Multiculturalism and Attention to Issues of Social Ethics in Theological Schools: Implications for the Development of Church Leadership

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Journal Editor:	editor@commongroundjournal.org
Webmaster:	webmaster@commongroundjournal.org
Mailing Address:	Common Ground Journal
	c/o Linda M. Cannell
	5250 Grand Avenue Suite 14-211
	Gurnee, IL 60031-1877 USA

From the Editor
By Soong-Chan Rah

The articles in this issue deal with the challenges of multiculturalism in multiple sectors of evangelical life and leadership development. At the beginning of my article ("Prophetic Voices and Evangelical Seminary Education") I note that less than half a century ago, the word evangelical would have been associated almost exclusively with white evangelicals. For many historians and theologians, the American evangelical story has been the story of Americans of European descent in the larger stream of American church history. While that particular article focuses on the challenges presented by the African-American experience, the larger movement of evangelicalism must deal with the widening scope of cultural diversity. Because the dominant story and narrative of American evangelicalism has focused on white evangelicals, there has been an exclusion of the story of non-white evangelicals, who have often had difficulty finding acceptance in the dominant white evangelical culture.

The articles in this issue represent a range of reflections and approaches to engage the increasingly critical topic of multi-ethnic and cross-cultural issues in seminary education. Often, evangelical institutions fail to adapt quickly to changes in the social-cultural setting. If seminary education is to effective serve the next evangelicalism, then significant questions need to be addressed. These articles are an attempt to initiate a dialogue and conversation as to how evangelical seminaries may effectively serve its rapidly changing constituency.

Mark Harden, who has spent many years in seminary administration, particularly in the area of diversity and multiculturalism, explores the importance of considering the theological ethic of reconciliation in the context of multi-cultural education. Harden's article is also an important reminder to consider the theological motivation for multi-ethnic ministry at the same time offering concrete steps to move towards reconciliation.

Lisa Anderson-Umana's article explores a significant potential obstacle for the ongoing work of multi-cultural education in mission contexts in particular – differing perceptions of power. Examining Hofstede's concept of power distance, Anderson-

Umana looks towards the creation of a third culture as a way of addressing the issue of power distance and developing Biblical harmony in cross-cultural settings.

Soong-Chan Rah's article attempts to address the growing complexity of multi-cultural ministry and the need to hear prophetic voices in this conversation. Examining the historical development of African-American evangelicalism in the decade of the 1960's and 1970's, I raise the issue of how evangelicalism often shuts down or minimize prophetic voices of color from within its own ranks. If evangelical seminaries are to develop a healthy multi-ethnic vision, these prophetic voices must be engaged in an increasingly diverse evangelical landscape.

David Leong's article moves us towards a constructive expression of multi-cultural seminary education. Leong provides a specific example of a course offering at Seattle Pacific University. Through a specific example, the reader may garner guidelines on developing similar courses for use in other regions of the country, contextualizing the content for a specific context.

Liz VerHage's article attempts to explain the rationale and motivation for the creation of the Center for Holistic Evangelism and Justice Ministries at North Park Theological Seminary. Building on existing partnerships, the center seeks to address a significant gap in evangelical seminaries– specifically in the area of urban, justice, and multi-cultural education.

About the Editor

Soong-Chan Rah is Milton B. Engebretson Associate Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism at North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL.

Trusting Strangers as Neighbors? Overcoming Challenges to Reconciliation

By Mark G. Harden

Abstract
A discussion of ethical issues related to how Christian institutions can make reconciliation a priority for the church and its mission. The complexities of group and individual cross-cultural interaction are discussed to highlight the challenges to reconciliation. The biblical concepts of neighbor and stranger are explored in light of the challenges and issues of reconciliation. Questions that emerge from a brief review of an interpretation of the Good Samaritan parable related to theological concepts are presented to discuss some of the problems associated with understanding and addressing reconciliation issues using a love ethic. The results include identifying barriers and the consequences of inaction based upon identified social conditions. Definitions of the problem and reconciliation are offered along with necessary steps to achieve reconciliation goals in the church community.

Introduction

If you had an opportunity to achieve something worthwhile, and all that stood in your way was having someone watch over an earthly treasure for a moment, who would you trust—a neighbor or a stranger? The easy answer would be a neighbor. At least you know where they live, and by the time the opportunity presented itself, you would have become acquainted with them as a neighbor. These days, however, it is difficult to know our neighbors due to our individualistic lifestyles. Being in the company of a stranger or strangers and having to fully trust them is problematic for most people. At minimum, most people would require sufficient background information about a stranger before giving them the benefit of the doubt. This hypothetical situation raises thought-provoking questions with regard to reconciliation. Questions for us to consider in this essay include: How do you see your fellow Christians—as neighbors or strangers? If as strangers, how do you build trust sufficient to begin a reconciliation process? And, is achieving reconciliation worthwhile for the church and its mission given the difficulties one can encounter? This article puts the complexities of group and individual cross-cultural interaction in perspective to highlight the challenges to reconciliation.

In the above scenario, I am referring to the idea of trust which is often associated with an established relationship. Most of us live segregated lives, wherein difference or diversity is often a perceived threat. This makes embracing ethnic and cultural differences a challenge, particularly when there is a history of distrust between social groups. Perceptions of cultural differences have been found to contribute to the problem of mistrust of individuals and institutions which impact the quality of interaction across differences (Doney et al., 1998). Those with different cultural orientations are challenged in their relationships when there are issues of authority and commitment that require trust. Trust in this instance has been defined as "a willingness to rely on another party and to take action in circumstances where such action makes one vulnerable to the other party." It is not difficult to imagine how an added layer of cultural differences can make trust more difficult to achieve. Moreover, factors that influence individuals establishing trust include the ability to calculate the benefits of the relationship, to predict the outcome, determine the intentions of the other person, and believe the capabilities of the other person (Doney 1998, 609).

When there is a protracted history of distrust among those who are different in the Christian community, we call for unity through reconciliation. Reconciliation, however, may be difficult to achieve. It requires willingness to trust 'other'. It requires relying upon the good will of others. Our current practices and state of affairs indicate that we have not become a reconciled community of believers. In fact, beyond the teaching of Jesus, there is little evidence of successful Christian reconciliation models and leadership that demonstrate practical steps that lead to productive outcomes. What does a biblical model of reconciliation look like for us?

Lessons about Strangers and Neighbors from the Scripture

In this new millennium, the Christian church has the opportunity to effectively address and resolve issues of difference and to create opportunities for reconciliation and unity in our diverse world. New generations, changing demographics, and the mission of the church indicate that reconciliation must be taken seriously in theological education, among church leaders, and in the hearts and minds of believers if we believe that reconciliation is possible. This, however, requires us to have improved clarity about what

the issues are, how to resolve them, and how to begin building a sense of community in which there is an appreciation for differences.

Theological schools and other Christian institutions have incorporated many elements related to cultural differences and diversity in programs to prepare leaders for ministry in the church. By doing so, they have attempted to preclude intergroup and intercultural conflict caused by social inequities and individual practices. But few have succeeded in providing us with a model of change that will help us realize the benefits of reconciliation. Later in this article the benefits and limitations of approaches used to prepare church leadership for reconciliation efforts are discussed. However, before discussing the practical issues surrounding reconciliation, the concepts of neighbor and stranger drawn from Old and New Testaments are presented.

The parable of the Good Samaritan in portraying the concepts of neighbor and stranger, displays powerful symbols in our Christian tradition that may provide us with insight about the nature of the challenges to meaningful reconciliation, and may capture a love ethic worth exploring.

What is conspicuously absent in the parable of the Good Samaritan is the identity of the stranger found on the side of the road. Luke says that Jesus gives us the identity of the compassionate man, but leaves no clue as to the identity of the injured man. It is as though we are left on our own to fill in the blanks about a stranger that demands the audience's attention. Obviously, Jesus wants us to see the stranger as our "neighbor." My sense is that the "neighbor" who needs our help is often a taken-for-granted stranger that few understand or care to know. The irony of making neighbors out of strangers by addressing their needs begs a question: who in our midst is most likely to be overlooked or ignored?

The parable of the Good Samaritan instructs us to make a genuine effort to help our neighbor. There is no question that the person under scrutiny is the religious character who fails to show pity for the stranger. Of all of the individuals in society, I find that the stranger is the most likely to be taken for granted, and at the same time, the least likely to be known or understood as a neighbor. Therefore, we need not only to ask "who is our neighbor?", as does the lawyer in this story, but we need to act as Jesus is indicating in the story: "how do you respond as a neighbor?" Although the former question has to do with the awareness of who is your neighbor, and the latter question has to do with a love

ethic for a stranger, I believe these questions are two sides of the same coin. The story of Jesus giving the parable of the Good Samaritan in response to a Jewish lawyer is helpful in providing insight about the barriers to reconciliation that may exist between the "neighbor" and the "stranger".

The concept of "stranger" throughout the Bible clarifies this insight. Scriptural themes about "strangers" suggest that otherness should not be a factor that deters action. Treatment of the stranger is an Old Testament theme in reference to Israel and the commandment to care for the "stranger" that is within their "gates" (Deuteronomy 10:19). In the New Testament, the stranger is identified in the Gospel of Matthew as "Lord" when the "sheep" will ask the question, "Lord when did we do all of these things?" The stranger is also the one whom we do not necessarily recognize as Jesus. Note the appearance of Jesus to Cleopas, who unknowingly answered him after the resurrection on the Emmaus road, that Jesus is sometimes a "stranger" (Luke 24:18). This concept helps us to avoid casting an image upon the stranger that makes our actions paternalistic and demoralizes the stranger. In fact, it elevates the stranger to equal or greater status.

John's letter to the church puts the question of reconciliation this way: "How can you love God who you have not seen and hate your brother (or sister) who you see every day (I John 1:17, 18)?" The implicit question is also, How can we ignore the needs of our neighbor (i.e., the stranger) that need to be affirmed in the context in which we live and share God's resources? Paul goes further and calls for us to accommodate our 'brother' who may be offended by our actions by never committing an offense. While on one hand we are neighbors, on another hand we are demonstrating love and compassion for the stranger (Jesus). The question is how far are we willing to go to be reconciled with a fellow believer?

Indeed, Christians are to be neighbors. They are neighbors in the sense that they need to be affirming each other as believing members of the household of God. They must not only get along, they must thrive together as "one body" with equal opportunity and value in an equitable system of priestly and prophetic ministry. Diversity presents challenges that often undermine this vision of the church and serve as a destructive force for the benefit of dominant group members or the status quo. Although it is a good start,

merely talking about the issues and having token members is far from making progress, and offers false hope at best for those marginalized in a biased system or practice.

Important Questions about Reconciliation

In addressing inequity, there are three important questions that must be answered: What is it about people that make reconciliation very difficult to achieve? What is the problem that reconciliation seeks to solve or restore? And, when will we know that we are ready for reconciliation? Several things come to mind as we seek to address these concerns. First, there is the problem of not being motivated to be reconciled and authentically engaged with the issues due to mistrust. Many Christians believe that they have not done anything wrong. Individuals are generally resistant to the idea of feeling guilty as members of the dominant group. They will simply not be ready to engage until they perceive that their good intentions get noticed by being seen as a "Christian" or at least a neutral bystander to social injustice. They find the idea of owning up to a privileged social status unacceptable. These individuals may not engage in productive dialogue until they are presented with what they perceive to be objective information about their behavior, attitudes, and beliefs. Second, unawareness of the issues and social dynamics of prejudice and stereotypic behavior leads individuals to blame the 'other' group or its members for the problem. The problem perpetuates itself because people cannot conceive of apologizing for their group's actions that they already believe are immoral or that they have already resolved in their individual life. In this instance, simply believing that prejudice is wrong is not proof that one perceives and is more inclined to treat a stranger of another ethnicity as a neighbor. Advocates often assume that the problem is self-evident and people understand the fundamentals of the problem. But until we increase deeper understanding about the nature of these things, we may do little to address the root of the problem. Third, not only is there little motivation or incentive to be reconciled, but people generally do not see a clear pathway to resolving the difference rift. Many individuals attempting to address reconciliation seem to suggest that having good intentions and Christian beliefs that support reconciliation are all that are needed, as though it is impossible to be prejudiced and a Christian at the same time. When a pathway to equity and social justice within the Christian community goes beyond temporary accommodation strategies, and when people are empowered to go beyond

'tolerance' or 'tokenism' toward meaningful inclusiveness, the benefits of reconciliation will seem more realistic and the journey toward reconciliation worthwhile.

Consequences when Progress Toward Reconciliation Fails

What happens if we do nothing about the current conditions and fail to make progress toward reconciliation in the church community? It is not difficult to imagine the consequences. It becomes self-evident that diverse communities will continue to have individuals threatened by differences and will disintegrate and perpetuate stereotypes that will lead to prejudice. Whether intentional or unintentional, prejudice will drive a wedge between groups and individual Christians until the complexities are better understood. Some will continue to grow more threatened by diversity as demographics shift. In a divided church community, individuals will either have a harder time finding communities and organizations to join or become more symbolically marginalized because of the inability to function cross-culturally. Others may exercise their privilege and power because of their social status and increasingly marginalize others intentionally and unintentionally. Some will try to reconcile with others out of ignorance in the name of unity but many will tire in frustration and will resist reconciliation efforts in order to maintain the status quo. Individuals may sometimes attempt to champion a cause toward unity, but stall when the short-term costs of reconciliation outweigh the long-term benefits. In some instances, fresh starts become false starts by the end of the week. In any event, some will seek to maintain the status quo in isolation and self-segregate in order to avoid interacting or sharing power with others.

If things remain the same, I believe the consequences will worsen based on an understanding of how future conditions can make reconciliation goals more difficult to achieve. Society's demographics are shifting each year and dominant group members are increasingly challenged to meet the demands of a diverse society, and at the same time, minority members of society are challenged by the forces demanding cultural assimilation. The current system cannot change if the status quo goes unchallenged. Based on rising tensions between ethnic groups in America, there appears to be a critical shortage of leaders in theological institutions who understand how to address reconciliation issues in a diverse 21st century church and society. This lack of understanding affects the disparities in health, wealth, housing, and education. It breeds

competition between the haves and the have-nots for resources and sustains intergroup conflict based on differences. Finally, unless there is progress in understanding how to lead social change, many Christians will continue to join ranks of those who seek to avoid the complexities of reconciliation and social justice. Consequently, some will become increasingly insensitive to the demoralization that others experience because of the avoidance.

The trust problem exacerbates our inability to resolve intentional and unintentional conflict due to past injustice and inherent human tendencies that cause relational stress and intergroup conflict. This leads to further prejudice, stereotypic behavior, and ideological isms (such as sexism and racism). Conflict undermines healthy human interaction among diverse individuals and is perpetuated by the evil necessity to compete against other cultural and ethnic identities. As a consequence of social injustice and inequities, individuals and minority groups re-live the perceived wrongs of the past, and experience suffering for past conflicts that need to be resolved with a measure of willingness, empathy, and compassion.

Cultural difference and diversity is, however, a predicament of the human condition. Yet, this predicament reflects the spiritual condition in which we find ourselves when faced with the choice to be reconciled with the other. The irony is that God is also other. Our faith compels us to be willing to trust and believe in this other without complete understanding of the differences. God is the stranger (e.g., as indicated in Matthew 25) who seeks to be reconciled with us. God requires that we accept others as strangers, and be willing to submit to his authority by being reconciled. Hence, the challenge of reconciliation is having the willingness to embrace the stranger (who we perceive as being different) as a neighbor, and to remove offenses that may threaten or become a barrier to that fellowship.

Approaches to Reconciliation

Several current approaches that attempt to address this problem have strengths and weaknesses. They include but are not limited to the following: 1) anti-racism methods; 2) diversity methods; and 3) intercultural competence. I will briefly outline some of the strengths and weaknesses of each.

Anti-Racism Approaches

Anti-racism approaches emphasize addressing issues of social injustice and inequality that are due to racial identity, social status, and power differences. Although the anti-racism approach has evolved over time from challenging systemic and overt forms of racism to challenging racially-based hate, power, and privilege, these approaches do not clearly identify what can be done to eliminate racism from our society.

Anti-racism approaches have little value beyond the enforcement of civil rights laws in this post civil rights era, but may be effective in laying the foundation for moral conviction in order to influence individuals at the philosophical level. The research is clear that people can develop strong egalitarian values and still hold prejudices against others both consciously and unconsciously. Moreover, we have no research evidence that anti-racism, as an approach, prepares or empowers people for permanent change in practice. In fact, research indicates that anti-racism education often backfires and may create more divisiveness by inadvertently demoralizing the individuals it seeks to disciple. Nonetheless, anti-racism dialogue is needed to promote Christian values and reinforce the values of an egalitarian society, to increase awareness about the potential harm associated with prejudice and discrimination based on racial categories. It is increasingly apparent that we may need anti-racism activities to complement other approaches that directly address issues and conditions of differences that create or may lead to intergroup and individual conflict.

Diversity Approaches

Diversity approaches deal with inclusiveness and tolerance of others in the broadest sense. The goal is not to transform or eradicate people's preferences around difference or inclinations. It is to help people become aware of differences and help them to manage their own behavior in light of those differences. The challenge with this approach includes the issue of competence. Although some form of self-regulation through understanding how one differs from another may also reduce intergroup conflict, it does not empower people to interact and work together effectively. That is, it does not go far enough.

Research has shown that motivation is also essential. The lack of motivation undermines ability to interact with others. Mutual understanding and trust supports motivation and mitigates the problem. It does this by establishing an authentic connection whereby individuals can perceive similarities and differences without feeling threatened. Diversity approaches seek to empower and affirm individuals in a diverse context without necessarily building their capacity or motivating them to interact across differences. Research shows that without effective efforts in place, individuals will self-segregate, prejudice their actions, and utilize stereotypes unintentionally and unconsciously. Diversity approaches do not provide opportunities for people to develop the competence for engaging with those who are different or for working with those who are different in

diverse contexts. In this case, diversity approaches need to be augmented as an intervention that includes building capacity for intercultural competence.

Intercultural Competence Approaches

An intercultural competence approach is concerned with all forms of cultural difference and the extent to which individual cultural orientations cause intercultural conflict. It is concerned with how one can achieve intercultural effectiveness in the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains of human interaction. Cultural orientation identities have been empirically derived from multiple disciplines in recent decades, and serve to increase our understanding of a variety of human behaviors. Intercultural awareness and competence are seen as necessary for effective engagement with others and for effective functioning in a diverse environment. Intercultural competencies include empathy, open-mindedness, self-awareness, non-judgmentalism, and tolerance. Because of the nature of diverse communities, intercultural approaches may address issues of power, privilege, cultural dominance, and various forms of ethnocentric bias that lead to prejudice and to the use of stereotypes. The issues are understood in light of human nature. Therefore, the concept of intercultural awareness and competence has to do with how one manages perceptions, emotions, and behaviors on multiple human dimensions. Individuals learn how to adapt to differences to facilitate effective engagement with those who are different.

Because differences and the psychology of differences are also research-based, what has been learned about building intercultural awareness and competence is not only interdisciplinary, but practical for application and best practices. As it relates to reconciliation, this approach emphasizes building intercultural competence with each generation to prepare people to live in a global society or to function within a diverse context. Although it is apparent that this approach offers the most promise in this essay, this approach has some challenges. It assumes that it is counter-intuitive for people to have intercultural awareness and competence due to how people are socialized. So, the results at a community or society level are seen over the long term. It does not require in-depth discussion on issues of racism or sexism because the nature of intercultural conflict encompasses differences that relate to many other ideological isms. Moreover, it does not guarantee that individuals with awareness will take the initiative toward reconciliation. Therefore, a structured approach is needed to help people engage in reconciliation. One must be intentional about connecting the dots on issues of racism, sexism, etc., and in laying a moral and practical foundation for motivating individuals to engage in reconciliation efforts.

Conclusion

Reconciliation can be envisioned as a pathway that reflects an understanding of the challenge of overcoming differences. Reconciliation can only occur between various individuals and groups when understanding and trust, facilitated by the work of the Holy

Spirit which can illuminate and inspire us, is established for us make an effort toward reconciliation. More broadly, when reconciliation occurs, differences are understood from multiple perspectives, opportunities for cross-cultural trust are apparent, and social equity is achievable through proper preparation to move us beyond false starts into equitable practices. Reconciliation occurs when new norms and a Christian love ethic that represents the ideal of stranger and neighbor as equals in the household of faith results.

This process must include support for mutual respect and meaningful interaction across groups for long-term impact. It can be achieved by including, but is not limited to the following:

1. A willingness to embrace and demonstrate an appreciation for differences and allowing that willingness to be anchored in the authority of God's will for us.

2. An equipping of leaders to increase intercultural competence for engagement with all sectors and levels of society as part of the church mission.

3. The socializing of our children in ways that dispel myths, encourages exploration, and promotes appreciation and value for cultural differences.

4. Seeking of leaders who can mobilize others to explore cultural differences and engage cross-culturally.

5. Exemplary leadership provided by majority and minority group individuals with moral conviction and courage for sacrificial service to achieve reconciliation goals.

6. A plan of action that is also implemented by members of the group in power to address dire conditions that are the legacy of past social injustice for the sake of their own group members' transformation.

7. A movement and culture of authentic reconciliation in our churches as essential Christian ministry service.

Reconciliation can be defined as the result of a series of conflict-resolving actions initiated within a constructive, dialectic, and restorative process that continuously builds trust while creating a dynamically-integrated diverse and cohesive Christian community. A reconciled community is one that continually affirms and validates others, while teaching and organizing itself to adapt by (a) overcoming intercultural conflict with a deeper understanding of inborn human tendencies and inclinations to be ethnocentric; (b) proactively preventing incidents of social inequity; and (c) promoting a set of mutually-

shared beliefs, values, expectations, and norms reflective of a reconciling Christian worldview where people are affirmed and appreciated. These strategic directions may provide a roadmap to spur action for intentional change. Furthermore, current approaches may be more effectively utilized as we incorporate such strategies for reconciliation and engage in this challenging process as neighbors rather than strangers.

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About the Author

Mark Harden, PhD, serves as Lead Faculty and Dean of Intercultural Relations at Bethel University, Bethel Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. Mark currently teaches courses in a seminary graduate degree program he developed in 2004, including the implementation of a required course that address issues of cultural differences, sexism, racism, and classism. Mark has help to create several organizations, and has directed several community outreach programs. He is a consultant and human ecologist with specialization is in program development and evaluation related to family and youth development interventions, community development, and provides intercultural competence assessment, training, and development assistance.

Differences in Power Distances May Make Harmony on a Multicultural Team More Challenging
By Lisa Anderson-Umana

Abstract
Threats to multicultural team harmony may come from a variety of sources such as immaturity, lack of shared vision, or from a compelling task to unify everyone; but one aspect that tends to slip under the radar screen is difference in power distance. This article shows how characteristics of both high and low power distance in cultures influences team members' concepts of *what* team harmony is and *how* it is created. The creation of a third culture, a *counter-cultural temporary Christian community*, can offer a multicultural team a way to suspend cultural expectations and work together.

A Brief Background

Before I knew the term *multicultural team* existed, I already had been involved in creating them and actively participating on them. After a team meeting I was often left bewildered by the group dynamics; but for many years I didn't have the theory to help me name the tension in the air, much less deal with it. The teams I have served on are composed of Latin Americans from different countries and missionaries from the United States. What awakened my curiosity has been complaints about team members from certain countries about how "complicated and difficult they are to work with and how disruptive they are to team harmony." Others are consistently criticized for being conceited. I found myself wondering: *Why is that*?

Team leaders proposed a number of reasons why some people seem to have a hard time "blending in and working harmoniously." We speculated that perhaps harmony is better formed on the basis of a shared vision or a compelling task that unites everyone. Or maybe the team member's "task vs. relationship orientation" is a key variable. We conjectured that one's spiritual maturity and experience is the factor that lends itself most to team harmony. We also wondered if team harmony is mainly a question of group chemistry, personalities or even social styles. Regarding cultural differences, we assumed that since most everyone was from Latin America and spoke Spanish, everyone was pretty much the same culturally speaking. Turns out that was an erroneous assumption.

Although there are many factors that contribute to or detract from team harmony, differences in power distance may make harmony on multicultural teams more challenging, precisely because power distance is a deeply held cultural assumption, off the radar screen of most team members, rarely questioned, nevertheless strongly influential in group dynamics.

Why does power distance matter? This article speaks to two reasons why it matters:

1. Power distance values influence a team member's concept of *what* team harmony is and *how* it is created.

2. By virtue of its subtle nature, the influence of power distance may go unacknowledged, leaving a team unprepared to deal with its impact on team harmony.

Power Distance

Now that globalization is in full swing, more and more is being written about multicultural teams with the business industry on the cutting edge of the research (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1998; House et al 2004). This wealth of literature provides rich insights and lessons for those of us working in the church and parachurch environments on teams made up of members from different races and cultures. Few researchers have been as influential as Geert Hofstede, a Dutchman who has been studying culture and its consequences on organizations since the 1960's. Since his framework of cultural dimensions is one of the most widely accepted and well-studied[1], I will use his definitions and cultural value indexes. Hofstede identified several cultural dimensions[2]. A dimension is a distinctive aspect of culture that can be measured relative to other cultures. Hofstede has statistically verifiable

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[1] While Hofstede's work is well-known, he is not without his critics (see http://geert-hofstede.international-business-center.com/geert_hofstede_resources.shtml). His critics often focus on methodological issues (his use of an attitude-survey questionnaire), the generalizability and representativity of his results for an entire nation, and others assert that his work is obsolete and doesn't take into consideration the cultural homogenization effect of globalization. Nevertheless, since the focus of this article is on a multicultural team's dynamics, I found the *idea* of power-distance to be a helpful way for our team members to name one of the cultural differences at play when we met together.

[2] The four dimensions he developed are: Power distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism-Collectivism and Masculinity- Femininity. I chose to study the implications of power distances because that dimension seemed to vary the most among members on our multicultural team.

measurements called indexes for more than seventy countries, giving each a score relative to one another.

The dimension of power distance describes issues related to one's relationship to authority and how social inequality is viewed. As Hofstede (2005, 40) notes, inequality exists in every society; some people have more power, more wealth, more physical and intellectual capacities, more status than others. All societies are unequal, but some cultures are more accepting of that inequality than others. The difference between cultures lies in how inequality is viewed and handled and the degree to which those inequalities are accepted.

> Power distance is defined as *the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. (*Hofstede 2005, 46 emphasis in text)

What lends force to Hofstede's research is the fact that the definition of power distance is based not on the most powerful but on the perspective of the least powerful. This suggests that society's level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005).

Possible Characteristics of Team Members from High Power Distance (HPD) cultures

Storti (1999, 130) describes the following characteristics:

- In the same way that some people are taller than others, team members from HPC cultures accept as natural and existential inequalities in power and status. It is normal for some to have more power and influence than others.

- Those with power try to distinguish themselves as much as possible, by insisting on the use of titles, position, status symbols and by not sharing or delegating their authority.

- With power and influence comes the responsibility to look after and care for those less fortunate. Those with less power adopt a dependent attitude, expecting to be looked after.

- Subordinates are not expected to take initiative and are closely supervised.

Naylor (2008) in his excellent series of on-line articles filled with principles and illustrations of HPD and LPD cultures notes the following:

- HPD leaders tend to accept and endorse authority, which in worst case scenario, may lead to a "voluntary servitude" on the part of the lower status members and "tyranny" on the part of the higher status members.

- They tend to accept as normal the privileges awarded to someone of a higher status like the use of titles and ranks, advantages, special treatment.

- The lower status members tend to accept a position of less power relative to their perceived superiors.

Possible Characteristics of Team Members from
Low Power Distance (LPD) Cultures

Storti (1999, 131) identifies possible characteristics of LPD cultures:

- They may see inequalities in power and status as man-made and largely artificial; it is not natural, though it may be convenient, that some people have power over others.

- Those with power, therefore, tend to deemphasize it, to minimize the differences between themselves and subordinates and to delegate and share power to the extent possible.

- Subordinates are rewarded for taking initiative and do not like close supervision.

- Naylor (2008) notes in addition that members tend to expect and will often fight for equal treatment, regardless of status, occupation, seniority, wealth or age. Even members who have authority are not offended when other team members approach them and offer their opinions or critiques, they often welcome their input.

It needs to be kept in mind that the contrast between HPD and LPD should be understood as a generality and that no culture is ever 100% high or low power distance culture. Hofstede's research, however, has demonstrates the tendencies of a given country or regions.

Table 1 indicates the power distance value scores of the members of the multicultural team I am part of and help to lead.

With the discovery of the existence of power distance and the observation that our Latin American team members had a large disparity among themselves, I began to explore how high and low power distance cultures conceived of team harmony and

worked towards creating it. In addition, since each culture has traces of both God's image as Creator and the stain of sin from the Fall, a Biblical perspective of harmony was vital.

Table 1 Power Distance Index for Selected Countries. [3]

Country	Power Distance Index
Guatemala	**95**
Panama	**95**
Mexico	**81**
El Salvador	**66**
Peru	**64**
Argentina	**49**
United States	**40**
Costa Rica	**35**

Team Harmony

What is team harmony and how does a team create it? Hofstede posits that culture is like software of the mind, culture causes a certain group of people to think, act and feel in a certain way. He defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005, 4). It would follow that each culture has its own unique definition of what constitutes group harmony and how it is best achieved.

Team Harmony Among High Power Distance Cultures

Members of HPD cultures may consider team harmony to consist of "having few desires, following the middle way and being moderate, not having aspirations beyond their rank" (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005, 47). They would expect being led by being told

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[3] Source: http://www.clearlycultural.com/geert-hofstede-cultural-dimensions/power-distance-index/

exactly what to do. Team leaders, then, may conceive that the way to bring about team harmony is for everyone to unquestionably accept his or her authority, to follow orders and protocol. Team members may be afraid to express disagreement, preferring a silent type of protest. They would expect an autocratic and persuasive/paternalistic style of being led (House et al, 2005). Team members would expect close supervision and being looked after in exchange for submission and loyalty to the one in charge.

Team Harmony Among Low Power Distance Cultures

In contrast, those members of LPD cultures might consider team harmony to consist of open, frank discussions, nothing taken personally, an ethos of equality, openness and togetherness (Naylor 2008). Team leaders, then, may conceive that the way to bring about team harmony is to use a consultative style of decision-making or one based on the majority vote, with everyone sharing their opinion. They may accept team members to show independent thought and action, while rewarding initiative.

A Biblical Understanding of Team Harmony

What might be God's perception of inequality in society (high and low power distances) and indicators of harmony as revealed from Scriptures? Admitting that as a Westerner, my reading of Scripture will be influenced by my cultural background and biases, the following three passages speak of harmony in an effort towards gaining a biblical understanding of team harmony or unity.

> **Psalm 133 (NLT)**
>
> **[1] How wonderful and pleasant it is**
> **when brothers [and sisters] live together in harmony!**
> **[2] For harmony is as precious as the anointing oil**
> **that was poured over Aaron's head,**
> **that ran down his beard**
> **and onto the border of his robe.**
> **[3] Harmony is as refreshing as the dew from Mount Hermon**
> **that falls on the mountains of Zion.**
> **And there the Lord has pronounced his blessing,**
> **even life everlasting.**

This Psalm draws a picture of how God would have us live life, soothed (as with anointing oil) by harmony with others and refreshed (as like dew) by the peace that

fellowship brings. God raises a standard of harmony (verse 1) and then pronounces his blessing on it (verse 3).

These New Testament passages bring specific instructions as to how to go about creating "team" harmony.

Romans 12:16 (TNIV) "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not think you are superior."

Interesting enough, the Romans passage speaks to issues of power distance. In the first century, Greco-Romano society was strictly hierarchical; at the top was the elite, educated class who would exercise leadership over the lower classes of laborers and slaves. The Apostle Paul, throughout chapter 12 admonishes the Christians in Rome to not follow the ways of the world, to not think more highly of themselves than they ought, to overlook offenses, and even pay back good for evil. This counsel would have run counter to a high power distance culture where Roman tyranny and forced servitude was the order of the day.

1 Peter 3:8-9 (NLT) "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers [and sisters], be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."

In the verses prior to 1 Peter 3:8, Peter counsels the wives and husbands how to get along, then Peter addresses his advice to "all of you" (verse 8-9) and he gives specific advice as to *how* harmony could be fostered through demonstrating sympathy, love, compassion and humility to one another and even to those who have harmed or insulted them.

While Scripture teaches us not to think too more highly of ourselves that we ought, paradoxically it also teaches about the necessity of submitting to authority on the governmental level (Romans 12:1-7), within the church structure (Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13), within the family (Ephesians 5:22-24, 6:1) and mutually to one another (Ephesians 5:21).

What exactly might team harmony look like in practical terms? In my reading from the social sciences, I discovered the following description of "rapport" to be closely aligned to Peter's advice to the church. "Social intelligence" speaks of harmony as having

rapport between individuals which entails three main components: (a) mutual attention; (b) shared positive feeling and (c) synchrony (Goldman 2006, 29-30). What one might observe on a harmonious team is that the members are attuned to one another, paying attention and making eye contact. There would be a sense of mutual empathy, a sense of positivity and warmth. If you were observant of the non-verbal communication, you would notice them being in sync or on the "same wavelength"; their conversation would be animated, full of spontaneous expression and responsiveness.

Conclusion

Preparing the Team to Rise to the Challenges of Being Multicultural

Remember my initial curiosity regarding why some people are considered "complicated and difficult to work with" and others are criticized for being "conceited"? After investigating high-low power distance values, I am able to name and better understand the tension that exists between certain members. What had previously been this blurry, bothersome hindrance to group harmony, upon informed scrutiny, focused into this picture: The members from the LPD countries were complaining (*Why are they so complicated?)* about the HPD members' need for maintaining a strict adherence to protocol and hierarchical procedures. The members from the LPD countries were criticized for being conceited (*who did they think they were?)* because they disregarded hierarchical structures, were not respectful of rank and were hostile to any sign of inequality or of one "rising above the others."

Unless otherwise instructed, every team member will interpret what's happening through their High or Low power distance default grid of understanding. We all tend to misattribute, negatively attribute or judge the intentions and actions of others according to our frame of reference concerning what is right or wrong. This reaction is often very emotional and visceral.

We as team leaders are making strides in grasping the implications of varying degrees of power distance, acknowledging its influence and preparing ways to help the team deal with it. Our plan is to add a new dimension to our team meetings: Cultural studies. Put the existence of high-low power distance on their radar screen. Help them question their own visceral reactions and assumptions. Teach them about the dangers of

misattribution using examples from our own team dynamics. However, it would be wise to remind ourselves that "understanding cultural values doesn't solve the dilemma of whether we should follow or confront expectations, but it fosters in us a more positive attitude about the motives of people who misunderstand us" (Plueddemann 2009, 94).

Creating a Third Culture

I readily admit that we have a long way to grow in terms of team harmony. There are many contributing factors such as how well team members align with the team vision/tasks and how well they spur one another one to growth and maturity in Christlikeness. But the hidden dimensions of HPD and LPD must be recognized.

Through the research involved in writing this paper, I did discover one thing we are doing well. When we bring a multicultural team together to accomplish a task, we invest heavily in creating what we call a *counter-cultural temporary Christian community*. We introduce a new set of norms and rules and invite members to abide by them for the duration of our time together. This has created what could be called a "third culture" –a space where people don't expect that their cultural norms will be followed, where they are open to doing things in new ways. To some degree, this has leveled the playing field between the HPD and LPD members. I have tried to illustrate that "third culture" with Figure 1 showing how the three interconnecting circles of High-Low power distance concepts of team harmony and a biblical perspective can come together to form a "third culture." Relationships within our *counter-cultural temporary Christian community* seem more horizontal than hierarchical which seems to align with the New Testament teachings noted above. We have explicitly taught the counter-cultural principles of the New Testament recognizing they were addressed to a multicultural team of Jews, Romans and Greeks. Paul introduced a brand new set of rules in Romans 12 as did Peter in 1 Peter 3:8 to a multicultural church of (verses that resonate with LPD cultures) while at the same time both writers acknowledged the God-given role of authority and the importance of submission for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men (1 Peter 2:13) and Romans 13:1-7 (verses that resonate with HPD cultures). The presence of biblical support for both cultural orientations –HPD and LPD—presents us with the opportunity to live within the tension created by this paradox. Team harmony is a little of both HPD (submission to authority) and LPD (equal

treatment for all), and yet neither (do not repay evil with evil, love your enemies). Remember, in the end, team harmony exists to serve the mission of the team. Harmony is both God's standard of being and doing among His people and it carries with it His blessing (Psalm 133).

Our resolve is to see multiculturalism as God's means of preparing us for life and service in heaven, where people from every nation and people group together will bow before the Almighty God to worship Him.
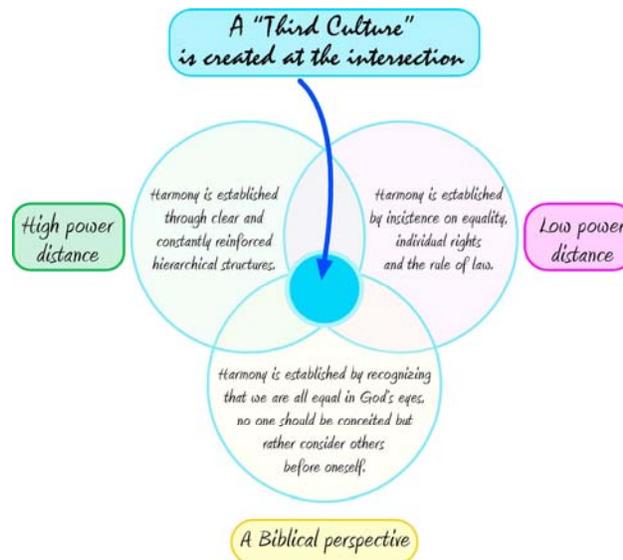
Figure 1. Creation of a Third Culture through the interconnecting circles of High-Low power distance concepts of Team Harmony and a Biblical perspective

Recommended Reading

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About the Author

Lisa Anderson-Umaña has served as a missionary with Latin America Mission for 28 years living in Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica and traveling throughout Latin America. She presently resides in Honduras with her husband, Alfredo Umaña and two children. Her work in Christian Camping International entails developing teams of instructors in nine different countries of Latin America dedicated to training camp and church leaders how to be counselors, program directors and Bible study curriculum writers. She graduated from Wheaton College Graduate School in Educational Ministries and is currently working on her PhD Educational Studies from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, near Chicago.

Prophetic Voices and Evangelical Seminary Education
By Soong-Chan Rah

Abstract
The current era of American Christianity is witnessing the shift to an ethnically diverse next evangelicalism. Evangelicalism's traditional orientation towards white leadership and dominance is challenged by a present and future multi-ethnic reality. Previous attempts at integration and shared leadership in American evangelicalism were made in the 1970's as black evangelicals engaged with white evangelical institutions. In the examples of the National Black Evangelical Association and the ministry of Tom Skinner, we see the need for evangelical institutions, such as seminaries, to understand the dynamics of power sharing, suspicion, and lack of common focus in achieving a united evangelical movement.

Introduction

Less than half a century ago, the word evangelical would have been associated almost exclusively with white evangelicals. For many historians and theologians, the American evangelical story has been the story of Americans of European descent in the larger stream of American church history. Assumptions could be made about the defining face of American evangelicalism as the face of an educated, upper-middle class, 50ish white male, living near a seminary in a sub-rural community.[1] Because the dominant story and narrative of American evangelicalism has focused on white evangelicals, there has been an exclusion of the story of non-white evangelicals, who have often had difficulty finding acceptance in the dominant white evangelical culture. For most of the twentieth century, the domination of the white evangelical story has specifically meant the exclusion of African-Americans from the white evangelical mainstream.[2] The story

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[1] Donald Dayton and Robert Johnson first challenged the dominant motif of the evangelical story by raising the reality of the diversity of evangelicalism outside of the Calvinistic Presbyterian and Baptist networks that have oftentimes defined evangelicalism. See Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston, eds., *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991). Doug Sweeney adds that "In Dayton's view, the very scholars who spill the most ink on evangelicalism are responsible for misleading us as to its nature and significance. Indeed, they have focused mainly in their writings on the movement's intellectual leaders, usually privileged white men with Calvinistic worldviews and cultural pretensions that put them at odds with the vast majority of their followers.

[2] A 1979 work on evangelical theology by John Woodbridge, Mark A. Noll and Nathan O. Hatch, *The Gospel in America: Themes in the Story of America's Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan

of even self-identified evangelicals in the black community and their attempts at integration with the larger white evangelical movement is severely under-reported.[3]

In *The Next Evangelicalism*, I posit the reality of the changing face of American Christianity. The numerical decline of white evangelicals has occurred at the same time as the numerical increase of non-white evangelicals. *The Wall Street Journal* notes in a 2005 article that the "traditional face of American evangelicalism is changing. An ever higher number of U.S. evangelicals – perhaps nearing a third of the total – are Asian, African, Latin American or Pacific Islander."[4] Yet, in the same way that there has been minimal understanding about the integration of races in American evangelicalism in the latter half of the twentieth century, there continues to be a struggle with racial integration in 21st century American evangelicalism.

Despite the projection of evangelicalism's rapid movement towards a multi-ethnic future, the assumption of a white-dominated evangelicalism remains entrenched. As recently as 2005, *Time* magazine profiled the twenty-five most influential evangelicals in the United States. Twenty-three of the twenty-five slots were held by white evangelicals.[5] *Time* magazine's assessment of who are the most influential evangelicals was unfortunate but seemingly accurate. Evangelicalism lacks non-white leadership in nearly all areas of influence. National pastor's conferences continue to be dominated by white evangelical leadership. Christian publishers continue to focus on white authors. As noted in *The Next Evangelicalism*, leadership in Christian higher education on both the undergrad and seminary level remains predominantly white.

"Among evangelical seminaries, the percentage of nonwhite student enrollment has increased from approximately 15 percent in 1997 to 31 percent in 2005. However the

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Publishing House, 1979), has passing references to black evangelicalism stating, "The cornerstones of the inarticulate black theology were for the forgiveness of sins, awe of God, religious ecstasy, self-respect in Christ, ethical earnestness, and hope."(43) In the subject index, "Black Christians: and other evangelicals" yields a total of five pages in a 253 page work.(276) "Sovereignty of God" yields 11 pages of references (282).

[3] For example, one of the most extensive archival collections on American evangelicalism, The Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, has one folder on the entire history of the National Black Evangelical Association.

[4] Edith Blumhofer, "Houses of Worship: The New Evangelicals," *Wall Street Journal* (Easter Edition), February 18, 2005, p. W.13.

[5] David Van Biema, Cathy Booth-Thomas, Massimo Calabresi, John F. Dickerson, John Cloud, Rebecca Winters and Sonja Steptoe, "The 25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America," *Time*, February 7, 2005.

percentage of faculty of color in 2005 stood at 12 percent, which is disproportionally and significantly lower than the 31 percent minority student enrollment. Furthermore, the last available study on the percentage of minority faculty at evangelical Christian colleges and universities conducted in 1998, shows that minority faculty made up only 3.6 percent of Christian college faculty, which was actually a drop from the percentage of minority faculty in 1995. A random sampling of twenty different Christian colleges and evangelical seminaries provided by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* in 2007 reveals that ethnic minorities comprise less than 7 percent of the faculty at those twenty schools."[6]

If Evangelicalism is to be Prepared

If evangelicalism is to be prepared for its next stage, diverse voices need to be represented in all areas of evangelicalism. If we view seminary education as a key component in the future of evangelicalism, then seminary faculty, staff, and administration must reflect the diversity and integration that will be a salient characteristic of the next evangelicalism. Even as we contemplate and reflect upon the reality of the changing face of evangelicalism in the 21st century, we are confronted with the reality that potential demographic changes in evangelicalism and the attempt at inclusion and integration is not merely a 21st century phenomenon. We have already been through iterations of these challenges as an evangelical movement in the 20th century.

In the latter part of 20th century, particularly in the decade of the 1970's, there was a burgeoning movement of African-American evangelicals. These self-identified evangelicals held to a conservative evangelical theological framework, but were often excluded from key areas of evangelical leadership and influence. Typically, the black church is excluded from categorization as evangelicals. In 2006, journalist Ed Gilbreath wrote that "recent studies by sociologists and political scientists estimate the number of evangelicals in the United States at 25 to 30 percent of the population, or between seventy and eighty million people. However, these estimates usually separate out nearly all of the nation's African American Protestant population (roughly 8 or 9 percent of the U.S. population), which . . . is typically pretty evangelical in theology and orientation. Indeed, 61 percent of blacks – the highest of any racial group, by far – described

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[6] Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), 19-20.

themselves as 'born again' in a 2001 Gallup poll."[7] Despite similar theological stances, there is a disconnect between white evangelicals and the black church. As Oberlin College church historian, A.G. Miller notes, "Most scholars who study the evangelical phenomenon have had a difficult time situating black Evangelicalism historiographically and tracing its development as a movement."[8]

This article reflects on the development of a uniquely African-American evangelical identity in the 1960's and 1970's. This identity arose out of a strong black identity engaging with a conservative evangelical theology in the context of white evangelicalism. The prophetic presence of these African-American evangelicals had the potential for great impact on the larger movement of evangelicalism. However, numerous factors consistently undermined the influence of black evangelicals. Two different snapshots (the National Black Evangelical Association and the ministry of Tom Skinner) provide insight into the resistance offered by mainstream evangelicalism to prophetic challenges offered by black evangelicals. The story of the African-American evangelical community in the 1960's and 70's impacts our understanding and can shape our reflection and discernment for the next evangelicalism and the challenge to hear prophetic voices even in the relatively conservative bastion of the evangelical seminary.

The National Black Evangelical Association

The initial failure to see the black church as an expression of evangelical faith has yielded an unnecessary gulf between white and black evangelicals. From the very beginning, the black church reflected an evangelical ethos.[9] The black church, while holding to an evangelical theology developed a particular expression that served the particular cultural context of African American Christianity. "African American Protestantism evolved as a special hybrid of black culture and international

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[7] Edward Gilbreath, *Reconciliation Blues* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006), p.40-41.

[8] A.G. Miller, "The Rise of African-American Evangelicalism in American Culture" in *Perspectives on American Religion and Culture*, edited by Peter W. Williams (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 1999), p.261.

[9] William Pannell notes: "The origins of the black Christian experience in American were evangelical in nature. Some elements of evangelicalism could be found in the early attempts of the Church of England to convert and baptize blacks." See William Pannell, "The Religious Heritage of Blacks" in David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge, *The Evangelicals* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1975), 99.

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evangelicalism. Rooted deeply in the Bible and empowered by the Spirit, black faith was facilitated initially by evangelical witness."[10]

The exclusion of the traditional and historical black church from the larger evangelical movement meant that in the latter half of the twentieth century, a new category would need to emerge to intersect with white evangelicalism. One expression of that emergence would take the form of the National Black Evangelical Association (NBEA). "While Black Evangelicalism is certainly not limited to the membership of the NBEA, the NBEA is paradigmatic of the religious movement that we refer to as contemporary black Evangelicalism."[11] Founded in 1963 with a conference in Los Angeles[12] and originally known as the National Negro Evangelical Association (NNEA), the NBEA's beginnings reveal four different threads of influence and formation. Many of these threads overlapped in various individuals but provided four different influences on the formation of the NBEA.

First, there was the fundamentalist thread exemplified by the influence of the Nottage brothers[13] of the Plymouth Black Brethren. The Nottages became Christians in their native island of Eluthera in the Bahamas. After immigrating to the United States, the Nottage Brothers were aggressive about evangelistic efforts in the urban African-American community and were able to establish a number of churches in various cities throughout the United States. These churches would form a cluster of churches separate from the association of white Plymouth Brethren.[14] While separated from the larger white denomination, this thread of the NBEA would continue to reflect the conservative fundamentalism of their white counterparts in the middle of the twentieth century.[15] The theology of the Nottages "was representative of the pre-millennial dispensationalist

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[10] Sweeney, 127.

[11] Miller, 259.

[12] Bentley, 146.

[13] Whitfield, Talbot, and Berlin Martin (B.M.) Nottage (1889-1966). B.M. Nottage was the more prolific and well-known of the Nottage brothers. See Miller, 262.

[14] B.M. Nottage (in a privately published sermon cited by Miller) asserts that "the 'all welcome' sign of the doors of most evangelical churches does not include the Negro. . . . Usually he isn't welcome and is not allowed to enjoy such fellowship." See Miller, 264.

[15] Also, included in this thread would be the contribution of John Davis Bell of the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

theology of the early twentieth century, which emerged among the Plymouth Brethren and other fundamentalist groups. . . . This body of black Christians clearly identified with the early fundamentalist groups."[16]

The fundamentalist strain of the NBEA (having emerged out of the context of the black church in the Caribbean rather than the historical black church in the United States) would also provide a contrast to the influence of the historic black church, oftentimes resulting in conflict and suspicion.

> The modern black evangelical movement, as it developed, placed more emphasis on the propositional aspects of faith than on experiential and ecstatic elements. This caused some strains between the black evangelical movement and the traditional black church, leading some black evangelicals to characterize the historic black church as 'apostate' and 'unbiblical' Conversely, some in mainline black churches labeled black evangelicals as doctrinaire and schismatic 'fanatics'.[17]

The significant role of the fundamentalist thread, particularly the Plymouth Black Brethren, was the influence of B.M. Nottage on NBEA leaders such as "Marvin Printis, the first president of the NBEA; William Pannell, the professor of evangelism at Fuller Theological Seminary; and Howard Jones, the first black associate of Billy Graham."[18]

The second thread was comprised of African-American Pentecostals; specifically, "the Trinitarian Pentecostal tradition as exemplified in the Church of God in Christ. The best representative of this movement is William H. Bentley."[19] Bentley would go on to become the most prominent, articulate, and consensus-building voice within and for the NBEA. He would serve as the President of the NBEA from 1970 to 1976 and would self-publish the NBEA's only self-reported historical document, *National Black Evangelical Association: Evolution of a Concept of Ministry*. The Pentecostal thread differed from the first thread in that many of the black Pentecostals were coming from traditionally black denominations that were free of white control. The Pentecostal thread of the NBEA "saw

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[16] Miller, 263.

[17] Ibid., 261.

[18] Ibid., 263.

[19] Ibid., 266.

itself somewhere between the fundamentalist variety of black evangelicals and the traditional black churches."[20]

The third thread emerged out of the growing number of African-Americans graduating from evangelical institutions.[21] After World War II, a number of African-Americans began to attend evangelical educational institutions such as Wheaton College, Moody Bible Institute, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and Fuller Theological Seminary. These pioneering African-Americans were influenced by these educational institutions in relatively small numbers, but they provided a base of leadership for black evangelicalism. "Black evangelical leadership of the early and middle sixties was part and parcel product of the institutions in which they received their training. It was hardly likely then that as a group, they could be expected to articulate a black ethnic viewpoint. The standards we were taught to emulate were indigenous to white Christianity, not reflective of Black social and racial reality."[22] Part of the role of the NBEA was the opportunity to develop a uniquely black theological reflection in addition to the conservative theological framework they received in evangelical educational institutions. The connection between black evangelicals and predominantly white institutions extended into African-American involvement in para-church organizations, such as InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Youth for Christ, and Campus Crusade for Christ.

The 1960's and 1970's began to see an increasing involvement of black evangelicals in the context of white evangelical institutions. However, there would be increasing frustration by these black evangelicals facing racism in the context of white evangelicalism. While theologically akin to the larger evangelical movement, black evangelicals did not find institutional support for their burgeoning movement from within predominantly white evangelical contexts. The emergence of the NBEA provided a context for black evangelicals to engage with one another as they faced these challenges as one of a few ethnic minority leaders in predominantly white evangelical institutions.

> During the early stage, many black evangelicals were frustrated with the white
> evangelical movement. This tension primarily sprang from what blacks

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[20] Ibid., 267.

[21] Knight Interview.

[22] William H. Bentley, *National Black Evangelical Association: Evolution of a Concept of Ministry* (Published Privately, 1979), 16.

perceived as white evangelicals' indifference and lack of sympathy for the evangelistic needs of African Americans. This eventually led some black evangelicals to charge their white counterparts with a spiritual 'benign neglect.' Eventually the charge of neglect evolved into a stronger allegation of racism.[23]

The NBEA gave black evangelicals the opportunity to connect with one another and to develop an evangelical theology that incorporated greater sensitivity to the African-American community.

The fourth thread is exemplified by Tom Skinner and the Harlem Evangelistic Association (which would eventually become Tom Skinner Associates). Skinner's ministry represented African-American evangelists whose model of ministry mirrored those of white evangelicals, such as crusades, altar calls, and the prioritizing of personal salvation. Because of the emphasis on personal evangelism, many of these evangelists received sponsorship and support from white fundamentalists and evangelicals. The aforementioned Ralph Bell was a black evangelist. Howard Jones, an evangelist and Jimmy McDonald, a musician both served with the Billy Graham Association.

But the most notable African-American evangelist was Tom Skinner. Skinner was a nationally-recognized evangelist who had a gripping testimony that appealed to both blacks and whites. His entrance in to the NBEA, however, represents more than the influence of the black evangelists of the fourth thread. Skinner's involvement meant the introduction of the "young turks"[24] into the NBEA. The "young turks" included Tom Skinner, Carl Ellis, Columbus Sally and others who were more holistic in their approach to evangelism.[25] Some of the fundamentalist roots of the early NBEA would come into conflict with the social justice emphasis of the younger black evangelicals. At the 1969 NBEA conference held in Atlanta, Bentley notes that "the lines were clearly drawn between those blacks who were identified with a more socially conservative bent, and who, on account, some felt, enjoyed close relationships with the white evangelical establishment, and those blacks who felt that more conscious efforts ought to be made to

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[23] Miller, 265.

[24] Ellis Interview.

[25] Knight Interview.

actively accept our own culture and carefully relate the Gospel claims within that context."[26]

The emergence of this social justice emphasis and a strong black identity provided a balance to the strongly personal evangelism emphasis in the early years of the NBEA. "As a result, for the first time in the history of the organization, the position was unequivocally expressed that white methods to reach black people had been historically proven to be inadequate."[27] There was an increasing awareness of the shortcomings of white evangelicalism applied to the African-American context. The NBEA, therefore, became the safe place for African-American evangelicals to explore issues specific to their own community and to develop their own theological framework and evangelical identity. However, the formation of a unique black evangelical identity meant the diminishing support of the white evangelical community. This example of diminishing support for black evangelicals forming their own identity is best exemplified by the story of Tom Skinner.

Tom Skinner and the Challenge to Evangelicalism

In many ways, Tom Skinner's story mirrors the trajectory of the NBEA. Skinner's story was evangelical through and through. Yet his message would be considered outside of the mainstream of dominant culture's evangelical expressions. His initial foray into evangelicalism was rooted in his ability to share his personal conversion story and to speak about his individual salvation journey. His ability to powerfully communicate an evangelical gospel message caused many in both the white and black communities to stand up and take notice. As Bentley observes about the emergence of Tom Skinner,

> Young and captivating, charismatic and capable, Tom expanded the mental and
> spiritual horizons of what Black ministry could be. His rare gifts of
> communication made him, even then, a figure to be reckoned with. . . . With [his
> first book], *Black and Free*, he became an overnight sensation and to many,
> "the" major voice of Black evangelicalism.[28]

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[26] Bentley, 19-20.

[27] Ibid., 20.

[28] Ibid., 18.

Skinner would provide the best of black evangelicalism sought by white evangelicalism but also ultimately exemplify white evangelicalism's inability to deal with the prophetic voice offered by black evangelicalism.

Out of Harlem

Skinner was the son of a Baptist preacher in Harlem, New York. His family pushed Skinner towards an intellectual engagement with the world around him. In an interview for the Billy Graham Center Archives, Skinner reveals that

> My father . . . placed a strong emphasis on the mind. So my father urged us ("urged us" to put it lightly) . . . he urged us to read very early. By the time I was twelve, thirteen years old I had read five or six of Shakespeare's plays. I had read *Othello* and *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*. . . . He believed that the way black people overcome is that you just have to be educated.[29]

Skinner was a good student, "president of his high-school student body, a member of the basketball team, president of the Shakespearean Club, and an active member of his church's youth department.[30] At the same time, Skinner was also the leader of the Harlem Lords, one of the most feared street gangs in New York City. Disgruntled with a seemingly distant God removed from the sufferings of his community,[31] disenchanted with white Christianity's inadequate gospel[32], and disappointed with the black church of his father's generation, Skinner lived a double life of the good church kid and the violent gang leader. The night before a big gang fight that could establish Skinner as one the major gang leaders in New York, Skinner was converted by an unscheduled gospel radio

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[29] Skinner Interview.

[30] Edward Gilbreath, "A Prophet Out of Harlem" *Christianity Today* (September 16, 1996) at http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1996/september16/6ta036.html.

[31] In *Black and Free*, Skinner writes, "As a teenager, I looked around and asked my father where God was in all this? I couldn't for the life of me see how God, if He cared for humanity at all, could allow the conditions that existed in Harlem." Tom Skinner, *Black and Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968), 29. See also Skinner's interview: "I thought that it was necessary for me to disavow religion, Christianity. I could not reconcile the things that I was hearing in church with what was going on in the street. The violence, the hunger, the poverty, the oppression. Skinner Interview.

[32] ""There were whites who made a lot of noise about how God was the answer to all our problems and how the Bible was our hope. . . . Basically, this individual had a half dozen Bible verses for every social problem that existed. If you went to him and told him that a place like Harlem existed, he would say, 'Well, what those people up there need is a good dose of salvation.' That all sounded well and good, except for the fact that I never saw the fellow actually in Harlem administering that 'dose of salvation.'" Skinner, *Black and Free*, 29.

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broadcast. The broadcast featured a preacher, whom Skinner characterizes as emotional, uncouth, uneducated, but Skinner "got a spooky feeling this guy was talking right to me."[33] Skinner experiences a personal, spiritual conversion. Upon his conversion at the age of 17, Skinner left the street gang[34] and embarked on a path of becoming an evangelist.

Skinner began to preach on the streets of Harlem attracting crowds and winning converts. The formation of the Harlem Evangelistic Association led Skinner to schedule a major crusade at the world-renowned Apollo Theater in Harlem. "By the crusade's end, more than 2,200 people had responded to Skinner's presentation of the gospel, and the 20-year-old evangelist was hailed as a preaching phenomenon."[35] Skinner's oratory gifts were recognized by all who heard him preach, including prominent white evangelists. In the early years of his ministry, Skinner worked with white evangelist, Jack Wyrtzen, who would set aside one night out of the seven nights of crusades for Tom Skinner to preach. Oftentimes, Skinner's night would turn out to be the most popular.[36] Skinner's profile rose with the backing and endorsement of many white evangelicals. He began making appearances on Moody Radio and began speaking at evangelistic crusades around the country and even into the Caribbean islands.

Skinner's appeal to the broader spectrum of evangelicals came from his telling his powerful personal testimony. The story of a tough street gang member converting to become a crusade evangelist was irresistible for many white evangelicals. But Skinner's story and testimony did not emerge out of a vacuum. His evangelistic efforts were in the shadow of a growing black nationalism and the Civil Rights Movement. As Skinner's standard testimony about his life story became wide-spread, he began to move his

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[33] Skinner, *Black and Free*, 56.

[34] Gilbreath notes the supernatural experience of Skinner's departure from the street gang. "Few had voluntarily left the Harlem Lords without losing their lives. So when Skinner went to his 129 fellow gang members to announce he was quitting, he knew he would probably not leave the room alive. Terrified, Skinner informed the gangbangers that he had accepted Christ into his life and that he could no longer be a member of the Harlem Lords. Not one sound came from the bewildered gang. Skinner turned to leave the room. Still, no response. To his astonishment, Skinner left the room a free- and unharmed-man. Later, the gang member who had been Skinner's second-in-command told him that he wanted to kill him that night but that a strange force prevented him." Gilbreath, "A Prophet Out of Harlem."

[35] Gilbreath, "A Prophet Out of Harlem."

[36] Sjoblom interview.

message beyond the simple story of personal salvation that appealed to white evangelicals. Skinner began to incorporate more teachings on the Kingdom of God and the necessity of social concern, responsibility, and action.

In 1969 and 1970, Skinner was still gaining larger venues to speak his message to the evangelical world. Skinner was invited in 1969 to address Wheaton College and in 1970, he was asked to address InterVarsity Christian Fellowships' Urbana Mission Conference. Probably the most significant student mission conference in North America, Skinner would be asked to address a predominantly white evangelical college student audience. In this landmark sermon, preached during a time of great turmoil in American society, Skinner would preach a sermon titled, "The U.S. Racial Crisis and World Evangelism."[37] The sermon would strike at the heart of evangelicalism with a prophetic challenge to confront aspects of racism found in American society and in American Christianity.

He challenged white evangelicalism's failure to address the social sin of slavery, as well as addressing white evangelicalism' over-emphasis on individual salvation and piety over and above social justice.

> You must keep in mind that, during this period of time, in general (there were some notable exceptions, but in general) the evangelical, Bible-believing, fundamental, orthodox, conservative church in this country was strangely silent. In fact, there were those people who during slavery argued, 'It is not our business to become involved in slavery. Those are social issues. We have been called to preach the gospel. We must deliver the Word. We must save people's souls. We must not get involved in the issues of liberating people from the chains of slavery. If they accept Jesus Christ as their Savior, by and by they will be free - over there.'[38]

Skinner addressed the history of white racism from slavery to Jim Crow laws and used examples from the white evangelical churches.

> To a great extent, the evangelical church in America supported the status quo. It supported slavery; it supported segregation; it preached against any attempt of the black man to stand on his own two feet. And where there were those who sought to communicate the gospel to black people, it was always done in a way to make sure that they stayed cool. 'We will preach the gospel to those folks so they won't riot; we will preach the gospel to them so that we can keep the lid on the garbage pail.'[39]

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[37] Tom Skinner, "The U.S. Racial Crisis and World Evangelism" Urbana '70 Sermon Manuscript posted at http://www.urbana.org/articles/the-us-racial-crisis-and-world-evangelism.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

Skinner confronted the apathy of white evangelicals who ignored social problems, going so far as to call them cowards.

> But on the opposite extreme was another coward. He was what I called the hyper-Christian. He called himself, and I quote, 'a Bible-believing, fundamental, orthodox, conservative, evangelical Christian,' whatever that meant. He had half a dozen Bible verses for every social problem that existed. But, if you asked him to get involved, he couldn't do it. If you went to him and told him about the problems of Harlem, he would come back with a typical cliché: 'What those people up there need is a good dose of salvation.' And while that might have been true, I never saw that cat in Harlem administering that dose.[40]

Skinner refused to hold back on his understanding of the intersection between racial justice, social justice, and the gospel of Jesus Christ. He masterfully weaved together multiple themes in raising a challenge to the status quo.

When Skinner closed out his sermon with a resounding proclamation that "The Liberator has come!" the gathering erupted into thunderous and sustained ovation. Carl Ellis -- who had been one of the key African-American InterVarsity student leaders at Urbana '67 who had staged a protest and subsequently negotiated for Skinner's inclusion in Urbana '70 -- recalls the prophetic power of Skinner's words and the sense that people were shaken to their foundations.[41] William Pannell, who was on the platform that evening describe the evening as "dynamite". "I have never seen such an explosion of joy and acceptance in response to a sermon."[42]

The Urbana '70 Missions Conference became a benchmark event for African-American evangelicals in positive and negative ways. Skinner's presentation at Urbana signaled the increasing prominence of black evangelicalism and the fresh prophetic voice offered by black evangelicalism. However, Skinner also represented a prophetic voice that would make many white evangelicals nervous. "Skinner's speech that night was the climax to a conference that was being refocused. . . . This made some IV leaders very nervous. What would become of 'foreign' missions if students' attention was redirected to the USA and its urban challenges?"[43] Other concerns also emerged as Skinner rose to greater prominence in the white evangelical community. Pannell recalls that as Skinner

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[40] Ibid.

[41] Ellis Interview and Gilbreath, "A Prophet Out of Harlem."

[42] Pannell Interview.

[43] Ibid.

began to speak more about the Kingdom of God,[44] he began to be perceived as having a political agenda. "Just as Skinner's ministry was attracting more attention from whites, his outspoken views on issues of social injustice facing the black community intensified (a fact that would lead many Christian radio stations to drop his program due to its 'political' content).[45]

Pannell recalls that as the crusades focus began to shift towards a kingdom theology and a more holistic understanding of evangelism, white evangelicalism became increasingly suspicious.[46] Skinner's increasingly frequent rejection by the broader white evangelical community came to a head when he divorced his first wife in 1971. "In the early 1970's, Tom's ever-growing ministry began to put a strain on his marriage. Tom and Vivian's marital problems eventually led to divorce. His divorce caused many friends to withdraw their support. Now with the rejection from much of the white evangelical community compounded by his divorce, Tom's life went through what can be described as a 'wilderness experience.'"[47]

Skinner would continue in ministry, but in a different form after his divorce – opting to focus on Christian leadership training,[48] including a ministry that still bears his name: the Skinner Leadership Institute. He would increase in his influence with African-American leadership in other segments of society, including serving as the chaplain for the Washington Redskins and working with the black Congressional leadership – through which he would meet his second wife, Barbara Williams-Skinner. By the time of his untimely and early death in 1994 at the age of 52, Skinner's voice in the larger evangelical community could be considered negligible.

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[44] Pannell (who was Tom Skinner's first associate) recalls conversations with Tom Skinner after a series of crusades in 1968 in Newark, NJ, which was still smoking from race riots. Pannell and Skinner began to develop a deeper theological reflection on the kingdom of God that would become the focus of Skinner's sermons.

[45] Gilbreath, "A Prophet Out of Harlem."

[46] Pannell Interview.

[47] No Author Listed. "The Ministry of Tom Skinner" in the *History* page of the Skinner Leadership Institute Website. http://www.skinnerleadership.org/TomSkinnerHistory.htm.

[48] Gilbreath, "A Prophet Out of Harlem."

Reflections and Application to Theological Education

The emergence of African-American evangelicalism in the 1960's and 1970's reveals the complexities of dealing with the issue of race, racism, and racial justice in the American evangelical context. In the emerging next evangelicalism of the 21st century, those questions continue to haunt churches, denominations and seminaries attempting to move beyond the status quo of de facto segregation. The difficulty of dealing with racial, ethnic, cultural differences should not be downplayed or underestimated if we are to move towards a more effective multi-cultural seminary education. The example of the NBEA and of Tom Skinner reveals the need to affirm the gifts and unique contributions brought by those different from us. Evident in both threads was white evangelicalism's discomfort with a strong non-white identity. Whether it was the formation of black identity in the context of the NBEA or the strong assertion of a black theology by Tom Skinner, dominant culture evangelicalism tends to adhere to the existing norms of white evangelical theology and ecclesiology. Clinging to the Western, white cultural captivity of American evangelicalism prevents the receiving of the gifts that other cultures may bring. Rather than the furthering of the sense of other-ness that often characterizes evangelical response to non-white Christianity, perhaps the next evangelicalism calls for a greater sense of embrace.

An additional aspect of this study that is open to further research may be the ways that majority culture evangelicalism is willing to put forth evangelicals of color as long as they fit the mold that is cast by white evangelicalism. There is a willingness to accept people of color as long as they accept "our" way of thinking. Ultimately, this preference reflects an inability to allow for ethnic specific expressions of faith and theology. In the next evangelicalism, room must be allotted for people of color to express their own faith in culturally appropriate ways. "It is important to most black Christians *both* to make good on their African heritage (demonstrating that Christianity is not simply a 'white man's religion') *and* to maintain the best traditions of orthodox, biblical Christianity."[49] Evangelical seminary education would benefit from hearing from a wider range of voices with an willingness to engage more than a token voice from different communities.

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[49] Sweeney, 127.

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About the Author

Soong-Chan Rah is Milton B. Engebretson Associate Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism at North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL.

Urban Theological Education at Seattle Pacific University: Encountering Neighbors and Race in Seattle
By David P. Leong

Abstract
This article describes the content and context of an intensive course titled "Christian Formation in Mission: Acts of Mercy and Justice." Offered at Seattle Pacific University's Graduate School of Theology, this course explores the intersection of Wesleyan "social holiness" and the urban context of Seattle. Two particular loci around which this missiological reflection takes place are *neighbors* and *race*.

Introduction: Wesley's Social Holiness

"The Gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness" (Wesley and Emory 1835, 593). This frequently quoted axiom of the Wesleyan tradition[1] seemed especially relevant as students listened to the staff of Urban Impact, a Christian community development organization in Seattle's Rainier Valley, one of the most ethnically and socioeconomically diverse communities in the U.S.[2] In the fall of 2009, about two dozen students in Seattle Pacific University's (SPU) Graduate School of Theology gathered together for an intensive course titled "Christian Formation in Mission: Acts of Mercy and Justice."

As SPU's new graduate program in theology enters its second year, one distinctive prerequisite continues to be a series of two intensive courses[3] designed in the spirit of John Wesley's emphasis on "works of piety and works of mercy," an intricate balance of the inward practices of spiritual disciplines as a means of grace and the outward expressions of compassion and justice that call believers "to relieve the distress of our neighbor, whether in body or soul" (Wesley and Emory 1840, 290). Wesley's

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[1] Founded in 1891 by the Free Methodist Church, Seattle Pacific University is deeply rooted in the rich theological heritage of John and Charles Wesley.

[2] Though diversity is a difficult descriptor to quantify, numerous sources have identified the Rainier Valley as one the most diverse communities in the U.S. See *Neighbor Power* (Diers 2004), *The Failures of Integration* (Cashin 2004), and *America's Most Diverse ZIP Code Shows the Way* (Willow 2010).

[3] The first of the two courses is titled "Christian Formation in Discipleship: Acts of Piety."

conjunctive commitment to piety and mercy "are nothing other than love of God and love of neighbor acted out in conformity to the love we see in Jesus Christ" (Chilcote 2004, 107), and Wesley firmly believed that what God had joined together, no one should separate.

But what do "acts of mercy and justice" look like in Seattle, a major port city on the Pacific Rim and the metropolitan hub of the northwestern region of the U.S.? And how does this particular urban context shape a course on missiology and social holiness?

Theological Education in Context: Urban Seattle

Seattle can be a difficult place for people of faith. As one of the country's most educated and most secular cities, it is not uncommon to encounter an inherent skepticism toward "organized religion" in the city's predominantly progressive subculture.[4] For these reasons and others, theological education in Seattle already faces some local obstacles in contextualizing its mission and relevance, but the greater challenge in creating a curriculum that truly engages the whole city is confronting our own biases and presuppositions about the "density, diversity, and disparity"[5] of the urban context.

Believing that the church is a particular "called and sent community" (Guder and Barrett 1998), and that all theology is contextual (Bevans 2002), one of the goals of this intensive course is to challenge students to consider their own complicity in the structural injustices that perpetuate inequalities in our local neighborhoods. Though this conversation sometimes hits— quite literally— a little too close to home, its importance is rooted in the conviction that theology of mission must always be both global *and local*.

This widespread phenomenon of urban "glocalization," the convergence of global and local realities in the city, is especially poignant in the Rainier Valley, a community of neighborhoods in southeast Seattle where resettled refugees, working class immigrants, and incoming gentrifiers coexist as neighbors. Of the Valley's roughly fifty thousand residents, 80 percent are people of color, 40 percent are foreign born, 45 percent speak a second language, and more than half are renters. More than 60 languages are spoken and

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[4] National religious identification surveys like the ARIS (2001) and the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey (Pew Forum 2008) have consistently placed Washington state (and Seattle in particular) at or near the top of areas that identify as "non-religious."

[5] These are three fundamental characteristics of the urban context that I explore *in Street Signs: Toward a Missional Theology of Urban Cultural Engagement* (Leong 2010).

over 50 ethnic groups can be found in one zip code alone (Leong 2010). But this colorful "neighborhood of nations" in south Seattle is very different from the neighborhoods north of the downtown area. In fact, SPU is located in one of the wealthiest and most socioeconomically homogeneous communities in all of Seattle, just five miles away from the northern end of the Rainier Valley.

Why, after decades of civil rights legislation in a city that prides itself on its tolerance and cultural progressivism, are our local schools, churches, and neighborhoods just as ethnically and socioeconomically segregated now as they have ever been?[6] This is the kind of glaring ethical and missiological question that must be addressed in a course that is seeking to understand acts of mercy and justice in urban Seattle.

Missiological Reflection: Neighbors and Race

As missiological reflection is contextualized, it must always engage both the theological tradition of the church and the complex anthropological realities of the local setting. Two particular loci around which this missiological reflection takes place in Seattle are *neighbors* and *race*.[7] Though there are many other relevant issues in this broader conversation, the theological significance of understanding these two concepts is foundational to the "Acts of Mercy and Justice" course.

"The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood." Eugene Peterson's well known paraphrase of this memorable introduction in the first chapter of John's Gospel is more than just a clever rewording of this incarnational doctrine. That God chooses to dwell among us and essentially become our neighbor is a powerful biblical metaphor that should intimately inform our understanding of what it means to love our neighbors as ourselves. Throughout the biblical narrative, love of God and love of neighbor are always held together with profound implications; these two inseparable ideals are upheld as the greatest commandment with utmost importance, a supreme

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[6] Naturally, this is a broad, complex claim, but substantial evidence in varied research points to this growing trend. See *Neighborhoods and the Black-White Mobility Gap* (Sharkey 2009), *Race and Recession* (Wessler 2009), *The Resegregation of Seattle's Schools* (Shaw 2008), and *Divided By Faith* (Emerson and Smith 2000).

[7] Though I cannot fully define "race" in this article, the concept of "race" as a *social construction* is a foundational assumption in cultural studies. See *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions* (Banks 1996), *Cultural and Literary Critiques of the Concepts of "Race"* (Gates 1997), *An Invitation to Social Construction* (Gergen 1999), and *The Meaning of Difference: American Constructions of Race, Sex and Gender, Social Class, Sexual Orientation, and Disability* (Rosenblum and Travis 2008).

imperative on which "all the law and the prophets"[8] are hung. This essential interdependence between love of God and love of neighbor must be foundational for a theology of neighborliness in the urban context.

A theology of neighborliness in the city must also engage the fundamental attributes of the urban context. Physical and geographic *density* means that neighbors live near us, may invade our privacy, or on occasion, come "too close for comfort," violating our conditioned social principles of individualism and personal space. Cultural and ethnic *diversity* means that we encounter neighbors who are quite different from us; their backgrounds, lifestyles, values, and religious worldviews may contrast sharply with our own. Social and economic *disparity* means that the needs of our neighbors are at times quite apparent and tangible, and may "cost" us, in terms of time, money, or other resources. Thus, an urban contextual theology of neighborliness seeks to know those who are near, engage those who are "other," and serve those who are in need. Though the definition of "neighbor" is traditionally a more static category of people, this theological concept of "neighbor*ing*" in the city is a dynamic verb of action and engagement.

And who is my neighbor? In the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, the passage opens with an abrupt interaction between Jesus and an expert in the law about what must be *done* to inherit eternal life. It is important to recognize that the qualification of faithfulness to the *shema (*Deuteronomy 6:4-9) that is outlined by the lawyer and affirmed by Jesus is portrayed in an intentionally *active* light. The discussion is not merely theological and propositional; it is by definition connected to the concrete reality of neighboring in the world. "That the practice of God's word is the central issue in this narrative unit is obvious from the repetition and placement of the verb 'to do'. . . in this way the first segment of this unit (vv 25-28) is bound together with references to *praxis*" (Green 1997, 425).

The defensive question "And who is my neighbor?" that the lawyer poses to Jesus is one of justification and avoidance. But Jesus replies with a radical narrative of countercultural neighboring, one in which traditional cultural categories were shattered in favor of a different definition of neighbor. After the priest and the Levite had failed to intervene on behalf of the beaten man, "the audience may well have expected the third

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[8] Matthew 22:40

character in the story to be an Israelite layman, thereby giving an anti-clerical point to the story . . . Jesus, however, deliberately speaks of a member of a community hated by the Jews" (Marshall 1978, 449). Jesus' unexpected inclusion and elevation of a Samaritan in the story is a turn that surely would have shocked his listeners. That a nameless Samaritan—someone perceived as a mixed-race abomination by many first century Jews—embodies a Christ-like ethic of love and service to neighbor should call into question the cultural categories of race and ethnicity that accentuate the segregation of neighbors in the urban context.

Few factors shape the contemporary cultural landscape of the city like race, racism, and racialization, and this is as true in Seattle as in many other cities. The fact that neighbors coexist in racially segregated communities is an urban reality that demands missiological attention, if for no other reason than the demonstration of unjust correlations between density, diversity, and disparity.[9] This discussion must go beyond the popular sentiments of multiculturalism[10] and the pre-modern concepts of ethnicity[11] depicted in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Both approaches stop short of engaging the particularly *modern* construction of race in the city, which is historical, social and theological in nature.[12] Thus, an urban contextual theology of neighboring that seeks to engage the segregation of the modern city must confront the injustices of racial separatism and fragmentation with a distinctly "audacious theological imagination" (Carter 2008, 372). This theological imagination must be rooted not only in an eschatological vision of Revelation 7, but also in a *present* vision of the mutuality and

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[9] For example, *The Resegregation of Seattle's Schools* (Shaw 2008) identifies stark educational disparities between schools in north and south Seattle that tend to fall along color lines in the neighborhoods.

[10] Often, more popular understandings of multiculturalism (especially among evangelicals, who largely embrace a more individualistic perception of race relations in American society) merely work to reinforce existing social structures with only slight modifications toward an appearance of diversity that fits an existing agenda (e.g., tokenism). See *Beyond Multiculturalism : Views from Anthropology* (Prato 2009).

[11] Ancient concepts of "ethnicity" (e.g., a Jew or Samaritan) must not be conflated with "race" in the modern sense of the word. The former has to do with a particular people group, while the latter carries a much more complex connotation of social construction in the modern world. See *Rethinking the Color Line: Readings in Race and Ethnicity* (Gallagher 2007).

[12] J. Kameron Carter's monumental new work, *Race: a Theological Account*, makes the connection between theology, modernity, and race one of the central arguments of his overarching thesis: that the concept of race in the modern world has distinctly theological origins in both the vast colonial implications of the East-West divide and the influence of supersessionism in the Christian church.

interdependence of *shalom*[13] that is committed to subverting the "racial imagination of modernity" (Carter 2008, 4-6) that has segregated the world into whites and people of color, particularly in the city.

Audacious theological imagination is the starting point because "the virulence and all-pervasiveness of prejudice and racism in US society" (Claerbaut 2005, 161) is a fundamental social reality of racialization in America, particularly in the urban context. It will take more than a little creative thinking to imagine that the oppressive structures of segregated public school systems, stratified housing patterns, and urban economics of privilege can be dismantled by the theological convictions of good neighbors. But the elimination of ethnic ghettos characterized by pockets of harsh disparity along racial lines will only be possible when truly diverse groups of neighbors choose to reject racialized expectations to cluster into homogeneous groups. All of this will require a radical, *prophetic imagination* (Brueggemann 1978) that is alternative to the segregated systems of the modern city. But how can theological education begin to engage these massive structural injustices?

Curricular Impact: Seeking Justice in the City

As SPU graduate students prepare for ministry in and through the church as ordained clergy, lay ministers, or Christians in other vocational areas, the program begins with the "Acts of Piety" and "Acts of Mercy and Justice" courses because they mark students' initiation into a community that is committed to being an "abbey, academy, and apostolate,"[14] or a people of spiritual growth, intellectual formation, and missional equipping. Through an emphasis on Wesleyan social holiness that holds piety and mercy together, students are prepared to engage their hearts, minds, and hands in the work of the gospel for the city and the world. And this particular task begins by seeking justice in the local context of urban Seattle.

Seeking justice in the city is not merely the work of social activists; good students of the Scriptures know that God's concern for "the orphan, the widow, and the

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[13] Jeremiah 29:4-7

[14] Theologian David Tiede first used these terms to describe Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN. See *Earthen Vessels : Hopeful Reflections on the Work and Future of Theological Schools* (Aleshire 2008:125-128).

stranger"[15] is a consistently recurring theme in a biblical definition of justice. Therefore, students must become educated advocates in contexts where the fatherless, single mothers, and immigrants are being marginalized in the city. Understanding God's deep "delight" in "steadfast love, justice, and righteousness"[16] makes urban ministry a distinctly theological kind of work, not just a "mercy ministry" of feeding the homeless and patronizing the poor.

The "Acts of Mercy and Justice" course immerses students in settings where they can catch a glimpse of the love of God and neighbor transcending racial and socioeconomic boundaries. These contextual ministry site visits are like laboratories of applied learning that help students to see and experience how the broader church is engaging its diverse neighbors in urban Seattle. Connecting students to shelters, non-profit organizations, and multicultural congregations at the beginning of their program opens the doors for conversations and partnerships that can be sustained throughout a student's theological education.

SPU recognizes that one intensive course can hardly scratch the surface of the ethical and missiological questions around the issues of neighbors and race, let alone the questions of incarnational ministry, downward mobility, and kingdom economics that often accompany this conversation. A week in the Rainier Valley does not automatically create friendships between diverse neighbors, nor does a visit to a multiethnic church singularly dismantle the "white, Western cultural captivity" (Rah 2009) of evangelicalism. However, despite these limitations, what the course can accomplish is still significant. By setting the tone for an ongoing dialogue between "scripture, tradition, reason, and experience"[17] in the concrete contexts that surround theological education, issues like racialization and segregated neighborhoods remain on the hearts and minds of students throughout their program.

Ultimately, putting a neighborly theological praxis in action means that an urban theological curriculum must somehow facilitate a *relational* understanding of the city's density, diversity, and disparity. Relational knowledge of individuals and families who

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[15] Deuteronomy 10:18, NRSV
[16] Jeremiah 9:24, NRSV

[17] This "Wesleyan Quadrilateral" is a model of theological process developed by Albert Outler. See *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler* (Outler, Oden, and Longden 1991).

deal with physical overcrowding in public housing projects provides a tangible context for understanding the everyday realities of living in the city. The pursuit of active relationships with those who are "other" establishes commonality in the shared challenges of being human, regardless of the diverse identities and communities that define us. A relational experience of economic disparities puts names and faces on those who are among the poor and disenfranchised, and looks beyond the appearances of socioeconomic status to evaluate the inherent worth of all people. Only when this understanding of the urban context is both academic *and* relational can an advocacy for "the least of these"[18] come from an authentic love of God and neighbor.

If the "Acts of Mercy and Justice" course can initiate this relational curiosity in a larger program that cultivates and sustains this relational advocacy for ministry in the city, then both students and the church will benefit from these communal works of piety and mercy in Seattle and beyond.

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[18] Matthew 25:31-46

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About the Author

David P. Leong is Assistant Professor of Missional Theology at Seattle Pacific University where he oversees the Global and Urban Ministry minor in the School of Theology. David and his wife, Chris have a son named Jonas and they live in community in the Rainier Valley.

Evangelical Identity Meets New Opportunities in Education

By Elizabeth M. Mosbo VerHage (with Soong-Chan Rah)

Abstract
This article examines the holistic implications of engaging in "evangelical education" and the tensions and opportunities that exist when considering how to equip and learn with diverse student and congregation populations. Both experienced practitioners from diverse communities – indigenous educators, and traditional graduate degree-seeking students interesting in the Micah imperative to do justice – emerging advocates, benefit from being shaped by, and helping shape the future of, theological education. The Center for Holistic Evangelism and Justice Ministries is a new initiative that seeks to intentionally steward the continued work of the Spirit in diverse communities and asks how we can best continue commitments of being urban, multicultural and Christian within the academy.

Introduction: Does *Evangelical Education* Exist?

Many of us serving in evangelical congregations and ministries have been shaped by what might be called an evangelical spirit, or ethos. While the term "evangelical" is often hard to define or apply, at its best it reflects the historic and communal spirit of the renewals and revivals around the globe since the 1600s that shape many congregations, movements and ministries committed to sharing the good news, or *euangelion*. While many prolific evangelical authorities define, locate and debate the use of this term, perhaps most recognized is Bebbington's quadrilateral that defines the evangelical spirit as converging on four points: conversionism, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism. Along with Timothy Larsen's five-point definition that builds on Bebbington's understanding and locates evangelical belief within a historic tradition,[1] the following argues that dependence on both the historic and the presently diverse community of the church is necessary for the evangelical ethos to be recognized, transmitted and shaped in the future. "Evangelical" is then understood as an adjective, able to modify individuals or congregations that self-identity with the spirit of this historic movement, and who are also

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[1] Larsen, Timothy and Daniel J. Trier, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, Cambridge University Press, 2007. See chapter one, pp.1-3, for a review of Bebbington's influence and Larsen's way of phrasing evangelical identity.

shaped by particular, if assumed, forms of theological formation. Many ongoing debates on defining evangelical identity within the theological world[2] reveal the need to intentionally shape the ethos of churches who are influenced by this sometimes amorphous, but prevalent, spirit. Moreover, the faces of the churches who are part of the evangelical world is shifting and changing. Here Soong-Chan Rah explains:

> There is widespread recognition that the center of Christianity has shifted from the Northern and Western hemisphere to the Southern and Eastern hemisphere. At the same time, there is the growing recognition that American Christianity is also undergoing a significant demographic shift. Some may see this shift through the lens of a declining Christianity in the Western hemisphere. For example, in the spring of 2009, two separate articles appeared in national periodicals anticipating the decline and predicting the demise of Christianity in America. In reality, Christianity in America is not in decline, but instead is experiencing a demographic shift towards a more multi-ethnic and urban future….
> American evangelicalism, however, has struggled with finding her place in the urban context . . . There is a unique opportunity for Christians to provide leadership to an American society that is moving towards a more urban and multicultural dynamic. In order to prepare the church for this future, seminaries, denominations, and Christian institutions must re-examine the ways it might deliver effective theological education and content to a broader constituency.[3]

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[2] Consider these examples: Grenz, Stanley, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era.* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000; Harper, Lisa Sharon, *Evangelical Does Not Equal Republican ... Or Democrat*. New York: New Press, 2008; Hart, D. G., *Deconstructing Evangelicalism: Conservative Protestantism in the Age of Billy Graham*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004; Heltzel, Peter. *Jesus and Justice: Evangelicals, Race, and American Politics*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009; Husbands, Mark, and Daniel J. Treier. *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2005; Kyle, Richard G. *Evangelicalism: An Americanized Christianity*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2006; Marsden, George M. *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1980; McGrath, Alister E. *Evangelicalism & the Future of Christianity.* Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1995; Noll, Mark A., *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994; Sider, Ronald J. *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience: Why Are Christians Living Just Like the Rest of the World?* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2005; Stackhouse, John G. *Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion?* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003; Tomlinson, Dave. *The Post Evangelical.* Rev. North American ed. El Cajon, CA: Emergent YS/Zondervan, 2003; VerHage, Elizabeth M.Mosbo. *Seek the Welfare of the City: Renewing the Gospel of Community, Compassion and Justice in the Evangelical Church.* North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL: Unpublished Thesis in Library, May 2002; VerHage, Elizabeth M.Mosbo VerHage. *Re-Membering Evangelical Ecclesiology: How John Howard Yoder Informs 21st Century North American Ecclesiology*. Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, IL: ProQuest dissertation online. May 2010. Webber, Robert. *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World.* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2002.

[3] Soong-Chan Rah, handout on Urban Ministry Track, given to ECC listening gathering, Midwinter, January 2010.

As an adjunct professor and graduate of several evangelically-formed institutions, it is easy to witness the shift in demographics within seminary student bodies and in many churches across North America. Some evangelical churches have struggled with these demographics and responded with "white flight," resisting urban or ethnic diversity, or supporting gentrification in order to continue economic divisions. But some churches and leaders have heralded the increasing growth of multicultural diversity and leadership in the church as a sign of coming Kingdom. Gary Walter, President of the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC), explains the Gospel's call to be intentionally multicultural like this:

> That's the point of the Acts 1:8 map of the mission. Jesus says here that we are to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. We tend to think it is a simple geographic reference to take the gospel farther and farther away. His hearers, however, would have been jolted by the radical call to cross cultures. Judea is nearby same culture, Samaria is nearby cross culture, and the ends of the earth is far away all cultures…
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> One-half of the new churches we plant today are among populations of color or are intentionally multiethnic. As a result, one-quarter of all ECC congregations are among populations of color or intentionally multiethnic…. So we have the beginnings of a pretty good mosaic: ethnically diverse; stylistically diverse; linguistically diverse; new and established churches; small, medium, and large churches; town and country, metropolitan, and urban settings; led by women, led by men… But in reality we have a long way to go. Realistically, when it comes to being reflective of the entire kingdom of God, we are probably at best consciously incompetent: quite aware of our shortcomings, but with a heart for moving forward. It will require resolve and intentionality, not sentimentality. But in moving forward, that mosaic will more and more form the very image and picture of a community that the world longs for but is afraid is not possible. We can show that in Christ, it is.[4]

The same evangelical spirit birthed pietism and tent revivals, the temperance and abolitionist movements, the ministries of Phoebe Palmer and Billy Graham, Black and Womanist theology, Minjung thinkers and the Esperanza movement, First Nations theology and pluriform global expressions of renewal, Prison Fellowship's restorative justice efforts and Christianity Today's publications, is continuing to blow in North America today. The Holy Spirit is moving communities to ask questions and look for deeper answers to both structural and spiritual brokenness, to become more aware of how

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[4] Walter, Gary. "Compass Bearings: The Map of the Mission." *The Covenant Companion*. Chicago, IL. June 2010. 5

evangelism and justice go hand in hand. How then might the academy resource, equip and shape those communities where this Spirit-filled wind is blowing?

Tensions and Opportunities: Education as Shaping Identity, and Vice-Versa

As this issue of *Common Ground Journal* is exploring, tensions may exist between the structures of theological education and the needs of diverse students, churches and communities. The unique needs of students interested in serving urban and multicultural churches, and particularly students and leaders *from within* urban and multicultural settings, deserves specific attention from the academy.

First, we might ask how students and pastors who have been shaped by specific racial, ethnic, economic and cultural environments receive education and resources, are being equipped to both serve their indigenous communities and influence the academy itself. Practical considerations may affect whether or not students from within diverse communities may take part in theological education, such as economic needs, transportation, awareness of the program, or balancing schedules. Other considerations are often more culturally-dependent, such as the place that formal or practical education holds within a community value system, or how age, gender, or specific theological commitments rank within a community's historic theological identity. Oftentimes elders or seasoned practitioners within congregations and ministries have little *formal* educational training, but are steeped in experience and the respect of their community. In many communities, theological formation in the shape of formal education is not a given, nor may it even be an obvious way to enrich or benefit individuals in ministry. Members of these types of communities may still greatly benefit from formal education if it is tailored to fit their needs and capacities; indeed, if students representing communities with historically low levels of formal education are part of formal theological formation, they may in turn influence a wide spectrum of congregations, institutions, families and relationships within their previously under-represented community. These same students and leaders from within diverse communities may also exert their influence on the educational institutions that they attend, influencing the formational and identity aspects of a theological school out of their experience-rich and community-centric understanding. Here we see the opportunity for shaping both under-resourced and under-represented

communities, and for adapting and strengthening formal learning institutions through the influence of what may be called *indigenous educators.*[5]

Second, we can look at another set of tensions (and opportunities) that exist surrounding the recent increased interest within much of the evangelical world to serve multicultural and urban churches, or be engaged is what is often called "justice ministries." While this interest is admittedly broad and can fall under various names and categories, increasing numbers of universities, seminaries, organizations, congregations, conferences and book publications are addressing the rise of evangelical interest in the Micah imperative to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God. With this increase in attention and interest comes an increase in questions surrounding this commitment, such as, how do you define justice? How does the church "do justice and love mercy" in light of the evangelical formational commitments to scripture, the Holy Spirit, personal salvation and the historic community of the church? How do diverse and multicultural communities define how to "do justice" in divergent ways, and what cultural or practical implications that have shaped this understanding? Theological education is needed to help shape and channel this heightened interest in doing justice to provide biblical thoughtfulness and a communal, historic hermeneutic to help discern what Micah did in fact mean by justice. And what it means to practice justice as a Body, as linked members with diverse capacities and cultures and convictions. The tension that the academy and students must face here is that while doing justice may not always require in-depth formal education in order to be faithful, sustaining holistic and ongoing practices of justice does require spiritual formation, communal discernment, biblical reflection and support. The costly practice of doing justice and loving mercy are not meant to be exercised as a one-time response, nor are they meant to deteriorate into being over-thought and under-exercised. Students and leaders with an interest in "doing justice" have much to offer churches and ministries that they serve, and must in turn be formed by

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[5] John Perkins and other leaders of CCDA (Christian Community Development Association), such as Wayne Gordon, argue that *indigenous leadership* is crucial for empowering community development. Perkins links indigenous leaders to one of his key principles for ministry, *relocation*. In a recent interview Perkins states, "We wanted to get the young people to know Jesus Christ and then help them to go off to college, then bring them back to help the community. You have to raise people up as the first step in stabilizing the community... We know that Jesus relocated among us; he was incarnational. In order to develop strong, indigenous leaders we want to help young people to stay in school and come to know Jesus Christ. That's central to my whole philosophy." Perkins, John. "Q & A Author Interview: An Interview with John Perkins and Charles Marsh." IVP Books. http://www.ivpress.com/title/ata/3453-q.pdf. Accessed April 2, 2010.

those same communities where justice and mercy are most needed. The opportunity here lies within the interest and growing awareness that justice is indeed an integral part of the evangelical experience of Christian discipleship. Students representing this commitment to justice ministries may be termed *emerging advocates[6]*. As this conversation grows and continues to take root in various congregations and communities, centers engaged in evangelical education must consider how to take advantage of these tensions if they are to succeed in equipping and serving the various communities that make up the diverse Body of Christ.

In other words, the need for shaping intentional identity within the pursuit of evangelical education persists: how does an educational program communicate the rich historic, biblical, communal, and pastoral components that make up evangelical identity, while at the same time continuing to encourage and seek out students, pastors and leaders that are in need of that education? How might an educational program help shape diverse students and serve diverse communities, but then also *be shaped by* the diverse students and communities that increasingly make up the dynamic and fruitful reality of current evangelical identity? How can centers for evangelical education make the most of the growing interest in "doing justice" and shape that movement of the Spirit through historic, biblical, communal and pastoral experience. How might we be intentional about this intersection between student and teacher, learner and influencer, doing justice and learning about justice, being formed in community and serving and pastoring for the community?

Intentional Evangelical Education: The Center for Holistic Evangelism and Justice Ministries

A new program that seeks to intentionally connect historic evangelical education and the practice of doing justice and multicultural ministry has recently been launched. "The Center for Holistic Evangelism and Justice Ministries" (CHEJM), is the fruit of a synergistic partnership between North Park Theological Seminary, several offices of the ECC, and other ministries, congregations, seminaries and organizations sharing a common interest in continuing to shape diverse students and communities, while serving

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[6] Within the ECC, one specific group of emerging advocates has been *The Young Pietists*; other advocates are filling the ranks of various "emerging leader" programs established by groups such as Sojourners/Call to Renewal, Bread for the World, CCDA, Micah Challenge, and others engaged in evangelical ministry.

diverse communities and congregations. Central commitments that shape the mission of CHEJM are found within North Park's rich heritage of focusing on *urban*, *multicultural* and *Christian* ministry. A key part of biblical justice entails resourcing those ministering within underserved urban centers, as well as developing intentional and authentically multicultural communities and leadership structures based on Christ's Gospel mandate to preach to the ends of the earth and be the Body of Christ. CHEJM is also founded on the conviction that local churches are the central location for acting out our formation in community and for reaching urban populations with the good news of Christ and of God's justice. These three commitments ground an intentional framework for *holistic ministry and evangelism*, as the best examples of evangelical commitments throughout history have always done. Good news for one's eternal soul is also good news for the entire community; personal faith leads to public action and witness; and if Christ is Lord of all of life for the believer, then Christ is also Lord of our decisions to care for the widow, orphan and alien that Scripture commands God's people to speak for following the example of the crucified Christ. As in the best of the evangelical tradition, CHEJM seeks to educate and form people to be aware of false dichotomies and to instead be shaped by a holistic, and life-changing, Gospel. The three branches that work together to shape CHEJM's program are education, research and collaborative leadership development. As we educate and form students, and serve diverse communities while we learn from and alongside them, a cycle of theological formation (educating), reflecting and telling the stories of ministry (research), and continuing to connect with the next generation (leadership development) takes place. Accordingly, the formational mission statement of CHEJM is: *To strategically and innovatively spread the good news of God's justice through education, research and collaborative leadership development between evangelical seminaries, congregations, communities and organizations in Chicago, other urban centers, and to the ends of the earth.*

Out of these historically-formed evangelical commitments, CHEJM is formed around a holistic, healthy and biblically-formed curriculum that teaches about urban, multicultural and justice ministry as both theological and practical. This means connecting *education*, *experience*, *research*, *ministry*, *intentional community* and *leadership* together around a common goal of fostering evangelical identity and biblically-formed ways to "do justice." CHEJM's goal is to integrate what are often

fragmented aspects within education, research and church communities; to intentionally value *both* formal *and* practical education, *both* narrative *and* quantitative research, and *both* spiritual/reflective *and* technological/political means of collaboration and networking. This synergy between sometimes fragmented commitments can then produce a "lived theology," a relational, fluid, responsive and biblical framework for being the church – and for learning about and living out evangelical justice in diverse, multicultural and dynamic congregations and communities. It is within this space where we live out our theology that both indigenous leaders and emerging advocates may shape and influence each other and the wider church through intentional education, reflection and ministry. CHEJM seeks to be a catalyst that generatively and creatively encourages the next generation of prophets, leaders, teachers and servants called to serve the ECC and the wider church for God's glory and neighbor's good.

Two main educational program foci will shape the first phase of the CHEJM. One is a certificate program in Urban and Multicultural Ministry at NPTS, aimed at equipping and resourcing students such as the indigenous leaders from within diverse communities. In keeping with the felt-needs of this student population, our research with various interested students over the past year has shown that weekend, summer, or evening intensives often best fit the practical demands of the already-in-ministry leader who may most benefit from a certificate. The goal of this program is to bring theological and academic tools, as well as new media and innovative communication strategies, to under-resourced and under-represented communities and congregations. The aimed end result is a cohort of leaders from within diverse communities who have been resourced and formed theologically, who will be able to influence future educational initiatives for the wider Body, as well as generate more educational credibility within their indigenous communities for future students.

The second educational program, under development for consideration by NPTS faculty, could become a new degree track for more traditional MDiv or MA students who want to be trained in Urban and Multicultural Ministry, aimed at equipping emerging advocates and other more traditional full-time students. In keeping with the needs of this student population, such a degree track could include significant service learning requirements, an urban and multicultural communal living component, and practical reflection and action in addition to the traditionally robust focus on formal theological

education. The goal of this program would be to bring experience with the communities and populations that will be served into dialogue with the students and leaders seeking to serve. The anticipated end result is a cohort of leaders who will not only be able to serve in churches, ministries and other settings requiring a completed graduate degree, but who will be better formed through formation and communal experience to live out theology and justice as holistic and Christ-centered advocates in the future for the communities they serve and the wider Body.

In addition to these formal education tracks, both the education and research component of CHEJM can inform each other in the production of practical church-based trainings, urban retreats and short-term experiential learning options, and lay/congregational resources. Research fellows and students participating in community living or service learning opportunities at urban sites will both help create and record qualitative and quantitative data for the purpose of serving churches in that community. Students at a specific cite may help uncover resources or services that already exist, or help find partners through the CHEJM and our regional partners. Both the academy and the community then shape the scope, content and application of these resources, embracing the reciprocal commitment of education as identity forming. The research component also serves the wider church through community-specific research projects, gathering resources and best practices, sharing stories and information between partner organizations and communities, and providing online and innovative communication tools for reaching under-resourced and under-represented communities.

The collaborative and leadership development component of CHEJM is designed to create a supportive networking environment for students who graduate from either a certificate or degree program, as well as practitioners/leaders active in diverse communities. By creating online and in-person community with students and partner congregations, organizations and communities, communication about various projects, networking, advertising, mentoring, events, trainings, and partner needs have an ongoing, easy to access location.

The Vision: Multiplying Opportunities and Educational Capacity

Into the sometimes-present tension between educational models for theological formation and diverse communities and students, CHEJM senses a divine opportunity to

multiply existing interest and needs in an intentional way. Grounded in a biblical and evangelical spirit, informed by the contexts of diverse communities and students of today, CHEJM's vision is to connect the sometimes divergent components that are all necessarily part of healthy and holistic evangelism and justice ministries. Toward this vision, CHEJM's evolving identity is grounded in the following commitments:

Evangelical: North American evangelical Christians have particular, if sometimes assumed, ecclesial and missional commitments. We want to recognize and celebrate those particular commitments and help equip people formed by that faith tradition.

Justice: Evangelical Christians have a particular history with justice, shaped by the Great Reversal, fundamentalism, and many cultural/racial realities. Evangelical Christians also take the Bible very seriously, and since justice/God's righteousness is central to the biblical narrative, we want to examine and repair a biblical theology of justice in the evangelical world.

Community: We hold that evangelical Christians, pastors and leaders, and urban practitioners all benefit from an intentionally communal identity; we are in this together, we are better together and we advance the kingdom together.

Urban, **Multicultural**, **Christian**: We work at strategically resourcing those suffering and underserved in *urban* centers and at developing intentionally and honestly *multicultural* communities as part of our kingdom and Gospel convictions; we are convinced that the *Christian Church* is the central location for acting out these convictions in community.

Contextual and Lived Theology: We are committed to building up the church, living into the kingdom of God, and sharing the Gospel of Christ as a way of life, a way of learning, and a way of spiritual formation. The expression of this may look different in different contexts, and require translation or varied application according to the settings, but the core mission and message of empowering the holistic good news always remains at the center.

Forward Leaning Mission: We are invested in living into the future where God is already leading, through helping support vital local congregations, developing healthy clergy and lay leaders, and remembering our constant dependence on the Spirit's missional guidance (and sometimes ensuing uncertainty or chaos.)

Innovative and Strategic: We hope to capitalize on diverse, creative and under-utilized strengths of communities and institutions in order to invite more people into this vision and do more good through participating in God's good news of justice. This may include using new media and addressing ministry resources to younger, post-literate audiences where applicable.

Our vision for the future of CHEJM is to see mutually beneficial and authentic relationships form among churches, communities, researchers and theological educators

whose common dependence on the Spirit and commitment to the whole Gospel results in working together to pursue evangelical justice that is embodied in multi-cultural congregations and transformative leaders living into God's present-and-still-future kingdom. With God's leading and challenging, and the Body's faithful response and advocacy, we can learn together how to shape an evangelical education that shapes identity and is shaped by those it serves.

Conclusion

It has been exciting to see the energy and interest in justice ministries currently spreading throughout many evangelically-formed churches, particularly in the Evangelical Covenant Church. This interest can be multiplied through intentional connections, partnerships, and continued reliance on where God is leading the evangelical church. Many indigenous leaders and emerging advocates are currently engaged in various initiatives related to evangelism and justice ministry that could be multiplied and empowered through formal and informal educational formation through CHEJM. The commitments that already exist within the ECC and North Park to be purposefully multicultural, intentionally urban, and distinctively Christian provide a rich framework for this desire to promote a holistic understanding of evangelism and the good news of God's justice. Defining biblical justice and reflecting on a robust and Christ-shaped theology of justice is also important for healthy church ministry and for mutual, reciprocal growth and faith to continue in diverse congregations and communities.

CHEJM has been percolating for some time and gathering interest, input and wisdom from the wider church community and key stakeholders within various church and denomination offices. We are grateful that The Lilly Endowment, through the seminary's *Making Connections Initiative*, has provided seed money for staffing and some start up programming needs throughout our initial phase. Plans for the certificate and degree programs will be discussed by North Park Theological Seminary faculty and other key leaders this fall. We anticipate our initial research project of organizing an online, user-driven ministry directory for the ECC being completed during 2011, and have already begun some preliminary research work and funding conversations. We are energized by this call to continue to work at an intentionally holistic and evangelical education around evangelism and justice ministry. We look forward to continuing to learn from and with others involved in the pursuits of theological formation, community development and evangelical justice ministries as this program develops. If you are interested in learning

more about this forming initiative, please join the conversation by contacting one of us listed below.

Contact Us

The CHEJM was co-founded by Soong-Chan Rah (Acting Director) and Liz Mosbo VerHage (Acting Associate Director.) Contact us at srah@northpark.edu or emverhage@northpark.edu

About the Author

 Liz Mosbo VerHage is an adjunct professor at NPU and received her graduate degrees at North Park Theological Seminary and her Ph.D. in Theology and Ethics from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. She is an ordained minister in the ECC and blogs at www.livingtheology.net.