do), mixed with atheism, has been typically and historically associated with tyranny and oppression (Budziszewski, 1997, p. 40-41). In our assessment of what follows, though we may affirm Confucianism’s emphasis on love, we cannot accept the convictions of Confucius and later, Mencius, that humans are inherently good, and perhaps even perfectible by their own efforts (Chan, 1963); though we may see many Christian parallels to the African concept of ubuntu, we cannot embrace a theology which promotes such cultural-ideological openness that it minimizes the urgency of the gospel message; though Indian philosophy may direct us towards an ultimately divine end, we must not confuse its various (pan-)theisms with the God of the Bible.
African Philosophy

African philosophy has been generally characterized by communalism, though Bell (2002) notes that there has been a tendency by those in the West to assume (falsely) an “African unanimism” in this regard: that is, that African thought reflects a universal commitment to communitarian conceptions of justice to the extent that it precludes any expressions of individuality whatsoever. Though it is true that, over and against Western philosophy, African thought tends to view community as ontologically prior to individuality, as Battle (2009) explains, the African concept of personhood (ubuntu) is that “each individual’s humanity is ideally expressed in relationship with others, and, in turn, individuality is truly expressed” (p. 3). Hence, John Mtibi’s famous aphorism: “I am because we are: and since we are, therefore, I am” (Bell, 2002, p. 60). This metaphysical concept of the self, then, implies a reciprocal social justice: ubuntu means that “we act humanely and with respect towards others as a way of demanding the same from them. Similarly, law, to be worth its name and to command respect, must evince ubuntu” (Ramose, 2001).

Chinese Philosophy

Though we cannot reduce Chinese philosophy to the thought of Confucius alone, he holds a place of special distinction, much as Aristotle does in the West, as the apex of Chinese thought (Chan, 1963). Confucian philosophy does not concern itself primarily with the distribution or allocation of social goods (Fan, 2003). That is, “Confucian social justice first concerns the promotion of right-relevant intrinsic goods...[i.e.], individual rights and liberties, but it cannot include economic values like property and income” (p. 147). As opposed to a more recently Western view of “justice as equality” and the assertion of rights, Confucian philosophy conceives of justice as harmony, with the most important moral principle being that humans deserve love (p. 149). In this way, the Chinese conception of social justice actually has more in common with the virtue theory of Aristotle (which stresses eudaimonia, or “flourishing”) and the teachings of Jesus. Confucian social justice, as in Aristotle, can tolerate inequality and asymmetry, even within the requirement to love, in the following way: though every human deserves love, not every human deserves love in the same proportion. For example, love for one’s family should supersede one’s love for strangers.

Indian Philosophy

Like African and Chinese philosophy above, Indian philosophy is extremely wide and varied. For over two millennia, Indian thought was dominated by an interest in the broader categories of metaphysics (the theory of reality) and epistemology (the theory of knowledge). In general, there have been three main “ways (yoga) of life” within Indian tradition, each informed by different literary/epic sources, and each with its own philosophical trajectory (Raju, 1971). These ethical codes are an attempt to synthesize all the various philosophies of India through the epics, (e.g., the Mahabharata, of which the Bhagavad-gita is a part) These ethical codes—the dharmasahastras (“sciences of right action”) are conveyed through story and song, and are situated in an all-encompassing religious/cosmic view of the universe. Though particular, socially/culturally contextualized rules of justice within Indian thought would require much further study within these vast epics, we may cite some general, representative principles that coincide with most of the other virtue traditions we have surveyed. For instance, Jainism prescribes certain bodily and mental virtues (dharmas) that seem to entail the recognition of social justice, among them forgiveness, humility, truthfulness, straightforwardness, cleanliness, self-restraint, and charitableness (p. 111). More recently, however, Indian philosophy has been left “fractured” by British colonialism (Raghuramaraju, 2006, p. 8), though not in an utterly destructive sense: the lingering effects of India’s early (and continuing) encounters with Western (particularly British) philosophy have, if anything, created an even greater diversity of thought. Indeed, as “globalism” (perhaps a euphemism for “Westernization”/ “democratization”) continues today, all the various world philosophies will continue to enjoy greater dialogue, if not greater agreement.
Before moving forward with 20th century educational philosophy on justice, we wish to relay that although the journal is housed within a school of education, there is a sincere desire, within this journal, to hear from others outside of education. This section does little to share the vastness of educational thought within the 20th century. Rather, we wish to give some introduction and return to Aquinas (1225–1274) who believed, "Justice is a certain rectitude of mind whereby a man does what he ought to do in the circumstances confronting him." Justice, therefore, is an action to a situation, not a passion from the heart. Justice could only be rectified should it be placed within the common good for all people through equality through action, which then also involves the community.

The notion of community has been essential in Catholic doctrine, and we started to hear more of the concept of social justice as it relates to the poor when Pope Leo XIII wrote the encyclical Rerum Novarum on May 15, 1891. First, an encyclical from the Pope within the Catholic Church is a written document of importance given to the Bishops regarding a variety of issues. In Rerum Novarum (Papal encyclicals online, January 2008) Pope Leo was concerned with the conditions of the working poor during a time when the Pope believed the poor were being judged harshly under capitalism. Leo, through this encyclical, hoped to bring justice to the poor by pointing out that the poor were equal in God’s eyes to the rich. He also stated without the working poor, society would fail due to the work that the poor provided. He challenged religious people who would use their faith as a means to support the oppression of the poor by using the Gospel message of Christ’s teachings as a message to solve the problems of the mistreatment of the poor.

Leo also went on to claim that the working poor would need to be liberated so as to have the opportunity to own land and be freed from the greed of others. Pope Leo also sought to assist people wishing to accomplish such an undertaking for the poor by suggesting the establishment of institutions that would give financial assistance to help workers and their dependents. Leo went further by telling the working poor that they should stand up for their own rights, form unions (but not go on strike or riot), and demand fair wages so they may be able to be fed, clothed, and housed. By taking care of the working poor, Leo was advocating a return to Christian morals that he believed were deteriorating within a capitalistic mindset of looking out for oneself. Government, he believed, needed to be in place for the protection of community and its citizens. Leo still believed in the protection of private property and wrote that the government should secure this right while being able to take care of and ensure the freedom for all people whether they were rich or poor.

Some believe this encyclical was the beginning of the social justice movement of equal opportunity, economic egalitarianism and income redistribution. It needs to be understood that although Pope Leo XIII was in favor of providing for the poor, he was also a proponent of property rights and the right for any person to move up in terms of financial gain while working to provide working justice for others. Today, social justice as a doctrine is firmly planted within the Catholic Church and is being taught in Catholic secondary schools across the United States.

From the Catholic Church tackling the issue of justice or social justice for society, educators began to delve into similar ideas with various people, such as John Dewey at the turn of the 20th century. Dewey advocated for pragmatic ways to teach all children through his writings in Democracy and Education but also championed the rights of women and was part of the organizers of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. From Dewey sprang a multitude of secular educators and education theorists who closely examined how schools were being run, who was educated, whose children were being educated, and what action could be undertaken to enhance and promote social justice within schools.

The difficulty of this paper is to bring to light the many people who have contributed to the issue of social justice and to share the vision of justice in all segments of life, and not just in the field of education. Within education, people such as Paolo Freire with Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 2006) assisted greatly in the current understanding of not only
how education could enhance the lives of students, but also how education has been a “banking model” (p. 72) that compares the student to an empty vessel that is filled by teachers.

Freire, in opposition to this theory, proposed that the student could be a contributor to his or her own education. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* also focused on how his own theories of literacy assisted sugarcane workers to read and write within two months and how the promotion of literacy development would bring power to individuals. This seminal book has been both praised for its contribution to rethink the current top-down trends of education but also criticized by conservatives who view Freire as a Marxist sympathizer and a person who favored an overthrow of capitalism due to his Christian belief of empowering the poor. However, his work has greatly influenced other secular work from current educational theorists, such as Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, Joe Kincheloe, Jonathon Kozol and others. Through these and other writers, we continue a questioning within education of how justice is or is not being delivered in schools, which develops into a rise of different pedagogies, such as inclusion, multicultural education, feminist theories, and moral education.

Due to this openness of educational theories, educators such as Nicholas Burbules (2004) have examined “Jesus as Teacher” and the role of how morals are delivered within schools. Other topics of interest that secular theorists have developed through a social justice lens are the concepts of cultural capital and the hidden curriculum. Cultural capital, what a person brings with him/her to school, is important to understand and develop within a classroom setting whereas the hidden curriculum in basic terms is the understanding that “what is not being taught in schools is as important as what is being taught” (i.e., lack of women in history books tends to tell students that women may not be important contributors to society).

As with any such pedagogy or theory, there are those who will embrace such concepts and those that will oppose it based on ideological or political beliefs. What is clear, however, is that from Plato through Pope Leo XIII to current educators who follow justice as theory within schools, they maintain that their focus is on others. How do we as Christians create systems—such as education—to be a place where all students will be able to learn and excel? It is our intent, therefore, to show that through Biblical integration and the teachings of Jesus Christ that justice is to bring about support for all of God’s people who are believers and non-believers.

**THE SIMPLICITY OF JUSTICE**

Perhaps the most encompassing definition of justice that resonates with both the biblical picture and the deepest, most universal, intuitions of the human heart is that justice is that state in which everyone receives what is rightful and appropriate. The distribution or restoration of good and the retribution of evil must be meted out according to some standard of merit. But this creates a puzzle for the Christian: If justice means getting what we deserve, mercy not getting what we deserve, and grace getting more than we deserve, then how is it that justice entails mercy, let alone grace, as Aquinas and other thinkers have asserted? The answer to this question must be couched within God’s redemptive framework. As John Calvin (1536/1960) points out, following Augustine, above, when we are commanded to do good to all men (Hebrews 13:16), even though there is little within others that could be judged as meritorious, we do so in view of “the image of God in all men, to which we owe all honor and love” (p. 696). It is for this reason that Jesus also taught that whatever we have done “even for the least of these,” we have so done it for him (Matthew 25:40). At minimum, justice demands that we honor God by honoring His image in others.
This principle is not merely a New Testament concept, but it reflects God’s plan from the beginning. In his commentary on the Old Testament conception of justice, Bruce Birch (1991) asserts:

It has not been possible to discuss the prophetic indictment of Israel without already noting the special prophetic concern for the weakest and most vulnerable members of the community...the poor, the needy, the widow, the orphan, the weak...were in need of advocates. The prophets became those advocates, and in so doing suggested that these most vulnerable and their welfare are the most adequate measure of justice and righteousness in the community...The prophetic ethic...seeks a societal order that values the worth of every person before God. Therefore, when any member of the community is denied the resources of full life and worth, the entire community is diminished and broken. (p. 268-269)

The Christian conception of justice, then, is captured in the Hebrew word shalom, which indicates “universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights” or, even more simply, “the way things ought to be” (Plantinga, 1995, p. 10). As Wolterstorff (1981) concludes, “Our work will always have the two dimensions of a struggle for justice and the pursuit of increased mastery of the world so as to enrich human life. Both are necessary if shalom is to be brought nearer” (p. 72). This kind of all-encompassing justice, required by a holy God, anticipated the coming work of Israel’s messiah. As Inch (2010) points out, “the ultimate sacrifice is that of self. This embodies justice/mercy, along with other righteous attributes” (p. 96), this principle is embodied in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who satisfied the justice of God by offering himself freely.

Thus, the Christian now stands before a just and holy God only on the merits of Christ’s own righteousness that has been imputed to us through his shed blood for the forgiveness of sins. The righteous demands of the law—the legal expression of God’s justice—were satisfied when Christ was put to death and suffered the torment of hell in our place. It is only on the basis of this transaction, the just for the unjust, that we can be granted mercy and grace. It is in light of this transaction that was freely offered to all that God demands from us a justice that is seasoned liberally with grace and mercy. To the one who is the recipient of mercy and grace, “rendering to each according to his due” now means something radically different than to one who has not received God’s mercy: if the “new commandment” (John 13:34) is to “love your neighbor as you love yourself,” (Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14) then to regard others unmercifully when one has received mercy is to elevate oneself above them, and thus, to treat others unjustly.

This principle is illustrated in Christ’s parable of the man who owed a great sum of money that was impossible to pay, and yet was forgiven when he begged for mercy (Matthew 18:23-35). This same man then turned around and demanded “justice” from his neighbor over a paltry sum of money. Justly, the king who had forgiven the first man’s debt threw the wicked man in prison until he could pay back everything he had originally owed for failure to treat his fellow man with mercy just as he had been shown mercy. Though the mercy that should have been extended to the second debtor was in no way equal to the massive debt owed by the first debtor, the first debtor’s ability to show “equal justice” was proportionate to that of the king: he had the opportunity to reflect the character of his king on a smaller, but corresponding scale. Thus, his failure to do so reflected a heart that had not truly internalized, and therefore not truly received, the grace and mercy that had been offered. His actions showed a crass disregard for carrying out the will or the favor of the king past his own selfish circumstances. This parable is a sober warning to all who would invoke the name of Christ and yet not regard their neighbors with a similar love. Rather, Romans 13:8 tells us that love fulfills the entire law, and so if Christ’s love is working itself out in us, this is evidence that God’s righteous law has been written on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33), overflowing in mercy and justice.

While Christianity, by its nature, cannot assimilate completely all the many views of justice surveyed in this short piece, let alone that exist/have existed in the world, Christian theology affirms that there is a common, universal moral sense
within humanity which, though it is marred by sin, continues to manifest itself across time and culture. In *The Abolition of Man*,

C.S. Lewis (1944) provides an appendix to his brief treatise on morality that categorizes and catalogues various ethical norms from a wide variety of ancient sources. These include laws of general beneficence, laws of special beneficence, duties to parents, elders and ancestors, duties to children and posterity, the law of justice, the law of good faith and veracity, the law of mercy, and the law of magnanimity (p. 91-109). This list draws from Egyptian, Babylonian, Jewish, Greek, Roman, Christian, Anglo-Saxon, English, Chinese, Hindu, Norse, and (Australian) Aboriginal wisdom literature that spans millennia. What is striking is the degree of convergence towards, rather than a divergence from, a common ethical core of beliefs. As a Christian theology affirms that God’s law embedded in (Romans 2:15: “written on”) the human heart, regardless of one’s national origin, ethnicity, or culture, we may happily survey non-Western traditions as illustrative that justice is a universal principle which all people groups recognize and presuppose.

So, we begin our travels within the Justice, Spirituality, and Education Journal. It is our prayer and hope that we, as a community, of many believers, occupations, and walks of life, that people may learn from one another how justice is being taught, implemented, and obtained throughout our academic halls, within society, and our world. Show us how, within your discipline or belief, how the two greatest commandments to love God, and your neighbor as yourself is being demonstrated to others.
REFERENCES


---

**ERIC TWISSELMANN**

Eric Twisselmann earned his BA in English at Biola University ('95) and his MA in the Philosophy of Religion and Ethics from Talbot School of Theology (2003). Eric has taught high school for the last 16 years at La Serna High School in Whittier, where he teaches English literature and philosophy. He has also taught philosophy as an adjunct lecturer at Biola University for the past 10 years. He and his wife Mandi (Biola class of '97) live in La Mirada and are the proud parents of 4 beautiful children. They are active members of Grace EV Free Church in La Mirada.

**FRED RAMIREZ**

Dr. A.Y. "Fred" Ramirez was born and raised in Santa Barbara, California. He obtained his degree in curriculum studies at Indiana University, and served as an associate professor of education at California State University, Fullerton from 1998-2008, and currently is an professor of education at Biola University. Prior to this he worked as a high school teacher in both public and private schools teaching a variety of subjects. His research interests include families and schools, international education, social justice, and diversity. He has spoken at national and international conferences and has published his research in journals such as Educational Leadership, Multicultural Education, International Education, The School-Community Journal, the Journal of Thought, and others. Fred Ramirez is also a master scuba diver trainer (instructor), and president and founder of EdActs Global, Inc. (www.edactsglobal.org). While he is not working in these three areas, he enjoys spending time with his family, reading, and traveling.
ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the unique role of Christian higher education in the promotion of restorative justice within the criminal justice system and other systems of discipline. Christian higher education should integrate a faith that is active with all areas of knowledge, producing students who are promoters and practitioners of justice in every area of their lives. Restorative justice provides an opportunity for Christian higher education to live out the purpose of establishing the biblical concept of shalom, which is a peace that requires justice, restored relationships, and responsibility. A critical pedagogy allows for variations in practice, which leads to methods of humanization for all parties involved in the restorative justice process. Christian higher education should challenge students to live justly and promote justice and the restorative justice movement is one way of accomplishing that objective.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INTRODUCTION

Christian higher education has a unique opportunity to influence the lives of its students in preparing them for life beyond the university. What does it mean to be a Christian institution of higher learning? Does having Christian professors in the classroom qualify an institution as being distinctively Christian? Does a university that claims to be a Christian institution have a role in missions and justice issues? Or are missions and justice issues distractions from the educational objectives of a university and better left to the church? Should the promotion of distinctively Christian values influence how educators, students, and the institutions respond to civic responsibilities and political life? One area of potential influence for Christian higher education is within the criminal justice system, attempting to bring about social action that promotes biblical concepts of justice.

CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

There is not a consensus on what the purpose is for Christian higher education. Arthur Holmes (1975) claims that the goal of Christian higher education should not be to simply indoctrinate students or to simply train ministers for ministry and mission related positions. Conformity and unity of opinion should not be a goal, since Christianity has had a long history of diverse thought and practice. He argues that the distinctive for Christian higher education is “an education that cultivates the creative and active integration of faith and learning, of faith and culture,” (Holmes, 1975, p. 16). Holmes believes that faith and religion have been separated from other aspects of modern life, leaving faith on the margins even for those who are Christians. We have compartmentalized life in a way that separates faith and religion from impacting other areas of our lives. As a result, the process of faith integration for Christian colleges and universities provides a unique and distinct purpose. Other avenues for Christians in higher education cannot truly demonstrate faith integration in the same way as Christian higher education (Holmes, 1975). If we truly believe, as Holmes argues, that “all truth is God’s truth, no matter where it is found,” then Christian educators in Christian higher education should be motivated to attempt true faith integration in our teaching methods, practices, and curriculum (Holmes, 1975, p. 16-17). Holmes also goes further in saying that:

All of life with its culture and its learning must be penetrated with Christian perspectives, if Jesus Christ is to be Lord of all. All of a young person’s human potential must be as fully developed as possible, if the stewardship of his life is to honor God. The Christian has a mandate in education (Holmes, 1975, p. 29).
The process of Christian higher education should affect all areas of a student’s life, infusing and integrating Christian principles in the hope of shaping a distinctively Christian inspired worldview that leads to action in all areas of life. A critical pedagogy allows for freedom to integrate faith and learning and fosters student learning within the context of Christian higher education.

Christian higher education has a greater calling to propel students and faculty toward a life where faith is fully integrated with one’s vocation. There is a responsibility to God within Christian higher education that “involves the ability to respond to God” (Sullivan, 2004, 270). God calls us as Christians to be faithful influencers in the world. We have a responsibility to make a difference in every area of life around us, including the academy, the arts, and government. Our primary motivation should be nothing less than Christ himself. Therefore, Christian higher education should help us to understand the world in which we live and motivate us to serve God by serving the world and making a difference in it (Liftin, 2004). Christian higher education should not be satisfied with a knowledge based product, but with one that lives out what is learned and challenges the elements of society that are contrary to a worldview that is influenced and shaped by Scripture.

Charlene Kalinoski in her article, Calling Students to Transformation, also argues that education should be viewed as a transformative process that challenges the entirety of the student. The process should involve more than “an accumulation of knowledge in the form of course units or hours, opportunities for service, or special educational experiences such as study abroad” (Kalinoski, 2007, 146). She advocates a holistic approach that integrates ideas with the whole being. These concepts are grounded in a values system that Christian higher education aspires to promote, but secular institutions leave unanswered and open. She advocates this distinct purpose by saying that:

Christian higher education may be limiting or reductive in the eyes of its critics, but it aspires to wholeness, the sort that binds a student’s education to his or her individual calling. It acknowledges that every person has a special calling entrusted to him or her by God. Secular higher education cannot make this claim and so places value on open-endedness, the freedom not to have to choose (Kalinoski, 2007, 146-147).

There is a unique ability on the part of Christian higher education to focus holistically on developing students that other non-religious systems cannot. After all, the holistic approach to education was central to what the founders of many academic institutions intended. Kalinoski claims that education is enhanced and fostered due to faith. “Knowledge of the liberal arts is liberating, but more so when encompassed by the liberating effects of Christianity” (Kalinoski, 2007, 147). What will the results be from a methodology in Christian higher education that promotes faith integration and the creation of a holistic person? What will graduates from Christian academic institutions look like and how will they live their lives?

**POSTMODERNISM**

The broader conversation challenging the established goals, objectives, and models of pedagogies in education has been shaped by postmodern thought and philosophy. Postmodernism has influenced the educational methods and practices in allowing for differing and varying views and opinions to be expressed and validated. Educators strive to implement methods that are “seen as relative to the needs of the students. Obviously, no one system fits all needs” (Anthony & Benson, 2003, 405). Postmodern philosophies allow for a diversity of people in the classroom and allows for methods and practices in education to be altered in order to fit the needs of the students in a multi-cultural society and world (Anthony & Benson, 2003). Are there ways for educators in Christian colleges and universities to use these methods to implement an active faith?

A critical pedagogy should develop out of an attempt to focus on the whole person and their individual callings in
life, which should challenge us to see each person as fully human. Paulo Freire (1998) argues that a significant problem in societies is that we do not always view each other as human, but we often view others as less than human. The process of dehumanizing others allows people to oppress and take advantage. This often leads the oppressed to rebel and attempt to overthrow the oppressors. The challenge for the oppressed is to restore their own sense of humanity while continuing to foster and encourage the humanity of those that have oppressed them. “This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well” (Freire, 1998, 46). This process is not easy, but is difficult and challenging. Freire compares it to childbirth because the people that arise out of the process are new and transformed individuals. “The same is true with respect to the individual oppressor as a person. Discovering himself to be an oppressor may cause considerable anguish, but it does not necessarily lead to solidarity with the oppressed” (Freire, 1998, 50). Both the oppressor and the oppressed undergo a transformation and humanization in this process (Freire, 1998).

How much more should we as Christians be able to live this out? We believe that God created all humans in the image of God and that He sent Jesus to die for each human being. We also recognize that we each were offenders of a holy God and are in need of mercy and forgiveness. This should shape how we live, how we relate to those around us and to how we educate. A critical pedagogy within Christian higher education allows for educators to move students toward a transformational, active faith within the whole person, challenging students to seek and promote justice.

**SHALOM IN EDUCATION**

Christian higher education should compel and move students in the direction of action, living out their faith in their vocation and in life. The Christian community does not exist solely for its own benefit, but to make an impact on other people around them and to establish the Kingdom of God. If we believe this, then shouldn’t Christian higher education play a pivotal role in establishing the *shalom* of the Old and New Testament in the world around us? *Shalom* means peace, but implies justice and right relationships with God, with other human beings, and with the entirety of Creation (Wolterstorff, 2004). According to Wolterstorff, “it is obvious that in the modern world, if the Christian community is to share in God’s work of renewal by being witness, servant, and evidence, its young members will need an education pointed toward equipping them to contribute to that calling” (Wolterstorff, 2004, 7). These ideas flow out of an understanding of Scripture where justice and *shalom* are promoted and encouraged throughout. It seems to speak to the very character and essence of the Creator God. “The God who asks Christians to go into all the world to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ is the very same God who loves justice” (Wolterstorff, 2004, 25). That God should compel us to live differently and to be different, to be promoter and practitioners of biblical justice and to attempt to bring about *shalom*.

Wolterstorff (2004) also argues that Christian higher education should have a goal of establishing *shalom*. *Shalom* requires justice, right relationships, and responsibility. Other goals of Christian higher education have noble aims, including a call to participate in the cultural mandate and a desire to see Christians live faithfully within their workplace, but they “speak scarcely at all of injustice in the world, scarcely of our calling to mercy and justice” (Wolterstorff, 2004, 22). A call to promote *shalom* does not mean we sacrifice other fields of study such as history, science or literature. Rather, Wolterstorff argues that where these fields promote *shalom*, then they should be taught in an integrated manner and with a new sense of urgency. He promotes a model of curricula that promotes a “response to the moral wounds of the world” (Wolterstorff, 2004, 24). Wolterstorff argues that we should not only teach about justice, but “we must teach for justice. The graduate whom we seek to produce must be one who *practices* justice” (Wolterstorff, 2004, 24). He goes further in claiming, “the graduate who prays and struggles for the incursion of justice and *shalom* into our glorious but fallen world, celebrating its presence and mourning its absence—that is the graduate the Christian college must seek to produce” (Wolterstorff, 2004, 26). The potential impact on our society and our world is enormous.
Students graduating from Christian academic institutions should be practitioners and promoters of justice and help to establish *shalom*.

Faith integration should produce people who fight and advocate for justice. Faith in Scripture is not complete if it simply infiltrates our minds and then does nothing. We do not have to have a system of complete conformity on ideas and methods, but action and justice should flow from Christians and distinctively Christian institutions. Educators also desire for students to apply the skills and disciplines they are learning in the classroom to their lives and vocations in the world beyond their academic institutions. Biblical faith should lead to action and should drive us toward establishing justice and *shalom*. The aspirations to influence, educate, and shape students in a holistic fashion will compel us to foster a faith in students at Christian institutions that lead to action and transformation.

**RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

What are some practical ways for Christian higher education to foster and encourage justice among students? Advocacy for the poor, attempts to stop human trafficking, and assisting those in need are worthwhile objectives and should be promoted within Christian higher education, but an often forgotten population are those who have had issues with the law. An area where Christian higher education can promote justice in the lives of students that is often neglected is in the criminal justice system. Encouraging humanizing factors for both victims and offenders of crimes should be a part of our attempts to help establish the *shalom* of the Old and New Testament. Justice is a term that has become popular and trendy in recent years, but can have different meanings. Jarem Sawatsky in his book, *Justpeace Ethics*, argues that the term *justpeace* should be used as an alternative because “justice and peace belong together and are essentially inseparable. Peace without justice is suppression. Justice without peace is a new form of oppression” (Sawatsky, 2008, 2). Sawatsky claims that justice is not something that stays the same, but rather is changing, adjusting, and “is based in relationship rather than impartiality” (Sawatsky, 2008, 3). He uses the book of Amos from the Old Testament as his source and desires to promote restoration as a primary goal of justice. According to Sawatsky, the biblical concepts of justice are linked to relationship, both with God and with the broader community. He argues that Christians often promote and encourage ideas of love, forgiveness, and relationship in our personal lives, but fail to see how that should flow to other aspects of our lives, including those who are our enemies or outside of our immediate contact. The worldview of those who espouse a *justpeace ethic* is fundamentally different and unique from the mainstream in that Christians should live out justice and peace toward all human beings (Sawatsky, 2008). Sawatsky argues that peacebuilders believed that life is about relationships, beauty, change, identity, and diversity. They believed that everything that God created was indeed sacred, somehow reflecting the very being of God—justice, righteousness, truth, love. They also believed that we did not have to wait to die and get to heaven before we could touch and taste these essential characteristics of life (Sawatsky, 2008, 24).

As a result, peacebuilders focus on reminding people of these things and challenging others to live with these at the heart of who they are. They do not believe that these things should be confined to a narrow group of people directly surrounding us, but rather should extend to all people (Sawatsky, 2008). Christian higher education has a unique ability to promote *justpeace ethics* and to encourage people to live out these principles.

As Christians, we should have a greater understanding of justice and the problem of injustice because it is deeply personal for us. The Fall of humankind in the book of Genesis reveals the first criminal activity and the whole biblical story reveals that we are all, as humans, essentially criminals. “We are all criminals at heart because we have broken God’s perfect standards,” thus breaking our relationship with God, with each other, and with all creation (Smarto, 1987, 189). We also believe that Christ came to restore these relationships and to show us that God is concerned about behavior, but also transformation of people on the inside. “Finally, Jesus issued a call to love and forgiveness in
circumstances where we have been wronged, a call to defuse the natural tendency to act aggressively and vengefully’ (Smarto, 1987, 198). How should we as Christians, and how should Christian institutions respond to this understanding of human relationships, in particular as it relates to our criminal justice system? Is there a role for Christian higher education in the promotion of restorative justice within our society? Should this change how we handle conflict and deal with disciplinary actions within Christian institutions?

In Scripture we see that God is both just and merciful. Sometimes it can be difficult for us to understand how both of these attributes and characteristics can coexist, yet both are intricately woven together as revealed through the actions of God with the people of Israel in the Old Testament and through the life, teachings, death, and Resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament. Donald Smarto (1987) quotes Luke 6:35-36 as a call to love our enemies and to bring about restoration and forgiveness to those who have violated or offended us. He argues that this should apply within our criminal justice system as well and fully recognizes that this is difficult for the victims of crimes. He claims that we are still able to judge the behavior of a criminal, but this should not equal judging the individual. We often categorize people as either good or bad, rather than seeing all of us equally as fallen creatures with the hope and reality of redemption (Smarto, 1987). Charles Colson argues that this worldview is rooted in the Enlightenment, that humans are essentially good and progressing in the right direction (Colson, 2001). Smarto also argues for compassion as we work with criminals rather than simply having sympathy for them. “Sympathy is an attitude that implies feeling sorry for the plight of another, but compassion is an action. Compassion means that we are motivated by love to do something for another person,” (Smarto, 1987, 209). This does not necessarily excuse offenders from punishment, but it allows them to be viewed as human and should allow a degree of discretion when applying sentences. Restorative justice allows for implementation of a critical pedagogy where individual stories, experiences, and opinions are valued and appreciated. It allows for victims and offenders to come together to deal with a situation in a unique way, as opposed to approaching things in an established, uniform way. It challenges people to unlearn what they know about others and the circumstances they are in and to relearn according to new stories and experiences.

Our concepts of justice are determined by our worldview and culture and are not formed in isolation, but rather within the context of our lives. A society also shapes these ideas within the context of broader societal goals and objectives, or should do so if it does not. Modern American society seems to be attempting to redefine justice as there have been changes in values, worldview and culture, but this has been difficult due to the rise of postmodernism and relativism. Charles Colson argues that “Human rights cannot be justified in a relativist system,” (Colson, 2001, 39). Our society may not fully understand these questions and does not always seem to have answers, but we as followers of Jesus do have a model and example and a call to be promoters and doers of justice and mercy. This call should affect the role of Christian higher education and the goals of those institutions, hopefully bringing about a system where biblical shalom is taught and lived out.

If we truly believe in justice and mercy, then our actions as Christians should reflect that worldview. The criminal justice system in the United States generally believes that punishment dissuades criminal activity. “The theory was that even though prisons didn’t rehabilitate, if we could get tough enough, we would discourage crime. The emphasis thus shifted to deterrence,” (Colson, 2001, 57). This system does not seem to have functioned in a way that has significantly deterred crime and is generally viewed as a retributive system (Colson, 2001). Retribution does not restore people and reconcile people to their community. Restorative justice does not negate the need for restitution, but is opposed to actions that are vengeful (Colson, 2001). If a retributive system of criminal justice does not truly deter crime, then what system should we promote? Does retribution promote the practice of justice and peace as understood in the biblical concept of shalom?

Colson argues that restorative justice is “based on restitution or to some extent making right the wrongs done,”
Colson claims that relational justice and restorative justice are not necessarily the same, but his view argues that they instill concepts of humans being created in the image of God, thus being created in need of relationship with God and in need of relationships with other human beings. He incites the biblical concept of shalom, which is “a peace that is intrinsically relational and righteous,” (Colson, 2001, 114). Justice fails to be achieved when “individual responsibility under law but in the context of community, individual transformation, and healing of relationships” are not in harmony and emphasized in a balanced way (Colson, 2001, 115). How then does a society promote a system of criminal justice that is restorative in nature? How does this have any impact on Christian higher education?

THE PRIMARY METHOD OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Restorative Justice in its modern form developed experimentally in the 1970s and 1980s as a way to bring about relational reconciliation between victims and offenders of crimes. A common method used by advocates of restorative justice has developed into what is known as Victim Offender Mediation (VOM) and Victim Offender Reconciliation Programs (VORP). These programs do not represent the entirety of the restorative justice movement or methodology, but they do reflect a significant aspect of it. The main idea is to have victims and offenders sit down in face-to-face dialogue. Often times community members are brought in to the process as well, since crime does not simply affect the victims and the offenders, but it also affects all of society and other members of the community (Umbreit, Coates, & Vos, 2006). The space and atmosphere for this process needs to be deemed safe for both victims and offenders because “program staff realize that victims have already been victimized and that many offenders have also been victimized” (Umbreit, Coates, and Vos, 2006, 54).

VOM and VORP recognize a need to be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, both victims, offenders, and the broader community and emphasizes that the program needs to be voluntary. It is believed that victims and offenders should have a choice as to whether or not they participate in these programs and to what extent they should be involved. Following-up is another foundational aspect of the process in VOM and may involve continued meetings between staff and offenders or victims. VOM also encourages a restitution process for offenders as well. In general, participants have had a higher degree of satisfaction after having participated in these programs when compared with other processes (Umbreit, Coates, & Vos, 2006). The process of VOM promotes a restoration of human dignity for both the victim and the offender and allows a reconciliation between them and the broader community. It allows the oppressed, in this case the victim, to seek a degree of restitution without dehumanizing the oppressor, thus enabling a humanizing process for all parties. It also allows for the process to be altered and adjusted in order to meet the needs of the parties involved.

Restorative Justice does have limitations. First, while there is a healthy dialogue and discussion about restorative justice, there is not one uniform method or goal. Is restorative justice complete in being a process that will hopefully lead to reconciliation? There is no agreement on the answer to this question. What is agreed-upon is that restorative justice generally deals with offenders after they have been deemed guilty of a crime, although prevention of crime is an element of the movement. It believes that victims should play a more significant role in the outcomes and decisions made regarding justice. Restorative justice also promotes aide for victims and normally involves face-to-face dialogue between the victims and the offenders. While still expecting offenders to be held responsible for their actions, restorative justice hopes to accomplish this while avoiding stigmatization (Daly, 2006).

Another limitation for restorative justice is the exceptionally high ideal of bringing about restoration for all involved and the goal of reconciliation. While the process of Victim Offender Mediation (VOM) is generally viewed as fair, it is more
difficult to truly bring about restoration through the processes as it is currently implemented. Also, victims often want and desire what is perceived to be a genuine and sincere apology from the offenders, and this expectation is often not fulfilled. While having high expectations and ideals is not necessarily bad, we should approach restorative justice with reality in mind, recognizing that restorative justice does have its limits (Daly, 2006).

VOM is a method within restorative justice for the pedagogy of the oppressed to be lived out practically in the promotion of justice. By allowing those who are victims to encourage the process of humanization for the oppressors, they are not continuing the cycle of dehumanization. In attempting to restore relationships and human dignity to all parties involved VOM is in a small way fulfilling the pedagogy of the oppressed and implementing biblical concepts of justice and *shalom*. Vengeance and violence would only be a continuation of oppression, but restorative justice aims to provide hope and honor to all parties, and to reconcile human relationships, which is central to the Gospel of Christ.

**RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Restorative justice is not the only social problem in our society and world, but attempting to provide human dignity to all parties involved in the criminal justice system is worthwhile. Advocating for justice, *shalom*, and action does not necessarily imply that Christian higher education should be involved in restorative justice within the criminal justice system; however, the arguments presented here hopefully challenge educators within Christian higher education to consider restorative justice as a way, a method, to challenge and engage students to think and live justly. Certainly other areas of concern and injustice need prioritization as well, but the challenges within the criminal justice system are seemingly under-noticed and unengaged by the Christian community. How then can Christian higher education be involved in the restorative justice movement?

First, raising awareness of the problems within the system is a tangible and realistic goal for educators. In bringing attention to the challenges and victimization of the offenders, compassion could motivate students to become involved in local VOM and VORP processes or, at a minimum, be aware of dehumanizing factors that limit the reintegration into society by those who have committed crimes. Fostering a desire to break the cycles of oppression and victimization within the criminal justice system is a start. Awareness creates opportunities for students to learn more and begin to consider options and implications that may affect them in their own personal lives. Awareness is a first step toward action, advocacy, or involvement.

Second, faculty in various academic departments could attempt to connect themes from their fields with the restorative justice movement. For example, the subject of literature when looking at the writings of Victor Hugo and Fyodor Dostoyevsky could connect the discussion to modern day challenges within our criminal justice system. Another example could be the connection of history and the colonization of Australia and other regions of the world with criminals and restorative justice efforts underway today. It is recognized that not every field will lend itself to include a discussion on restorative justice naturally, but it is possible for many to consider possible connections within their disciplines. Also, faculty could employ a critical pedagogy in making attempts to integrate justice principles into service-learning projects for students. The goal should be to connect projects with the academic discipline being taught in the classroom, while challenging students to become aware of injustices and attempt to determine ways to live and promote justice.

Another option for Christian higher education to be involved in restorative justice is through student life and spiritual life departments. These departments, working in collaboration with other departments on campus could assist faculty members in connecting with the restorative justice movement. Service projects, ministries, and Chapels all could play a
role in attempting to instill justice principles through restorative justice in the lives of students. They could connect with local VOM and VORP facilitators and engage in prison ministries or ministries working with individuals who are attempting to restart their lives after prison. Many colleges and universities have service requirements and these projects could be presented as a way for students to fulfill them.

This is not an exhaustive list of possible ways to be involved, but it is an attempt to provide tangible ways for Christian higher education to connect with the restorative justice movement. It moves us forward in an attempt to integrate our Christian faith and principles with the educational process as we strive toward justice and *shalom*.

**CONCLUSION**

Restorative justice is one practical area in which Christians have potential to impact others and attempt to bring about *shalom* and justice within our society. The criminal justice system currently promotes vengeance and retribution that does little to raise the humanity of the victim and generally dehumanizes the offenders in the process. The Creator God has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, even though we were in rebellion and offenders of His goodness, mercy, grace and holiness. As Christians, we have a restored relationship with the Most High God and the promise of restored relationships with one another and with all of His Creation. We should demonstrate the same love that has been provided to us through Christ to other people and strive to bring about redemption, justice, and restoration for all of God’s creatures. Micah 6:8 says, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (NASB). As Christians, may we strive to follow Him in bringing about justice.

Christian higher education, as the academic extension of the Christian community should be more than simply having a Christian in the role of professor and teacher. From the beginning, Christian higher education had loftier goals of holistically shaping students to fulfill Kingdom purposes and objectives. Aspiring to influence a student to integrate all areas of learning with an action-oriented faith is challenging, but the potential of impacting our society and the world is significant if Christian educators are able to fulfill this aspiration. The hope is that faith integration would be a part of truly leading students and faculty toward life transformation. As the Christian higher education community is transformed, students and faculty should continue the process by being doers of justice and through advocating for and bringing about change within the broader society. After all, “it should become obvious that only a biblical worldview can produce true justice. For justice is impossible without the rule of law; and the rule of law is impossible without transcendent authority,” (Colson, 2001, p. 41). Being promoters of a biblically-influenced worldview, Christian higher education should strive for true integration of an active faith with all areas of knowledge. Faith integration should produce and lead to the formation of graduates that are promoters and practitioners of justice.

The criminal justice system needs to have a Christian worldview and perspective infused and integrated into its methods and theories. The system generally does not encourage restoration for either the victims or the offenders. Often, both the offenders and the victims are dehumanized and the system seems to invoke retribution and vengeance in a way that is not restorative or redemptive. Restorative justice provides methods for humanization because it encourages and promotes the listening and hearing of one another’s life stories. For Christians, our stories are all connected in the overarching story of God. Christian higher education has an opportunity to promote biblical concepts of justice in a way that helps to establish *shalom* in a unique way through the restorative justice movement.

**REFERENCES**


---

**STEVE WINTERBERG**

Steve Winterberg is a PhD student in Intercultural Studies at Biola University and is currently serving at a local church in southern California. He spent several years working in Christian higher education in a role designed to integrate faith and mission with all areas of knowledge. He has served in various roles in local churches and in roles overseas, most extensively in South Asia.