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Review

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Reviews

How Shall We Then Care? A Christian Educator's Guide to Caring for Self, Learners, Colleagues, and Community

Paul Shotsberger and Cathy Freytag (Eds.). Wipf and Stock, 2020.

Reviewed by Michael Lessard-Clouston, Biola University

The last several difficult years have caused a number of teachers to leave the field of education completely, while those who stayed have had additional reasons to be concerned for their wellbeing. Research by Wong, Pompeo-Fargnoli, and Harriott (2022), for example, shows that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted both them as teachers and their students' learning, while an online survey of 765 language teachers around the world by Gregersen, Mercer, and MacIntyre (2021) interestingly revealed both major stressors and uplifts (sources of positivity) due to the pandemic. In a conference talk from well before the pandemic started, Gkonou (2019) noted "four core aspects of wellbeing": physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. Thinking about these issues as I prepare ESL/EFL teachers, and wondering how to connect Gkonou's fourth aspect in training English language teachers, I knew when I saw this book that I needed to discover what the editors and authors share about educational care by and for Christians.

How Shall We Then Care? is an edited collection composed of a Foreword, an Introduction, and 10 chapters by different authors. In his Foreword, David I. Smith warns that an ethic of care is not just about being nice; "It is a careful philosophical proposal with specific roots and contours that quickly open up a range of theological, philosophical, pedagogical, hermeneutical, and practical questions, each calling for further investigation" (p. xi). In his Introduction, editor Paul Shotsberger makes clear that "care theory" reflects God's nature and "helps us understand God's love and care for us" (p. xiii). Shotsberger draws upon Noddings's (2002, 2007) work, but noted that Noddings "had no place for God in her theory" (p. xv). Yet the authors in this volume are all Christian, though they work in a variety of contexts, some public and others Christian. Accordingly, Shotsberger declares, "A Christian ethic of care serves to illuminate our relationship with God while also helping to flesh out what care looks like in various contexts" (p. xv). Shotsberger also briefly introduces each chapter in this collection.

Chapter 1 aims to answer the question of its title, "What Can Christians Learn from Care Theory?" (p. 1). Authors Sean Schat and Cathy Freytag (the volume's other editor), draw from Noddings' (2013) work to suggest that human beings need both to care for others and to be cared

for by others. Their chapter offers a theological foundation using four sections. The first addresses “the love mandate” found in Matthew 22:34–40, Jesus’ teaching on the greatest commandments. The second section of the chapter then outlines how the church has failed at carrying out the love mandate, through harm Christians have caused, ways we have supported marginalization, and forfeited our right to speak or failed to successfully communicate love and care for those we are in relationship with. The third section suggests care theory can help the church because it indicates care is bidirectional, yet care is only successful when it is accepted as such by the one being cared for (p. 12). The fourth section in Chapter 1 challenges Christians to follow Christ and His example of caring for others, despite their sins, so that “successfully communicating care can help us reveal God’s love to others” (p. 16).

In Chapter 2, Sean Schat draws upon his dissertation data (see Schat, in press) to focus on a six stage model for how he believes “successful communication of care occurs” (p. 27). The model begins with recognizing care needs, moves into the teacher’s caring intentions, reflected then in teacher caring behaviours, which ideally lead to the student responding that care has been successfully communicated, so a relationship is established, and the outcome is a transformed relationship, where care has been extended and recognized. In Chapter 3, Anna Berardi and Brenda Morton introduce trauma-informed school practices by drawing upon the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15 to challenge readers to respond to the younger son more like the father in the story than like the older son. Using several visuals and making use of counselling approaches, Berardi and Morton present a “tri-phasic model” (p. 52) with three phases (connecting, coaching, and commencing) to help respond to “victims of social-cultural exclusion and violence” (p. 49). They also apply the model to six subsystems within a K-12 education system, including districts, schools, educators, classrooms, communities, and support systems.

Chapter four is the longest (at 33 pages), and focuses on “Game-Based Teaching Methodology and Empathy” (p. 66), by Angel Krause, Scot Headley, Danielle Bryant, Alicia Watkin, Charity-Mika Woodward, and Sherri Sinicki. The chapter describes how a Doctor of Education course in ethics delivered partly online and partly in person used various texts and a role-playing game to engage with ethical dilemmas. The chapter is co-written by the professor and five (of ten) students, who themselves taught in schools of education, a state university, and high schools. After describing functions of role-playing games and the course experience, the middle section of the chapter outlines an interview study on the experience of the doctoral

course, and the findings, which indicated a successful course with applications that fostered empathy among the students (p. 83). The interview questions are included (pp. 96–97). The last part of the chapter includes four students' stories (roughly a page and a half each) from one year after the course was completed, and how it impacted them, as well as the professor's story (roughly two pages in length), including how the game was used in his subsequent courses.

In Chapter 5, Danielle Bryant's essay outlines that empathy is a Christian calling, reminding teachers of Romans 12:15, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn" (p. 102). Bryant developed the ACTS model to help slow down busy moments in teaching in order to allow for contemplation on empathy: "Actively Listen, Communicate Back, Think with Empathy, and Speak a Response" (p. 104, emphasis added). Bryant also gives an example of how the ACTS model has been used in an elementary classroom and another of how it was used in an undergraduate education class. In Chapter 6 David W. Anderson's essay describes "The Ethic of Care and Inclusive Education" (p. 112), starting with what is needed in inclusive education following the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and connecting it to an ethic of care. For Anderson, Christ's example of care for all, including the "diseased, disabled, outcasts, widows, Jews, gentiles, tax-collectors, adulterers" (p. 117), is the model Christians and teachers should emulate. Drawing upon his (2012) book outlining a theology of special education, Anderson ends his chapter with a description of qualities which evidence an ethic of care, including compassion, presence, interdependence and hospitality, relationship, authenticity, and service (pp. 119–122).

Alicia Watkin's Chapter 7 builds on Anderson's and addresses the responsibilities of Christian special educators. Watkins recounts numerous examples of her work as a special educator in different types of schools and argues that the greatest commandments to love God and neighbour (Mark 12:30–31) require building relationships with "students, parents, colleagues, and administrators" (p. 128). Turning to teacher education for special needs, Watkins believes collaboration is needed to learn to address Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs). She ends with three action steps she believes "special educators must put into practice: *listen*, *show up*, and *advocate*" (p. 132). In Chapter 8, Michelle C. Hughes proposes four dispositions for teachers to develop during their teacher preparation: being a lifelong learner (Proverbs 2:4), a reflective practitioner (Proverbs 24:32), a compassionate professional (Colossians 3:12), and a grateful servant (Colossians 3:18) (pp. 154–155). She also recommends individual and collective

reflection and includes two useful appendices, including one for these dispositions.

In Chapter 9, “Self and Soul Care: Spiritual Practices to Sustain Teaching” (p. 159), Stephanie Talley argues that, for Christian teachers, faith and soul care not only inform our practices but also sustain us and keep us going. Observing Sabbath, saying no, and setting boundaries are key, since “the caretaking of your soul is critical to sustainable teaching. It is as important as staying current in pedagogy” (p. 165). Talley also describes a new teacher event her institution hosts, and she offers examples of small group activities that foster discussions of faith and teaching. In the final Chapter 10, Elaine Tinholt’s essay discusses “Caring for New Teachers Once They Leave Campus” (p. 174). Tinholt’s focus is largely on first year teachers, and she starts by reflecting on her own first year. She discusses preparing graduates for their first year of teaching, including through higher education partnerships, and devotes sections to supporting first-year teachers, including through constructive feedback, induction support structures, supportive communication with administrators and colleagues, and practical ways to care for novice teachers. Tinholt believes that when we support and care for new teachers, “we are also caring for the students they serve in their classrooms” (p. 192).

As an academic I appreciate edited books because they embrace narratives and research that does not always appear in many journals. This collection incorporates work from 15 unique teachers and teacher educators in many different states (and one in Canada). The chapters largely reflect the efforts of these teachers and teacher educators to care for themselves, their students, and their colleagues, while there is less emphasis on the “community” at the end of the sub-title.

Challenges with edited books include bringing unity to so many different voices and order to a range of contributions. With contributions ranging from 12 to 33 pages in length, there are understandably major differences in the breadth, depth, and range of individual chapters here. The outlier for me was Krause et al.’s Chapter 4, which aimed to incorporate some empirical qualitative research yet did not meet the standards for detail that would be expected in a journal article for replication. Personally, the chapters that resonated most with me included Bryant’s essay and ACTS model, Hughes’ work on dispositions in education, and Talley’s on self and soul care, as well as those addressing special education, a topic about which I am learning more. But the introductions to care theory and attempts to connect it to Christian educators and to theology were also useful. Since there seems to be a need for a more detailed guide about educational care and teacher wellbeing, perhaps a more developed philosophy or theology of

care in education is needed to assist Christian teachers and teacher educators in pursuing this topic further. Yet this volume offers a good foundation.

Having read Mercer (2021) and Mercer and Gregersen (2020), which are mainly geared toward individual teachers' wellbeing, I appreciated the way this edited collection brought in the church and Christian programs of education. A good read, this is a valuable book which should accordingly be in the library of every Christian college or university with an education program.

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Teaching and Learning Across Cultures: A Guide to Theory and Practice

Craig Ott. Baker Academic, 2021.

Reviewed by Mary C. Cloutier, Moody Bible Institute

Teaching cross-culturally is one of the most challenging and rewarding opportunities for

the scholar-teacher, whose great love for learning and the learner help them to overcome the unknown and unpredictable. Craig Ott has served for decades in cross-cultural theological education and church-planting, adapting his teaching to the various learning environments and students. He draws together the theories and practical applications most useful for intercultural communicators and instructors. But this is not as much a “how-to” book as “here are the many variables to consider” – which encourages the teacher to ponder, to create, to analyze, to interpret and to learn from their students. While affirming various instructional theories, Ott sees both the teacher and the student as evolving and progressing in the learning process. All teaching preferences and methods are equally considered, but there is no assumption that the teacher is limited to tradition or their learners’ preferences. In our changing, interactive world, both teacher and student will benefit from such variety, carrying the new skills and understanding into future relationships and circumstances.

Chapter One of the guide helps the reader to understand the challenge of teaching cross-culturally, giving careful thought to the combination of culture and content of teaching, the various types of learning, and the contrasts of learning approaches and goals across cultures. Ministry workers, whether serving at home or abroad, will need to develop skills in teaching and training. As our cultures shape our expectations and responses, so we need to better understand the complexity of the intercultural ministry field. Creativity, innovation and willingness to change will help the teacher to better connect and communicate cross-culturally. Ott then gives a quick overview of the “five dimensions of culture’s influence on teaching and learning” (p. 24), involving the overlap and interaction of cognition, worldview, social relations, media and environment.

Chapter Two offers a general definition of culture and analyzes human differences and commonalities through the three categories of the universal (genetic; characteristic of all people), the cultural (learned; characteristic of the group) and the individual (both genetic and learned; characteristic of the individual person). Neither the teacher nor the student is culturally neutral, and cross-cultural learning is both informed by, and leads to, globalization and cultural hybridization. The teacher should strive to grow in intercultural competency, self-awareness, general knowledge, attitude and experience, and purpose to be a receiver, as well as giver, in the learning process. All of this will contribute toward better communication skill and satisfying relationships in their host community.

Chapter Three discusses learning styles, learner preferences and expectations, teaching styles and the implications for teaching in various cultures. Ott acknowledges the competing educational theories, and juxtaposes studies conducted around the world, which underscore the differing outcomes and expectations in each scenario. A teacher should be aware of their students' preferences and expectations yet be willing to introduce alternative approaches new and unfamiliar to them (p. 58). The teacher and the students can both adapt, but with the expectation of some misunderstanding and discomfort in the process.

Chapters Four through Six focus on cognition, including concrete and abstract orientations, the relationship of language, literacy and cognition, critical analysis and various approaches to reasoning. This will help the teacher to better adapt questions and illustrations for clearer understanding, and how their students may approach argumentation and rhetoric. Learning may include a combination of storytelling, the use of metaphors and object lessons, proverbs, case-based instruction, mixed media and abstract teaching. The Bible gives any number of examples of teaching methods both new and familiar to the learners. Culture, environment and school all impact a student's cognitive development. Again, the teacher should seek to understand and communicate in ways understandable to the students, but also be willing to introduce new perspectives.

Chapters Seven and Eight cover the worldview dimension, including epistemological differences between cultures. Our sources of knowledge may include various combinations of science, tradition, and the supernatural. Teacher credibility and authority in a given culture may be based on their credentials, title, position, age and life experience. Worldview also impacts learner motivation, concept of time, and punctuality. The cross-cultural teacher, and their students alike, should be aware of how these factors impact learning. Worldviews can be challenged and changed in the intercultural environment, but both teacher and student should approach it with a spirit of humility. Ott encourages teachers to implement a variety of approaches for worldview change.

Chapters Nine and Ten focus on the Social Dimension, which considers status, hierarchy and authority in the community and learning environment. Teachers serving in a new culture should purpose to understand and adapt to local cultural expectations of teacher-student relationships, and help the students equally adapt to varying modes of relationship and authority. Ott gives multiple examples of teacher-student expectations across cultures. A mismatch

between a teacher's style and student expectations can lead to confusion and dissatisfaction. Status, power and authority in a culture impact how a student will communicate with the teacher and participate in the classroom setting. While the teacher should be mindful of these variables, they can combine adaptation and change to help the student feel both comfortable and challenged in the learning environment.

Chapters Eleven and Twelve deal with the media dimension of contemporary cross-cultural education. Media allows for greater variety in teaching methods but can also increase confusion and misunderstanding. Oral and written learning preferences are impacted by language differences, the availability and use of instructional materials, and expectations on note-taking and assignments. The teacher's body language, use of humor, choice of illustrations and examples, may greatly impact the student's learning experience. The teacher should also be sensitive to whether the students truly understand, and benefit from, the media used in the classroom. Incorporating drama, song and the arts can enhance learning and comprehension. As online education grows and expands, the cross-cultural teacher can adapt and improve in its use, while being mindful of its limitations. Ott gives guidelines for improving teacher effectiveness and student comfort and participation in online learning experience.

Chapter Thirteen touches on environmental conditions which impact learning. The cross-cultural teacher may have to adapt to power outages, inadequate space, equipment or teaching materials, and other interruptions to their planned course activities. Student availability, living spaces, climate, health and other conditions will impact teaching efficacy and learning outcomes. Community and family relationships, social and safety considerations, the institutional environment, student expectations and other cultural conditions will also add to the complexity of the teaching experience.

Ott recommends that cross-cultural teachers become students of their students, getting to know their culture and context, showing genuine care and concern, and fully depending on God's grace and enablement for what can be a challenging and rewarding ministry.

This guide is both highly academic and broadly applicable to real-life cross-cultural teaching. Students preparing for cross-cultural education and ministry will benefit from its comprehensive sweep of teaching theory and methods in the intercultural setting. I would recommend it for courses related to intercultural ministry, and intercultural/multicultural education. As a cross-cultural educator who has taught in a second language, I find the material

realistic, valuable and useful. Seasoned ministry workers, trainers and teachers will appreciate the honesty and affirmation that we are ever learning and adapting our teaching methods. This will be a valuable resource for the cross-cultural educator, helping them to confidently and creatively adapt their teaching to the circumstances, environment and participants.

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