

# Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for Christians in Higher Education

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Volume 11 | Issue 1

Article 1

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2021

## Full Issue

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### Recommended Citation

(2021) "Full Issue," *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for Christians in Higher Education*:

Vol. 11 : Iss. 1 , Article 1.

DOI: 10.31380/sotlched.11.1

Available at: [https://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/sotl\\_ched/vol11/iss1/1](https://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/sotl_ched/vol11/iss1/1)

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# The Journal

of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

for Christians in Higher Education

# THE JOURNAL

*of the  
Scholarship of Teaching and Learning  
for Christians in Higher Education*

Volume 11 Number 1 2021

*Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*  
*for Christians in Higher Education*

**Volume 11 Number 1 2021**

ISSN: 1559-8624

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*Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for Christians in Higher Education* is published annually in May.

*Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for Christians in Higher Education* is indexed through the Digital Commons (<https://www.bepress.com/impact-analytics/>). *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for Christians in Higher Education* contents may be searched at [http://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/sotl\\_ched/](http://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/sotl_ched/) and through any web search engine.

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# THE JOURNAL

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*Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning  
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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

## CELEBRATING DIVERSITY IN TEACHING AND LEARNING FOR CHRISTIANS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Hayoung Lim

*T*he recent pandemic has been dramatically impacting societal shifts and influencing global change. We are living in the most critical period of time for mindful shifting global trends pertaining to education and leadership training. We are also embracing the peak of dynamic exchange for online teaching and virtual learning. In the midst of the present forceful shift, *The Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for Christians in Higher Education* has provided an online, interactive, and integrative forum for Christian educators, scholars, and administrators to articulate and promote the ongoing research in teaching and learning from a Christian perspective.

Interaction and integration for Christians in higher education always include diversity. In our increasingly diverse and multicultural society, it is more important than ever for scholars, educators, and administrators in higher education to incorporate culturally responsive instruction in the classroom and globally adaptive policies in the operation of each institute. The increase of diversity not only relates to race and ethnicity, but also includes students with different religions, political opinions, economic status, gender identities, value systems, ethics, and language backgrounds. Cultivating diversity, fostering inclusion around multicultural education, and taking a culturally responsive approach to teaching benefit all college students. Establishing greater multicultural integration and inclusion would help students

with different backgrounds and needs succeed, and it encourages acceptance and helps prepare students to make positive changes in people of an exponentially diverse world.

Diversity in higher education system will continue to grow, so it is essential we prepare students to adapt to a rapidly evolving globalization and embrace the diversity representing who they are. This issue of *The Journal* gives a celebrating voice for diversity in our in-person and virtual classrooms. Dr. Marcia P. Livingston-Galloway, former coordinator of the English Language Learner (ELL) program at Oral Roberts University, and Dr. Andree Robinson-Neal, a faculty member in the College of Doctoral Studies at Grand Canyon University, offer a great opportunity to re-conceptualize inclusive pedagogy practice in the classroom. From National San Marcos University in Lima, Peru, we have foreign language professor Dr. Nora P. Mendivil-Carrión and education professor Dr. Campana Concha Abelardo present a positive influence of teacher training in English language learning on Moodle, a free online software package used in education. Dr. Angela Watson, professor of psychology at Oral Roberts University, and two of her students indicate the positive relationship between religious ego identity status and subjective well-being of Christian college students. Dr. Amir Azarvan, associate professor of political science at Georgia Gwinnett College introduces his Socratic approach to applying Ephesians 3:15 to many contemporary political debates.

In addition to these four scholarly articles, this issue of *The Journal* includes five book reviews and an editorial on the benefits of music therapy. This issue is replete with information, and I would like to sincerely invite you to *The Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for Christians in Higher Education* to celebrate our diversity in Christ all together.

Hayoung Lim  
General Editor

# EDITORIAL

## SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN CHRISTIAN MUSIC THERAPY

Hayoung Lim

“Music is composed of many separate yet interconnected components such as pitch, melody, rhythm, tempo, harmony, form, timbre, dynamics, and instruments. It has been my true joy to find what, within the music, changes one’s life physically, emotionally, cognitively, and socially. Determining how to use music to achieve therapeutic goals and facilitating the best musical experience for individuals might be the utmost part of my job as a music therapist.”

Hayoung A. Lim

*M*any prospective college students who want to major in music therapy have a common reason to choose it for their major: they love music and love to help others. This is a very good reason to start studying music therapy; however, music therapy is a serious healthcare profession. Music therapy involves using music as a tool to help people regain or develop important life skills, such as communication, physical movement, pain management, attention and memory, mood regulation, emotional growth, or social skills. Music therapists work with individuals of all ages who require treatment due to deficits in physical, cognitive, communication, or social/emotional functioning. Therefore, music therapy can be a rewarding career for the student who has not only a strong musical background but is also interested in pursuing scientific knowledge for treating people in various clinical conditions.

Teaching allows me to fulfill what I believe to be a fundamental responsibility of being a Christian music therapist: to provide the best possible music therapy treatment services for every client/patient who God deeply cares and loves.

## **Power of God’s Healing + Effects of Music = Christian Music Therapy**

I hope that every Christian music therapy student believes in the power of the Holy Spirit to heal people and in the power music to improve people’s health. And I hope that those students develop the ability to advocate for music therapy and to explain the actual mechanism happening in music therapy sessions that bring powerful changes in people’s lives. Therefore, the purpose of my teaching is to prepare professional music therapists to work with individuals of all ages and in a variety of clinical conditions. There are basic aspects that should be understood by Christian music therapy practitioners. Among these is the process of a well-rounded background in music (music theory, music literature, and performance), music perception and production, an understanding of human musical and non-musical behavior, the basics of scientific decision making, humanities and social sciences, as well as courses and practical experiences in music therapy. I want my music therapy students to defend and validate the scientific mechanisms of music therapy, which utilize this great gift from God—music—and to leave my students with an increased understanding of why this particular musical experience treats a specific disorder or problem in all people for whom Jesus Christ died.

My scholarship and research in music therapy come directly from my clinical experiences. In my music therapy sessions, I have experienced “magical” moments with my patients. Through various music therapy interventions—such as listening to music, singing, or music making by playing instruments—I have seen wonderful changes in patients’ attitudes, thoughts, emotions, perceptions of self, and behaviors. Even after a brief music therapy session, patients have reported that they experienced comfort, pleasure, motivation, and increased self-esteem. In addition, patients with physical disabilities show positive changes in their bodies after they engage in music therapy. The music therapy profession has celebrated noticeable and positive changes in patients who have cognitive, emotional, and/or physical deficits. These beneficial changes have been easily attributed to the magical power of music; however, for a long period of time, the

changes have not been regarded as scientific phenomena. Therefore, it is part of my job to justify and teach the beneficial outcomes of music therapy with science-based research so that music therapy treatments can be applied in current clinical practice.

Music therapy is still a young profession and needs additional research and scientific evidence to validate the therapeutic effects. I want all of my students to experience and generate their own evidence through their learning. Every music therapy student believes in the power music can have on people's health; however, not many students develop the ability to justify the phenomenon and to explain the actual mechanism happening in a music therapy session which brings powerful changes in people's lives. Therefore, in my teaching I aim for students to (1) gain an in-depth understanding of research findings regarding music perception, human response to music stimuli and effects of various music therapy techniques; (2) develop skills in summarizing and communicating the content of music therapy research literature through written and verbal means; (3) enhance their therapeutic knowledge and skills by applying research findings to clinical populations; (4) design and practice therapeutic techniques based on research evidence of human response to and perception of musical stimuli; and (5) formulate ideas and develop skills as needed for their own music therapy practice. I want all of my students to be able to contribute to the growth of our profession by providing the methods of justification and validation of music therapy in their work following graduation. I have several objectives as a music therapy educator in addition to teaching these basic principles.

## **Presenting Knowledge and Facilitating Understanding**

Students come to my classes with many layers of knowledge about course material. I try to help these students tap into their prior knowledge, test it against what is presented in class, and use that knowledge as a base on which to build a greater understanding of more complex networks in theory and clinical implications.

## **Linking Theory and Application**

I believe that learning requires deep understanding that can only come when students internalize and actively apply knowledge in creative and meaningful ways. In any class I teach, I hope that students will be able to wrestle with the course material in their own lives, applying abstract theories about music and human behaviors to what they experience in their everyday world. Ideally, this approach should empower students to validate music therapy theories and process concepts in ways that are meaningful to them as well as their clients.

## **Helping and Challenging**

While I want students to be able to personalize their education via active learning, I also recognize that I have expertise regarding which students may benefit. I believe most students will rise to the challenge when quality work is demanded of them if they are also helped to develop the skills necessary to make that possible. For this reason I encourage critical thinking and the improvement of oral and written skills in all of my classes.

## **Maintaining Rigor and Encouraging Creative Experimentation**

I believe my students are best served when they are actively and rigorously engaged in the pursuit of knowledge. A teacher may inspire, but students should be actively engaged in the learning process for it to be successful. In an effort to give students greater ownership of the knowledge they encounter, I use cooperative and active learning strategies as well as lecture in my classroom and try to develop assignments that foster both analytical and critical thinking as well as opportunities for creative application for their best music therapy practice.

## **Respecting and Supporting a Wide Diversity of Students and Student Needs While Maintaining Balance and Fairness**

The study of music therapy is—I believe by its very nature—imminently practical; it is practiced and applied by our students and clinicians for our clients or patients on a regular basis. As a result, we teach by what we do or did in the music therapy session room or patient’s room as much as by what we read. By modeling effective music therapy, concern and compassion for our students, and a real enthusiasm for our clients/patients, we also teach the value of our profession. As a foreign professor, I strongly value the diversity of learning styles and the unique perspectives—both individual and cultural—that my students may bring to the classroom. As a result, I strive to provide an environment where students feel comfortable expressing their needs and opinions and believe that the entire class benefits and learns from that process.

Over the course of my 17 years as a college/university instructor, my approach to music therapy education has shifted from an emphasis on my teaching, to a more central focus on student learning, and finally to a more holistic realization that the two are inseparable aspects of the same whole. I would define “teaching and learning” much as I would define “communication” as a holistic process in which there is a co-creation of meaning between student and teacher. In order to accomplish this “co-creation of meaning,” I constantly strive to balance my expectation as a teacher with my students’ experiences as learners. Like all values, these are ideals for which I am constantly striving but am not always fully successful in achieving. I have also found that each semester and each class provides new challenges and opportunities for my own learning as an instructor and a scholar. As my students grow, I grow. As my discipline grows and matures, I am constantly working to meet the challenge of passing that knowledge on to my students. Ultimately, I hope to give them the passion and skills for music therapy that will allow them to participate in the genesis of that knowledge and to provide optimal services for their own clients/patients

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# THE EPHESIANS 4:15 RULE:

## A SOCRATIC APPROACH TO POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

Amir Azarvan, Georgia Gwinnett College

*Journal of the Scholarship  
of Teaching and Learning for Christians in  
Higher Education* 11.1 (2021) 9–14  
[http://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/sotl\\_ched/](http://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/sotl_ched/)

**Key Words** *political correctness, politically incorrect, Socratic Method, Golden Rule*

### **Abstract**

In the Apostle Paul's words, we should "[speak] the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). Many of us are good at doing one (i.e., speaking the truth) or the other (i.e., speaking in love). But few of us excel at doing both at the same time. I argue that this "Ephesians 4:15 Rule" is relevant to the many contemporary political debates that revolve around the concept of political correctness and push us into joining one or the other extreme ideological camp. In this essay, I lay out my Socratic approach to explaining to students what I take to be the proper approach to this somewhat elusive concept.

## Introduction

**I**f political correctness denotes basic decency—if, to put it in simple terms, it simply means not being a jerk—then we should, of course, be “politically correct.” I try to model such conduct for my children, sometimes to awkward effect, such as that one time that my daughter, then a toddler, described a brown mare as an “African-American horse.” Of course, this *is not* what political correctness means. I have considered it necessary to define this somewhat elusive concept for my students, as it figures so prominently in many contemporary political debates that, characteristically, push us into joining one or the other extreme camp. I employ the Socratic Method in explaining what I take to be the proper approach to the concept of political correctness. For the sake of fellow educators who might be interested in adopting a similar approach, I have emboldened my propositions—with each of which I secure my students’ general agreement before proceeding—as well as the conclusions that logically follow from them.

## Statement of the Problem

According to *Merriam Webster*, to be politically correct is to conform “to a belief that language and practices which could offend political sensibilities (as in matters of sex or race) should be eliminated.” Thus, **political correctness condemns discourse on the basis of whether it is offensive, not whether it is true.** This is problematic for the obvious reason that **just because something is offensive doesn’t necessarily make that it false.** I have found that simply revealing—however delicately—my positions on certain controversial topics is enough to scandalize people. Merely identifying as pro-life runs the risk of being labeled a misogynist; simply professing traditional views on sexual morality may invite accusations of anti-gay hatred. These are but two examples reminding us that political correctness is not, as an article in the *Guardian* suggests, a “phantom enemy” concocted by the Right—even if there are those who, admittedly, use our aversion to political correctness in order to excuse their malice (Weigel, 2016, November 30).

## Method

Now assuming **it is generally good to be truthful**,<sup>1</sup> we are forced to conclude that **political correctness is not necessarily good**. For if it is generally good to be truthful, and if some truths are offensive, then it is generally wrong to censor truths that are otherwise offensive. But why do I not conclude that it is necessarily bad to uphold norms of political correctness? The answer is intimated in the following syllogism, which concerns how we should engage in social and political dialogue.

I begin with a premise that most of my students, religious or otherwise, at least claim to accept: **We should follow the Golden Rule**. In other words, we should treat people the way we wish to be treated (Luke 6:31). I then draw two logical corollaries of this rule for my students. First, **we should not seek to offend others for the sake of offending them**. After all, we do not wish to be offended ourselves. Of course, many will boast about not being easily offended. “I am not some snowflake,” they will say (oh, how I despise that word). But no reasonable person actually *wants* to be offended. If you desire to be offended for its own sake, then you are not being virtuous; you are being a masochist.

The second corollary is that **we should endeavor to teach others the truth**. After all, we wish to learn the truth ourselves. Some will reasonably take issue with this proposition. They will correctly point out that there are proud people who resist the notion that they have anything to learn from others. However, no one, save the most hopeless narcissist, will proudly admit this. In other words, they are aware that they have much to learn from other people. However, because of their pride, they are too weak to live in accordance with what they know to be true—that they are not omniscient.

Logically, this leads us to the conclusion that **we should promote truth in the least offensive way possible**. This principle is, I believe, perfectly encapsulated in Ephesians 4:15. In the Apostle Paul’s words,

1. We can admit of exceptions to this general rule that it is good to be truthful. Suppose, to use a familiar example, you were living under German occupation. Most people would morally approve of lying to the Nazis about hiding Jews in your home. Barring exceptional cases like that this, though, it is good to tell the truth

we should “[speak] the truth in love.” Many of us are good at doing one (i.e., speaking the truth) or the other (i.e., speaking in love). But few of us excel at doing both at the same time, and I am certainly no exception to this rule.

For the sake of illustration, let us apply this “Ephesians 4:15 rule” to a pair of statements, presented in Table 1 below, that express the same idea concerning the differences between men and women with respect to physical strength, but in very different ways.

Example	Is there an element of factual truth?	Is it expressed in an offensive manner?	Is it politically correct?	Does it pass the Ephesians 4:15 test?
A. “Scientific evidence suggests men are physically stronger than women.”	Yes	No	No	Yes
B. “Chicks are weaker than men.”	Yes	Yes	No	No

Table 1. *A Comparison of Two Statements*

## Results

Both of these statements have at least an element of truth.<sup>2</sup> Further, both are politically incorrect. Why? Because these days, practically any claim of a systematic difference between men and women invites the charge of sexism. But how do these statements differ from one another? First, Statement B is quite vague; it does not specify the *kind* of strength in which men generally surpass women. Second, by referring to women as “chicks,” the statement is expressed in a way that is unnecessarily offensive. Thus, in addition to being politically incorrect with respect to the *content* of the truth that is expressed, Statement B is politically (indeed, morally) incorrect with respect to the *language* in which it is expressed.

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2. I know from personal experience that no matter how I express this particular truth, it will offend some people.

## Discussion and Conclusion

In short, only the first statement passes the Ephesians 4:15 rule. For, as I explain to my students, if you can avoid offending people while educating them but choose not to do so, then it would seem to me that your ultimate objective is not, at least purely, to teach them the truth. Rather, it would appear that your *intention* is to offend them, either because you are a sadist or because you think—and sadly, you would be correct in thinking this—that this is an effective way of achieving popularity.<sup>3</sup> When you have such malicious intentions, you run the risk of losing the opportunity to win people over to the truth. You might end up closing their minds to the truth through the *avoidably* offensive way in which you have expressed myself. And that should concern you—if, that is, you genuinely honor the Golden Rule.

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3. Of course, it is conceivable that people consciously seek to offend others for altruistic reasons. They might reason that such “tough love” is an effective means of liberating people from falsehood. It seems to me, however, that this is not a common motivation.

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# THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHER TRAINING

ON THE MOODLE PLATFORM AND ESL  
LANGUAGE LEARNING ON STUDENTS AT A  
LATIN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

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*Journal of the Scholarship  
of Teaching and Learning for Christians in  
Higher Education* 11.1 (2021) 15–28  
[http://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/sotl\\_ched/](http://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/sotl_ched/)

**Key Words** *platform, Moodle, learning, English as a second language*

**Palabras Clave:** *plataforma, Moodle, aprendizaje, inglés*

## Abstract

**Objective:** To accurately know the influence of teacher training on the Moodle platform and English learning in ESL students at a Latin American university. **Materials and Methods:** For this pre-experimental study, the pre- and post-tests were applied to a sample of 29 students and then processed with the SPSS (Statistical Analysis Software) program. **Results:** The pre-test reached an average score of 13.86 compared to the post-test, which reached an average score of 17.83. This indicates a positive influence with an increase of 3.97 points,  $P = 0.00$ . Therefore, the hypothesis stating that ESL students are able to learn in a virtual class is accepted. In the four specific hypotheses, increases of 4.00,

3.50, 3.74 and 4.20 points between the pre- and post-tests, respectively, verify the improvements. **Conclusion:** We can conclude that there is a positive influence with the Moodle platform teacher training in the learning of English as a second language. Clear evidence is shown in the increase of 3.97 points between the pre- and post-tests, which indicate an academic progress of the students of a regular average to very good.

**Objetivo:** Conocer la influencia de la capacitación de docentes en la plataforma Moodle y aprendizaje del inglés básico en estudiantes de inglés básico de una universidad. **Materiales y Método:** Para este estudio pre experimental para ello se aplicó el pre y pos test a una muestra de 29 estudiantes, que será procesada con el programa SPSS. **Resultados:** El pretest alcanzó un promedio de 13.86, a comparación del posttest con un puntaje promedio de 17.83, con ello una influencia positiva con un incremento de 3.97 puntos.  $P = .000$ , se acepta la hipótesis planteada. En las hipótesis específicas también se comprobó un incremento de 4.00 , 3.50 , 3.74 y 4.20 puntos, respectivamente. **Conclusión:** Existe una influencia positiva de la Capacitación docente plataforma Moodle en el aprendizaje del inglés básico, ya que entre la prueba pre y pos test se experimentaron un aumento de 3.97 puntos, lo que permite señalar un progreso académico de los estudiantes de un promedio regular a muy bueno.

## Statement of the Problem

Many English as a second language (ESL) students complete a full ESL program each year with the inability to communicate in the target language. We confirm and relate this inability to communicate with poor oral production during the process of the language course. This problem is attributed to inadequate or inappropriate methods of second language instruction. It can be determined with some precision



that the level of expertise of the teacher mastering the second language is a positive determining factor in the acquisition and production of the second language.

Another determining factor in the acquisition and production of the second language is the frequency in which the second language is taught. It is common to teach during monthly periods of an hour and a half to three hours a day with teachers who are mostly native Spanish speakers teaching ESL, and their proficiency in their second language ranges from excellent to poor. Although it is true that universities have teachers trained in didactic subjects, unfortunately not many have the knowledge or cultural immersion necessary to really understand the language in a context stemming from real-life experiences. In other words, these teachers have learned the second language in their country of origin in an unfavorably controlled environment. This is very unfortunate due to the inconsistency and incompetence of many of our students learning their second language.

Despite three years of second language instruction, students who complete the English language programs are ill-prepared to respond to the demands of using the second language in various real-life situations. Life experiences show us that a significant number of language students show incompetence in communication skills in the target language. Indeed, not all students successfully face the new challenges that the university courses pose, such as increased demands, growing need to organize academic work, greater dedication to study, preparation during exams, autonomy, etc. Having observed all these factors, we monitored three groups of students, with 10 students in each group taking ESL classes in which the teacher chosen was trained in the usage of Moodle as a tool of technology. Moodle is a learning platform designed for virtual instruction that enables students to have the opportunity to personalize their learning environment.

## **Background**

The research is based on the advances found in Oré (2017), who found a notable improvement in the skills of the study population after the use of the Moodle platform. Most of the grades were average before Moodle; however, afterwards the averages were significantly better. This shows the effective contribution of the technology.

Abanto and García (2017) developed a study of an English virtual platform, which—despite not being Moodle—showed that it was effective in improving English skills, which allows us to understand that numerous virtual elements can help a student’s academic progress. Therefore, the objective of this investigation, stated in the general hypothesis (GH), is to know the influence of teacher training on the Moodle platform and the learning of English as a second language at a university. Finally, the specific hypotheses (SH) seeks to identify how the teacher training in Moodle positively affects the learning of English in ESL students in the four skills of writing, reading, listening, and speaking.

## **Materials and Methods**

### **About the Training**

Teachers were trained in the 2020 fall academic semester teacher training program in 10 sessions divided into two different topics: (1) the role and competencies of the virtual tutor, and (2) organization and implementation of the virtual Moodle classroom. Each session lasted three hours, during which the teacher actively participated in the development of fundamental aspects of E-learning, the strategies for the virtualization of an online course, the use of the Moodle tool for the creation of digital resources, and the protocol to create videos in virtual environments.

One of the main topics of this training was the role of the teacher and the skills of the virtual tutor. Here, the teachers learned strategies and skills that enabled them to develop successful tutoring techniques and provide permanent motivation to students, while applying empathic feedback. It was very important to educate the teachers in the role of motivator. Student motivation in virtual learning is a fundamental element of successful second language learning. According to Huertas (1997), motivation is defined as the desire to learn. The teachers were trained in aspects of motivation, which activates and exponentially improves communication between teacher and student; it also activates and involves the student in the learning process.

To reach the objective of this training, the teacher was taught how to generate intrinsic motivation in students through the creation of online learning activities. It is worth mentioning that these activities should allow the inclusion of different learning styles favoring innovation and student autonomy. The role of the teacher is not to teach classes full of grammatical theories in the second language but to create lifelong learning in students and motivate them to communicate in the target language. The teachers become this new virtual environment in which they guide, facilitate, and stimulate autonomy without ceasing to accompany their pupils. Using feedback is a learning strategy that allows students to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and the teacher can help students overcome their shortcomings and encourage their achievements. This metacognitive part promotes reflection.

During the development of the topic organization and implementation of the Moodle virtual classroom, teachers learned to prioritize the planning of activities. Likewise, they were trained to implement activities (e.g., homework and forums), to properly configure various assessments, and to implement different types of questions to optimally evaluate their students; this would contribute to the proper development of their asynchronous lessons. Moreover, the teachers learned to integrate Zoom and Microsoft Teams to create synchronous online lessons.

## **About the Tests**

Regarding the pre- and post-tests, a test similar to the international KET (Key English Test) was developed and applied by the researcher. This exam corresponds to level A2 (basic level) of the Common European Framework and measures the student's knowledge of English in simple situations. The students had to demonstrate their ability to understand phrases and expressions frequently used in everyday life and to recognize and use simple words and phrases in the different sections of the test.

The students also had to demonstrate their knowledge of both written and spoken English, as well as their listening and reading

comprehension skills. To corroborate the differences in means between the pre- and post-test, the student's T-test was used, as it had a sample of 29 students. The pre-test as well as the post-test were validated by three researchers who are experts in the subject and the methodology of second language acquisition. Their validation was 90%. Then, a pilot test was given to 10 students, and the results obtained using Cronbach Alpha indicated a 95% reliability in the test results. Therefore, it is confirmed that the designed test was validated to be applicable to the sample.

### About the Population

At the university there were 90 students enrolled in the 2020 fall academic semester in different levels and sections of Basic, ranging from Basic 1 to Basic 6. The sample of 29 students who were enrolled in Basic 1 (true beginners) was taken, representing 30% of the population.

- N = 90 (basic 1-6) Therefore, it was considered as a sample:
- N = 29 students that represent 30% of the population enrolled in Basic 1 course.

The student population consisted of 95% women and 5% men, had an average age of 22 years, were Hispanic and native Spanish speakers, and belonged to the middle social class. Since the sample was homogeneous in this aspect and due to the characteristics of the sample, it was not necessary to compare it.

### Methods

This pre-experimental research was processed with the SPSS (Statistical Analysis Software) program with a descriptive and inferential analysis. It was used in T-tests for students to verify the difference between the pre- and post-tests, as presented in Tables 1 and 2 below. The students' T-tests were used because of the small sample size.

		Frequency	Percentage	Accumulated Percentage
<b>Validated</b>	Bad	2	6.9	6.9
	Regular	16	55.2	62.1
	Good	11	37.9	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	

Table 1. *Pre-Test Frequencies for Basic English Learning* Source: Nora Mendivil

		Frequency	Percentage	Accumulated Percentage
Validated	Good	10	34.5	34.5
	Very Good	19	64.5	100.0
	Total	29	100.0	

Table 2. *Post-Test Frequencies for Basic English Learning* Source: Nora Mendivil

Tables 1 and 2 indicate the results in the pre-test: 55.2% attained a “regular” grade before applying the teaching strategy through the use of the Moodle platform. Then in the post-test, a result of 65.5% attained as “very good” learning. For that reason, it is appropriate to say the strategy worked.

The test of difference of means indicates values between the results for the pre-test = 13.86 and for the post-test 017.83. Evidence of improvement in the learning of the Basic English language in 3.97 points from “fair” to “very good.” Gender differences are not detailed because the sample majority consisted of women with the same characteristics of age, social class, etc.

## Results and Discussion

The data and statistics established the following:

### General Hypothesis Test (GH)

**GH.** The Moodle platform teacher training significantly increases the learning of ESL students at the University.

	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error of the mean
Pre-Test ESL Student Learning	29	13.86	1.329	0.247
Post-Test ESL Student Learning	29	17.83	0.966	0.179

Table 3. *General Hypothesis Mean Difference*

Source: Nora Mendivil

The general hypothesis proposes a positive influence of the Moodle platform teacher training on ESL students’ learning, and this research confirms the main objectives of the investigation. The statistics in Table

3 clearly identify the differences in the mean of the pre-test (13.86), ranking as below average, and the mean of the post-test (17.83), ranking as “very good.” The difference between these scores shows an increase of 3.97 points in the results.

### First Specific Correlation Test

**SH1.** Teacher training in Moodle increases the learning of writing skills in ESL students at the university.

	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error of the mean
Pre-Test Learning Writing Skills	29	13.40	1.315	0.231
Post-Test Learning Writing Skill	29	17.40	0.945	0.169

Table 4. *Mean Difference of SH 1*

Source: Nora Mendivil

An analysis of the first specific hypothesis of the independent variable in the learning of writing skills found a difference in the means between the pre- and post-tests, as recorded in Table 4. In the pre-test, students had an average score of 13.40, which is considered a low average. On the other hand, the post-test mean was 17.40, which is considered a very good grade. The increase of 4.00 points between the means in the pre- and post-test scores indicates a positive influence that teacher training in Moodle increases the learning of writing skills in ESL students at the university.

### Second Specific Correlation Test

**SH2.** Teacher training in Moodle increases the learning of reading in ESL students in the language center at the university.

	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error of the mean
Pre-Test Learning Reading Skills	29	13.74	1.321	0.232
Post-Test Learning Reading Skills	29	17.24	0.938	0.165

Table 5. *Mean difference of SH 2*

Source: Nora Mendivil

The second specific hypothesis examines the influence of teacher training on a virtual platform (Moodle) in learning reading skills. It identifies a mean difference in the pre-test score of 13.74, which indicates a “regular” average, while the post-test score of 17.24 indicates a “very good” score (See Table 5). An increase of 3.50 points was confirmed, indicating teacher training in Moodle increases the learning of reading in ESL students in the language center at the university.

### Third Specific Correlation Test

**SH3.** Teacher training in Moodle increases the learning of listening skills in ESL students at the university.

	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error of the mean
Pre-Test Learning Listening Skills	29	13.61	1.321	0.245
Pre-Test Learning Listening Skills	29	17.35	0.954	0.172

Table 6. *Mean Difference of SH 3*

Source: Nora Mendivil

The third specific hypothesis proposes that teacher training in Moodle increases ESL student learning of listening skills at the university. Research results allow the general conclusion that this is true. As seen in Table 6, the mean difference in the pre-test score of 13.61, considered an average score, and was increased by 3.74 on the post-test with an average score of 17.35.

### Fourth Specific Correlation Test

**SH4.** Teacher training in Moodle increases the learning of speaking skills in ESL students at the university.

	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error of the mean
Pre-Test Learning Speaking Skills	29	13.52	1.310	0.247
Post-Test Learning Writing Skills	29	17.72	0.948	0.179

Table 7. *Mean Difference of SH 4*

Source: Nora Mendivil

The fourth specific hypothesis was examined to determine the influence of the teacher training of the Moodle platform regarding learning speaking skills in the target language. Results recorded in Table 7 show a mean score in the pre-test 13.52, considered an average grade; however, the post-test mean was 17.72, considered to be a very good score. The difference between those scores show an increase of 4.20 points, so statistics indicate teacher training in Moodle increases the learning of speaking skills in ESL students in a language center at the university.

Contrasting with previous studies, we found similarities in the conclusions. For example, Fernández (2015) identified that teachers with limited competencies and abilities of virtual tools such as the Moodle platform limit teaching to students.

Finding teachers from different universities with difficulties regarding knowledge of the virtual environment and technological tool, harms the student, limiting their learning. In the present study it is evidenced, nowadays, that teachers must be prepared to handle these tools; therefore, it is necessary for teachers to be trained in the use of the Moodle platform as well as other platforms, which the present study encourages, providing alternative solutions to improve ESL learning in Latin America.

This is a situation that we were able to verify in this ESL course where most of the students who had teachers trained in Moodle achieved very good averages. Teachers need to be more aware of new technologies to help their students achieve academic objectives. Teaching methods and many computer-based instructional programs have changed the view on learning. It is moving from the pedagogy of the acquisition of knowledge to a pedagogy of process learning.



In his study “The Virtual Learning Environment Based on the Moodle Platform and the Relationship in Free Access Teacher Training,” Fernández (2015) found that the teachers in the educational institution of the study present certain difficulties in terms of their knowledge of the virtual environment. This is because there is no consistent training. Likewise, it warns that the institution has not been making teacher training a priority, thus reducing the possibilities of strengthening teaching skills related to the use of technological tools. This results in the students’ poorer performance in terms of ESL learning.

Regarding learning English as a second language, Goñi (2019) discusses that the emotional state is an important factor to learn this language since speaking in public is not an action that comes easily to everyone. Although this research does not examine these conclusions, it takes into consideration that virtual platforms manifest varied alternatives in which the student can choose the most comfortable way to participate in class. These dynamics allow very good grades in writing, reading, listening, and speaking.

## Conclusions

This current study confirms the general hypothesis that there is a positive influence of the Moodle platform teacher training in ESL learning as evidenced by the 3.97-point improvement of the post-test average over the pre-test average. These results indicate an academic progress of the students of an “average fair” to “very good.”

In the first specific hypothesis (SH 1), the initial forecast is repeated: both the pre- and post-test show an increase of 4.00 points. This confirms that teacher training on this virtual platform positively influences writing. It also verifies that students presented improved scores from being low in the pre-test to being very good in the post test.

The second specific hypothesis (SH 2) confirms a favorable influence of teacher training in reading skills. The regular grades became very good. Between the pre- and post-tests, they verified an increase of 3.50 points, which represents the benefits of the dynamics of the virtual elements.

The third specific hypothesis (SH 3) verifies the positive influence of the Moodle platform teacher training in listening skills. The pre- and post-tests experienced an increase of 3.74 points. This shows an academic progress of the students from a regular average score to a very good score.

The fourth specific hypothesis (SH 4) confirms the positive impact of teacher training on the virtual platform used by the institution of study. Since the differences in means between the pre- and post- tests indicate an increase of 4.20 points, this confirms the benefits of the virtual Moodle platform where most of the ESL students achieved knowledge in English by increasing their grades from fair to very good.

These results show a clear improvement in students' learning English as a second language in all four areas: writing, reading, listening, and speaking. The increase in the mean scores range from 3.50 points to 4.20 points between the pre- and post-tests. Improvements in learning the second language are credited to good teacher training, including training with the Moodle platform.

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to thank my students who spent the time, the effort, and the dedication to make this research possible.

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# RE-CONCEPTUALIZING INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY IN PRACTICE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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*Journal of the Scholarship  
of Teaching and Learning for Christians in  
Higher Education* 11.1 (2021) 29–63  
[http://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/sotl\\_ched/](http://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/sotl_ched/)

**Key Words** *inclusion, inclusive practice, pedagogy, inclusive pedagogy, educational practice, higher education, diversity*

## **Abstract**

Twenty-first-century classrooms are becoming increasingly culturally, ethnically, and racially diverse and are looking more and more like microcosms. Consequently, students and some educational stakeholders are demanding the inclusion of race, culture, justice, and equality in the curricula and pushing the envelope for more inclusive pedagogy. Central to the concept of inclusive pedagogy are the values of fairness and equity. Proponents of inclusive pedagogy have indicated that numerous variables influence pedagogy, particularly inclusive pedagogy. These values have elicited concerns throughout the educational system regarding how instructors and facilitators serve all learners academic needs in their academies. However, there is no consensus on what constitutes inclusive pedagogy

in higher education (HE) or if inclusive pedagogy even exists in that space. Therefore, educational institution leaders need to re-conceptualize their thoughts on inclusive pedagogy.

This paper reviews some of the existing literature applicable to inclusive education and inclusive pedagogy. It proposes inclusive pedagogy dimensions that instructors in HE need to consider to effectively implement inclusive pedagogy practice (IPP) in the classroom. It concludes with a conceptual framework for inclusive pedagogy in practice (IPIP) in HE and suggestions of how administrators, faculty members, and course designers can advance the IPIP framework across their campuses.

## Introduction

The conversations regarding inclusive pedagogy as a concept evolved out of research surrounding inclusive education that emerged in the early 21st century (Vrășmaș, 2018). Seminal researchers exploring the efficacy of inclusive education relative to special education expressed the need for a paradigm shift in teacher education and school organization and structure (Dunn, 1968). At that time, research and discussions focused primarily on where students identified as having special needs should be educated: in pull-out or regular classrooms. Despite more than 20 years of research, inclusive education as a concept remains elusive and has been defined in numerous ways. The literature reveals that early definitions were contextualized and generally lacked consensus (Artiles et al., 2006; Florian, 2014; Loreman, 2017). To distinguish the concept from a location, such as a classroom, Florian (2014) noted that early definitions emphasized inclusive education as a process or an approach. She proposed that though problematic, the lack of a clear definition may indicate the wealth of information on inclusive education that researchers need to uncover. Graham and Slee (2008) concurred with Florian that for the concept to be distinctive and recognizable, those involved in pursuing a more concise definition should acknowledge gaps created while implementing inclusion and identifying assumptions that inform their personal and collective philosophies apropos inclusive education.

Globally, inclusive education still has the stigma as an approach geared primarily towards special needs students in mainstream classrooms. However, in the last decade, inclusive education definitions continue to evolve. The majority cluster around the notion of an educational philosophy or belief system reflected in schools that welcomes all learners and treats them as valuable citizens. Such schools also allow all learners to actively engage in learning in a communal educational context and learn curricula that reflect the cultures and communities from which they come (Booth & Ainscow as cited in Florian, 2015; Gannon, 2018; Moriña, 2017). The concept is based on the premise that education is a fundamental human right for all, including persons with disabilities (United Nations, 2006) and represents the basis for equity and fairness promoted in the broader society. Currently, inclusive education has extended beyond the placement needs of learners with disabilities to include access for all learners and opportunities for maximized engagements in a diverse learning community with no fear of discrimination and/or appraisals.

Inclusion in education has been under scrutiny in the United States, the UK, Canada, and other parts of the world (Florian, 2014). In the United States, early attempts to address inclusion specific to learners with disabilities included enacting the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Act delineates that educational institutions should educate students with disabilities in regular classes with peers who are non-disabled unless the severity of their disabilities prevents learning even with requisite support (Texas Education Agency, 2017). Other responses include increased efforts to reinforce existing laws, to equalize or increase school funding, address racial inequities, and establish uniformity among school practices and policies (Husted & Kenny, 2002).

However, while policies regarding inclusion were being developed at the P-12 level, competing school reform initiatives were being developed simultaneously, which often meant trading or sacrificing one set of goals for another. Rouse and Florian (as cited in Florian, 2014) liken this ongoing competition between inclusion policies and other school reform initiatives to marketplace principles. This marketplace application has created significant concerns among many educators who

fear that the competition between the agendas of school reforms and the moral obligations of inclusion would only retard progress towards inclusive education. Florian (2014) indicates that some inclusion supporters fall short of inclusive education practices, as they are only committed to doing things that give some allusion to inclusion. Irrespective of intent and extensive efforts, critics have argued that anticipated promises of inclusivity are yet to be delivered, as prevailing efforts about inclusive education seem to place greater emphasis on learning contexts (i.e., the “where”) rather than on teaching practices and approaches (Artiles et al., 2006; Florian, 2014). Over time, the focus on inclusion and inclusive education has generally shifted to inclusive pedagogy, which has now invaded university meeting agendas, processes, policies, and teaching and learning methodologies (Moriña, 2020).

The purpose of this paper is to examine some of the existing literature pertinent to inclusive education and inclusive pedagogy and highlight dimensions of inclusive pedagogy for consideration if instructors in higher education are to succeed in effectively implementing inclusive pedagogy practice in the classroom. The paper concludes with a conceptual framework for inclusive pedagogy in practice and suggestions of how administrators, faculty members, and course designers in higher education can support and advance the inclusive pedagogy in practice framework across their campuses.

## **Inclusive Pedagogy and Higher Education**

A review of extant studies conducted by Blankenship et al. (2005) reveals that the paradigm shift advocated by Dunn (1968) relative to inclusion has yet to be realized. McIntyre (2009) implies that teacher preparation programs could play an influential role in initiating a paradigm shift and could effectuate significant pedagogical changes relative to inclusive pedagogy. Teacher trainees invariably tend to adopt and transport their training institutions’ practices, attitudes, and thinking to their classrooms. McIntyre further alleges that teacher trainees’ struggle to work with exceptional students might be due to their not being espoused to other ways of thinking about inclusive education for diverse learners. In concurrence with McIntyre, the



Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU, 2015) notes copious evidence in the existing literature highlighting many of higher education's existing inequities, especially relating to students of color's traditionally underrepresented communities. In its work *Step Up & Lead For Equity*, the AACU (2015) calls higher educational institutions to act instead of talking about the issues associated with educational inequities.

Although teacher training institutions have an essential role in the shift toward inclusive pedagogy in schools, the literature indicates that higher educational institutions, in general, can facilitate this shift through their policies, philosophies, campus cultures, administrative services, and support (Moriña & Orozco, 2020). Ultimately, the responsibility of advancing inclusive pedagogy has been placed on teachers and faculty members (AACU, 2015; Loreman, 2017; Moriña & Orozco, 2020; Sandoval & Doménech, 2020; Spratt & Florian, 2015). Consistent with that thought, Loreman proposes that to be inclusive, institutions must attend to pedagogy, which is primarily concerned with how teaching and learning occur.

## **Interpretations and Intersections of “Pedagogy” and “Inclusive Pedagogy”**

The debate regarding the meaning of pedagogy dates to Simon's exploration of pedagogy as a topic (1981,1994). Simon argues that what was paraded as pedagogy—the activities and discourses associated with teaching—were simply teachers' conceptualizations, plans, and justifications that represented a combination of pragmatism and ideology that they obtained from their teacher training. Although pedagogy has been associated with curriculum design, strategies, techniques, and assessments, Giroux and Simon (1988) submit that pedagogy's discourse involves more:

It stresses that the realities of what happens in classrooms organize a view of how a teacher's work within an institutional context specifies a particular version of what knowledge is of most worth, in what direction we should desire, what it means to know something, and how we might construct representations of ourselves, others, and our physical and social environment. (p. 12)

Alexander (2004) concurs with Simon's argument that pedagogy calls for refining experience and exploring various evidence points to develop a professional knowledge base. Alexander acknowledges teaching, learning, and curriculum as core elements of any pedagogical discourse. He insists that as a foundational step, an intelligent understanding of pedagogy requires the synergistic interplay among the following three domains: (1) the learner, learning, instruction, and curriculum; (2) the institution and its policies; and (3) the culture, individual, and history—which enable, legitimize, formalize, and locate teaching, respectively. In light of these arguments, Loreman (2017) argues that pedagogy is critical to any practical, inclusive approach. Without an effective process for instructors to reflect on their knowledge, understanding, and ways of engaging in developing proposed inclusive approaches, there is no foundation for inclusion.

Inclusive pedagogy is an instructional approach whereby teachers practice educational inclusion by supporting all students in their classrooms by mindfully employing instructional approaches that are advantageous to all learners and foster a sense of community (Florian, 2014). The distinctive factor is that inclusive pedagogy is not defined by teachers strategies but by how they are performed (Florian, 2015). According to Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), the use of the term “inclusive pedagogy” was intended to specifically focus on the activity of teaching and its related discourse. The concept was introduced to oppose systemic bell-curve thinking and tendencies related to teaching and learning that reflected predetermined notions about students' abilities (Florian, 2014)—hence her appeal for the literature to provide an understanding of what counts as evidence of inclusive pedagogy.

According to the Center for New Designs in Learning & Scholarship at Georgetown University (n.d.), inclusive pedagogy is a way for instructors and students to work together. It involves teamwork that is explicitly designed to bring social justice into the classroom through learner-centered and equity-focused teaching, where everyone has space to be present and feel valued. This inclusive pedagogy perspective implies that students come to the classroom as contributors to the learning process and not merely consumers. The Institute for Learning and Teaching at Colorado State University

defines “inclusive pedagogy” as a “student-centered teaching approach that considers all students’ backgrounds, experiences, and learning variabilities in the planning and implementation of student engagement activities, equitable access to content, mutual respect, and a more robust learning experience for all learners” (Buchan, T., et al., 2019). The language of Georgetown University’s Center for New Designs in Learning & Scholarship’s definition suggests that inclusive pedagogy enables opportunities to expand inclusive pedagogical discourse into higher education. This mindset is depicted in the inclusive pedagogical approach in action framework submitted by Florian (2014). It includes three assumptions with corresponding actions, challenges, and evidence about instructional practices appropriate to primary, secondary, and postsecondary levels of education.

First, instructors recognize that difference is an inherent part of the human element: (a) the evidence of an understanding that ways of knowing and learning are not a one-size-fits-all approach and includes the development of classroom environments where everyone participates in the process; (b) using rich and varied learning strategies; (c) incorporation of differentiated learning through choice; (d) creating diverse classroom working groups instead of ability grouping; (e) showing that everyone in the room has value; and (f) incorporating active participation through social constructivism and recognition of asset vs. deficit learning.

Second, instructors believe they are capable of teaching all the students in their classrooms. Evidence includes a focus on what and how to teach the material (rather than to whom the material is taught) while providing students with opportunities to engage with information and use reflective responses in providing support.

Third, instructors should develop new ways to relate to and creatively engage with their students and prioritize care for them over acquiring knowledge. Besides, they should develop a flexible approach to teaching and learning, view student difficulties as opportunities for growth, display a commitment to personal and professional development, and display dedication to holistic, community-centered practices that support learning.

This newer, broader lens frames the ensuing theoretical discussion and the proposed conceptual framework for higher education's inclusive pedagogy. The framework offers practical situational examples of inclusive pedagogy in practice—what it looks like when it works and when it does not—and identifies possible results for students, faculty members, and higher education organizations. Inclusive pedagogy in higher education is crucial for these constituents because colleges and universities have become more culturally, linguistically, economically, and ethnically diverse. Social justice, equity, and learner-centeredness are paramount to these learners' successes.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for inclusive pedagogy was founded on Alexander's (2004) perception of pedagogy as a composite of knowledge and competencies that the teacher should possess to inform and validate decisions made in the teaching process (Florian, 2015). Since then, several compelling theories and inclusive pedagogy models suited to the postsecondary education environment have emerged. Socio-cultural Learning Theory (SCL), Multiliteracies, Critical Race Theory (CRT), and the Universal Design of Learning (UDL) each have been used individually and represent an excellent start to the conversation of the applicability of a broader concept of inclusive pedagogy in higher education. The following section provides an overview of these theories and models and identifies why none of them alone suffices as a foundational methodology that all institutions could adopt.

### **Socio-cultural Learning Theory**

The findings and discussions relative to inclusive pedagogy in the literature generally focused on theoretical concerns about all learners and learning, and to some extent, the transformation of an institution's culture. However, inclusive pedagogical practices are rooted in the socio-cultural learning theory drawn from Vygotsky's work, highlighting the importance of language learning. It is based on the premise that humans social, cultural literacy, and cognitive development occur when

they can mediate “symbolic and socially constructed artifacts, the most significant of which being the language” (Vygotsky, as cited in Shabani, 2016, p. 2). For example, before learning course content, students whose first language is not English must first learn the language to navigate social landscapes and context (Halliday, 1993) before they can benefit from inclusive pedagogy. However, focusing on language and going beyond the lingua franca (i.e., the common language of the region or location) to engage students is merely a first step in developing inclusive pedagogy in practice in higher education.

Inclusive pedagogy is better understood by those with an understanding of socio-cultural relationships on learning (Claxton, 2009; Spratt & Florian, 2015). Findings from studies conducted by Black-Hawkins et al. (2007) and Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) helped develop a clear articulation of inclusive pedagogy that represented this understanding. The researchers opted not to use interviews for data collection. They indicated that some of the most robust and authentic data emerge from the social context or community of the classroom, where they could observe the teaching approach and social interactions between teachers and learners during active teaching and learning. Evidence from this study led to the conclusion that inclusive pedagogy practices were different from common pedagogical approaches. The latter was noticeable in the ways teachers responded to learner differences, the choices they made about whole-group and individual learning activities, and how they used their specialist knowledge. In support of socio-cultural learning, Claxton posited that each learner is a “person plus,” where “plus” symbolizes things or people within the learning context. Spratt and Florian concur with Claxton underscoring the significant impact that teachers have in the learning community. Within the socio-cultural space called the classroom, learners are expected to manage a complex web of relationships. How teachers respond or interact with all learners individually and as a group could convey messages that supplant the content being formally taught, ultimately impeding learning (Claxton, 2009; Kuzolin, 2014; Spratt & Florian, 2015).

## Multiliteracies

The pedagogy of multiliteracies, a model proposed by the New London Group (2000), offers an early example of inclusive pedagogy in practice (IPIP) that embraces diverse cultures, languages, communities and depicts literacy teaching and learning integrating multiple modes and technological media. Recognizing the need to address these linguistic nuances in higher educational classrooms, the New London Group provides a theoretical underpinning to support a discussion about appropriate education for women, immigrants who are non-native speakers of the national language, aboriginals, and people who speak unstructured dialects. They advocate a shift from traditional literacy approaches to a multiliteracies pedagogy, which accounts for critical factors associated with linguistic and cultural differences impacting connectedness within and across groups. They also note the availability of a cornucopia of communication channels for learner engagement and language skills development that are critical to social interactions and employment satisfaction. Being aware of the sociocultural differences in her classroom, Mills (2007) used an ethnographic approach to explore the New London's multiliteracies to expand her literacy pedagogy discussion. She asserts that learning means more than verbal language, as verbal language contains multi-textual nuances, depending on the doer's student or faculty orientation.

Brown and Croft (2020) advanced the discussion of linguistic diversity from how faculty and students engage verbally to recognize technology's influence on the written form. They advocate for an open pedagogical approach in higher education classrooms. Open pedagogy relates to the issues faced by students who may not have the level of academic prowess as those who came to university in the past but—because of engagement with the material and their faculty—have been able to gain access to levels of education that they may not have before. Brown and Croft suggest that open pedagogy supports the diversity of culture and educational level within college and university classrooms. Additionally, the New London Group (2000) state that it is vital to identify a classroom that recognizes gender differences.

## Critical Race Theory

However, despite that gender, identity, linguistic, age, culture, and ethnic diversities exist in college, university, and graduate classrooms, higher education's developmental history is grounded in a faith-based, European, male perspective: the first U.S. colleges and universities were founded for White males. Arday et al. (2020) reflect on the importance of incorporating critical race theory to focus on "centrality of Whiteness as an instrument of power" (p. 1) as an influence on Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) student feelings of belonging, inclusiveness, and ability to engage. As Harris and Clarke (2011) indicate, BAME experiences have been misinterpreted or are notably missing from class materials. Textbooks, assigned articles, and lectures often omit the narrative of non-majority people groups, resulting in a feeling of ostracism, general exclusion from education, underrepresentation in the curricula, and denial of opportunities for learners from majority backgrounds to gain insight into the present and formerly lived experiences of other cultural groups in the learning community.

Critical race theory pulls from and spans a broad literature base across several disciplines, including sociology, law, history, and ethnic studies (Yosso, 2005). It is admitted to this discussion because of its concerns about race, equity, social justice, multiculturalism, and multilingualism. It also deepens the perspectives of various opinions about inclusive pedagogy. Scholars such as Ladson-Billings (2000) and Solorzano (1998) argue that in many learning contexts, some students' knowledge is often discounted based on their color and race or other demographic characteristics by teachers who operate from a deficit model mindset. Garcia and Guerra (2004) suggest that deficit thinking pervades U.S. society, and many stakeholders in the school environment reflect such beliefs. They propose that teachers who practice racial, gender, and class prejudices should be challenged. Administrators and departmental leaders should conduct an analysis of systemic factors that promote deficit thinking and nurture educational inequities among learners, particularly those from non-dominant, socio-culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Advocates of critical race theory are cognizant that the theory does not serve all the needs of inclusive pedagogy but is a helpful lever to promote the practice. Inclusive pedagogy and CRT are frameworks advocating for an understanding that every learner is an asset and brings wealth to the learning community (Bernal, 2002; Franklin, 2002; Gannon, 2018; Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Yosso, 2005). Educators committed to learning how to practice inclusive pedagogy possess a CRT lens value and nurture the cultural wealth students from communities of color bring to the learning environment. Yosso observed that the cultural wealth that students bring to a college is represented in multiple forms of capital that are mutually inclusive and dynamic. Gannon (2018) and Lac (2017) concur that learners increase the learning community's asset portfolio. However, Gannon emphasizes that inclusive pedagogy is more than being invited and welcomed to sit at the table. Inclusive pedagogy in practice also includes having a voice at the table, being supported, and being made comfortable at the table.

## **Universal Design of Learning**

Universal design for learning (UDL), a principle-based framework, was inspired by the architectural concept of making buildings accessible to all (Posey, 2021). The framework is grounded in socio-cultural theory, built on the general premise that learning occurs when there are interactions among students, peers, teachers, and other experts. It provides insight into how people learn from each other in social settings. Socio-cultural learning theory and UDL involve valuing student differences across the curriculum, teaching practices, and assessment strategies (Hockings, 2010) and relate to two fundamental principles of inclusive pedagogy: equity and fairness for all learners. UDL was designed to help educators proactively design learning experiences that would include all learners. It is a useful guide for teachers interested in constructing active learning communities, has an inherent potential to influence learner success, and is flexible and adaptable to various contexts or circumstances (Loreman, 2017; Posey, 2021; Rappolt-Schlichtmann et al., 2012).



The UDL framework includes three underlying principles: (1) multiple means of engagement, (2) multiple means of representation, and (3) multiple means of action and expression (Fornauf & Erickson, 2020; Loreman, 2017; Posey, 2021). These principles are critical to learning in higher education, where the learning is now delivered through various media to learners from diverse linguistic, cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. The universal design for learning framework has garnered some support at the K-12 level, but there is a lack of empirical data to support its effectiveness. However, Rappolt-Schlichtmann, et al. (2012) and Fornauf & Erickson (2020) report that the model is widely accepted among scholars and practitioners and that there is support for UDL inclusion in postsecondary education. Implicit in references to the word “multiple” in the UDL frameworks principles is recognizing there are various learners in the higher education classroom requiring pedagogical practices that will afford them opportunities for academic success. If students are underserved or marginalized, inclusion is simply an illusion (Vasquez et al., 2012).

## **Decolonizing Higher Education Curriculum through IPIP**

Williams et al. (2020) explored student feedback related to diversity as a component of classroom pedagogy and discussed the need for educators to have appropriate learning to help students gain cultural competence. The authors identify the value of bringing together multiple disciplines to develop a greater faculty understanding of cultural and ethnic differences through professional development. They report that higher education organizations’ overall culture can change to become more inclusive when faculty members take the initiative to work in multidisciplinary teams to bridge diversity and inclusion discussions across them all.

One of the first steps to understanding the need for inclusive pedagogy in practice (IPIP), where “inclusion” refers to the involvement of all members of the higher education community—regardless of gender, identity, religious or irreligious belief systems, age, disability, or culture—is recognizing that such a pedagogy involves four components of inclusion: beliefs, knowledge, design, and action

(Moriña, 2020). In a call to instructors, UNESCO (2006) states that the components might be represented in the following ways: (1) All students have something valuable to contribute (belief); (2) instructors must understand teaching strategies, student needs, learning styles, classroom management, and organization, as well as how to assess challenges, and how to get support as instructors (knowledge); (3) from an organizational standpoint, classes must be planned and designed appropriately (design); and last, (4) instructors should be prepared to include proactive—rather than reactive—practices to engage students (actions), which supports and aligns with Florian’s (2014) inclusive pedagogy in practice framework.

The importance of a decolonizing framework as a part of inclusive pedagogy in practice is to address points of difference while avoiding stigmatizing differences in the classroom. Students, faculty, and administrators should avoid ignoring differences in favor of recognizing points of similarity; doing so lends toward a melting pot mentality rather than recognizing the socio-cultural mosaic that higher education classrooms represent. Stentiford and Koutsouris (2020) maintain that inclusion in higher education must incorporate an identification of student needs from three perspectives: needs shared by all students, needs of groups of students, and needs of the individual student. These perspectives could relate to exceptionalities, cultures, or any areas of difference. Such recognition does not mean that faculty should treat students the same, despite such needs. Instead, it means that faculty must attend with equity to student needs within the classroom environment, taking a rights-based perspective when facilitating learning.

Ljungblad’s (2019) conceptual framework offers an example of how inclusive pedagogy in practice is rights-based, focusing on what students should have instead of operating through a deficit lens. The framework is composed of three components (i.e., instructor competencies)—relational, didactic teaching, and leadership—of which relational is key to pedagogy and inclusive education that accounts for student (and instructor) differences. Ljungblad posits that classroom relationships should be sustainable as well as relational, yet more research is necessary to clarify the nature of relationship-building in higher education spaces.

## Higher Education Inclusive Pedagogy in Practice: A New Model

Although many of the perspectives on inclusive pedagogy in practice in P-12 education have applicability to higher education, inclusive pedagogy in practice within the various levels of higher education require a theoretical model to incorporate many of the elements indicated in previous research. Research thus far has shown a slow but progressive shift from inclusion—which has been primarily concerned with where to educate learners with disabilities or special needs—to inclusive education as a process of eliminating exclusion, barriers, and discrimination so that all learners can have equal access to learning opportunities in mainstream classrooms—to the current focus on inclusive pedagogy. Summatively, the focus has been on students' needs and rights and the relationships between them and their instructors. These two elements are vital to the success of inclusive practices in higher education, where there is recognition of the many areas of diversity. However, two additional components have not yet been fully explored or included in the existing theoretical frameworks. As Ljungblad (2019) indicates, first it is vital to continue dialoguing about developing relationships between faculty and students as a learning dichotomy. The second element necessary for a more fully developed inclusive pedagogy in practice in higher education, which is generally absent from the literature, is the organization and its leaders. These two additional components lead to a new model of inclusive pedagogy in practice in higher education.

Relationships are central to education and inclusive education and are foundational to teaching (Ljungblad, 2019; Moriña, 2017; Spratt & Florian, 2015; Veitch et al., 2018). The relationship chasm between college students and their instructors is narrower than that of P-12 students and their teachers, affording more significant opportunities for developing interpersonal relationships. However, although instructors are ultimately responsible for practicing inclusive pedagogy, it is becoming increasingly apparent that there are numerous influential variables and stimuli in their learning communities and institutions

that affect how they perform their roles. Consequently, interpersonal relationships in higher education are not always organic, but complicated. Variables such as students' socio-cultural, socio-economic, linguistic, religious, racial, and ethnic backgrounds influence inclusive pedagogy in practice—as do other variables, such as (1) students' experiences, personalities, capacities, aspirations, expectations, and non-academic responsibilities; (2) program curricula design; (3) university vision, mission, and policies, as well as class size; (4) campus structure, services, and personnel; and (5) the philosophy of the instructor (Ljungblad, 2019; Renn & Reason, 2013).

Unfortunately, instructors are often left to contemplate in isolation how they will reflect inclusive pedagogy in practice, considering the confluence of extenuating variables and multiple expectations to be met. The authors of this paper submit that the latter should also be a critical concern for all institutional stakeholders involved in policy and decision-making. Administrators must ask whether they provide teachers the tools and autonomy to meet work expectations, professional expectations, and students expectations. Instructors should engage in honest self-assessment or introspection to identify active or potential biases, misjudgments, and the type of mindset and beliefs they have of all students. Students also need to answer questions of capacity, preparedness, commitment, grit, and motivation to support their expectations.

Inclusive pedagogy in practice in higher education is a process of growth and involves leaders, faculty, and students. As suggested by Figure 1, the “rain,” or nurturing of students within the system, occurs through instructor training and ongoing professional development. College and university leaders nurture faculty and guide growth through positive feedback, a willingness to hear new ideas, and encouraging interdisciplinary learning, where faculty from different colleges and programs work together to modify (i.e., decolonize) course materials. The entire process is grounded in the classroom environment, where faculty members encourage the development of relationships between themselves and between the students in their classes. Systemic growth and change across the institution are evident when the

information students receive lines up with their experiences (e.g., what they are told at admission, the alignment of how they are treated from class to class, and how their expectations match those experiences).

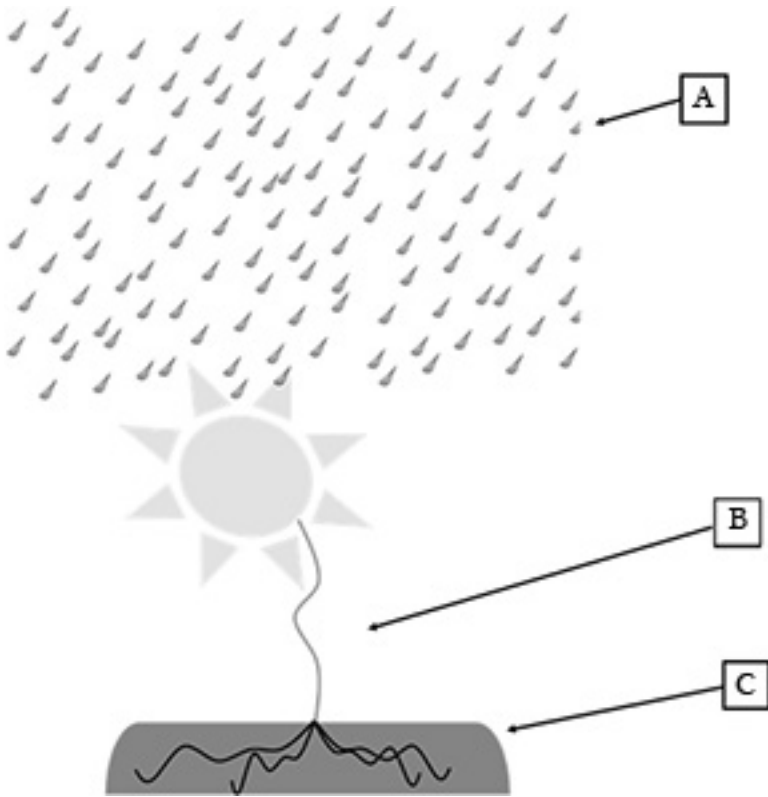


Figure 1. *Cyclical Growth Path of Higher Education Inclusive Pedagogy in Practice*

Note. This figure represents the three necessary components of IPIP in higher education. Faculty training, incentives from leadership, and information provided to students (A) nurture growth of diversity, equity, and inclusion across the university through interdisciplinary engagement (B), while relationships and the classroom experience (C) anchors both faculty and students.

Renn and Reason (2013) propose that college students must navigate the human, organizational, and natural elements that comprise the environment they are expected to learn and develop to achieve academic success. Like organisms in an ecological environment, stimuli

in the learning community may reinforce learner traits, behaviors, and attitudes as well as influence adaptations within the learning environment or themselves. When these interactions occur in the learning community, Renn and Reason assert that learning, personal development, and academic success are potential outcomes. In this regard, Strange and Banning (2001) purport that since the higher education environment shares a reciprocal relationship with learners, campus leaders or college administrators should consider how they can design or adapt their campus buildings and physical layout to promote safety, increase learner engagement, and improve success for learners from a broad cross-section of backgrounds and individualities in order to support inclusive practices.

Figure 2 represents a construct of some of the micro and macro variables with varying degrees of impact on inclusive pedagogy. It is not an exhaustive list or neat arrangement of variables, which all have implications for inclusive pedagogical practices. These and other variables represent the messy realities of many students who enter our postsecondary institutions from across the globe. Nevertheless, some of the same variables are pertinent to other stakeholders' experiences in the learning community. Furthermore, this model proposes that inclusive pedagogy in practice in higher education is best served when learning is at the center rather than the student or instructor. When the latter is in effect, three purposes of education—(1) qualifying learners for future careers, (2) introducing them to existing socialization processes locally, and (3) helping them discover and develop their uniqueness within the broader learning community—are more likely to be achieved (Ljungblad, 2019). The authors of this paper are fully cognizant of existing disagreements about achieving inclusive pedagogy. Thus, this model is intended to be a starting place for those who want to grow their inclusive pedagogy in practice intelligence.

### **Practical Examples: Potential Growth Steps to Inclusive Pedagogy in Practice**

Understanding the existing literature related to inclusive pedagogy and developing a model of inclusive pedagogy in practice is the first step. It is then necessary to identify opportunities for instructors and

facilitators interested in applying inclusive pedagogical practices in their classrooms. The interactive model in Figure 2 leads to ways individuals and department teams (e.g., instructors, administrators, department heads, and staff members such as librarians, counselors, financial aid personnel, and housing leaders) might begin reflecting on areas where they can incorporate more inclusive practices. Like the model itself, the list is not meant to be the only ways to begin or advance inclusive pedagogy in practice in higher education, but it is offered as a starting point and incorporates components from inclusive pedagogy researchers identified earlier in this work (Drewry, 2017; Florian, 2014, 2015; Florian & Camedda, 2020; Gannon, 2018; Hockings, 2010; Posey, 2021; Rothe as cited in Loreman, 2017).

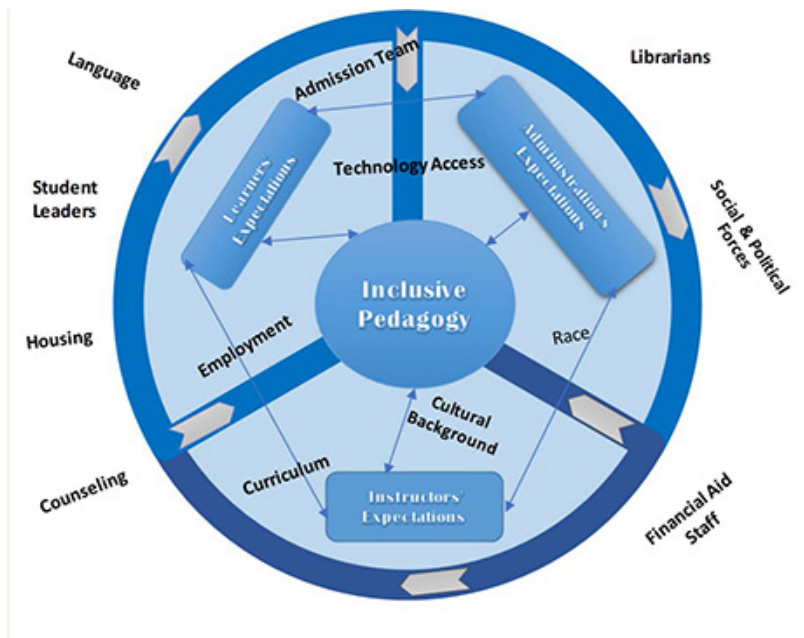


Figure 2. *Interactive Model of Inclusive Pedagogy in Practice (IPIP)*

Table 1 provides a summary of these three models of inclusion-inclusive pedagogical approach in action, multi-dimensional, and inclusive pedagogy in practice for higher education. The table compares and contrasts the models' (1) principles and underlying assumptions, (2) fundamental challenges, (3) opportunities for growth, and (4) evidence of inclusive pedagogy in practice.

Dimensions of Inclusion				
Models	Principles/ Underlying assumptions	Fundamental Challenges	Actions/Opportunities for Growth Pedagogical approach	Evidence of Inclusive Pedagogy in Practice in Higher Education
General Inclusion	<p>1. Education is a fundamental human right, and every student should be afforded the opportunity to have equal access to quality education.</p> <p>2. Teachers must believe they are qualified/capable of teaching all children.</p>	<p>1. The belief that inclusion is an attempt to accommodate students with disabilities.</p> <p>2. The exclusion of some learners from challenging learning experiences &amp; communal interactions.</p> <p>3. The teachers &amp; school leaders who operate from a deficit mindset or practice bell curve thinking (i.e., I can only meet the needs of average learners. Those at the two ends will need something different or extra).</p> <p>4. Learner diversity &amp; exceptionalities impede learning success.</p>	<p>1. Look for learning potential &amp; teachable moments with every student.</p> <p>2. Replace the deficit mindset with one that says all students enrich this learning because they bring diverse assets to the learning community.</p> <p>3. Believe that every student will make progress &amp; foster the environment to do that.</p>	



Dimensions of Inclusion				
Models	Principles/ Underlying assumptions	Fundamental Challenges	Actions/Opportunities for Growth Pedagogical approach	Evidence of Inclusive Pedagogy in Practice in Higher Education
<p>Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action (IPAA)</p> <p>(Florian, 2014, pp. 290-292)</p>	<p>1. Differences are accounted for as an essential aspect of human development in any conceptualization of learning.</p> <p>2. Teachers must believe they are qualified &amp; capable of teaching all children.</p> <p>3. Teachers continually develop creative new ways of working with others.</p>	<p>1. The identification of difficulties in learning &amp; the associated focus on what the learner cannot do often puts a ceiling on learning &amp; achievement.</p> <p>2. Seeing all students as the teacher's responsibility.</p> <p>3. Teachers believing some learners are not their responsibility.</p> <p>4. Changing thinking about inclusion from "most" &amp; "some" to "everybody."</p> <p>5. Teacher as the sage &amp; provider of knowledge &amp; students as consumers &amp; passive participants.</p>	<p>1. Reject deterministic views of ability.</p> <p>2. Accept that differences are part of the human condition.</p> <p>3. Reject the idea that the presence of some will hold back the progress of others.</p> <p>4. Believe that all children can make progress (if conditions are right).</p> <p>5. Commit to supporting all learners.</p> <p>6. Believe teachers can promote learning for all children.</p>	<p>Teachers . . .</p> <p>1. Cultivate a classroom where all learners get to participate in the life of the learning community.</p> <p>2. Create a rich learning community rather than using teaching &amp; learning strategies that are suitable for most alongside something additional or different for some who experience difficulties.</p> <p>3. Focus on what is to be taught &amp; how, not on who the learner is.</p> <p>4. Provide opportunities for learners to choose the level at which they want to engage in lessons.</p> <p>5. Engage in strategic/reflective responses to support difficulties that children encounter during learning.</p>

Dimensions of Inclusion				
Models	Principles/ Underlying assumptions	Fundamental Challenges	Actions/Opportunities for Growth Pedagogical approach	Evidence of Inclusive Pedagogy in Practice in Higher Education
Multidimensional (Ljungblad, 2019)	<p>1. Humans have rights to life &amp; development, to voice their opinions, and to non-discrimination.</p> <p>2. Relationships form the cornerstone of education.</p> <p>3. Education aims to prepare the next cadre of professionals &amp; leaders, to teach social behavior for relationships inside the school, community, &amp; the world.</p>	<p>1. The belief that a quiet classroom is evidence of effective teaching &amp; learning success.</p> <p>2. The perception that if teachers develop relationships with students, it may lead to disrespect &amp; create a teacher-student dichotomy.</p> <p>3. That creating opportunities for students to speak will diminish teaching/ learning time.</p>	<p>1. Give all learners opportunities to speak &amp; be taken seriously.</p> <p>2. Develop a trusting, respectful professional relationship with students.</p> <p>3. Conduct an overall assessment of the campus environment (e.g., people, facilities, &amp; policies) to ensure inclusive pedagogy friendliness.</p>	<p>Teachers . . .</p> <p>1. Cultivate relationships with students through verbal &amp; non-verbal communication (tone of voice, pitch, facial expression, eye contact)</p> <p>2. Model collaborative learning &amp; demonstrate care for all students who need educational support.</p>

Dimensions of Inclusion				
Models	Principles/ Underlying assumptions	Fundamental Challenges	Actions/Opportunities for Growth Pedagogical approach	Evidence of Inclusive Pedagogy in Practice in Higher Education
Inclusive Pedagogy in Practice (IPIP) for Higher Education  (Livingston-Galloway & Robinson-Neal, 2021)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Humans have rights to life &amp; development, to voice their opinions, &amp; to non-discrimination.</li> <li>2. Developing relationships is the cornerstone of education.</li> <li>3. Higher education prepares the next set of world leaders.</li> <li>4. Learner accommodations or learning modifications are available to all learners, if necessary.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identifying &amp; admitting personal prejudices &amp; biases as essential.</li> <li>2. Administration, staff, &amp; teachers often operating in silos. Inclusive pedagogy resides in the domain of the teacher inside his/her classroom.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider <i>if, when, &amp; how</i> students are given opportunities to share their unique voices in classroom conversations.</li> <li>2. Allow the curricula to reflect global diversities &amp; student differences.</li> <li>3. Adopt the belief that teachers can build a healthy &amp; meaningful interpersonal relationship with all learners.</li> <li>4. Accept that teacher relational proficiencies contribute to learner success.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inclusive pedagogical practices are embedded throughout curricula &amp; interwoven across campus.</li> <li>2. Academic &amp; non-academic constituents &amp; stakeholders affiliated with the institution adopt inclusive practices.</li> <li>3. All constituents are allowed to speak truth to power relative to issues that impede IPIP (e.g., race, social justice, culture).</li> <li>4. Ongoing training pertinent to inclusive pedagogy for staff, faculty, and students during onboarding process &amp; as necessary.</li> <li>5. Faculty members demonstrate a willingness to initiate &amp; engage learners in conversations around inclusive pedagogy &amp; invite constructive feedback on learners' perceptions of how inclusive practices are evidenced in instructors choices &amp; relationships with them.</li> <li>6. Guests to class &amp; other on-campus events represent the demographics of the student body &amp; employees in general.</li> </ol>

Table 1. *Summary Comparison of Three Models of Inclusive Pedagogy and the IPIP Model for Higher Education*

# Individual Opportunities for Growth

## Instructors

Identify personal prejudices and misconceptions. Admit and bracket biases to include questions like the following:

1. What am I taking for granted in the pedagogical approach I am considering? Is there something I am missing?
2. What are the assumptions and beliefs informing the basis for this approach? Do I hold biases towards particular learning theories (such as critical race theory or social constructivism)?
3. To what extent do my traditional classroom practices influence my pedagogy?
4. What are the roles of the instructor/facilitator and the learner?
5. Does my approach dishonor or disrespect the religion, culture, or other diversity in my classroom?
6. Does my approach make allowance for students to express their particular orientation? How might that affect the identity of a learner?

Tip: Invite your peers to reflect on the questions and to give constructive feedback.

## Other Ways to Build IPIP

1. Be authentic. Be committed to growing even in the face of challenges, difficulties, or mistakes.
2. Know your students. Learn their names, pronunciations, meanings, and significance, and permit them to correct you. Conduct a cultural inventory in your class that you can use to help plan lessons that are culturally considerate.
3. As much as is feasible, visit the learners' communities/contexts and attend some of their cultural events to learn more about them.
4. Recognize and give students multiple opportunities to share and use their culture in the learning environment. Encourage

the integration of cultural elements in assignments as appropriate.

5. If a student's native language is not English (be sure to ask), encourage them to teach you (and the class if appropriate) something in the language.
6. Set English-language learners up for equitable success by occasionally removing time frames on quizzes and tests.
7. Allow students to occasionally collaborate on tests and quizzes because some students do learn during those moments.
8. Complete an interest inventory with students. In class introductions, include personal elements such as the books, movies, music, sports, food, or other things of interest and create learning opportunities for students to share theirs. Create opportunities for students to grow their knowledge in those areas as they relate to the course.
9. Make connections between learning and life without trivializing issues. Ask students to identify ways that they can use the knowledge or skills they are learning.
10. Where possible, periodically rearrange the classroom to depict contexts and themes or simulations relevant to the lesson focus.
11. Be willing to reframe questions when students indicate they do not understand and allow their peers to provide clarifications.

## **Administrators, Counselors, Course Developers, and Other Teams**

There are elements of organizational oversight and development that also should be evaluated to determine areas of opportunity for the development of IPIP across the campus:

1. Create cross-campus opportunities for students to use their native language when trying to process learning, especially if their native language is not alphabetic. It takes between seven to nine years for non-native English speakers to develop academic English language proficiency.

2. For virtual learners, develop systems across all courses to assess needs and challenges they may have. Work across campus teams to develop solutions. For example, create and build guidelines for faculty to incorporate extended assignment deadlines and connect students with appropriate staff to guide proactive problem solving before or at the start of the semester regarding how to resolve technology challenges that may arise.
3. Develop flexible syllabi that allow students to present and demonstrate their knowledge and learning (e.g., videos, re-enactments, poetry, art, virtual showcase, storytelling, interviews, co-presenting with experts including resourceful family, friends) to connect with various learning styles.
4. During semester opening sessions, first-year orientations, or planned interactions with prospective new students, invite them to share about their journeys to college.
5. Create a campus culture—starting from leadership through instructors and staff—that uses person-centered language styles in all situations. Prepare the community with ways to ask meaningful questions and have dialogues that are not intrusive.
6. Understand that inclusive pedagogy in practice development takes time. Allow space for mistakes, apologize quickly when made aware of an offense, and encourage others to do the same. Be realistic. Select and implement manageable inclusive pedagogical moment(s) regularly. Solicit meaningful feedback across campus.
7. Encourage group collaborations across departments, disciplines, and classrooms to identify successful approaches. Be willing to take calculated risks.
8. Cultivate a campus where learning is at the center, not an individual instructor or student differences.

## Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research

The current exploration of literature and suggestions for moving inclusive pedagogy into a new practice model summarized in Table 1 creates opportunities for educators and researchers alike. Higher education administrators and departmental leaders must foster an atmosphere for learning that helps faculty, staff, and students belong. Leaders need to recognize the value of culture across academic teams. For a fully inclusive community, instructors should understand that the college or university where they work is dedicated to their belonging; they should be educated on the importance of similarly valuing the students in their classrooms. Hiring and onboarding can incorporate elements of inclusive pedagogy in practice, where human resourcing and recruiting conversations include discussions of intercultural understanding and practice. Course development can be guided through a cultural lens, where those who create content include global perspectives in selecting materials, address learning and teaching styles through varied types of assignments and course engagements, and provide student course assessments that include questions about the overall cultural climate of the class.

There are also opportunities for researchers to explore inclusive pedagogy in practice in higher education as well. Much of the existing work on inclusive pedagogy in higher education has occurred outside the U.S., presenting a need for further exploration within a general North American context. Specifically, the literature would benefit from qualitative works used to explore the experiences of faculty, the types of IPIP-related professional development and inter- and intra-departmental training offered on campus, and the processes for faculty-to-faculty mentorship. Explorations of the overall student experiences to gather their stories and feedback related to inclusive pedagogy in practice would also be salient. The list of ways to incorporate inclusive pedagogy in practice in higher education classrooms could serve as a starting point for these qualitative explorations.

Quantitative research in the form of longitudinal examination of change across time after incorporating IPIP techniques and causal-

comparative works to identify the potential for improved student outcomes when intercultural needs are addressed on campus might further the conversation. The list of ways to incorporate inclusive pedagogy in practice in higher education could help develop an instrument requiring validation and testing. Future researchers interested in doing so could advance the development of IPIP in a scientific way beyond the scope of the current endeavor.

Inclusive practices in higher education contexts must account for the confluence of variables that expand beyond differentiating and accommodating special needs students in the classroom. Inclusive pedagogy “is a mindset, a teaching-and-learning worldview, more than a discrete set of techniques. But that mindset does value specific practices which, research suggests, are effective for a mix of students” (Gannon, 2018, p. 3). Inclusive pedagogy in practice should (1) inform the way courses are designed; (2) bracket administrator, instructor, and student cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and racial biases; and (3) result in a deconstruction of deficit thinking to a growth mindset to recognize the resourcefulness and wealth that students bring to the learning environment (Spratt & Florian, 2015; Yosso, 2005). Inclusive pedagogy in practice necessitates that all learners have access to learning and are invited to invest in and withdraw from the bank of knowledge and skills critical to gaining perspective and solving problems in a world that have become a microcosm. The “cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of diverse students” (Gannon, 2018, p. 106) are channels to more effective teaching, and instructors should purposefully engage in culturally relevant instructional practices that draw upon sociocultural learning principles (Lopez, 2011). Inclusive pedagogy in practice in higher education enables students, faculty members, and administrators to decolonize and infuse diverse perspectives in all classes, programs, and curricula. How will you re-think your pedagogy in the face of an increasingly diverse global student population?



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# SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AND RELIGIOUS EGO IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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*Journal of the Scholarship  
of Teaching and Learning for Christians in  
Higher Education* 11.1 (2021) 64–86  
[http://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/sotl\\_ched/](http://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/sotl_ched/)

**Key Words** *Christian spirituality, subjective well-being, religious ego identity development, psychosocial development*

## **Abstract**

Spiritual maturity greatly impacts psychosocial development (Bravo, Pearson, & Stevens, 2016; Dreyer & Dreyer, 2012; Power & McKinney, 2014). Much of the identity formation process occurs during adolescence and early adulthood (Good & Willoughby, 2014; Hardy et al., 2011). The current study sampled students from a private Christian university to examine the relationship between religious ego identity status and subjective well-being. Positive relationships were found between religious ego identity and subjective well-being. Discussion includes the unique developmental needs of emerging adults to help Christian universities better facilitate their students' growth and education.



## Introduction

Spirituality is an important aspect of life for many people and can be an influential factor in mental health, affecting development and life satisfaction in different stages (Dreyer & Dreyer, 2012; Good & Willoughby, 2014; Power & McKinney, 2014). Hill and Hood (1999) have described spirituality as a sort of open-mindedness to the existence of a deity or other celestial possibilities. They delineate between spirituality and religiosity, which has been generally associated with more strictly codified religious beliefs that are cultivated and practiced within a social group (Hill & Hood, 1999). Watson (2011) explored issues complicating spirituality research that revolve around the myriad of ways spirituality can be defined. For example, spirituality is often thought to be a general openness to the Divine, while religiosity is considered to be a pursuit of spirituality within a communal context and informed by a doctrine of beliefs. Furthermore, spirituality has been operationalized in terms of behavioral, cognitive, affective, and social indicators (Hill & Hood, 1999). Secular researchers may have different ideas regarding desirable outcomes for their spiritual participants than these participants have for themselves, leading to potential misunderstandings that can alienate the two perspectives from one another (Watson, 2011).

### Statement of the Problem

At the turn of the century, Slater, Hall, and Edwards (2001) called for the development of more precise measures of spirituality, and several researchers have worked to refine measurement in ways that better account for participants' personal values and beliefs (Simpson, et al., 2008; Watson, 2011; Watson & Watson, 2013). In a 2011 report, the Pew Research Center (2011) estimated that approximately one-third of the 2010 global population (2.18 billion people) were Christian. According to Berger's 2009 study, there were approximately 560 million evangelical Christians in the world who subscribed to a biblical framework of spiritual understanding. This socio-cultural prevalence of Christianity makes it a central topic for discussion in many different

contexts. The United States has a long history intertwined with the Christian religion, and Christianity continues to be a dominant force in the lives of many U.S. citizens (Newport, 2017).

The college years are a time of transition during which individuals form and refine identity constructs (Bravo et al., 2016; Luyckx et al., 2013). For most students in the United States, going to a university is a rite of passage associated with self-discovery. The educational process is recognized as one that challenges learners not only to learn new ways of thinking and being but also to reflect on and question the familiar assumptions upon which they have built their lives thus far. This process of deconstructing one's belief system to make way for the reconstruction of knowledge that is better informed by historical and current perspectives is generally understood to be a necessary if difficult indicator of genuine education. A university is a place of education, not only academically, but also socially and emotionally.

Many universities, both secular and religious, are also committed to spiritual development, and private Christian universities are often especially invested in spirituality (Astin & Astin, 2010). At these universities, the administration focuses upon the spiritual dimension as a part of its commitment to mission, and faculty members are socialized to integrate the spiritual dimension into teaching, research, and service (Astin et al., 2011; Giselbrecht, 2015; Paredes-Collins, 2013; Utterback, 2013). In addition, students are recruited with the promise of this spiritual emphasis and subsequently educated with this goal in mind. As such, religious integration in this critical period of development in adolescence and emerging adulthood has great implications in the psychosocial functions and resolutions of these students. Many Christian educators identify with the calling of the prophet Jeremiah, to whom God spoke, "I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:9b-10, NIV). The trust that students and their loved ones place in private Christian universities is based upon the belief that this process of both rooting out inferior ideas and cultivating better ones will be carried out in ways that are respectful of who they are and where they come from, as well as where they are going (John 8:14).

## **Purpose of This Study**

More research is needed to explore the relationships between religious ego identity status and subjective well-being. This study focuses upon emerging adults enrolled in a conservative private Christian university to learn more about their developmental trajectories. We hypothesize that the higher religious ego identity status of moratorium would be correlated with lower levels of subjective well-being because of the ambiguity associated with this identity status.

## **Literature Review**

### **Identity Development**

A review of the literature on the topic of subjective well-being and religious ego identity development reveals a number of studies have been carried out in recent years. As identity development unfolds throughout an individual's emergence into adulthood, its resolution has consequences for one's behavior, well-being, and self-awareness (Hardy et al., 2011; Luyckx et al., 2013). Identity formation is critical in psychosocial functionality. The discovery of self is particularly relevant for college students, as much of the identity formation process takes place in adolescence and emerging adulthood (Bravo et al., 2016; Good & Willoughby, 2014; Hardy et al., 2011; Power & McKinney, 2014). Research suggests that most students work through Erikson's psychosocial crisis of identity versus role confusion while in college, developing an increasing sense of integrity or being true to self. During this period, students typically explore their identities, discovering their personal beliefs and the roles that they play as individuals in the world around them. Erikson's (1950) notions contributed to the foundational constructs of identity development, and Marcia (1966) later transformed Erikson's theory into an empirically viable model (Hardy et al., 2011).

Marcia's (1966) framework contains four categories of identity status: (1) diffusion (low exploration, low commitment), (2) foreclosure (low exploration, high commitment), (3) moratorium (high exploration, low commitment), and (4) achievement (high exploration,

high commitment). According to Marcia's operationalization of this developmental period, young adults develop their sense of identity by exploring their values, beliefs, and goals and developing an increasing commitment to those genuinely congruent with their self-understanding (Hardy et al., 2011; Luyckx et al., 2013). This process necessarily requires movement from less exploration and commitment to more thoughtful appraisal, which is not always a pleasant task. To achieve a true sense of identity, most people must endure a period of moratorium in which they are not certain of what they believe, what they want, or who they are. Generally, people prefer more security and less ambiguity to maintain a sense of subjective well-being. Consequently, the movement from unconscious concessions about identity and associated beliefs to more thorough expressions of realization is often accompanied by uncomfortable vulnerability. In fact, moratorium with its uncertainty has been correlated with lower levels of subjective well-being, and foreclosure with its commitment has been correlated with higher levels of subjective well-being (Lillevoll et al., 2013a). Among the ego identity statuses for developing young adults, achievement is typically considered to be the most developed status because it requires engaging in life possibilities, exploring options, and committing to certain principles or beliefs, while diffusion is considered to be the least developed status because it encompasses no interest in engaging in discovery or making meaningful commitments (Luyckx et al., 2013).

Negotiating the process of identity formation is critical in the psychosocial health and adjustment of individuals, and difficulties in this development can contribute to maladjustment and distress (Good & Willoughby, 2014; Hardy et al., 2011; Luyckx et al., 2013). Moreover, identity development has long been purported to occur across many dimensions of life, causing the processes of exploration and commitment to be potentially uneven as individuals may be differently motivated to avoid, foreclose, or continue the exploration process necessary to achieve a clear sense of personal identity regarding religion, politics, profession, etc. (Goossens, 2001). Thus, religious ego identity development requires the exploration of religious beliefs with the intent of making a commitment to values most consistent with one's sense

of self; this specific domain of exploration and commitment, however, often occurs contemporaneously with the development of ego identity in other domains as well.

## **Identity Status and Subjective Well-Being**

According to previous literature, Marcia's (1966) four identity statuses of psychosocial development are each associated with unique traits. For instance, individuals in diffusion have often reported high levels of health-compromising states such as depression, generalized anxiety, and social anxiety. On the other hand, achievement has been associated with high scores in areas of general well-being such as life satisfaction, internal locus of control, meaning in life, and eudaimonic well-being (personal development and potential in life) (Schwartz et al., 2011). This literature suggests that the adherence to a certain set of beliefs coupled with the search for meaning in life generally leads to greater overall subjective well-being. However, individuals actively working to achieve a clear sense of identity have also been shown to exhibit greater levels of general anxiety and depression in comparison with those who foreclose exploration and commit to their identity sooner. Thus, the uncertainty associated with high exploration and a search for meaning may often have a negative effect on subjective well-being, at least in the short term (Schwartz et al., 2011).

Research has shown the foreclosure identity status is correlated with lower levels of generalized anxiety than all three of the other identity statuses, indicating the understandable temptation to cut short exploration to avoid uncertainty, even at the cost of congruence. In comparing Marcia's identity statuses, Lillevoll, Kroger, and Martinussen (2013a) also found that individuals in the achievement identity status possess lower levels of anxiety compared to individuals in moratorium. The lower anxiety levels associated with less mature identity development seem due to less uncertainty and doubt that logically accompany exploration. Foreclosed individuals are more likely to make choices that shield them from internal and external conflicts, which leads to greater adherence to social norms, absence of difficult decision making, and avoidance of challenging situations

associated with the exploratory stages of identity development (Lillevoll et al., 2013a). While Schwartz et al. (2011) found individuals in moratorium have “fairly high levels of emerging self-knowledge” (p. 16), such as eudaimonic well-being and meaning in life, those individuals also scored fairly high on measures of identity confusion, depression, and anxiety. The increase in anxiety that often accompanies moratorium’s questioning and insecurity (and subsequent gains in identity development), then, appears to be a necessary if painful artifact of the journey toward identity achievement for many. For example, the identity statuses of foreclosure and achievement, which are both distinguished by high levels of commitment—as opposed to ambiguity—have been correlated with lower levels of health-compromising behaviors, such as impaired driving, unsafe sexual behavior, and illicit drug use, demonstrating the immediate benefits stronger commitments bring (Schwartz et al., 2011).

## **Christianity and Religious Ego Identity Development**

A large body of research suggests that religiosity is an influential factor in mental health and contributes to healthy determination of purpose (Dreyer & Dreyer, 2012; Power & McKinney, 2014; Puchalski et al., 2014). For many people, religion is an important part of life that enhances psychological health and functioning. Religiosity has been shown to contribute to better psychosocial adjustment, higher levels of subjective well-being, and higher levels of interpersonal satisfaction (Bravo et al., 2016; Dreyer & Dreyer, 2012; Good & Willoughby, 2014; Power & McKinney, 2014; Puchalski et al., 2014). For many other people, however, religion contributes to dysfunction. For example, religion has been related to lower levels of happiness and life satisfaction (Shariff & Aknin, 2014), higher levels of distress (Salsman & Carlson, 2005), more health risk-taking and delayed medical treatment (Horton, 2015; Mambet Doue & Roussiau, 2015), and collegiate sexual addiction (Giordano et al., 2017). Given that religion is a multi-dimensional construct that encompasses such diversity of belief and practice, it can be difficult to determine which aspects of religion are conducive to good psychological health and functioning and which are not.

In his seminal work studying Christian participants, Allport (1950) conceptualized religiousness in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic orientations. Intrinsic religiousness, with a focus on internal motives, is more reflective of psychological maturity and adjustment. Subsequent studies have observed that the extrinsic dimension seems to be better conceptualized by two factors: an extrinsic personal orientation focused upon intrapersonal benefits derived from religion and extrinsic social orientation focused upon relational benefits (Genia, 1993). Moreover, the intrinsic religious orientations correlate with psychological adjustment among Christian participants, in general, and conservative Christians, in particular (Ghorpade et al., 2010). Allport's original description of mature Christians, those who are cognitively open not only to contemplate their beliefs but also to welcome corrections and subsequently integrate feedback into existing belief systems, seem to share many similarities with those who have achieved religious identity. Extrinsic religiousness, with a focus on external motives, is less adaptive and would be thought to more closely resemble the less analyzed categories of identity development. On the other hand, subsequent research on the questioning nature of a mature faith has led to rampant debate about the nature of questioning for people of faith who feel securely attached to God versus those who prefer cognitive complexity itself over religious aims and value more agnostic perspective-taking (Batson et al., 1993; Miner, 2008). Questions persist about the nature of religiosity and identity, particularly in emerging adult populations whose primary psychosocial tasks are centered upon developing ego identity.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

Volunteers were recruited from a private Christian university in the midwestern United States. Data were collected using two measures of Christian spiritual maturity from 590 participants as part of a confirmatory factor analysis; however, only 174 participants who also completed measures of subjective well-being were included in this study.

## ***Demographics***

- Out of the 174 students in this study, 128 were between the ages of 18-25, and the remaining participants either declined to disclose age ( $n = 4$ ) or were older (ages 26-35 = 18, ages 36-45 = 9, ages 46-55 = 9, ages 56 and older = 6).
- Of those in the study, 89 volunteers were female, 79 were male, and 6 declined to disclose sex.
- Out of the 174 participants in this study, 136 reported never having been married, 26 reported being currently married, 6 reported being divorced, 1 reported being widowed, and 5 declined to report marital status.
- Regarding their parents' marital status, 122 students reported their parents were married, and the remaining students reported their parents were not married (divorced = 23, widowed = 16, never married = 3), declined to disclose their parents' marital status ( $n = 6$ ), or selected an option that was outside the acceptable range, suggesting they misunderstood their choices (i.e., they selected a fifth option when only four choices were provided,  $n = 4$ ).
- Racial components showed that 97 participants self-identified as White, 40 as Black, 15 as Hispanic, 10 as Asian, 9 as other, and 3 declined to disclose ethnicity.
- Lastly, 59 subjects were first-year college students, and the remaining subjects either declined to disclose education level ( $n = 4$ ) or had been in college longer (2nd year = 37, 3rd year = 29, 4th year = 8, 5th year or higher = 37).

## ***Religious Affiliation***

- Out of the 174 participants in the study, 136 self-identified as Assembly of God/Non-denominational/Pentecostal, and the other participants either declined to disclose denomination ( $n = 3$ ) or affiliated with another denomination (Baptist = 10, Catholic = 0, Methodist = 9, or other = 16).
- Of the 174 student volunteers, 123 reported having been converted to Christianity or self-identifying as a member of the Christian religion for eight years or longer. Seventeen



reported not having been converted as long (4-7 years = 8, 1-3 years = 7, less than one year = 2), and others reported never having been converted (n = 27) or declined to report time since conversion (n = 7).

- Of those in the study, 94 students described themselves as intellectually conservative, 63 described themselves as moderate, 13 described themselves as liberal, 3 declined to disclose intellectual preference, and 1 participant selected an option that was outside the acceptable range, suggesting they misunderstood their choices (i.e., they selected a fifth option when only three choices were provided).

## **Procedures**

The second author administered the measures to participants who had been recruited using an IRB-approved script. Participants completed the packet of measures independently in their classrooms during a regularly scheduled class period and then returned them to the researcher for analysis. All identifiers were removed from the data, which were kept under lock and key to assure anonymity and confidentiality. This data collection process adhered to the same procedures described in earlier research (Watson, 2011; Watson & Watson, 2013).

## **Measures and Assessments**

### ***Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (OMEIS)***

Religious ego identity development was measured using the religious subscale from the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (OMEIS) (Adams et al., 1979). Adams (1998) reported Cronbach's alphas from 20 studies that ranged from .30 to .91, with a median alpha of .66. The scale was composed of 15 items designed to measure Marcia's four statuses (diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement) of ego identity development. For example,

- Item 2 from the subscale that is intended to measure diffusion (low exploration, low commitment) is "When it comes to religion, I don't care about finding something that appeals to me."

- Item 13 from the subscale intended to measure foreclosure (low exploration, high commitment) is “I’ve never really questioned why I attend the same church I always have.”
- Item 11 from the subscale that is intended to measure moratorium (high exploration, low commitment) is “I keep changing my views on what religious views are right and wrong for me.”
- Finally, item 6 from the subscale that is intended to measure achievement (high exploration, high commitment) is “I’ve spent a lot of time thinking about religion and know what I can believe.”

Respondents chose from a 5-point Likert-type scale with the response most like them from among the choices “disagree,” “somewhat disagree,” “unsure,” “somewhat agree,” and “agree.” Summated scale scores were calculated for the global measure and for each subscale. Cronbach’s alpha for the global scale in this sample was .70. Cronbach’s alpha for the subscale measuring diffusion was .84, for foreclosure was .62, for moratorium was .78, and for achievement was .37, so it was not retained for further analysis.

### ***Beck Depression Inventory (BDI)***

Subjective well-being was operationally defined in terms of depression, loneliness, and life satisfaction. The variables were measured by the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) (Beck et al., 1961), the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1996), and the Life Satisfaction scale (LSS) (Diener et al., 1985).

Internal consistency for the Beck Depression Inventory is generally high. For example, the internal consistency coefficient was reported to be .89 for a sample of 1,022 undergraduate psychology students with a mean age of 20 years (Dozois et al., 1998). The scale is composed of 21 items designed to measure participants’ self-reported feelings associated with depression. An example of a question from the BDI is “How often do you feel so sad you can hardly bear it?” Respondents chose from a 5-point Likert-type scale with the response most like them from among the choices “never,” “once in a while,” “sometimes,” “often,” and “always.” Summated scale scores were calculated, and Cronbach’s alpha for the BDI was .94 for this sample.

### ***The UCLA Loneliness Scale***

Russell has reported coefficient alphas for the UCLA Loneliness Scale from four studies, each with sample sizes greater than 300, ranging .89 to .94 (Russell, 1996). The scale is composed of 20 items designed to measure participants' self-reported feelings associated with loneliness. An example of a question from the UCLA Loneliness Scale is "How often do you feel that you have a lot in common with the people around you?" Respondents chose from a 5-point Likert-type scale with the response most like them from among the choices "never," "once in a while," "sometimes," "often," and "always." Summated scale scores were calculated, and Cronbach's alpha for the UCLA Loneliness Scale was .75 for this sample.

### ***Life Satisfaction Scale (LSS)***

Bailey, Eng, Frisch, and Snyder (2007) reported coefficient alpha for the Life Satisfaction Scale (LSS) to be .85 from a study of 215 adults, and Yoon and Lee (2004) reported their study of 215 older adults yielded Cronbach's alpha of .83. The LSS is composed of five items designed to measure participants' satisfaction with their lives. An example of a scale item from the LSS is "In most ways my life is close to ideal." Respondents chose from a 5-point Likert-type scale with the response most like them from among the choices "disagree," "somewhat disagree," "unsure," "somewhat agree," and "agree." Summated scale scores were calculated, and Cronbach's alpha for the LSS was .85 for this sample.

## **Results**

### **Overview of Statistical Analyses**

Bivariate correlations and multiple regression analyses were conducted. The analyses first examined the whole relationships among all the variables and then explored the unique relationships between religious ego identity status and subjective well-being.

### **Identity Status and Subjective Well-Being**

First, we investigated correlations between identity statuses and subjective well-being, the results of which are available in Table 1.

These statistics include the means, standard deviations, and correlations with the other measures in the order they are presented: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, loneliness, depression, and life satisfaction.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Diffusion	6.74	4.06	—	.192*	.349**	.134	.157*	-.003
2. Foreclosure	8.92	4.10		—	.091	.079	.101	.005
3. Moratorium	6.49	3.53			—	.247**	.508**	-.216**
4. Loneliness	58.81	9.46				—	.439**	.008
5. Depression	42.84	15.24					—	-.365**
6. Life Satisfaction	17.60	5.54						—

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables*

\* $p < .05$ , one-tailed. \*\* $p < .01$ , one-tailed.

Consistent with expectations, a lack of commitment was associated with lower subjective well-being as expressed with the positive relationships between diffusion and depression, between moratorium and loneliness, and between moratorium and depression. Further, the negative relationship with moratorium and life satisfaction lends additional evidence to the lack of commitment on well-being. In this sample, there were some measurement problems with the ego identity status subscales as seen in the multicollinearity between diffusion and foreclosure. This can likely be explained by the lack of exploration that characterizes both of these identity statuses, but foreclosure should also reflect a commitment lacking in the diffusion status.

## Religious Ego Identity Status and Subjective Well-Being

Next, we conducted multiple regression analyses to see if identity status predicted subjective well-being. Table 2 shows that scores on moratorium contributed a small amount of additional unique variance in scores of life satisfaction beyond any shared variance with scores on the other identity status measures.

Measures	Unstandardized beta	Standardized beta	t	p	Zero Order r	Semi-partial r
Diffusion	.110	.080	1.001	.318	-.003	.074
Foreclosure	.016	.012	.153	.879	.005	.011
Moratorium	-.384	-.245	-3.091	.002	-.216	-.229

Table 2. *Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Life Satisfaction from Ego Identity Status*

Similarly, Table 3 confirms that moratorium was the only predictor that contributed to the variance in scores on loneliness. In this case, however, the unique variance attributed to moratorium was slightly smaller than the shared variance.

Measures	Unstandardized beta	Standardized beta	t	p	Zero Order r	Semi-partial r
Diffusion	.106	.046	.569	.570	.134	.042
Foreclosure	.111	.012	.633	.528	.079	.047
Moratorium	.605	.226	2.870	.005	.247	-.212

Table 3. *Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Loneliness from Ego Identity Status*

Finally, Table 4 also reveals that moratorium was the only status that predicted variance in scores on depression. As with loneliness, there was slightly less unique variance attributed to moratorium than the variance shared with the other predictors.

Measures	Unstandardized beta	Standardized beta	t	p	Zero Order r	Semi-partial r
Diffusion	-.130	-.035	-.488	.626	.157	-.032
Foreclosure	.225	.060	.906	.366	.101	.059
Moratorium	2.222	.515	7.368	.000	.508	-.482

Table 4. *Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Depression from Ego Identity Status*

## Implications

Students are unique, and their developmental trajectories differ. Some students are diffused, not seeking to understand themselves in terms of their commitments, potentially leading to lower levels of subjective well-being such as depression. Some students are foreclosed, demonstrating a strong commitment to beliefs they have not actually explored, potentially retarding development. Some students are in moratorium, seeking to understand what they believe and why, so they can make meaningful commitments and grow in their sense of self and purpose. Regrettably, this necessary yet difficult process is often accompanied by lower levels of subjective well-being.

Our results confirm past findings that those who identify themselves with the religious ego identity statuses associated with lower commitment are also more likely to suffer from lower subjective well-being (Lillevoll et al., 2013a). In addition, participants are particularly vulnerable when they cannot yet make commitments in ways that are truly congruent with their sense of self as they are exploring personal beliefs and reflecting upon their values, (Schwartz et al., 2011). As expected, those in the highly committed foreclosure religious ego identity status demonstrated no relationship with subjective well-being, while those who identified with the lack of commitment that is characteristic of diffusion yielded a small positive relationship with depression.

The most troubling finding, however, confirmed that those who identified themselves in the moratorium status suffered from the poorest subjective well-being, indicating they felt lonely, dissatisfied with life, and quite depressed. In other words, ambiguity and uncertainty cause most people to feel insecure, which threatens the sense of subjective well-being; identity achievement is theorized to require reflection and at least some interior exploration of beliefs necessitating a degree of uncertainty that, for many people, is somewhat uncomfortable (Schwartz et al., 2011)

## Conclusions

The present study provides unique insight into the developmental trajectories of students in a private Christian university. The students in this sample with higher scores on moratorium demonstrated a negative relationship with life satisfaction and a positive relationship with loneliness and especially depression. The inherent conflict between the search for religious ego identity and subjective well-being must be known and understood if adolescents and emerging adults caught in the throes of this conflict are to be properly supported. Educational leaders at universities that exist to facilitate the education and development of each student must both be aware of the diversity within their student populations and be ready to respond. Thus, administrators at these universities should commit to meeting the needs of individual students in ways that support their growth, education, and healthy functioning, and faculty should be socialized with these goals in mind. Young adult Christian students need educational scaffolding to know that exploring their beliefs does not suggest a betrayal of God or renunciation of faith.

Perhaps the most powerful source of support involves not only recognizing the soul work required of emerging adults seeking to achieve their own religious ego identity but also celebrating that process by normalizing it and encouraging students in their faith as they carry out this important psychosocial task. A unique challenge faced by many conservative Christian students is the sense that they should accept without question all they have been taught, without realizing that it is the testing of faith that leads to the authentic Christian maturity they seek (James 1:3; 1 Peter 1:7). Many students wrongly believe that questioning their beliefs and values is somehow evidence of a lack of faith and maturity, when in reality, it is by this very act of questioning that depth and maturity are produced. Indeed, scripture teaches followers not to spurn the prophetic utterances, but to test everything and hold fast to what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21). According to a biblically-based theology, they can be confident that God is their loving Father who is present with them as they work out their salvation, using all things – even difficult things—for their ultimate good (Deuteronomy 31:6; Philippians 2:12; Romans 8:28). When they

encounter questions that they are not certain how to answer, they can rest assured that they are not required to derive every answer; indeed, they are not required to derive any answers without Divine assistance (Proverbs 3:5-6; John 16:13). Christians have been promised that they are each a masterpiece created by God, and that He who began a good work in their lives is faithful to complete it (Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 1:6); therefore, they can be content even in struggle, knowing that His power is perfected in weakness (Philippians 4:11-13, 2 Corinthians 12:9).

Perhaps the most important tenet of Christian doctrine is also the most potent tool in supporting conservative Christian university students in successfully achieving a congruent religious ego identity: God is love, and He has called His followers to pursue Christlike love above all else (1 John 4:7-8; 1 Corinthians 13). Thus, adolescents and emerging adults from conservative Christian constructs can be supported in their pursuit of an achieved religious ego identity when they are reminded that they have been invited by their God to bring Him every question, concern, and anxiety in prayer to exchange them for peace (Philippians 4:4-8). Mature Christian followers know quite well that the very desire to be mature in faith can result in an existential angst that threatens subjective well-being. These believers can encourage those in their care who are cultivating their own religious ego identity with the scripture that teaches the antidote for this self-doubt: reassurance that God not only sees the struggle but also that He is not threatened by their uncertainty and doubt. Instead, He reminds them that He loves them, His faithfulness is greater than their self-doubt, and He is present to reassure them of His good intentions toward them. He can be trusted to help them pursue authentic truth about who they are and the freedom that truth brings (1 John 3:18-23; John 8:31-32).

## **Limitations and Future Research**

Although this study contributes significantly to the knowledge of associations between spiritual maturity, identity, and subjective well-being, the data must be viewed within the context of its limitations. There are implicit challenges with self-reported data, yet prior research



has demonstrated relatively low threats to validity when anonymity and confidentiality are assured, as this study provided (Slater et al., 2001). Other concerns, however, are more serious. The OMEIS subscales correlated in unexpected directions. Specifically, Cronbach's alpha was so low that it could not be retained for analysis, and our sample demonstrated correlations among the three identity statuses that were investigated, suggesting a measurement problem that has possibly confounded our findings. Hence, future research should focus on improving the psychometric properties of the OMEIS, in general, and the achievement subscale in particular. Second, the generalizability of the findings is limited due to the specific characteristics of the participants included in the study. For instance, the majority of the volunteers in our study self-identified as Assembly of God/non-denominational/Pentecostal, limiting generalizability not only to other faith traditions outside of Christianity, but to other Christian groups as well. Also, most participants were between the ages of 18-25, narrowing the implications of the study to the general population. Finally, the majority of the participants self-identified as White, restricting the range of variability in ethnicity. Therefore, in future research, it would be useful to examine the effects of denomination, age, and ethnicity on Christian spiritual maturity and their resulting effects on religious ego identity development and subjective well-being.

Note: The authors wish to thank Claire Ferguson for her contributions during the initial stages conceptualizing this research study.

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# REVIEWS

***The Learning Cycle: Insights from Faithful Teaching from Neuroscience and the Social Sciences.*** By Muriel L. Elmer and Duane Elmer. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2020. 223 pp. ISBN 0978-0-8308-5383-0. \$22.00

This book begins with a story about a former student, the author's self-reflection, and a subsequent call to action for the authors—the realization that becoming a better teacher is about helping the student to “connect knowledge to life” (p. 3). This is a good transition to the intent of the book.

The book is divided into 14 chapters, with the essence of the subject matter—*The Learning Cycle: Insights for Faithful Teaching from Neuroscience and Social Sciences*—being discussed in chapters 3 to 14. The Learning Cycle is made up of five levels with two chapters dedicated to each level, except the second level. The chapters are undergirded with one or two scriptural references and relevant quotations from fields such as brain research, philosophy, theology, physics, psychology, education, and poetry. While there is a fair share of scriptural relevance and detail throughout the text, this review focuses mainly on the academic context: The Learning Cycle.

Each level of the Learning Cycle begins with the word “recall,” as the authors affirm that “remembering content is the foundation of learning” (p. 27). For each level, the authors provide helpful illustrations from their experience and practice of the Learning Cycle Theory. While the model is a closed cycle, in chapter 14, the authors advise viewing the cycle as an upward expanding spiral that accommodates “space to engage new challenges created by life experiences” (p. 197).

The goal of this model is a life of character, integrity, and wisdom, a model where “truth spoken is truth lived” (p. 19). The model has five levels:

Level 1—Recall

Level 2—Recall with Appreciation

Level 3—Recall with Speculation

Level 4—Recall with Practice

Level 5—Recall with Habit

The authors refer to the learning models developed by Krathwohl and Bloom (1956 & 1964), as well as David Kolb (1984), because they are foundational to the Learning Cycle in terms of the domains and transformation. However, this model incorporates content or information as an important element. It appears that the first four levels of the Learning Cycle are part of an orientation process, while the fourth and fifth are the actual learning in practice. The model also includes a section on “Barriers to Change,” addressed in the chapter before the last two levels of the model. This model is aligned to scripture, and as such, the requirement for the student or teacher to live in accordance with the knowledge or information and reflected biblical truths is inherent. Following are brief reviews of the levels:

### **Level 1—Recall (chapters 3 and 4)**

Duane Elmer discusses memory, defined as the retention of information and the types—short-term, working memory, and long-term memory—“learning that changes a life” (p. 27). Also discussed are conditions of learning—proper stimulation through sense (comprehension) and meaning (relevance). It is astutely suggested that learning has taken place when “it becomes part of the believing and behaving pattern of the person’s life” (p. 29).

Rehearsal and rote memory are explored as a learning strategy for information storage and recall, with particular emphasis on the value of the rehearsal. The discussion of international students’ presence in the classroom, however, could benefit from a more wholesome consideration of the characteristics and dynamics of this group of students.

The second chapter in this level discusses lectures with some useful insights and tips for the class lecture structure. Amongst many best practices, the best types of lectures are those that engage the learner through “open questions”; “respect the independent thinking of the learners . . .” (p. 41); “interesting, relevant, and practical” lectures



(p. 49); and opportunities for reflection. Over-reliance on lectures is discouraged, especially when considering brain capacity and cognitive overload or cognitive unload.

## **Level 2—Recall with Appreciation (chapter 5)**

The role of emotion in learning is advocated in a very brief overview of advances in neuroscience and with more in-depth discussion on the relationship between the emotional state of the brain and the rational part of the brain. Basically, more learning is achieved when the brain is positively engaged. Also, safety in the classroom can contribute towards this goal and change experiences for reticent students. For example the authors' statement of "stories packaged as whole experiences...resulting in deeper learning" (p. 70) seems laden with depth. This relevant point of discussion, if revisited, could provide more understanding of its connection with emotion in learning.

## **Level 3—Recall with Speculation (chapters 6 and 7)**

The authors use a brain science definition of the word "speculation"—"that which occurs when new information connects with past information and prompts the learner to imagine what might be" (p. 76)—as a springboard to undergird the importance of speculation in the Learning Cycle. Elmer and Elmer also mention briefly learning tasks that support speculation: useful talking, writing, case studies, field trips, group work, etc.

The authors point out the responsibility incumbent upon teachers to emphasize the future importance of current learning to life and to character development, and for teachers to also encourage students to embrace the connection between truth and life in order to experience change. The authors provide a good argument with practical examples (pp. 86-88) as caution against hindering the fruitfulness derived from the contemplation of the connection between truth and life experience.

The authors explain the power of cognitive dissonance as a result of speculation in learning and the growth experienced in human development and spiritual growth. Dissonance provides an opportunity

to “. . . form new habits that will lead to a more coherent, integral life (character)” (p. 96). The authors provide Biblical parallels with examples of Jesus’ and professional examples as illustrations to further understanding.

## **Barriers to Change (chapters 8 and 9)**

Muriel Elmer discusses recognizing and identifying barriers, using some of Jesus’ teaching examples. The Reasoned Action Approach (RAA) behavior change theory is a model to counter barriers to change. It is a “theory that asserts that a few specific beliefs control both why and when people decide to change their behavior” (p. 113). Insightful correlations between the RAA theory and the Learning Cycle are also provided with each RAA critical belief correlating to a particular Learning Theory level. An identifying barrier illustration helps to increase understanding. Another chapter is devoted to practical strategies to overcome barriers to change: writing a memo to self, role playing, managing social pressure, avoiding dangerous contexts, managing negative thoughts, and depending on scripture and prayer.

## **Level 4—Recall with Practice (chapters 10 and 11)**

Elmer and Elmer discuss hesitation toward change in general and in cross-cultural contexts, the added issue of discomfort. From their illustrations, tools such as encouragement, dialog, and discussion prove to be useful in promoting transformative learning. A strategy for turning learning into practice—dialog and discussion—is explained, using the four stages of Mezirow’s Theory of Transformative Learning (pp. 136-138), which, as mentioned earlier, undergirds the learning cycle. The authors also provide an interesting explanation of the relevance of a learning community in exercising individual priesthoods (i.e. gifts and abilities) for nurture and ministry.

Chapter 11 focuses on approaches to incorporating practice into the learning environment. As mentioned in the earlier chapter, practice is intended to form habits. One approach is *social simulation*—allowing learners to practice new behaviors with minimal rules with the aim of

highlighting people values that drive their behavior. Reflection provides opportunities for learning. Other approaches include skills training with built-in practice, alternating practice with regular debriefing, and role-play. Examples of each approach are provided. These approaches all abide by learning principles—safety, repetition, rehearsal, engagement, and action—all of which support brain growth or how the brain works.

## **Level 5—Recall with Habit (chapters 12 and 13)**

A habit is defined as “a specific recurring thought behavior or set of behaviors that have become so automatic that we can repeat them without thinking” (p.163), and formation of habits is also described, both intended and unintended. Elmer and Elmer describe good habits (attitudes of gratitude) and bad habits (poor interpersonal skills and bad attitudes), which can be changed by replacing routines. The authors also provide examples of building habits based on personal Christianity.

Chapter 13 espouses the benefits of sustaining habits with a particular emphasis on the relevance of spiritual perspectives in developing keystone habits to promote change. Support groups are deemed to be important in influencing the behavior of people in developing good habits.

## **From Habit to Character (chapter 14)**

This final chapter is a quick overview of the learning cycle. The authors provide succinct examples of applications of the learning cycle at the individual, group, and institution levels. The essence of the learning cycle—to become a transformed person—is found in three words: wisdom, integrity, and character. The chapter also discusses imbalances regarding any one stage of the cycle; each level mutually reinforces the other levels and plays a distinctive as well as integrative role. *The Learning Cycle: Insights from Faithful Teaching from Neuroscience and the Social Sciences* is a useful practitioner’s book with applicable strategies, tips, and illustrations of achieving the end goal of transformative learning.

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***Called to Teach: Excellence, Commitment, and Community in Christian Higher Education.*** By Christopher J. Richmann and J. Lenore Wright, eds. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2020. 236 pp. ISBN 978-1-5326-8318-3 (softcover) \$29

**T**his collection of essays is written by various faculty members from different disciplines at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. It is the result of a 10th anniversary symposium of the Academy for Teaching and Learning (ATL) held at Baylor in the latter part of 2018.

In the introduction, editors J. Lenore Wright and Christopher J. Richmann briefly discuss the terms “calling” and “vocation,” providing theological comment that focuses the office of the professor toward the purpose of serving one’s neighbor—the student. Their invitation to the contributors of this volume is framed in the belief that “the call to teach (like any calling) is shaped by excellence, commitment, and community” (p. xiii). Furthermore, Wright and Richman provide a historical backdrop of Baylor’s 40-year resolve “not to take teaching for granted” (p. xiii). This resolve and practical intentionality culminated in the establishment of the Academy for Teaching and Learning at Baylor University in 2008.

### **Part 1: Excellence (six essays)**

In the first essay, “Baylor’s Intellectual Heritage,” Robert Baird shares his own story and journey as an undergraduate philosophy student at Baylor, giving the reader a glimpse into his perception and experience of the rigorous intellectual tradition of this Christian university. Throughout his essay, Baird makes it clear that students—especially students of faith commitments—must be taught by instructors to engage the critical aspects of the mind with precision and

courage, neither giving in to the anxiety of doubt and uncertainty nor to the pessimism that can easily overtake students engaged in academic criticism. In the second essay, “An Inquiry-Based Approach to Teaching Space Weather to Non-Science Majors,” Trey Cade shares his joy in teaching the fascinating subject of space weather. Most pertinent to his essay is how he was able, through storytelling, to take this very complex information and present it to a wider student audience, many of whom do not have a background in the sciences. In the third essay, “Observing a Master Teacher,” A. Alexander Beaujean presents data he collected through a case study of a master teacher, one Roger E. Kirk. He concludes by encouraging instructors to learn from other master teachers in their departments and disciplines.

The fourth essay, “Responding to Bad Questions and Poor Answers” by Andy E. Arterbury, contends that teachers ought to be sensitive and aware of negative classroom behavior, address it, and turn what was meant for evil into the good of the student. The author encourages instructors to be creative in responding in these moments, while always keeping the student’s honor at the forefront of one’s intentions in addressing issues like these in the classroom. In the fifth essay, “The Outrageous Idea of the Christian Teacher,” Perry L. Glanzer and Nathan F. Alleman address two important questions regarding Christian identity and teaching: (1) How does being a Christian change one’s teaching? and (2) How should it? This article is very helpful and erudite, and I suggest it is significant in its findings. For the sake of brevity and for this review, suffice it to say that Glanzer and Alleman discovered a holistic approach to Christian identity and its influence upon teaching. This approach seeks proper integration of Christian practices and norms into the classroom, but also that which is first the result of Christian identity: the Christian formation of the instructor and teacher. The sixth essay, “...Lovin’ the Skin I’m in: The Need for ‘Stories’ via Young Adult Literature in the Secondary English Classroom” by Mona M. Choucair, shows how teenagers and young adults engage deeply with narratives and stories when those stories are relevant to them. She contends that digital media, diversity, multicultural literature, graphic novels, and digital storytelling are all relevant means of capturing the minds of a younger, storytelling generation.

## Part 2: Commitment (five essays)

In the seventh essay, “Training Future Philosophy Teachers: Using a Plato Graduate Seminar as Professional Development,” Anne-Marie Schultz demonstrates how she integrates pedagogical methods into the learning objectives of her Plato seminar. Instead of focusing only on the research interests of graduate students, Schultz suggests that instructors should appeal to their teaching interests as well. Thus, as students reflect upon their own experience as graduate students in a seminar moment, they are able to garner “pedagogically oriented strategies” (p. 98) for their professional future in teaching. In the eighth essay, “Our Future Faculty as Stewards of the Academy,” T. Laine Scales considers the “preparation of doctoral students for university teaching and academic life” (p. 74) with an emphasis upon stewardship. Scales suggests that in challenging doctoral students toward a stewardship of teaching (she lists six tasks of stewardship), doctoral education will find new hope for relevancy and existence in the university.

In the ninth essay, “Called to Teach the Psalms,” William Bellinger and Rebecca Poe Hays focus their emphasis upon the study and reading of the Psalter. They demonstrate how student engagement with an ancient text—even ancient poetry—allows those ancient authors to “become part of our community” (p. 112), causing their world to “intersect” with our own. Furthermore, Poe Hays suggests that the study of the Psalms is “an ideal context” (p. 117) showing students how to love God with all of their minds as well as with their hearts.

In the tenth essay, “Why Study Music?,” Laurel E. Zeiss demonstrates, through her discipline of music, the importance of teaching and studying the arts and the communal significance that such study has for her students. She masterfully presents many reasons why studying the arts is essential for community, theology, and cultural significance. In the eleventh essay, “Nurturing Spiritual Intelligence,” Burt Burleson advocates for the development of spiritual intelligence in our classrooms. His call for the development of maturity on this level in students through classroom instruction is profoundly important, as is more fully shown in his essay.

### **Part 3: Community (five essays)**

In the twelfth essay, “The Teaching Vocation as Sharing Life: Reflections from a Faculty-in-Residence,” Candi K. Cann juxtaposes academic time with liturgical time, showing how similar they are to one another. She rightly encourages instructors and teachers to consider the prominent role that academic time plays in the communal journey of the student through the educational system and process. The thirteenth essay, “Embracing Diversity through Cultural Humility” by Elizabeth Palacios, argues for sensitivity to the need for inclusivity in the classroom, both at the level of course experience and of course development. Celebrating differences within the classroom means that an instructor and teacher can reform learning objectives to be more inclusive through pedagogical practices centered upon the diversity of the student and instructor population in every way.

In the fourteenth essay, “Of Fireflies, Skeletons, and the Abbot’s Pew: Ineffable Distinctives within the Teaching Tradition at Baylor,” Elizabeth Vardaman shares with her readers about her 40-year career at Baylor, bringing forth deep wisdom from her experiences and her reflections on what it means to be a student and a professor. She argues that faculty should take seriously the task of guiding students toward the “light” that is “pulsing and aligning their skills, interests, aptitudes, values, and joys,” while at the same time acknowledging the pain, difficulty, and, sometimes, the need for correction that is in the world.

The fifteenth essay, “Teacher Authority and the Student-Teacher Relationship: Searching for the Golden Mean” by Byron Newberry, discusses the need to carefully consider teacher authority. He intuitively divides this authority into three categories: formal authority (administrative); expert authority (subject expertise); and referent authority (authenticity in student-teacher relationships). In the sixteenth and final essay, “Integrating Christian Faith and Social Work Practice: Students Views of the Journey,” Jon Singletary, Helen Wilson Harris, T. Laine Scales, and Dennis Myers share student views on the “integration of faith and social work practices” (p. 187). This essay is rightly placed at the end of this book, for it is relevant to all Christian teachers who seek faith integration in their respective disciplines and in their classrooms.



In the epilogue, D. Thomas Hanks brings this whole collection of essays to an edifying closure. He challenges the reader to simply list what is seen as the two most important elements gleaned from the essays. The first element I see as instructive is the way that each contributor voiced—either explicitly or implicitly—that they are still very much a student in one way or another. The second instructive element concerns the way in which these essays continually reach for a transcendent ideal, one in which knowledge begins with the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7). Truly, the contributors have repeatedly demonstrated that the vocation of teaching is a call to serve the Master Teacher. I highly recommend this text, and as a young scholar and teacher, I will return to it often for guidance and wisdom

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***Dreaming Dreams for Christian Higher Education.*** By David S. Guthrie. Beaver Falls, PA: Falls City Press, 2020. xxvi+ 266 pp. ISBN: 978-0986405181 (PAPERBACK) \$19

**D***reaming Dreams for Christian Higher Education*, by David S. Guthrie, is a resource aimed at both administrators and faculty members. In the book's forward, Guthrie's longtime colleague Bradshaw Frey describes the book as one that possesses "much power as an academic catechesis" (p. xii). Through engaging the reader in a series of pertinent discussions regarding subjects having to do with the healthy perpetuation and propulsion of Christian higher education well into the next millennium and hopefully beyond, Guthrie has attempted to educate, challenge, and empower his readers. Chapters chronicle his own academic journey via personal anecdotes, team-related projects, committee involvements, speeches, and seminar presentations. A gauntlet is thrown that beckons the reader to pick it up and dream higher on behalf of an educational system that needs re-launching and a new trajectory. Especially in light of COVID-19 and the many challenges to which it has given birth, Guthrie wonders, "What might dreaming dreams for Christian higher education look like, given new realities that are unfolding ...? How will Christian colleges and universities respond with courage and creativity ...?" (p. 4).

In chapter 1, "The Idea of a Christian College: A Reexamination," the author refers to material that he presented at a conference in 2001, specifically asking how one might respond to the aforementioned challenge to be courageous and creative in the context of Christian higher education. While the presentation was delivered two decades ago, it poignantly lays the groundwork for the author's case by asking the pivotal question, "Christian Scholarship ... For What?" (p. xx).

Chapters 2 and 3, titled "The Project of Christian Higher Education" and "The Saga of a Christian College" respectively, deal with the plight of assessing the landscape in which educators and institutions alike find themselves. Ultimately, Guthrie suggests Burton Clark's notion of "institutional saga" for consideration (1972, p. 178).

Chapters 4 through 6, respectively titled “Educating for Godly Wisdom in the Shadow of Empires,” “Christian Higher Education and the Challenges of Postmodern Individualism” and “The ‘R-Word’ and Its Alleged Relevance . . .,” deal straightforwardly with the cultural issues that have, in the author’s opinion, created the current precarious academic environment.

Chapters 7 through 11 offer proposals for knitting together a strategic, practical response within the courageous and creative context suggested earlier. Suggestions include the following:

1. Effective leadership in the academy (p. 121)
2. A strategy for personal assessment in the academy (p. 165)
3. A strategy for student affairs professionals within the academy (p. 196)
4. A strategy for articulating expectations in regard to student conduct (pp. 211-213)
5. A strategy to remember why it is that people do what they do as academics in the first place (p. 217).

The concluding chapters (12, 13, and the epilogue) are a self-effacing, encouraging, and idea-filled conclusion to an engaging and thoughtful presentation.

Guthrie has most assuredly waded into a world where assessments, rubrics, and syllabi tend to rule and reign. In *Dreaming Dreams for Christian Higher Education*, he has provided a context wherein those who find themselves fatigued and academically lethargic might find hope, courage, and creativity again. And for those who are not so fatigued, their dreams might be equipped to soar even higher.

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*Where Wisdom May Be Found: The Eternal Purpose of Christian Higher Education.* By Edward M. Meadors. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019. 348 pp. ISBN: 978-1498296106 (hardcover) \$35

The captain of a sailing vessel traversing the seas had many responsibilities. They knew the destination, the weather conditions, and the capabilities of the ship and crew. With these in mind and many other variables, the captain set the course to successfully complete the voyage. The captain called for the setting of the sails and, when necessary, brought the ship into action. The captain monitored the sea charts, the coastal maps, and the stars and had to be the ultimate juggler of variables in order to bring the ship to the destination and accomplish the mission.

There were many skills sets and specialties amongst the crew. Topmen and reefers hoisted and trimmed the sails. They were sure-footed and steady as they climbed the lines and handled the sails—sometimes in the middle of a storm or battle. The boatswain knew the miles of ropes and cordage that held together the masts and sails in an intricately woven pattern. The coopers, carpenters, and caulkers all had special skills needed for the preparation of the ship for the voyage and, more importantly, for the maintenance of the ship in times of trouble. The myriad of seamen, landsmen, and officers had their daily tasks to keep their world afloat. Large crew or small, day or night, rain or shine, calm or gale, peace or battle—the captain was responsible for knowing each of the sailors by name and the jobs they performed. Without this knowledge and skill, the voyage would fail.

While it may seem melodramatic to compare the ship captain with an anthology editor, they have similar responsibilities. Like the captain, the editor must know the final destination of the collection of essays. The editor knows the skills and strengths of the contributors and plans the essays' goals and parameters. Book editors select and assign the essay topics to the right contributor to draw out the richest, most nuanced

depth of thought and meaning. Like the captain, they chart the order of the essays to bring the anthology to the desired conclusion. Continuing this analogy one last step, *Where Wisdom May Be Found*, edited by Edward M. Meadors, however, gets lost at sea.

It is generally thought that essay anthologies are not very popular in the context of selling or reading. The primary cause for this unpopularity is that the essays are often disjointed, not pulling together into a specific, cohesive theme (Kahn, 2017). Unfortunately, this is an apt description of this work. As a whole collection, *Where Wisdom May Be Found* seems to be content to state what is obvious for Christians: There is wisdom in God's Word, and it is available to those who earnestly seek it. Through 26 chapters spanning 332 pages, 27 contributors, and including a chapter written by the editor himself, *Where Wisdom May Be Found* reminds the reader that wisdom is to be found in the various academic disciplines. One would hope that wisdom as defined by Christians would be found throughout the curriculum in Christian universities. Most of the contributors do an excellent job of conveying this thought and building each argument with skill. However, while the contributors are assigned specific facets of the academy, they often repeat each other in laying their groundwork. Once their case is presented, there is little or no connection to the other essays, resulting in a lack of cohesiveness. Returning to the analogy of the ship captain, this anthology is like the ship and crew with an order to set sail, but without specific leadership from the captain. Each crew member has his or her own idea of where to go, how fast to travel, and the best means to get there. In the end, the ship goes nowhere. Unfortunately, after a long read, this work tends to leave the reader frustrated and thinking of lost opportunities and what the anthology could have accomplished.

*Where Wisdom May Be Found* is not without its bright spots. Wisdom abounds in its essays. In the first essay, Meadors himself reminds us of the role of wisdom in redemption and, in a limited way, ties this to Christian higher education. He refers to this as "the Liberating Yoke" and reminds us that "Authentic repentance involves not just a change of mind, but also an *expansion* of mind" (2019, p. 9). He speaks of the transformative power of a renewed mind (Romans

12:2) and its expanded capacity for wisdom. This essay is well developed as a contribution but lacks enough direction to lead the anthology as a whole.

Clinton E. Arnold's essay "The Role of Biblical Exegesis within the Christian College Curriculum," the second essay in this anthology, admonishes Christian faculty members that it is their calling and responsibility to step beyond their fields of specialization and embrace a deeper study of scriptures prayerfully and empowered through the Holy Spirit. They are to open their eyes, minds, and hearts even more to experience a greater understanding of God and to bring this opportunity to their students. This strong essay promotes the importance of integrating faith and learning.

By detailing Socratic philosophy, James S. Spiegel, in his essay "Philosophy as the Love of Wisdom," highlights the influence of the pursuit of wisdom on society and reminds the reader that the very definition of philosophy is the "love of wisdom." Paul R. DeHart's essay—"Wise Politics: Classical Philosophy, Medieval Christianity, and the Contemporary World"—carries the pursuit of wisdom by way of classical philosophy through the Early Church age to today. He shows the long struggle of applying philosophical practices to Christian beliefs and to scripture and values that eventually shaped the basis of Western systems of law and government. Both essayists provide a brief, but yet thorough, review of the development of Western philosophy and its ever-changing relationship with the Christian Church.

The remaining essays explore the role of wisdom throughout various disciplines such as the arts, social sciences, and rhetoric. Nine essays cover the hard sciences, and one even speaks of the role of wisdom in the area of athletics. Each of these provides insight into the role of wisdom in each discipline. In the final four pages of the last essay in the anthology, "Concluding Sapiential Postscript: 'Get Wisdom,'" Jeffrey P. Greenman attempts to present a concluding argument for the pursuit of wisdom in Christian higher education. He pulls together a few thoughts that are common to some of the other essays and ties these to the idea that the promotion of wisdom is in essence the calling of Christian higher education. Unfortunately, this seems to be too little and too late.

An article in the December 2019 *Writer's Digest* calls for the editor of an essay anthology to be ruthless and to edit the original content to bring cohesiveness, maintain interest, and manage page length (Lindholm, 2019). The contributors are experts in their fields; however, they do not have the big picture nor typically see the other essays. An essay anthology is not usually a collective, collaborative project. Thus, the editor must shape the focus of the anthology. Establishing the goals and parameters for each essay, and selecting the right contributor is only part of the effort of achieving a cohesive and overarching narrative. While the authors of this critique do not know the level of “ruthlessness” employed by Dr. Meadors in the editing process, the anthology’s lack of cohesiveness suggests that it was limited. His opening essay could have been more intentional in setting the stage for—and guiding—the collection. Instead, it seems to the reader that his essay is just one good stand-alone essay looking for direction itself.

Perhaps the analogy of an essay anthology setting sail on a voyage to a desired, narrowly defended theme is incorrect or, at least, is a limited view. Maybe it is fine to travel around in circles without really going anywhere or to set off on an essay adventure knowing only a rough direction to head and not having a final destination in mind. In an October 2016 post to *Notion Press*, Aishwarya Mukundarajan does say that the theme of an anthology may be very narrow or broad. The cohesiveness is not exclusively found in a well-defined theme. Cohesiveness can be in the form and style of the essays or in sharing a common time period or setting. This may have been the case with the essays that make up this anthology. All of the essays, some more than others, share a common setting: Christian higher education. Whatever the case, passive editing or intentionally broad cohesion brought simply by a common setting—at least for the reviewers of this anthology—reflects Kahn’s point. It simply is not a satisfying read. The contributors have presented many astute points, thoughts, and arguments that are both scripturally and academically supported. However, after a book full of points well made, the collection fails to gather the points into a cohesive conclusion to make the jump to the “and therefore” statement. *Where Wisdom May Be Found* seems to be content to drift aimlessly, but with good conversation.



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***Reforming the Liberal Arts.*** By Ryan C. McIlhenny. Beaver Falls, PA: Falls City Press, 2017. 170 pp. ISBN 13: 978-0986-40512-9 (PAPERBACK) \$14.99

**D**oes the book title, *Reforming the Liberal Arts*, mean that the traditional curriculum of liberal arts education needs reforming? Perhaps the American educational system needs reforming, or maybe the traditional liberal arts curriculum needs to reflect reformed theology as its major foundational worldview. Ryan C. McIlhenny, the author of the book, informs the reader that

1. The traditional liberal arts curriculum is sufficiently Christian in its origins and perspectives.
2. Traditional liberal arts is essentially built on reformed theology at its core.
3. Liberal arts should be the foundation of all American educational practice and information.

Liberal arts study attempts to help students achieve meaning, not just information, and therefore must include theological understanding, which comes from an extensive knowledge of the integrated subjects included in such an education.

McIlhenny treats his subject first by revealing the inadequacies of our 21st-century social media informational hyperactivity. Social media tends to create a “togetherness-separation paradox,” which confuses reality recognition. People think the world of technology in media is a real one when, in fact, it is not. Through social media we think we are connected but only in a technical, mechanical sense—as one may be connected to a chair when sitting on it. The closest analogy would be the use of a telephone or a calculator in the past. Technology provides tools that are specific but restricted—similar to hand-tools such as a hammer or screwdriver. Different tools are used for specific tasks, but our contact with another human via a tool does not make much of a relationship. McIlhenny indicates that education proposes relationship, and liberal arts education is the most extensive through its dedication to provide an opportunity for relational meaning.

Additionally, McIlhenny presupposes that the liberal arts are grounded in theological tradition and the reformed tradition “provides the most consistent, coherent, and cogent summary of the sovereignty of God and His work in all of life” (p. 21). The reformed theological tradition emphasizes the sovereignty of God and His interconnection with humans throughout history. The development of the liberal arts began in 5th century B.C. Greek culture, which built education through the study of philosophy. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle proposed to study reality, ethics, art, and epistemology as these subjects interacted with the world. As Arthur F. Holmes (1977) has said, “all truth is God’s truth” (p. xx). Reformed theology purports to identify and recognize God’s hand in all truth, in all cultures, and in all times—hence the value of diversity. In the liberal arts, we find the best way to understand the nature of reality—hence the meaning of life as individuals. Education without a true metaphysical balance of knowledge that helps us find the proper meaning of life makes our pursuit of understanding unfulfilled. McIlhenny refers to the liberal arts as they have been classified since the Middle Ages: the Trivium consisting of grammar, logic, and rhetoric; and the Quadrivium, which includes arithmetic, geometry, arts, and astronomy. Learning about all these fields includes increased learning about God, since He is involved in all things that pertain to human life. There should always be a recognition of His presence and connection in all fields of knowledge.

“Faith drives learning,” says McIlhenny (p. 70). There should be no separation of learning and religion; theology is necessary to a truly effective education. Some Christian educational programs even separate theology into its own specialized field of courses, which assumes no recognition that God and faith interact with “secular” subjects. This implies that religion is not involved with the fields of physics or business. We try to cram as much factual information related to the subject as possible into each special course and relegate theology to its own series of theological courses. So we have missed the intent to reveal God in all of life. The liberal arts provide an integrated connection of God and subject information—a coherent meaning and purpose for all things in Him.

McIlhenny asserts that for people to develop a realistic picture of the world, critical and creative thinking must go together. The best way of providing for this development is through liberal arts education. The world is not spiritual versus physical; everything is connected, integral, interactive, and coherent. Faith is the key to this development. We all have faith in something or Someone. We believe in creation or evolution; we believe in the principles that make our tools work, or we believe in the ways we see life happen or anything else that proposes to suggest meaning. Liberal arts, especially grounded in reformed theology, will justify our position of faith in God, creating the picture of reality. That comes through God. Obviously, we are encouraged by Scripture to seek wisdom through learning but to also realize that we never get to the pinnacle of having gotten all the wisdom we need. Christians should be life-long learners, which helps us to attain wisdom for living in the world (Romans 12:2, “Do not be conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of the mind...”).

Community is the best setting for learning, and a religious community grounds students in the best learning environment. That way, diversity enters the best values practices that education should promote. Online learning, according to McIlhenny, has serious weaknesses and limited usefulness for education. Face-to-face learning experiences are the most effective, and technology promotes our current culture’s penchant for isolation and escapism. Social interaction is inherent in humanity. “An artificial world creates an artificial self” (p. 120). Our understanding of self comes from the influences of our natural and nurtured experiences, such as parents, family, friends, activities with others, and culture.

Finally, McIlhenny claims that liberal arts education should be considered a spiritual practice—a ministry to the world. He wishes readers to “meditate on the inescapably religious nature of higher education” (p. 22). The teacher’s responsibilities include helping students construct an educational edifice of subject substructures that identify meaning from deeper learning experiences. Worship of God must involve the person’s heart as well as conceptual knowledge. Truly effectual learning must include and affect the inner self—the essence of the person. Good learning then promotes the knowledge of God

as a Person who is connected to all aspects of human life. McIlhenny concludes that “a liberal arts curriculum reflects an understanding of the interdependence of various disciplines and how they work together to provide a richly meaningful educational experience” (p. 161).

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***The Flourishing Teacher: Vocational Renewal for a Sacred Profession.*** By Christine Bieber Lake. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020. 224 pp. ISBN 13: 978-0830-85284-0 (hardcover) \$56.99

**T**he *Flourishing Teacher: Vocational Renewal for a Sacred Profession* by Christina Bieber Lake reads like a motion picture for a professor's life. From the paradoxical dread of returning yearly to what a teacher loves and then to the not-so-calming-end of the academic calendar year, this book serves as a renewal for those who belong to the sacred profession of teaching. Saturated with stories and scholarship, recommendations collide with the words of Henry David Thoreau, Kathleen Norris, and Jesus. Although this book addresses higher education teaching in general, it does not shy away from the divine entanglement in the lives of teachers.

Designed to be read linearly or thematically, the structure serves as a resource for enjoyment and a reference for enrichment. Comical stories, sad memories, diagrams for visual learners, supporting literature, and scholarly references lead the reader toward two themes—being overwhelmed and being necessary. The overview below does not follow the monthly organization of the book but lumps the content into seasons. The book's humility and truthfulness call the reader deeper into the months, the stories, the feelings, and the desire to flourish.

In the fall season, Lake reminds us that “in the month-that-shall-not-be-named” (p. 11), teachers are “preparing for a spiritual marathon” (p. 8). Teaching with purpose requires more than just organizing content and delivery modules. Lake writes on the influence of faith and practice with the same ease as she integrates literary classics into the 21st-century classroom. She highlights the importance of living a life of spiritual and pedagogical practices that lead students to belong to “a community of truth whose goal is to be in relationship with the truth and with each other” (p. 15). Lake admits this process is taxing, even from the beginning, and suggests we “think very hard about energy—not energy in general—but your [personal] energy” (p. 29). She recommends keeping an encouragement file, establishing routines,

habits, and maybe even investing in noise-canceling headphones (p. 34).

The demands of teaching in higher education include the infamous committee work. Lake highlights the extra burden this has on those with a minority representation, which for her is being a woman. In a guild dominated by white males and a pledge for diversity, a woman is in high demand for committee work. Her lesson for all of us is to learn how to employ polite refusals and “saying yes to ourselves first” (p. 48). Other strategies include personal organizational strategies such as prioritizing tasks, establishing procedures, protocols, and even the possible implementation of a work uniform.

In the long winter months, which are even longer for Lake, who lives in Illinois, she reminds us that teachers are overwhelmed and on a collision course with the Christian calendar: Advent. Productivity demands, evaporation of self, and the dreaded drama that “grades” bring to what may otherwise be a truly educational process intersect with Advent and the anticipation of hope, truth, and a savior. Lake states, “the fact that our larger culture bows to the idol of productivity puts many Christian educators in a lose-lose scenario” (p. 87). She goes further to connect this idolatry to our students by mentioning that “it seeps into our students, too, when they value grades and performance over learning” (p. 88). As for grading itself, Lake provides a short discourse on opinions, but unable to tackle the entire issue, she concludes that “grading is a whole other stocking full of coal” (p. 98). For the educator, flourishing may be fleeting.

The use of Thoreau’s discussion on “the dying of a tree’s leaves as a gift of nourishment to the next generation” (p. 75) once again reveals Lake’s expertise in literature and gift of application. Transition and crisis are the themes for the season, noticeable in the weather, the profession, or the educator’s phase of life. Between Thoreau and Jonathan Rauch, alternative narratives to those in our culture provide opportunity over crisis (p. 78). Lake recommends personal work towards mindfulness, including contemplation, *lectio divina*, and even “starting the month with some sort of advent retreat” (p. 96).

In the long, cold, barren months of the academic calendar (January and February), Lake notes “even more than in August, educators face

significant motivational challenges” (p. 119). Familiar to the veteran educator, Lake shares that in these months she “found [herself] thinking, for the first time . . . that I can’t do this job for another fifteen years” (p. 119). A few recommendations from Lake’s own experience include acknowledging this feeling and creating a “soul shelf.” The soul shelf is the go-to location in an educator’s calm place where only those things that are beautiful, nurturing, and encouraging nudge one toward receptivity and also remedy the sickness of the soul are allowed. In consistent form, Lake provides personal examples and recommendations for starting one’s own soul shelf.

In the spring months, Lake reminds us that our anticipation for spring break is unlike that of the 21-year-old college student. Before that week arrives, decision fatigue has depleted willpower. The rhythm of higher education and the academic calendar take a toll on the educator by March, and rest is surging as the primary need. With the lack of rest, the accumulation of activities, and the unfulfilling tendency spring break has on the educator versus the educated, Lake reminds us “we are not mules” (p. 149) and introduces the concept of *acedia* from what seems to be one of her favorite authors, Kathleen Norris. On *acedia*, Lake defers to Norris but includes a single phrase about the month of April that most educators will identify with: “your *eros*, your passion, has dissolved . . . you are adrift, and your engines are dead in the water” (p. 147).

Along with using one’s soul shelf and systems, Lake emphasizes rest, which is at the heart of the Sabbath, which Lake states as the “single most important spiritual decision I have made (outside of the decision to surrender my life to Christ . . . [was] the decision I made, years ago, to keep the Sabbath” (p. 159). It is in spring when committee work and the scholarly demands of research, writing, reviews, revisions, and resubmissions evaporate strength that Lake states, “We must fix our eyes on the end; the resurrection of Christ . . . no matter how meaningless and redundant our lives have grown to feel. Easter represents the very real hope of new life that is ours in Christ Jesus” (p. 146).

In the summer months, the assumption is that professors will review the year, read course evaluations, and prepare for better. Once again, Lake suggests we start with rest and “learn not to work when you



are exhausted [which] requires knowing when you are exhausted and how exhausted you really are” (p. 167). She goes further to mention that “every three or four summers you should completely stop...and do absolutely nothing... [she] calls it a ‘Jubilee summer’” (p. 172). She sums up the need for a break with the metaphor of cattle: herded around, force-fed, and purposed for production. In this chapter Lake is not only an empathizer and a mentor but also a leader advocating for the endangered unicorn in higher education called sabbatical. Perhaps no change will come from Lake as the sabbatical troubadour, but the reader is cheering her on.

The summer also includes obligations to individual disciplines, which take “time, humility, and disciplined attention” (p. 179). However, with scholarship comes imposter syndrome. Lake states, “Shame seduced envy. They had an illegitimate child: imposter syndrome” (p. 192). She recommends the reader let go of results and refers to Proverbs, which “contrasts a heart at peace with envy, instructing us that the only way to counter envy is to know who you are in Christ Jesus” (p. 192). As summer closes and cycles the reader back to August, Lake reminds us that the summer is for grace, gratitude, joy, and perspective.

To an outsider looking in at the teacher in higher education, the profession may seem to be one of overwhelming fatigue and the thirst for rest. This is the consequence of experience, honesty, and meaningful service to the profession on behalf of Lake. The purpose of this struggle, if not implicit everywhere in the stories, is also made explicit. This purpose is the student. Educators in higher education struggle because they are there on purpose. Scholarship and committee work are part of the gig, and wrong assumptions about schedules from outsiders are expected. However, students are the reason we try so hard. Lake never leaves this assumption, but fixes her aim at acknowledging, empathizing, supporting, and mentoring the reader, who will most likely be a flourishing teacher in a sacred profession.

## REFERENCES

Lake, C. B. (2020). *The flourishing teacher: Vocational renewal for a sacred profession*. IVP Academic.

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