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A mini-narrative about my praxis as a Muslim feminist

by Manijeh Daneshpour, Ph.D., associate professor and director of the Department of Marriage and Family Therapy, St. Cloud State University, Minnesota, *mdaneshpour@stcloudstate.edu*

My country is Iran. I was 21 years old and newly married to my 23-year-old husband when we immigrated together to America to pursue our educational and professional expeditions. Although my husband and I were born into Muslim families, our perspectives about organized religion differ significantly. He claims not to be religious, while I passionately claim to be a devout Muslim. Our ardent yet respectful differences take root in my choice to wear *hijab* (Islamic head covering), which puts me in a rather unconventional position in both my personal and professional lives. While in the West the *hijab* has come to symbolize either forced silence or radical unconscionable militancy, I choose to wear it to represent myself as an example of modesty and as a sanctuary of female independence. This is based on my postmodern Muslim feminist praxis, fighting against the definition of modernity that creates a dichotomous and conventional view of a Muslim woman as being secluded, uneducated, and controlled if she chooses to wear the *hijab*. Yet in my personal life, my spouse does not support my choice to wear the *hijab* for a number of reasons—which have nothing to with my feminist values or independence. As a veiled image walks by his side on the streets of America, he has difficulty ignoring the stares rooted in the common perception that he is yet another Middle Eastern oppressive male who demands that his wife be completely covered. His frustration is complicated, but his dilemma is simple.

He feels that my decision to wear the *hijab* puts him in the position of perceived oppressor by default and thus he adamantly insists that I explain to everyone that the choice to wear it is my own.

Manijeh Daneshpour

My professional life follows much the same pattern. As a professor and a marriage and family therapist, I am greeted with curious looks from students, clients, and professionals when I walk in to a classroom for the first time, enter the lobby to greet a client, or when I present at a conference. To put people at

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ease, I begin with an introduction to my *hijab* and welcome and solicit questions, especially those that are politically incorrect—for conforming to political correctness would inevitably make people walk away with more stereotypes than those they held before approaching me. Only when these formalities are over do I talk about my professional training and experiences. When I emphasize that my *hijab* represents my hard-core feminist ideology, some people

claim to have a deeper understanding regarding Muslim women's status, choices, and within-group diversity. Some others believe that my work in academia in the United States while holding on to my spiritual and professional identity proposes an unexpected, different kind of intellectual and personal freedom.

In my experience, both my feminist and religious ideologies are constantly being challenged and questioned. It is thus that I find myself on the surface of two tectonic plates in motion: my feminist values and my religious beliefs. If I defend my Islamic identity, my feminist values are questioned; if I defend my feminist identity, my Islamic beliefs are challenged. These clashing plates are what form the multilayered complexity of the identity experienced by Muslim women like me—a complexity that not only is the cause for the frictions that consistently place the likes of us between a rock and a hard place, but also threatens to quake what inherently makes us who we are.

I am also constantly struggling with the White western feminist discourse about women of the Third World, which is not exempt from charges of universalism, colonialism, and misunderstanding Third World women's experiences because it removes the cultural differences that distinguish us from each other (Aguilar, 1997; Mohanty, 1995; Sandoval, 2000). It constructs all Third World women, regardless of our ethnic origin, as a collective "us" versus the White western women's "them" (Mohanty).

I and many other Third World women find this problematic in White western feminist scholarship about Muslim women, because it tends to constitute Third World women as an historical group undifferentiated by other factors, such as class, ethnicity, and geographical location. Our identities are understood as having been constituted prior to our placement in a variety of social institutions, such as our families, rather than as meaningful identities being produced through these institutional relations. Gender is thus taken to be the origin of oppression, rather than oppression producing particular forms of gender. White western feminists have used a model of subjectivity that does not allow for sufficient agency in any of us Third World women.

Therefore, since I believe that theory and practice are always praxis, as a feminist family scholar I strive to do the kind of research that can affect Muslim women's lived experiences and generate change in their lives. My Muslim feminist praxis includes disseminating knowledge to different audiences by writing articles, presenting at workshops, and providing therapy that fosters behavioral and emotional change. In addition, I believe that I do praxis by offering perspectives about the impact of colonization and western hegemony on Muslim women, explaining Islamic perspectives about women's rights, describing Muslim women's experiences in their relationships, and speaking on behalf of Muslim women who do not have a strong voice in the West.

At the same time, I am aware that the injustice against women in Islamic countries, perpetrated by the system of patriarchal power, is real. There has been more than enough pious preaching about how Islam is great for women (in an ideal world) and not enough correction of the injustices perpetrated on the ground. In the beginning, Islam was the most revolutionary liberalization of women's rights the civilized world had ever seen. But now, centuries later, much of the Islamic world has lost touch with its cathartic roots and has harbored some of the worst current abuses of women's rights. Nevertheless, the colonial perception and conceptualization of Islam and of Muslim women's rights as static, unchanging, and in fact unchangeable, along with the White western feminist monolithic image of Muslim women as passive, powerless, backward, uneducated, and victimized, have simply been fuel to the fire of challenges that Muslim women face.

Over time, Muslim women like me have realized that we have been used by colonialists, misunderstood by postcolonialists, undervalued by most western feminists, and controlled by Islamic fundamentalists—all while we have been busy raising our families and contributing to our societies. In the twenty-first century, then, what has emerged is a global women's movement accented by a philosophy that draws on the feminist classics but that also reflects the social realities and concerns of women in various parts of the world (Mojab, 1999). We have come to understand that feminism is a theoretical perspective and a practice that criticizes

social and gender inequalities, seeks to transform knowledge, and aims at women's empowerment. Fortunately, feminism has come to acknowledge that women around the world will pursue different strategies toward such empowerment and transformation (De Reus, Few, & Blume, 2004).

We have also come to realize that Muslim feminists have been inspired by Third Wave western feminism and postmodernism and are attentive to feminist writings from the developing world (Moghaddam, 2000). Any reading of the women's press in Muslim countries reveals that female activists and scholars, including those who define themselves as Muslim, are aware of or familiar with postmodernism and international writings on feminism.

Thus, I have come to believe that women have always suffered the consequences of gender inequalities, and that feminist politics are often shaped by specific historical, political, and cultural contexts. Therefore, if feminists should be defined by their praxis rather than by a strict ideology, then Muslim feminism seems to have prospered as one feminism among many (Moghaddam, 2000). Nevertheless, we are still painfully situated in an awkward place between Islamic fundamentalists trying to control us and neocolonial oppressors trying to emancipate us. We are struggling to stay connected to the holy sphere of family while latching on to the broader sphere of professional life with all its contradictions and challenges.

As for my own personal and professional journey, for many years now I have been fighting several different wars and implementing many different strategies. As a family therapist and researcher, I strive to seize both my feminist and religious identities while continuing to maintain deep connections to postmodernism and its anti-essentialist perspective as the base for my feminist praxis. I also feel responsible to use the therapy room to explore Muslim women's concerns and challenges and try to offer information about ways that they can use their religion to be empowered and change their destiny.

Over time, I have come to believe that Islamic feminism is a feminist discourse expressly articulated within an Islamic paradigm, behaviors, and activisms. It derives its

Spirituality: Expressions of two people groups

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Spirituality speaks to our awareness of and relationship to God or the transcendent. It provides purpose, meaning, and a framework for our lives. Religion is reflected in external practices, institutions, and rituals. Both are contextual, personal, and communal. American Indians and African Americans share similar and disparate stories of disenfranchisement and loss, one victimized by Manifest Destiny, the other by the demeaning institution of slavery. Both provide rich tapestries of spirituality, religiosity, resilience, and struggle.

We are Anglo Americans with Italian, German, Scottish, English, and American Indian backgrounds. We have years of service with African Americans and American Indians in our clinical practices, advocacy efforts, educational settings, and institutions that effect policy and programs for strengthening families. We are currently employed in the Chickasaw Nation *Chokka-chaffa' Kilimpi'/* Family Resource System in Ada, Oklahoma. The first author is currently researching for his doctoral dissertation the experiences of historical loss and trauma and the factors that contribute to family resilience in three- and four-generation Chickasaw families. The second author has worked in areas of advocacy with the Black farmer movement since 1994, especially with the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association (BFAA) of North Carolina. Those are the vantage points from which we reflect upon these two groups of people.

Native Americans have experienced disenfranchisement for more than 500 years. The victims of genocide and ethnocide, the Native population, native languages, and cultural practices unique to each tribe were lost in the Native American Holocaust. This has led to a collective trauma experience for Native Americans that has been transmitted through generations of families and is most commonly referred to as historical trauma.

Like other tribes who dotted the continent prior to European arrival in the fifteenth century, the Chickasaws were displaced to the Oklahoma Territory on the Chickasaw

Trail of Tears (1837–1852) as a result of the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Due to land removal and additional governmental policies and practices that occurred after removal, such as mandatory placement of Native American youth in boarding schools, Chickasaws, like other Native American tribes, suffered many losses. These losses include, among others, the loss of land, language, culture, and spiritual beliefs and practices. Like other Native American tribes, the Chickasaws have shown their strength and resilience in response to such adversity and in some ways have recovered from these
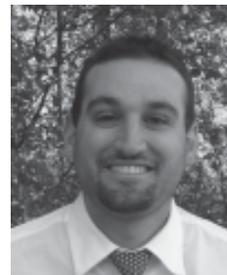
C. J. Aducci   Waymon Hinson

losses, although not entirely. Tribal sovereignty, strong and stable tribal leadership,

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understanding and mandate from the Qur'an and seeks rights and justice for women and for men in the totality of their existence. This belief has helped me untangle patriarchy and religion; it has also given me Islamic ways of understanding gender equality, societal opportunity, and how to hold on to my own potentials. Further, my exposure to Muslim women's writings and praxis has made me recognize how Islamic feminist discourse is equally relevant and highly active in my home country and other predominantly Muslim countries. It has constituted a different statement of the views of people and their understanding of and attachment to their religion and culture by attempting an Islamic articulation of gender equality.

I am encouraged that Muslim feminism has become acknowledged as a viable new option for change among all feminists. I anticipate that it may even become a center for activism and praxis that includes the uniting of Muslim men and women in order to incur better and greater changes in all Muslim countries. With this, I understand that unless we can create a paradigm shift in using postmodernism to authenticate our mini-narratives as Muslim women, we continue to waver on the unsteady tectonic plates that threaten a quake beneath our determined and active journey. I refuse to loosen my footing. By representing myself as a post-

modernist Muslim feminist and allowing my own growth in the feminist world, I will remain grounded in the belief that one day, the opposing plates beneath me will settle into a land that I can walk on, as a woman, as an activist, and as a feminist with her veiled head held high. ∎

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tribal emphasis on health, education, and family, economic independence, and respect for Chickasaw Elders and their wisdom and seeking guidance and leadership from their Creator have all contributed to helping the Chickasaws persevere. Of these, spirituality remains the most pivotal and unifying for the Chickasaw people and provides a source of strength and continuity across generations of families.

Spirituality continues to have very important meaning within Chickasaw families and plays an important role in family life. Although Chickasaws were displaced from one another during removal, and today Chickasaws reside across the globe, spirituality can be seen as the tie that binds Chickasaws to one another. Although Chickasaws and their family members may be separated geographically, they remain eternally connected through the living spirit. Spiritual practices, which are typically informal, extend beyond the walls of the church and enter other domains, such as cultural events, tribal meetings and functions, Chickasaw community centers, and Chickasaw homes. For instance, within the Chickasaw Nation, cultural events and tribal meetings and gatherings begin with a prayer, which is typically said in the native Chickasaw language. This shows the emphasis the tribe and tribal members place on their Creator and further demonstrates the importance of seeking the Creator for continued leadership and guidance.

Chickasaws practice spirituality in ways that may be similar to other Native Americans. Prayer is seen as a way of seeking guidance and for giving thanks; singing traditional hymns in the Chickasaw language fills the body with the Creator's spirit; reading and studying scripture allows for greater understanding of the Creator's role in one's daily walk; attending church provides opportunities for fellowship with other Chickasaws. However, the concept of "church" takes on somewhat different meaning for Chickasaws, as a church is viewed as merely a structure that most importantly serves as a gathering place for Chickasaws to worship the Creator with one another. This may also be a reason why spirituality is viewed as something informal and as something that extends beyond the walls of the church. Less emphasis on the church and greater emphasis placed on the

relationship with the Creator enables Chickasaws to keep cognizant of their Creator.

Enslaved Africans survived the Middle Passage and unspeakable atrocities of slavery, the auction block, and the lynching tree. After the emancipation and Reconstruction, they worked the land and came to own some of it, migrated to the cities, and survived Jim Crow. The rich heritage of culture and spirituality lived on in the secrecy of the forests while the slave owners slept. Ultimately able to practice their own faith, most African Americans practice an evangelical faith distinct from the theology and structure of the plantations. Although African Americans were invited into White Christianity, they were not offered fellowship. "Separate but equal" has given way to churches led by Black Americans.

African American spirituality is not a singular, monolithic entity, as there is much diversity in its settings and expressions. It springs from a worldview of God as absolute, supreme, first and last, whose fundamental nature is

jectification, and dehumanization. Black theology, religiosity, and spirituality served as a response to racism and oppression and continue to the present day. These are pivotal understandings for today.

At the intersection of influence for African Americans are the Black church, Black family, and school. The church is central, a powerful expression of an openness to the movement of God in individual and corporate lives, important for the socialization of children, a place of importance for the economic, relational, and service needs of the family from children to the elderly. Within the church, family, and school all are taught the "somebodiness" of persons. For some, spirituality is a private and personal experience, while for others is it a deeply communal experience as shared with the faith of other families via faith rituals, routines, and teachings.

The Black family teaches and passes on a variety of spiritual themes: religious/spiritual orientation, flexibility of family roles, and stories of resilience and achievement in a

> At a meta-level, Native Americans and African Americans have worldviews that are shaped by their ancestors and their stories of struggle and resilience, which have been passed down from generation to generation.

spirit. It is theocentric and emphasizes the wholeness of the Creator and the created. Ultimate authority is the Bible, which promotes spiritual and cultural freedom. A liberation spirituality and hermeneutic emerge, not as escapes from this world, but as protests against oppression and yearnings for freedom. The church and the biblical text promote strength of intelligence, wisdom, and buoyancy—an optimism in perilous circumstances.

This spirituality served to form a cohesive network of relationships, behaviors, and community, shaping challenges of racism and oppression into liturgies of survival and criticisms of the inhumanity of the auction block, chains, and the lynching tree. Themes are found in Negro spirituals, blues, and jazz, as well as in worship styles.

Four lenses, then, were used for African Americans: one's own, one's peers, the White master's, and God's. They viewed themselves via the eyes of God, an empowering and transformative view from a negative, oppressed, worthless state of being. Through White eyes they saw only denigration, ob-

racist world. Storytelling allows the spiritual strength and faith of those long gone to remain present in their struggles and spiritual fortitude. A variety of family structures transmit the value of family: nuclear, intergenerational, and community. Prayer plays an important role for Black families because of oppression, persecution, and injustice. God-parents are chosen to nurture the young, both literally and symbolically, and at death the family and community celebrate the soul's "homegoing." These subtexts of spirituality promote resiliency and hope for a better tomorrow as the young embrace a God who is fair and just. Schools are places and spaces that encourage development of life skills, the intrinsic and extrinsic value of education, and outreach efforts into the Black community.

Spirituality within the Black family has been largely ignored, but is increasingly a focus for family clinicians who are intent on developing theoretical and practical means of assessment and intervention. Spiritual and cultural ecomaps are useful for these purposes.

Religion, spirituality, and families

by Frank D. Fincham, Eminent Scholar and director, Florida State University Family Institute, *ffincham@fsu.edu*

Less than a decade has passed since Hill and Pargament (2003, p. 65) noted that social scientists tend to keep "their distance from religion and spirituality" and so it is not surprising that research on religion "is rarely represented in the scientific journals devoted to family issues" (Parke, 2001, p. 555). In just a matter of years, this circumstance has changed dramatically, possibly reflecting changes in the broader culture, such as the recent increased use of prayer for health concerns (Wacholtz & Sambamoorthi, 2011), increased levels of economic inequality that show a rough linear relationship with frequency of prayer (Norris & Inglehart, 2004), and the role accorded religion in high-profile world events (e.g., Bali, Madrid, and London bombings). Several handbooks on the topic

have emerged (e.g., two-volume *APA Handbook of Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality*) and new journals have been established (e.g., *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*). As Mahoney (2010) has provided comprehensive reviews of research on religion in families, this paper highlights only selected challenges for research on religion, spirituality, and families.

Some Challenges
Obvious Truths
Possibly resulting from personal experiences (positive and negative), religion can evoke strongly held viewpoints that appear to be self-evidently true. An initial challenge is for scholars to critically examine what is often taken for granted among believers or nonbelievers. For example, among persons of faith

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it is widely believed that "the couple that prays together stays together." That this may not be the case is evident only when we recognize that prayer is motivated behavior and where there is motivation it can be malevolent as well as benevolent. Joint prayer thus may not only bind a couple together more strongly but also corrode the relationship if one partner uses prayer to belittle, cajole, or manipulate the other (for an example of such prayer see *Friday Night Lights,* season 2, episode 1).

Selection and Third Variable Effects
Many nonbelievers take it as axiomatic that religion is harmful. Here the challenge is openness to the contrary view. Indeed, some scholars have concluded that "religion plays a role in maintaining positive relationships within nuclear families" (Mattis & Jagers, 2001, p. 526). But this conclusion poses its own challenges. Although the above sweeping claim is largely consistent with extant data, an important challenge is to dig deeper and realize that people who profess a religion are not a random sample but a self-selected sample. Could more positive relationships in their families reflect a selection effect rather than something about religion? At a minimum, studies need to control for potential differences between families that do and do not profess a religious faith. But alone, such control is not enough to conclude that more positive relationships can be attributed to the practice of a religious faith. This is because religiousness is associated with features that are not intrinsic to religious activities only. For example, more expansive social networks are typically found among religious participants and the social support they provide may be potentially responsible for outcomes attributed to religiosity. The number of relevant third variables like this is potentially quite large, making it difficult to draw valid inferences from research comparing religious

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A distinctive family context that richly engages spirituality is that of the African American farmer. Family life is especially difficult when discriminatory practices impact farm operation loans and funding for land, seed, and various operational costs. Land loss for small farmers is enormous, but for Black farmers, the losses are much greater. Within the larger story of the Pigford Class Action Suit, originally filed in 1997, are the stories of families. Farmers and families exhibit signs and symptoms that mental health professionals would recognize (but would need cultural sensitivity to interpret), seen more prominently in the life of the farmer, then the spouse, and less so in adult children of the farmer. Simultaneously, protective factors are reported, such as identity as farmers, the value of land ownership and sustainability, and belief in justice. Also protective are faith, family, ingenuity, and the righteousness of the cause. One collection of recorded and transcribed stories in the Historical Archives of BFAA in Tillery, North Carolina, reveals subthemes of family: suffering together as a family, trust in God, support of family members and the surrounding community, the value of the family unit and noble work, closeness in times of trouble,

prayer as an immediate connection to an ever-present God who would save from "the wolves of life," paternal and maternal influences toward a life of faith, church involvement and leadership, a belief in "payday someday" for all who hurt God's children, a God who gives peace that protects one from doing acts of violence, and a faith that God provides direction for one's life. It is through families that stories of struggle and resilience are transmitted.

At a meta-level, Native Americans and African Americans have worldviews that are shaped by their ancestors and their stories of struggle and resilience, which have been passed down from generation to generation. Both groups have learned to live, cope, and thrive within a larger dominant society that at times possesses distinctly different worldviews. American Indians and African Americans, Chickasaws and Black farmers, have experienced traumas of land loss and disenfranchisement. Nevertheless, both value family, elders, community, education, and passing on values within those contexts. ■

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and nonreligious samples (correlational studies that include nonreligious participants are similarly problematic).

"Sizing" Claims Correctly

Assuming that the challenges of self-selection and third variable explanation are adequately dealt with, the next challenge is to "size" our claims in accordance with the nature and strength of the data. For example, earlier research has reliably shown that religiosity covaries with marital satisfaction, but some recent studies limit this effect to a single sex, showing that only husband church attendance predicts marital satisfaction (Wolfinger & Wilcox, 2008). Moreover, as Mahoney (2010) points out, most research relating to religion and the family (79% of marital studies and 76% of parenting studies over the past decade) uses 1 or 2 items to measure religious variables (e.g., affiliation, attendance, self-rated importance, biblical conservatism), raising serious concerns about the reliability of measures. In addition, the global item(s) used show small effect sizes. For example, those who frequently attend religious services are less likely to divorce than nonattenders, but the average effect size is only $r = .125$.

Understanding Mechanisms

Although studies generally show that religiosity is related to several positive outcomes in family relationships, albeit quite weakly, they provide little information about what specific, modifiable aspects of religious behavior and spirituality are associated with such outcomes. Thus a further challenge is to "go beyond a reliance on global religious indices to clarify what about religion matters, for better or worse, in family life" (Mahoney, 2010, p. 806).A factor potentially linking religious and spiritual behavior to positive relationship outcomes is the extent to which they promote a positive relational context and view of the partner, reinforce general pro-marriage attitudes and commitment to marriage, and foster a sense of the couple as "we" as opposed to two individuals. As noted, studies have shown that religious involvement is related to greater relationship quality for married couples, potentially reflecting both the direct effects of increased social support of norms and values of marriage- and relationship-enhancing behaviors (e.g., partner forgiveness) in many religious

communities, as well as indirect effects such as fostering increased individual psychological well-being and temperance. To the extent that pro-marriage attitudes fostered by various forms of religious engagement and activity generate trust between partners, they should also encourage greater spousal investment in the marriage.

Identifying Modifiable Religious Behaviors to Improve Family Life

The identification of specific, modifiable aspects of religious behavior and spirituality that are associated with positive relational outcomes is crucial to designing faith-friendly interventions to prevent or remediate relationship distress. In our own attempt to do this, Steve Beach and I focused on prayer, a form of spiritual activity common to all the Abrahamic traditions (i.e., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), with strong parallels in most other religious traditions (e.g., Buddhism,

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Hinduism, Shinto). We examined colloquial, petitionary prayer, a form of prayer that invokes God's help in response to specific needs, using the individuals' own language rather than a set prayer. Relationship distress often reflects conflict and hence we offered a theoretical analysis to show that prayer for the well being of the partner can be used to reduce marital conflict or better manage conflict when it occurs (Beach et al., 2011). Here it is worth noting that religiousness is either unrelated or slightly inversely related to conflict (Curtis & Ellison, 2002; Mahoney, Pargament, Swank, & Tarakeshwar, 2001). Illustrating the importance of moving beyond overall indices of religiosity, several descriptive and qualitative studies highlight the importance of prayer for dealing with conflict and marital problems more generally. Butler, Stout, and Gardner (2002) found that 31% of respondents almost always and 42% sometimes prayed during marital conflict. In their qualitative study, Marsh and Dallos (2001) showed that religious practices such as prayer helped couples to manage their

anger during marital conflict. Finally, couples in a recent study reported that prayer alleviated tension and facilitated open communication during conflict situations (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006). Such findings are consistent with a national survey showing that most Americans (90.4% of African Americans and 66.7% of non-Hispanic Whites) say that prayer is very important when coping with stress, a response that is higher among married than never married respondents (Chatters, Taylor, Jackson, & Lincoln, 2008).

Moving from Theory and Basic Research to Practice

There is virtually no research evaluating the efficacy of adding a faith-based component to family interventions, a task that requires considerable care given the numerous ethical and professional challenges involved. (For example: Is it ethical for scientists to pick scripture and provide sample prayers for participants? Can one avoid dual relationships with clients in offering faith enhanced interventions?) To examine the potential of adding spirituality to a widely used skills training program, we investigated a prayer-focused version (PFP) of the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), an empirically supported prevention program for couples (Beach et al, 2011). PFP was offered to groups and included all the basic components of PREP as well as a strong focus on private, intercessory prayer for the partner. Participants were given a conceptual framework for the use of colloquial, intercessory prayer for their partner and given specific encouragement to pray for good things to happen to their partners. All prayers were introduced as being in keeping with the higher order goal of "helping you to be a vehicle of God's love in your relationship."

For wives, but not husbands, the addition of prayer appeared to result in a more efficacious program compared to traditional PREP, particularly in terms of its immediate effects from baseline to posttest. Over time (6 month and 12 month follow-up), wives who experienced PFP still showed an advantage over those receiving traditional PREP. Although the mechanism of action is not known, it is possible that the enhanced response of wives to the PFP condition reflects a better fit to their needs, given that

The spiritual formation of graduate students— teaching at a faith-based school

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The climate in the field of mental health with regard to spirituality has changed over the past 25 years. When I trained to be a marriage and family therapist in 1985, there was a strict bifurcation of the professional and the spiritual. Therapists in training were urged to put their values and beliefs aside, as they did not want to impose them on their clients. This attitude transferred to the classroom. We did not talk about spiritual matters other than in an occasional side conversation. The paradoxical aspect of this is that I was trained at a Christian university. A primary reason I chose to attend the school was to learn in a place that espoused values similar to my own. I wanted to know how to integrate my beliefs into my role as a counselor.

The program in which I was trained is a high-quality program and I received an excellent education. I am grateful that they did not encourage me to proselytize my clients. Having served on the state professional board for 10 years, I have seen the ethical dilemmas that arise when therapists are not cautious about the imposition of their beliefs. But the downside during my graduate school years was that I had to learn how to make sense of my faith and spirituality on my own. I grappled with this as a new professional and finally came to a holistic perspective that allowed me to address the whole person— psychologically, relationally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. I learned to open the conversation to all these arenas without the imposition of my values.

Jackie Halstead

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they were, on average, more involved in church activities than were husbands.

Conclusion

This brief paper has focused on a few challenges faced in advancing understanding of religion, spirituality, and family life. Successfully negotiating such challenges is critical to improving the quality of research and thereby the perceived status of work in this field. Towards this end, it is useful to publish our research in prestigious mainstream outlets and not limit it to specialized journals that focus on religion. Too often such specialized outlets are derided by colleagues in our parent disciplines who may even be suspicious of research on religion. Publishing our work in highly ranked, mainstream journals is the best way to establish research on religion, spirituality, and families as a broadly accepted and widely respected field of scholarship. Although this may require jumping higher hurdles, the effort is worthwhile, as it is likely to result in a stronger foundation of research on religion, spirituality, and families. ∎

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When I came back to teach 11 years later, the climate of the profession had changed. It was now acceptable to breach the divide between a person and his or her spirituality. I was able as a professor and then a program director to encourage openness in new therapists both for their self-exploration and to help them know how to address spirituality with their clients in an ethical manner.

Inclusion of Spirituality

My intent in encouraging the inclusion of spirituality in the classroom is twofold. First, as stated previously, I have a holistic view of people. The classroom is a logical place to explore the manner in which spirituality is addressed in one's professional role. My second goal is to give the student the opportunity to explore his or her spirituality and to gain the personal growth that comes from spiritual practices. The course becomes a laboratory for students to grapple with their faith and gain a level of comfort in allowing others to grapple and grow. They are spiritually transformed or, in other words, experience change in their behavior and cognitions as they develop a deeper connection to the divine.

Spiritual formation in the context of graduate education creates a time of exploration and questioning. Students emerging from the undergraduate world have made decisions regarding their careers and are nearing the end of their educational journeys. They are beginning to realize the seriousness of training and are moving beyond the "learning for the exam" mentality. In addition, the growing population of second-career graduate students is also in a crucible. They are taking the risk of moving into a new profession and are in a stage of evaluation of their life choices. Both sets of students are ripe for the opportunity for spiritual formation. Whether the professor is intentional or not, the student will be exploring his or her faith and spirituality. In his 1981 classic book, *Stages of Faith,* James Fowler offers a framework for faith development. He places young adults in the Inductive–Reflective stage. A description of this stage is as follows: "This is the tough stage, often begun in young adulthood, when people start seeing outside the box and realizing that there are other 'boxes.' They begin to critically examine their beliefs on their own and often become disillusioned with their former

faith" (http://www.usefulcharts.com/psychology/james-fowler-stages-of-faith.html). Scott Peck parrots the characteristics of this stage and refers to it as the Skeptic–Individual stage in his 1987 book, *A Different Drum.* Graduate students are experiencing dissonance and expansion of preconceived notions. It is an ideal time to foster spiritual formation.

In my 15 years of teaching at the graduate level, it is my experience that the response is overwhelmingly positive when I facilitate spiritual formation in the context of the courses that I teach. I wanted this as a graduate student and appreciated any opportunity to explore my spiritual concerns. I have learned to create a context for growth and to invite students to engage in spiritual formation. I certainly do not require that they engage, as this would be unethical, but I offer the opportunity and have yet to meet a student who is unwilling to take this chance to do so.

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Components of Creating a Context for Spiritual Formation

There are two factors in facilitating spiritual formation. The first is a didactic component. This involves the incorporation of spiritual formation into the course material and classroom discussion. The title used at faith-based institutions of higher learning is the "integration of faith and learning." The instructor is encouraged to think through the material she is presenting through a lens that is spiritual in nature. In other words, I consider my material and the manner in which it can teach spiritual lessons. For example, when discussing marital conflict, I might include the concepts of reconciliation and forgiveness and connect them to the Christian paradigm.

Another form of integration is to include portions of the sacred text from my faith tradition. I might read a biblical text that is associated with the topic I am addressing with my students. When discussing grief, for instance,

I can read Psalm 23 and highlight the manner in which it deals with loss and sadness.

Robert Harris cautions that one must be responsible in the integration of faith and learning in his 2004 article, *Answering Objections to the Integration of Faith and Learning at Christian Colleges.* He responds to suggestions that integration waters down serious scholarship and teaching and encourages responsible and ethical behavior on the part of the professor (http://www.virtualsalt.com/int/objections.pdf). The facilitation of spiritual formation is offered in a tentative rather than direct manner. Imposing doctrine on another does not promote spiritual growth. Growth occurs when one is given the opportunity to consider and wrestle with the concepts. I am overt with regard to my personal biases and those of my faith. I invite the students to discuss and address faith from their frames of reference. The point is not to impose my opinions, but to open the spiritual arena for discussion.

As previously mentioned, graduate students are in a stage of life in which they question and challenge previously held assumptions. A helpful concept is offered by psychologist Carol Dweck in her reference to a growth or fixed mindset in her 2008 book titled *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success.* A growth mindset is a key component in spiritual formation. A person with a growth mindset is open to new ideas and ways of experiencing the world. Without this mindset, one has a fixed mindset. He or she holds a rigid perspective—one that does not allow for change and growth. Educators can encourage a growth mindset by encouraging an expansion of ideas. If I simply tell students what to think (whether spiritual ideas or any ideas), they will need to return to me to determine their next thoughts. If instead I allow them to grapple with ideas and make their own decisions, they own those conclusions and learn how to think in a critical manner.

The second necessary component in the facilitation of spiritual formation in graduate students is experience. One can learn the theory, history, and steps of a spiritually forming practice, but that is not what encourages transformation. The students need to experience practices that connect them to

The family:
A context for youths' spiritual growth

by Anthony G. James, M.S., Department of Human Development and Family Studies, University of Missouri, Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Family Studies and Social Work, Miami University (Ohio), *anthony.g.james@muohio.edu*

Most, if not all, parents desire their children to grow up with a set of morals, principles, guidelines, standards, values, etc., that will help them thrive in civil society. In recent years, scholars have sought to explore ways that spirituality can help youth with that internalization process.

Growing Interest in Youths' Spirituality

In his 2006 work, Peter Benson theorized that youth have strengths and resources available to help them thrive in their social worlds (i.e., internal and external developmental assets). Some scholars wondered whether spirituality would be an internal asset for youths' positive development.

A 2004 study by Elizabeth Dowling and colleagues found that spirituality was linked to youths' ability to thrive, but that study didn't consider how youth conceptualize spirituality.

Youths' Self Perceived Spirituality: A Developmental Asset

With colleagues Mark Fine and Linda "Jo" Turner (in press), I chose a different path to investigate the relationship between spirituality and youth development by examining how youth conceptualize what it means to be a spiritual young person. Interestingly, youth conceptualized being a spiritual young person in 10 different ways: to have keen consciousness, extraordinary self-confidence, high religious involvement, belief in a higher power or force, virtue, purpose, or unarticulated spirituality, to exude radiance, to be the same as a religious young person, or to be connected. Further, youths' self-perceived spirituality was linked to increases in their competence, confidence, character, connection, caring and compassion, and contribution to their social worlds. Further, their spirituality had a long-term impact on their characters. Those findings further support the notion of spirituality being an internal developmental asset for youth.

Anthony James

Nevertheless, that study didn't consider that youth conceptualize spirituality in a variety

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the divine. They do so through the modeling of the professor, classroom experience, and assignment of outside practices.

The modeling of the professor is a key to spiritual formation of the student. When the character of the professor is consistent with the spiritual formation being encouraged, the students are more apt to view the teaching as credible. I am transparent about my own spiritual growth and am committed to living in a kind, compassionate, and curious manner. I maintain a nonanxious presence that is facilitated by my spiritual practices. As I make the case for the integration of faith and the discipline, I use stories from my own experience of transformation. I have not reached an end point of my spiritual formation and never will, but I share my commitment to the journey of becoming more spiritually formed. For example, I participate in an annual 8-day Ignatian silent retreat. As I encourage my students to seek times of silence and solitude, I draw on the credibility I have through my personal experience. I am able to share the benefits I have received from this practice and can give a firsthand account of the benefits

and challenges of this experience. Although I could teach the practice from the writings of a book, my personal experience lends weight to what I say. It also gives me the opportunity to attempt the practices before I encourage others to do so—a responsible practice.

Classroom experience is another vital aspect of spiritual formation of the student. The actual trying out of spiritual practices is a key to the student developing spiritually. The professor can lend structure to the practices and troubleshoot as the students try them out. One example of classroom experience is the use of silent meditation to begin a class. I invite the students to close their eyes and be silent for a few moments. They are encouraged to let go of their anxieties and be present for the allotted class time. They can pray silently if they want, but I primarily want them to breathe deeply and focus on the present. Although a seemingly small practice, it is surprising to me how many times students mention this practice as a significant part of the class. The repeated statement in evaluations is that those few minutes are the only time during the day that they slow down.

Finally, requiring outside experience solidifies the formation. In their book, *The Critical Journey* (2005), Janet Hagberg and Frank Guelich support the importance of experience in moving beyond the dissonance that comes with spiritual development. With experience, what begins as an assignment can evolve into a way of life. The students find that the methods of prayer, meditation, simplicity, and other spiritual practices are rewarding. They recognize the change that is happening in the form of a nonanxious presence or that they are becoming more kind and compassionate. They see the benefit beyond the grade and incorporate the experiences into their daily routines.

Graduate school is a wonderful time of life. Students develop and grow in many ways— spirituality is only one of these ways. Students also grow emotionally, psychologically, and socially. What a benefit it is for a professor to play a deliberate role in the spiritual formation of the student. Through integration of faith and learning, through experience in the classroom, and through outside experience, we invite students into a deepening relationship with the divine. It is their choice as to whether they accept the invitation. ∎

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of ways. A follow-up study examined whether differences in conceptualization of spirituality were linked to differences in youths' positive development. Using the 10 spiritual categories listed above, I created three broad groups of spirituality (i.e., having found meaning in life, being a good young person, ambiguous spirituality) and examined how having different conceptions of spirituality was linked to youths' positive development. Findings revealed a consistent trend across the six domains of positive development. Youth who had coherent conceptions of being spiritual had significantly higher scores on all but one domain of positive development (confidence). Specifically, youth in the group who had found meaning in life generally scored highest on positive development, with youth in the ambiguous spirituality group scoring the lowest.

After establishing empirical support for the link between spirituality and positive development, it was important to explore possible sources of those youths' self-perceived spirituality, in the hope of aiding researchers and practitioners in their goals of encouraging and cultivating the spiritual lives of youth.

Another study (James, Fine, & Turner, 2011) investigated family and community factors as possible sources of youths' self-perceived spirituality and whether either factor was linked to youths' spirituality above and beyond the other. The family factors consisted of "importance of religion to the family" and "parental responsiveness [to the child]." Following the work of Jennifer Urban (Urban, Lewin-Bizan, & Lerner, 2009), whose study found that increased access to community resources is positively correlated with positive developmental outcomes for youth, the community factors consisted of "human resources," "accessibility," and "collective activity," and measured the availability of resources in the youths' communities.

Findings revealed that both community and family factors were associated with youths' self-perceived spirituality, but that family factors had a stronger effect than the community factors. This suggests that parents rear their children in contexts that support and encourage their value systems, including their spiritual values. And that has effects on their children's spiritual lives.

Future Directions

With the shift in how the developmental period of adolescence is viewed, scholars focused more on nurturing youths' internal assets and providing external assets that increase youths' chances of thriving in civil society. My work supports the notion that youths' spirituality can be an internal developmental asset that helps them thrive in their social worlds. Further, parents and families can play a crucial role in the growth of that spirituality. Nevertheless, there is still much work to be conducted and future studies would advance the field by focusing on the following ideas.

> Research has found that youth have the ability to think critically about their spirituality and internalize its positive aspects, which can influence their positive development.

Research has found that youth have the ability to think critically about their spirituality and internalize its positive aspects, which can influence their positive development. But what the field lacks is a better understanding of the processes youth undergo to develop their conceptualizations of being spiritual. My colleagues and I posit that parents, community leaders, practitioners, clergy, etc., can help youth foster their conceptions—and level—of spirituality. But future studies can specifically address the mechanisms that drive youths' conceptualization of spirituality. While we now have an idea of what being spiritual means to

youth, we still need studies to examine how they came to those conclusions.

Additionally, scholars should examine the fluidity of spirituality. Plausibly, the development of spirituality is a process that waxes and wanes in terms of its saliency in the lives of youth. Understanding that process will be important in order to increase the chances that it will have a lasting impact on various domains of youth development.

Finally, families are crucial with respect to the values and principles that youth internalize. While my study found that creating an environment conducive to spiritual growth and positive parent–child interactions both appear to be linked to youths' spirituality, those family factors did not have long-term effects. Exploring the particular actions families take to create an environment that nurtures youths' spirituality can help practitioners and scholars provide families with tools to help foster their children's spirituality. ■

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Fathers and spirituality: Faithfully fathering for life

by Rob Palkovitz, Ph.D., professor, Human Development and Family Studies, *robp@UDel.edu*

Most contemporary lifespan development books characterize people's development as highly interactive systems that can be conceptualized in biological, psychological, and social domains. As a professor, when I ask my human development students to reflect on formative influences in their lives and to consider "why they are the way that they are," they often cite spirituality as having a profound influence. As the literature is written and as the theories are frequently presented, spirituality is not easily reduced and compartmentalized into bio-psychosocial categories. Students speak about their experiences with and perceptions of formal and informal religious groups (for better or for worse) and the ways that their families have shaped their approaches to faith and spirituality. Independent of their spiritual orientations, whether they affiliate with and participate with "organized religion" or not, however mainstream or uncommon their belief systems, it is clear to me as a human development and family studies scholar that each individual's spirituality is strongly influenced by their family experiences.

As active members in a local nondenominational church, Judy, my wife, and I co-led youth groups for 20 years with the goal of helping teens to transition from a place where they attended services and events because their families did (spiritual foreclosure) to a place where youth personalized their own faith, having wrestled with difficult questions, emerging as people with their own vital belief systems (spiritual identity achievement). Through the countless meetings and individual discussions we had with various teens, it became clear to us that everyday interactions with family members had significant influence in informing teens' emerging faith and in influencing the centrality of their spirituality in comparison to other emerging developments.

From different social addresses: as a fathering scholar, as a father, and as a mentor and male role model in a faith community, I have focused on the importance of fathers' roles in influencing their children's developing spirituality. There is a need for further research and discourse about the treatment of the supernatural in families and how it influences developmental outcomes. As a systems-thinking developmentalist, it is clear to me that faithfully fathering plays a pivotal role in how children come to view spiritual reality. Interestingly, because we are biopsycho-social-spiritual people, and because changes in any of these components brings change across the entire system of interacting parts, many important components of faithfully fathering may not seem to be all that "spiritual." The way that children, youth, and emerging adults come to think about spirituality is significantly shaped by the ways that fathers (in the diversity of fathering contexts —residential or not, married, separated,

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divorced, absent, biological, social, etc.) operationalize issues of faith (e.g., faithfulness, trustworthiness, hope, love, joy, peace, gentleness, self-control, honesty, generosity, etc.) and enact them into their relationships with their partners, children, work associates, and communities. Throughout development, children come to understand much about the importance or unimportance of faith by observing and interpreting fathers' lives as they love God and love people, or fail to do so, in everyday contexts.

While consistent participation in faith communities plays an important role in solidifying the priority of spirituality in children's lives, the consistency between fathers' stated spiritual values and their practice in the details of everyday life seem to etch a more distinct pattern of meaning than doctrinal positions or participation in formal religious services.

Rob Palkovitz

Faithfully Fathering

In my research with fathers, interviews with diverse men have convinced me that in the many ways fathers come to realize the importance, centrality, scope, and responsibilities of fathering, they come to understand that faithfully fathering is necessary. Men who are able to consistently "do well" in the following ways present tangible, developmentally facilitative contexts for the developing faith of their children. The following characteristics build emotional and social capital in children that enhance their ability to believe in spiritual matters. I have adapted many of these principles from interviews with dads and have retained the "you" language that many employed in their descriptions:

- Faithfully fathering means that you are there for your children when they need you, in whatever way you can be there to help them.

- Faithfully fathering means that you have ways to stay connected to your children's feelings, thoughts, behaviors, interests, and activities throughout the many changes that life brings.

- Faithfully fathering means commitment to a lifelong relationship and finding ways to do what you can to build the relationship and your children's life in positive ways, no matter how much or how little you have.

- Faithfully fathering means that you are there for your children over the long haul; whether your relationship with their mother is going well or not, you are committed to

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positive coparenting, whether you live with them or not, whether you have an abundance of resources or not, and whether they are doing well or not.

- By definition, faith is belief in things not seen. Many aspects of fathering require faith. Faithfully fathering means that you keep on doing what you believe to be best even in the absence of tangible evidence that it is "working" or producing immediate results.

- Faithfully fathering means believing that if you do the things you know how to do with the motive of helping your children to do well, to turn out well, and to build your relationship in positive ways, that somehow it will work out for good.

- Faithfully fathering means that you understand that you, as a dad, have a unique role to fill in your children's lives and that if you continue to do the best you are capable of as a dad, in the long run, it will benefit your children, your relationship with your children's mother, your own development as a man, and the overall good of the community.

- Faithfully fathering means that you understand the importance of being an actively available and engaged dad, and in order to do that well, you have to monitor and work on your fathering fitness.

- Faithfully fathering means growing as a dad: increasing your skills and stamina to keep on doing the right things and decreasing the weaknesses you see in your fathering. It means being a healthy person so that you can help your children to develop to meet their potential.

Involved dads understand that faithfully fathering is a challenging and lifelong endeavor. Dads know that there are few, if any, experiences that compare in terms of responsibility, scope, importance, investment, and payoff: the payoff for your kids, for your family, for your community, and for you as a man. The reality is that most dads feel some mix of doing well in some ways, coupled with the understanding that they could have done better in others.

Challenges to Faithfully Fathering
The catch, for many men, is their distaste for hypocrisy. Fathers are deeply conscious of

the challenges of sharing their faith with their children when it contrasts with past mistakes and difficult times in relating to them or their mother. Simply stated, our own family members are acutely aware of our shortcomings and weaknesses. When fathers talk to children about faith, hope, and love, they know that their words are being heard against the backdrop of imperfection that has existed in past encounters in relationships. Knowing how to present your faith genuinely while acknowledging your mistakes and your hopes for growth and change is a key element to being real as a father of faith. Most men who aspire to attain a meaningful level of consistency between spirituality and other aspects of everyday life are painfully

aware of shortcomings in their ability to attain the standards they are stretching for. In the same vein, most fathers are aware of countless ways that they could improve their fathering in general. Simply stated, in both spirituality and fathering, men are aware of their flaws, mistakes, and sins. It can be humbling (and uncomfortable) to confront your shortcomings.

Perhaps the path of least resistance to reducing the mismatch between your ideals and your observed performance is to minimize the focus on your ideals. This pathway leads to the diminishment of the centrality of faith talk and spiritual goals for fathers. In short, men's awareness of their shortcomings can influence a shortage of direct discussion of spirituality, contributing to their children's impression that it is not important.

Perhaps the most basic challenge is the fact that some men do not have a vital personal faith themselves. Some have faith, but do not feel that they have sufficient depth of experience or expertise to stress the importance of that faith to their children. The number, frequency, and piercing depth of the questions that children ask about God challenge some men. Sometimes the stark bluntness and no-nonsense questions rattle men who

are not secure in their own faith. Sometimes the complexity of the answers that they have constructed crumbles under the honest, simple questions of children. Spirituality is a complicated construct, and translating complex understandings and nuances of "truth" to a child asking simple but challenging questions can highlight the tentative or conditional nature of fathers' own beliefs.

Some men have had poor models in their own fathers when it comes to matters of fathering and faith. Some men have made some serious and interpersonally injurious mistakes and do not know how to recover from them. Some men have situations where their partners are not on the same page as they are in regard to faith—there is not a unified front. Some men have children who have taken oppositional stances to them because of past relationship stressors or because of peer or significant other influences. It is important that each of these difficulties be addressed with an honest recognition of the problem and with potential solutions.

Faithfully Fathering for Life
It is essential that fathers recognize the countless opportunities they have in everyday interactions to have an important influence on their children's lives and emerging spirituality. One research participant stated, "Others watch and evaluate how you are doing, partly based on how your children are doing. More importantly, as a dad, you know that your kids look at you and that they have some strong ideas about how you are doing." How you are doing as a father, as a man, and as a person—a person of faith. As your kids look at how you are doing with them, they make both conscious and unconscious decisions about their identity, their value, and how they are doing as a person. They notice whether they are important enough to you to have your full attention, if you approve of their decisions, if you are proud of the things they are doing, and if you are happy with them. The way you are toward your children provides them with a template for relating to many aspects of spirituality, including (in many major faith traditions) what to expect from a Heavenly Father. Faithfully fathering across the lifespan entails consistency in your love stated for God and your demonstrated love of the people in your daily lives. ∎

Distant immigrant patriarch to expressive dad: Father school as gender boot camp

by Allen J. Kim, doctoral candidate, Department of Sociology, University of California, Irvine, *oneallenkim@gmail.com*

Introduction

How do immigrant fathers from non-Western countries say "I love you," learn to hug their children, and pledge to become more emotionally involved fathers? Across the United States and worldwide, a growing number of men are actively searching for the answer to the fundamental question: What does it mean to be a father today? Reminiscent of the Christian Promise-Keepers movement in the 1990s, Father School is a South Korean–inspired men's movement that has been at the forefront of mobilizing immigrant and nonimmigrant fathers to become actively involved in their families.

Brought to America in 2000, the Father School organization serves primarily Korean but also increasingly Hispanic immigrant men across the United States. Leaders advocate that ethnic minority men uphold their paternal identity and role as "family builders" and stress the importance of developing stronger ties with family members through improved communication, emotional expressiveness, and placing families first. Operating in 45 countries, the most distinctive feature of Father School (FS) is its boot camp–like seminars whereby distant patriarchy is abandoned in favor of a more expressive and caring fatherhood identity. Conferences are organized as intensive 4-day seminars replete with small group activities, testimonials, lectures, and homework assignments designed to improve men's performance as both fathers and husbands.

Background

Founded in 1995, FS, according to one of its publications, "was established in Seoul, South Korea in response to the growing national epidemic of abusive, ineffective, and absentee fathers." The seminal idea for educating Korean fathers came from Do Eun Mi (wife of a family minister), who was raised by a distant and abusive father. Seeking to offer an alternative paradigm of fatherhood grounded in Christian values and contemporary norms, Father School was developed at Duranno Bible College in Seoul and refined under guidance of elder Kim Sung Mook, now the organization's executive director. The FS aim, according to their brochure, is to "help men recover their identities, return the father to the family, and reunify the family through the father role."

In South Korea, the rise of FS followed the IMF economic crisis in 1997, when many South Korean men lost their jobs overnight. Lacking the breadwinner role central to their identities, many fathers began questioning their roles and contributions to their families. Worldwide, the nonprofit Christian organization has graduated over 200,000 participants in 230 cities across 45 countries. More than 3,000 sessions of the FS program and its message, "Lovely father, Lovely family," have targeted men of diverse backgrounds in church, prison, military, corporate, mental hospital, school, and immigrant community settings.

> Father School exemplifies the changing nature of fatherhood and how non-Western men of diverse backgrounds are actively engaged in a similar search for meaning, fulfillment, and purpose in their identities and roles as fathers.

The origin of FS in Seoul may not be too surprising, given the robust growth of Christianity in South Korea dubbed the "Korean miracle," with one third of the population considered adherents of the faith. The appeal of Father School among Korean immigrant fathers in the United States is also noteworthy, given the 75% of the Korean American population who attend church or consider themselves Christian.

Father School Worldview

In the case of South Korean fathers, FS takes issue with men who are stereotyped for being too busy with work, frozen in Confucian patriarchy, and disconnected from their families by their failure to communicate. Leaders are critical of the narrow traditional view of men's work as only outside the home and typified by the "salaryman" bread-winning stereotype. In contrast, woman's work inside the home has traditionally been

Allen Kim

deemed as caregiver and emotional provider for the family. Leaders pinpoint long work hours, the focus upon children's academic achievement, men's drinking and hostess-bar culture, and their personal pride and selfishness as contributing factors that alienate men from their families.

In South Korean society, Confucianism solidified "an extreme form of patriarchy." FS speakers point to men's abusive use of power, authoritarian parental control, anger-management problems, alcoholism, the emphasis upon emotional restraint, and the expectations for complete obedience emphasized within Korean family ideology. Getting men to open up about their lives and to interact with family members in more emotionally expressive and nurturing ways is considered the central problem for South Korean fathering. Inspired by biblical principles and the example of Jesus, FS seeks to modernize fatherhood by encouraging South Korean men to develop healthy communication skills and adopt a more active, involved role in raising their children.

Organization

Offering an array of hands-on marriage and family education seminars and related magazines and books, the self-proclaimed "movement center" has generated both national and international news. Fathers' School International Headquarters in South Korea functions as the central management

and administrative base for its domestic and international programs. The organization sponsors religious programs as well as non-religious programs (called "Open Father" programs) devoid of Christian references. The majority of participants are recruited through local churches, newspaper advertisements, word-of-mouth from former members, pressure from family members, and targeted marketing initiatives in public spaces.

For their international operations, FS regional headquarters are located in North America, Europe, Oceania, and selected East Asian countries, each with their respective staffs and cadre of grassroots volunteers. In addition, Mother School (a complementary program assisting women to examine their role and identity as wives and mothers) and "pre-Father School" programs (targeting younger, unmarried men in public schools, the military, and church contexts) are offered.

Fatherhood Program Overview

FS enlists Christian clergy, professors, government officials, media celebrities, and former members to conduct a 4- to 5-week program instructing fathers on their identity and role as the head of family. In their brochure, their "social campaign" to build strong and healthy families is guided by a fourfold aim:

1. Recovering the identity of the father.
2. Creation of a new and healthy family culture.
3. Developing strong leadership in the workplace and in society.
4. Establishing new support groups for social service.

Conference seminars are composed of small-group accountability forums similar to those of Alcoholics Anonymous and focus on personal disclosure, camaraderie, and openness about personal feelings. Men engage in a collective journey to repair broken relationships and broken communication with family members by adopting a new fathering identity and role less tethered to Korean patriarchy and focus on breadwinning. Each week addresses one theme pertaining to the father's influence, father's manhood, father's mission, father's spirituality, and father and the family.

Portrait of Father School Seminars

FS seminars function as intensive, dynamic socializing contexts intended to improve men's behavioral performance as emotionally expressive, caring, and responsible fathers. The core features elaborated here typify most Father Schools that I observed firsthand during field research in the immigrant church context in the United States and during FS site visits to prison, military, church, and government programs in South Korea.

Practice 1: Benchmarking God the Father and Western Fatherhood

FS uses video, testimonies by former members, and news reports about men's moral and familial failures to denigrate Korean patriarchy. The FS solution involves prioritizing a more expressive and caring father ideal represented by cobbling together the figure of Jesus, biblical values, and images of western fatherhood as exemplary models.

Practice 2: Timed Regimen

Through intensive interaction via group activities and strategic homework assignments, men pursue a new paradigm of fatherhood by listening to lectures, exploring their interiority, acknowledging past wounds, confronting personal failures, and integrating revised behaviors that signify a new fathering identity. Men become increasingly enveloped by the organization's discursive, physical, emotional, and spiritual routines, which are designed to promote emotional bonds between members and their families.

Practice 3: New Speech Guidelines

Men are asked to abandon sexist and hierarchical Korean speech patterns that prevent intimacy at conferences and with family members. For example, newcomers are all addressed as "brother" without reference to honorific status markers while wives are addressed as "beloved wife" apart from domestic references like "house person." Members are instructed to adopt a more affectionate and democratic conversation style.

Practice 4: Hug Bombing

Male to male hugging is an organizational symbol and greeting prominently featured in FS literature. To challenge men's distant parenting style, men are drilled in hugging and saying, "I love you" with fellow FS members and then subsequently with family members. Hugging at conferences is mandatory and designed to enhance openness and

care among fathers and to encourage men's expressive engagement with family.

Practice 5: Letter Writing

Considered the central FS activity, men are provided stationery to compose letters to family members. Fathers each pen letters to their own fathers to heal their "father wounds" and recognize the legacy of fatherhood passed down generationally. This is followed by letters written to spouses and children to express regret for the past, to share words of love and care, and to pledge a new fathering vision in the future.

Practice 6: Public Confessionals

Letters penned by fathers serve as the basis for small-group sharing activities and become the source of public scrutiny and reflection. Through the sharing of men's letters, fathers build social cohesion and practice openness and emotional expressiveness.

Practice 7: New Fatherhood Displays

Men are asked to take family members out on dates as an opportunity to bond, they are encouraged to share words of love and praise, they share gifts of appreciation, and they are asked to have intimate conversations that emphasize understanding. On the final conference day (attended by family members), men wash the feet of their wives (as performed by Jesus for his disciples). This symbolizes men's humility, care, and devotion to family. This is followed by a formal graduation ceremony with public pledges of spiritual purity and commitment as renewed "family builders."

Future

The Chinese character representing fatherhood (shared by East Asian and many Southeast Asian cultures) is a pictograph of two arms crossed with a whip in each hand—stressing the authoritarian, disciplinary, and instrumental role that fathers traditionally embody. In contrast, paternal acculturation in the United States involves emulating an intimate "new father" ideal that is loving, involved, and nonauthoritarian—deemed a better fit for contemporary families. FS exemplifies the changing nature of fatherhood and how non-Western men of diverse backgrounds are actively engaged in a similar search for meaning, fulfillment, and purpose in their identities and roles as fathers.

The back side of the storm:
Clergy families in distress

by Marcus N. Tanner, Ph.D., president and CEO, HealingChoice, *www.healingchoice.org*

It was an unusually calm day for an Easter Sunday morning in Texas. It was reminiscent of the calm before the back side of the storm. I was a pastor and for the first time in my ministry, I left my pregnant wife and daughter at home before heading to church that morning. Although our family saw the approaching clouds, somehow we thought we would be protected. It was on that day that I was forced to resign.

The previous 6 months of our ministry had been quite stormy. We were on staff at a large church that had just hired a new senior pastor. The details of the experience that the pastoral staff was about to endure are important but are too long for this article. Suffice it to say that the church was divided over a significant issue and a small group of people were leading the charge in contradiction of the stated goals. Two weeks prior to that Easter Sunday morning, the church had come to the end of a process and was in a business meeting to decide if a future process would take place on the key issue. The business meeting was filled with a venomous

and biting tone. I had not, in all my life, ever witnessed such hatred among Christian believers. At the end of the meeting, a vote took place: 51% against, 49% for.

Those 2 weeks before I would step in front of the congregation, along with the entire pastoral staff, and resign were some of the most uncertain times of my life. My wife was 7 months pregnant with our son and my daughter was 6 years old. My wife was having complications with the pregnancy and as a result went on early maternity leave. Unless we received our promised severance pay, we would soon be in a devastating financial situation. That, coupled with the psychological abuse we had experienced over the previous 6 months, the loss of our friends at the church, and the blacklisting by local denominational officials were too much for us. We were in distress, financially, emotionally,

Assemblies of God ministers. In short, 41% of the sample had experienced a forced termination at least once during their ministry. The ministers who had been forcibly terminated were more likely to experience negative marital and

Marcus Tanner

family satisfaction, have higher levels of stress and more physical and emotional health problems, and consider leaving the ministry than those who had never been forcibly terminated (Tanner & Zvonkovic, 2011).

In our second project, we sampled from 39 denominations in the United States. The findings were almost identical to those in

> One minister we interviewed said he couldn't even drive down the same street as the church or he would start to hyperventilate and sweat; these are symptoms of anxiety. Another minister we interviewed talked about aking up in the middle of the night from nightmares about the experience.

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As new Americans continue to influence the religious and demographic landscape of the United States, far more research is needed to understand the experiences of fathers from diverse backgrounds and the specific ethnic "fathering sites" that influence men's important identity and role as parents. The transformative impact of the FS program beyond conference participation is not altogether clear. However, for Chloe, whose Korean father passed away several months after attending FS in Southern California, each of his passing birthdays is an opportunity for her to pull out her father's only letter of love to her and to be reminded of his voice and deep, abiding care. For recipients, the discursive and personal value of FS writing assignments may extend far into the future. ∎

socially, and physically—ready to leave ministry altogether.

I hear stories similar and worse than my own every week from ministry families who have been or are going through a forced termination experience. My experience left me with so many unanswered questions. Some of those unanswered questions led me to Texas Tech University to study human development and family studies. My research has centered on ministry work and family but, more specifically, I wanted to know how other ministry families experienced forced termination.

My research on forced termination is eye-opening, exciting, heartbreaking, and cathartic, all at the same time. My colleagues and I recently published several journal articles from three different studies. Our first study was a fairly large pilot project that sampled

the pilot project. Because we had so many different denominations participate, we were able to look at a within-denomination frequency of forced termination experiences. The Assemblies of God had the highest frequency of forced terminations (34%) compared to any other denomination represented in the study (Tanner, Zvonkovic, & Adams, 2012).

In our third study (Tanner, Wherry, & Zvonkovic, 2012), we wanted to hear the stories of ministry couples who had been forcibly terminated and collect some specific data on Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Quantitatively, clergy and their spouses scored high and in some cases above the clinical cutoff for GAD and PTSD. These

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couples also scored themselves as having experienced mobbing (bullying tactics) prior to their forced termination. This provided an indication that forced termination was not just an event but was also a process.

As I began to interview these couples, the stories I heard from them were heartbreaking. One couple told of their experience with a forced termination:

My son, who was 7 years old, had cancer. Something told us he would not survive but we wanted to do all we could for him while he was still on this Earth. The church at first was sympathetic to our situation. We had quite a few people reach out to us in our time of need. The board met and discussed allowing me time off from weekly duties in order to care for my son; I just needed to preach.

 Most of the couples I spoke to recalled a specific event when it seemed at first the church was supportive but then changed; maybe it was a personal event in the ministry family or an event centered on the life of the church. It seemed as though the process or initial outcomes of this event usually disgruntled someone in the church, usually one closest to the minister.

I don't know what happened. It seemed like everything was fine at first. They met with my husband and said he could have the time off as long as he continued to preach the services. … It got really bad after our son died. It seemed like the whole church was angry with us, our family … my husband. What did we do? We were the ones hurting. We were the ones needing ministry. We had spent so much time with families in the church, when their loved ones passed away, visiting them at the hospital, visiting family after a death. Where were they when we needed them?

This reaction was common. All that ministry families do for their congregation meant nothing during a forced termination. The weddings, births, parties, funerals, hospital visits, counseling sessions, all the work and relational time spent with members of the congregation couldn't prevent a forced termination.

I thought we were friends. When his son died in an accident, we were there, even my young son, eaten by the cancer, was there to console them. I just don't see how he could

do this to me, my family when we were in such need. They just turned on us. We lost everything, our son, our home, our church, everything we had been working so hard for.

We called this the "Brutus effect." Often in these forced terminations, it was a "friend" who either led the charge or sounded the trumpet. We found the process of forced termination lasted between 6 months and 2 years. During this time, the ministry family would be subjected to private and public mobbing (bullying) by a small group of people from the church. The mobbing left members of the ministry family emotionally scarred and in some cases afraid to stay in ministry. One minister we interviewed said he couldn't even drive down the same street as the church or he would start to hyperventilate and sweat; these are symptoms of anxiety. Another minister we interviewed talked about waking up in the middle of the night from nightmares about the experience.

All of the clergy couples we interviewed spoke of great loss as a result of forced termination. Much of a ministry family's life is subsumed by the church in which they work. Many ministry families move away from their own families to answer the call to serve the church. Ministry families find the social, emotional, spiritual, and financial facets of their life intrinsically tied the church. When the church decides, through the demeaning process of forced termination, that they no longer want the ministry family there, the associated loss is catastrophic in many cases. Ministers are not eligible for unemployment insurance; they are some of the lowest paid, highly educated professionals in the world (Morris & Blanton, 1994) and often do not have a retirement plan. Many of them live in a parsonage (church-owned housing), so they may be kicked to the curb as well. The immediate and long-term effects of a forced termination are the back side of the storm. The mobbing tactics of the church are damaging and leave their own engraving on the well-being of the ministry family. The loss associated with the culmination of a forced termination can have long-lasting and devastating socioemotional, psychological, spiritual, and financial effects.

Some of the clergy couples we spoke with said they were forced to file for bankruptcy and move their family in with their own

aging parents. Many of them talked about the great struggle of deciding whether to continue on in ministry as a vocation and spoke about their lack of faith in God during this time. Some of the clergy couples we spoke with had adult children who witnessed the forced termination. Their adult children refused to have anything to do with the church. I think it is ironic that families who, by choice or virtue of their relationships have dedicated their lives to serving a group of people, experience such loss and devastation from a group of people whose unofficial motto is to "love one another." Forced termination gives new meaning to the phrase, "suffering for the cause." One question that remains in my mind is, "who ministers to the ministry family?" I am thankful that there are people who recognize the unique situations ministry families find themselves in, especially situations that are detrimental to their well-being.

As this article describes a very negative experience my family now shares with ministry families who have gone before us and will come after us, I want to conclude on a positive note. Although the back side of the storm is always the worst and its strength and duration typify the destruction left in its wake, storms do eventually come to an end. Our storm came to an end and we began to clear away the damage in our lives. We have had to focus on restoring almost every aspect of our lives: relationships, finances, emotions, and our physical health. As we moved through the motions, my family saw an unmet need in the lives of ministry families and wanted to do something about it. Since 2005, HealingChoice™, an organization that my wife and I founded, has been providing PastorCare to ministry families. It is our hope that we can help ministry families rebuild and restore after a destructive experience and also educate ministry families and churches on how to avoid such experiences.

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Wrestling with sacred matters: A new theory in family studies

by Loren Marks, associate professor, Louisiana State University, *lorenm@lsu.edu*

At his retirement in 1999, Wes Burr gave a PowerPoint presentation outlining his vision of the future of family studies. The final slide image was a cowboy riding into the sunset. His accompanying comment was something like: "Please don't call me and ask if I want to co-author a paper, I will be out working on my bucket list."

After 10 years, Wes bumped into an enviable problem. He ran out of "must do" items on his bucket list. After contemplation, he confessed an unfulfilled dream to himself— a failure to articulate his theory that the sacred matters to families. I count it as a high point of my professional life to have served as a sounding board for one of our field's best as he put together his swan song.

I have been asked to offer a brief, distilled version of the new theory former NCFR President Wes Burr published in his recent volume *Sacred Matters* (2012), co-authored with Randy Day and myself. Before doing so, I would like to tell you a little about the experience of wrestling with the *Sacred Matters* book. As I prepared this article for *NCFR Report*, I reviewed several of the e-mail exchanges Wes and I had surrounding the book. I was reminded that Wes's notes bounced from the humorous to the profound —how often do you bump into someone

who quotes from Monty Python and the Old Testament in the same exchange? Yet, what stood out to me most, and still does, is that Wes Burr possessed the rare combination of health, time, and resources to go wherever he wanted and to do whatever he wanted— yet, within a large expanse of possibilities he chose to arise almost daily at 4:00 a.m. to compose a book that he felt internally compelled to write. What could be that important to a man no longer drawing a paycheck?

Sacred Matters presents novel qualitative and quantitative research, but the heart of the book is "a theory about ways the sacred parts of the human experience help and harm families. … a theory that provides new, useful, and testable insights about *how, when,* and *why* sacred matters make a difference in families" (p. vii). The theory is

faith] is the most important thing that exists. If it's not [true], it's the most important lie that exists. I am basing my life and my future and eternity on the fact that this is true.

Loren Marks

Not only does the sacred matter; to many, the sacred matters profoundly. This may be especially true in the context of family life, as outlined in Proposition 2.

Proposition 2: Experiencing Parts of Family Life as Sacred Gives Them a Unique, Unusually Powerful and Salient Influence in Families

Many of us have encountered various expressions of W. I. Thomas's principle that a

> Whether or not God actually exists, if belief in God becomes powerful enough to catalyze action at individual, marital, and family levels, then that phenomenon becomes an important (and in some cases, a most important) variable of interest for clinicians, educators, and researchers who are striving to understand and assist families.

grounded on four general ideas or propositions that I will mention and briefly discuss.

Proposition 1: Experiencing Parts of the Human Experience as Sacred Gives Them a Unique, Unusually Powerful and Salient Influence

To put it more succinctly: *the sacred matters.* This is the bedrock idea. U.S. polls indicate that a very high percentage of the population reportedly believe in religious, spiritual, or sacred realities. Further, for a significant minority (20%–25%), religious beliefs are reported to be the most important influence in life. One father we interviewed reported: *Either you believe this stuff or you don't, and if you do and if you have a faith that is meaningful and alive … then [religious*

situation perceived as real is real in its consequences. What is less well known is that this idea was borrowed and adapted from an earlier statement by William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*: *Name it the mystical region, or the supernatural region … . Yet the unseen region in question is not merely ideal, for it produces effects in this world. … [T]hat which produces effects within another reality must be termed a reality itself, so I feel as if we had no philosophic excuse for calling the unseen or mystical world unreal … . God is real since he produces real effects.*

Whether or not God actually exists, if belief in God becomes powerful enough to catalyze

clergy families

Tanner, M. N., & Zvonkovic, A. (2011). Forced to leave: Forced termination experiences of Assemblies of God clergy and its connection to stress and well-being outcomes. *Pastoral Psychology, 60,* 713–726. doi: 10.1007/s11089-011-0339-6

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action at individual, marital, and family levels, then that phenomenon becomes an important (and in some cases, a most important) variable of interest for clinicians, educators, and researchers who are striving to understand and assist families.

The proposition that sacred perceptions and experiences are especially powerful in the context of family presents a two-edged sword, as outlined in previous work by Annette Mahoney and Kenneth Pargament. For example, viewing and perceiving one's own marriage as not only contractual but "sacred" may convey profound meaning to the spouses and may enhance the stability and quality of the marriage. As one wife we interviewed shared:

[I believe that] "What God hath put together, let no man put asunder." I don't believe in divorce ... . God has engrained my marriage in me so deeply ... . [Some] women might say, "I don't care if he [my husband] is mad or not." Or "I don't care if I spend all the money up." But in my mind I'm thinking ... I've got to get myself together and give [God and my husband] the honor of what this relationship means ... . We've been together so long, married 16 [years], and it's not all been great but when they see [me], they want to know where [my husband] is.

While the sacred can strengthen a relational bond, this is not the whole story. Conversely, if a marriage viewed by the spouses as deeply "sacred" ends in divorce, the pain of divorce may be intensified by an added burden of failure and sense of tarnishing something sacred. In short, viewing something as sacred raises the stakes. As important as perceptions and views of the sacred may be, we contend that action and behavior are what matter most, as addressed in Proposition 3.

Proposition 3: It Is Variation in what People Do as a Result of Their Ideals and Beliefs About the Sacred that Determines Whether the Sacred is Helpful or Harmful in Families, and It Is Not the Mere Presence of Religion in General or Global Religiosity that Makes the Difference

Healthy ideals and beliefs are often an important step in the right direction, but it is the way that beliefs are lived out that gives them destructive or creative power.

Rodney Stark, a leading sociologist of religion, has demonstrated that many atrocities in recorded history were linked to religion gone wrong. Stark also demonstrates in his recent work that widespread "blessings" and religious capital come from organizations and persons who constructively channel religious beliefs and actions. While Stark's focus is national and macro-level in focus, *Sacred Matters* presents data from the familial micro-level that demonstrate that religion can both bless and destroy relationships—depending on how faith is lived out in the home. As an African American father we interviewed said:

It's not what you do in the [church] building, it's what you do outside the building ... because we can clap the right "Hallelujah"

and say the right words and everybody sees, but when no one that's in your church sees you, how are you acting then? Hmmm? ... Are you living the ... walk of faith ... or are you living like the world's living? I can't say it any [plainer] than that ... . Are you practicing what you preach?

Sacred beliefs about forgiving, sacrificing, and loving others are insufficient on their own. If professed faith is to be a blessing to marriages and families, actions must be elevated to more closely match generative ideals. The word may be mightier than the sword, but the word is not mightier than a visible example. As a Muslim mother of two said of her husband:

In terms of religion, it doesn't matter how much the father talks to the children [about religion], the children will learn from what the father does. ... If my children see my husband ... setting an example, I don't have to "teach" it. They are seeing it.

A central message from the families we interviewed may be expressed as follows: "Our

behavior is permission to others to behave similarly … but it is more than that. It is an invitation to do so." Some invitations we send are harmful; others are constructive—as outlined in our fourth proposition.

Given the central ideas that (a) the sacred matters for many families; that (b) viewing something as sacred raises the familial stakes; and that (c) behavior matters more beliefs, we are still left with the question: "When are behaviors that result from the sacred helpful and when are they harmful?" Our answer to this question is:

Proposition 4: The More Behavior Is Consistent with a Cluster of Widely Shared Goals in Families, the More It Tends to be Helpful, and the More It Is Inconsistent with These Goals, the More It Tends to be Harmful

A resulting problem with this response that there is more than a little controversy about what these goals should include. We selected the five goals of: (a) providing helping patterns, (b) meeting emotional needs, (c) providing a home (in both a literal and ideal sense), (d) balancing stability and change, and (e) avoiding and coping with "undesirable" experiences. These goals serve as commencement points and receive detailed attention in *Sacred Matters* as we relate data that portray how "sacred" beliefs and behaviors alternatively impede or facilitate these important goals. This list of five goals to consider in connection with sacred matters is brief and incomplete, but as Wes has written:

The theory in this book is a little like the tip of an iceberg that will increase in size rather than melt and disappear. The modest number of ideas we introduce are the parts of the sacred that can be easily identified, easily translated into the language of scholarly inquiry, and added to the field. However, there is a limit to what can be done in one book, and there is a great deal more about the sacred that is like the ice below the surface. It is less visible and hasn't been put in the language of academia, but we hope it will also become a part of family studies in the future.

To Wes Burr's thinly veiled invitation to NCFR colleagues to look more deeply than we have been able to look, I add my own explicit invitation. I look forward to reading careful, thoughtful, and balanced work on sacred matters that increasingly captures the complexity, richness, and dualism of this vital family research topic. ◼

From crisis to connection: Spirituality as a resource for families after a cancer diagnosis

by Dan Zomerlei, M.Div., M.S. MFT, *zomerle1@msu.edu*, Adrian Blow, Ph.D., Sahil Gambir, H.BMSc, and Janet Osuch, M.D., all of Michigan State University

Meet Jan.

Jan is a 56-year-old mother of two. She is a lifelong healthy eater and the proud finisher of three marathons after age 40. She does not smoke, drink, or live near power lines.

At her annual physical, her doctor had some surprising news for her.

"Jan. You have breast cancer."

Meet Tyler.

Tyler is a 5-year-old boy who is excited about his new friends and the many great things he is learning in his kindergarten class. Tyler's parents, Ryan and Sophie, are happy to see Tyler and his two older siblings all thriving—socially and academically—at school.

But life begins to unravel. Tyler has not been feeling well. Headaches. Fatigue. No interest in having friends over or in playing with his brother and sister. After a series of doctors' appointments and medical tests, each more daunting than the last, Ryan and Sophie's worst fears come true.

Their physician tells them, "I'm sorry. Tyler has a brain tumor."

Many people each year are given the same bad news that Jan and Tyler received. Their story is the story of millions of Americans. The National Cancer Institute reports that males have a 1-in-2 lifetime probability of developing cancer. For females, the rate is only slightly better at a lifetime probability of 1-in-3. A 2010 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that cancer accounted for 23.2% of all deaths in the United States in 2007. This equates to more than 560,000 cancer deaths in one year.

The good news for cancer patients is that cancer mortality is on the decline. Cancer survival rates for all cancer sites are now more than 68%. However, in spite of this good news, both cancer death and cancer survivorship present challenges to families as they attempt to adjust to the pervasive effects of the disease on the patient and family.

The Cancer Crisis

Susan Sontag, in her 1977 book, *Illness as a Metaphor*, described cancer as "the disease that does not knock before it enters." Cancer presents an existential crisis that can be even more painful than the disease. The ambiguity about the course of the illness leaves families wondering, "Why me?" "How could this happen?" "What if I die?" "What will my family do without me?" The sense of control over one's health that patients like Jan believe they have is eradicated. The rules for living they once steadfastly obeyed—eating healthy, exercising, having a close community of family and friends—have been overmatched defenses against the cancer disease.

The prevailing model for healthcare professionals in helping patients and their families combat the ambiguity and lack of control over cancer is the biopsychosocial model. This model, first introduced by George Engel in 1977, guides healthcare professionals as they attend to the unique biological, psychological, and social needs of each patient. This framework is a vast improvement over the prevailing treatment model that dominated the majority of the twentieth century, in which medical professionals typically were more focused on treating the disease and its symptoms than the patient as a whole person.

Yet there remain limitations with the biopsychosocial approach. The existential crisis of a cancer diagnosis can create needs in patients and families that are not sufficiently met. The existential crisis quickly evolves as the newly diagnosed patient faces questions about life, death, mortality, and life's meaning. Unaddressed existential needs can lead to an even deeper suffering for cancer patients and their families as they search for meaning and purpose in midst of their disease. This search

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for meaning is central to the family experiencing cancer. As Victor Frankl wrote in his 1946 book, *Man's Search for Meaning,* people are not destroyed by suffering, but they are destroyed by suffering without meaning.

Spirituality as a Resource for Families Experiencing Cancer

The search for meaning leads patients and families beyond the limits of the biopsychosocial realm. One study found that 75% of physicians reported that their patients sometimes or often want to address spiritual issues in the examination room. As cancer patients and their families face their feelings about death and begin to reflect on their lives, they commonly desire to seek spiritual support to help them cope with their illness.

Since Engel's 1977 article, some researchers have argued for extending the biopsychosocial framework to include the spiritual aspect of human life. Including spirituality in healthcare presents health professionals

crisis to connection

with another avenue for intervention and for improving patient and family well-being. The biopsychosocial–spiritual (BPSS) model recognizes the potential of spiritual and religious variables in modulating the biological experience of illness and can improve the delivery of compassionate care to families with a cancer diagnosis.

Multiple researchers have found evidence that spirituality can act as a buffer to many of the negative BPSS outcomes that may be associated with cancer. For example, a study on chronically ill patients found that those with lower levels of spirituality were more likely to experience symptoms of depression. Another study found a link between higher levels of spirituality and a reduced onset of mental illness, as well as increased likelihood of adjustment to physical illness. Research also suggests that patients who are more spiritually open to seeking a connection to a meaningful spiritual practice or the transcendent are better able to tolerate illness and treatment-related pain. Studies such as these suggest that spirituality can be a valuable resource for families facing the ambiguity and crisis of a cancer diagnosis and can reduce the risk of negative psychosocial outcomes in families.

The Process of Spiritual Coping
Intending to add to the understanding of how spirituality can benefit families experiencing a cancer diagnosis, our team of researchers has sought to identify the specific processes of spiritual coping in response to a cancer scare. Preliminary findings from interviews with women who had recently experienced a diagnosis of breast cancer revealed aspects of spiritual coping that are consistent with the findings of other researchers and can provide insight into the basics of how spirituality can benefit families who are coping with the existential nightmare of a cancer diagnosis.

Spirituality provides cancer patients and their families with answers to unanswerable questions. The distress accompanying the question of "Why me?" loses its sting as people turn to their higher power or system of meaning to come to beneficial conclusions. These conclusions typically vary from person to person. Some see cancer as a "wake-up call" reminding them to readjust their priorities. Others believe they got cancer in

order to help them have more empathy and understanding for other friends and family members who have gone through a severe illness. Still others may not be sure what the exact purpose is yet, but most believe they will be able to learn something significant about themselves and about life as a result of the disease. Spirituality provides patients and families meaning in their suffering.

Another common result of spiritual coping during cancer is the augmented sense of connection to other people, God or a higher power, self, and nature. Cancer can be a very isolating disease. The physical restrictions caused by the cancer and its treatment often prevent people from participating in their usual roles within their family, work, and social life.

When cancer patients rely on their spiritual beliefs, they are often reminded that there is more to life than their hospital bed and the lost hair they counted in the shower that

> Spirituality provides patients and families meaning in their suffering.

morning. Spirituality turns people outward, even in their loneliest moments, to feel connected to people and the world around them. It is a means of transcending the despair of cancer and can be a bridge to peace in the midst of tumult. In the experience of connection, cancer loses its power.

Our hope is that our work will add to the developing conversation about how spirituality serves as a resource for cancer patients and their families as they navigate the existential crisis of cancer and other life-threatening illnesses. We believe that by having an awareness of the specific processes of spiritual coping, healthcare professionals will better understand how to incorporate spiritual care into the care of the whole cancer patient and his or her family.

Future of Spirituality in Cancer Care
Unfortunately, there are still many barriers preventing the integration of spiritual care for cancer patients. For example, the treatment team may lack the knowledge, training, or time necessary to adequately address patient's spiritual needs. They may be concerned about wrongly using their power as physicians or nurses to impose their religious views on their patients, or they may be personally

uncomfortable with the topic of spirituality. Other healthcare professionals may simply believe that evidence of the connection between spirituality and health is weak.

Yet progress is being made in meeting the spiritual needs of patients. For example, in 1992 only three medical schools offered specific courses on spirituality. Currently, more than 100 of the 150 medical schools in the United States now offer some selection of courses on spirituality in medicine, and 75 of those 100 schools require students to take at least one course on the topic.

Other simple ways help hospitals meet the spiritual needs of cancer patients in their care. For example, by providing ongoing spiritual training and support for healthcare staff on how to collect spiritual histories from patients, healthcare workers will become more aware, more qualified, and more comfortable in addressing spiritual concerns. These spiritual histories are a brief assessment tool that can be implemented within the time constraints of the physician's routine clinical practice.

Healthcare workers can also be invited to do their own intentional self-reflection on what spirituality means for them. It can be valuable for healthcare professionals to be thoughtful about what gives meaning to their lives, meaning to their work with patients, or what they think about death. Awareness of one's own spirituality can help physicians be aware of how patients rely on their own spiritual belief systems to find comfort or even to guide their treatment decisions.

Changes such as these in healthcare settings can vastly improve the effectiveness with which healthcare professionals meet the existential needs of patients like Jan, Ryan, Sophie, Tyler, and the thousands of others each year who receive cancer diagnoses. Research points to spirituality as a valuable resource for families as they cope with the multifaceted suffering brought on by cancer. Thus it is our responsibility as researchers and clinicians to continue to search for the best methods of capitalizing on this resource as we provide compassionate care for each patient and each family faced with cancer. ∎