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ON THE COVER

Photo by Lloyd DeGrane
FROM THE EDITORS

When the editorial board sat down this year to discuss submissions, it was weeks before COVID-19 was labeled a global pandemic. Then, the topics were all immediately relevant to policy and practice discussions. While they still are important, issues of COVID-19 have superseded all else. In doing so, it has revealed existing cracks in welfare systems and international equity; it has opened a brief window for innovative policy and practice ideas. In a world where everything has changed, seemingly overnight, there’s an opening for social workers to step in and make real change at an individual, local, or societal level.

The following papers strongly reflect the broad field that is social work and displays the unique point of view and skills social workers bring to the table. The following papers discuss events from super-local to international scales or examine particular theoretical nuances of methodology. No matter the academic niche of the paper, the writers have brought their own voices and unique insights to existing social issues through an interdisciplinary approach. While none specifically deal with traditional healthcare issues, these papers explore many of the issues implicitly aggravated by this global health crisis and remind us of the diverse concerns that need to be considered in emergency response. The broad swath of topics and thinking well encapsulates the field of social work and in these uncertain times, reminds us of social workers’ important positionality in ensuring that programmatic and policy decisions are made fairly and don’t neglect any population or culture.

In “Towards a Whiter Woodlawn: Racism and the University of Chicago’s Employer-Assisted Housing Program,” Laurel Chen examines a little-known but enormously important University of Chicago policy. This policy encourages University staff to move into neighborhoods surrounding its Hyde Park campus, most incentivizing communities that have historically been of color or of low income. After examining the racist implications of this policy, Chen explores how constituents ranging from community members to students can organize around this issue.

Next, David ben-Jonah Bezalel explores the dual concepts of estrangement and cherishment. The paper, “Developmental Estrangement and the Re-emergence of Love,” effectively examines the histories of their positionality in psychodynamic thought and how these concepts can strengthen therapeutic practice.
Abstract

This article investigates the racism inherent in the purportedly race-neutral University of Chicago's Employer-Assisted Housing Program (EAHP) and its drive to encourage employee homeownership in the Woodlawn neighborhood. The paper demonstrates that the program's eligibility requirements mean it is most accessible to White people. It further shows that the EAHP marketing works to sell Woodlawn in specific ways in order to attract White homeowners despite the current racial makeup of a neighborhood that is majority-Black. Finally, in light of the University's longstanding efforts to expand its physical sphere of influence through the creation of Whiter, wealthier spaces in neighboring communities, it outlines how staff, students, faculty, and broader community members might organize around the issue and put pressure on top administrators to alter such programs.

Four houses at the northern edge of Chicago’s Woodlawn neighborhood, a block from the University of Chicago and several blocks from the site of the proposed Obama Presidential Center (OPC), recently sold for upwards of $700,000, a record for the area. The homes are two-story, black and white framed homes with floor-to-ceiling windows. Their upscale design and high market price set them apart from the rest of the neighborhood (Rodkin, 2019).

Woodlawn is adjacent to Jackson Park, which in 2016 was named the site of the OPC. Median home values rose 16% in 2017-2018 (Cleaver, 2018) and the neighborhood has experienced rising rents (Smith, Lane & Butler, 2018; Whitely, 2017). The median household income in Woodlawn, however, is only $25,000 and 77% of residents are now renters and 84% are Black (Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2018). In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, Woodlawn saw many housing foreclosures (Gamino, 2015), part of what Keeanga-Yahmatta Taylor...
(2018) called the “culmination of a long period of predatory inclusion of African Americans in the housing market” through subprime lending (p. 23). Given the economic conditions in the neighborhood now, who can afford the rising prices in Woodlawn? A University of Chicago employee with an incentive to move to Woodlawn is one possibility.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO’S EMPLOYER-ASSISTED HOUSING PROGRAM

The University of Chicago’s Employer-Assisted Housing Program (EAHP) provides up to $10,000 in down-payment assistance to full-time benefits-eligible employees who buy a home in one of nine nearby communities. According to the EAHP webpage, the program “strengthens [the University] connections to surrounding neighborhoods, retains valuable employees, and helps staff to optimize their work-life balance.” In 2014, the University created a tiered system, with neighborhoods eligible for varied amounts of assistance, ranging from $2,500 to $10,000. It also created the “Woodlawn Focus Area,” spanning west from Stony Island to Cottage Grove Avenue and south from 61st to 67th Street. Those buying a home in the Woodlawn Focus Area get the most down-payment assistance: $10,000. No other neighborhoods qualify for this amount. Homeowners in the other neighborhoods may buy a second home with assistance in just one area—the Woodlawn Focus Area (Coward, 2015). During a panel discussion on The Future of Woodlawn, Susana Vasquez of the Office of Civic Engagement said the varying amounts of down payment assistance are based on “demographic changes” and “where we think it’s important for folks to live.” Clearly, the University thinks it is most important for employees to live in the Woodlawn Focus Area.

In this paper, I investigate the racism of the EAHP’s drive to encourage employee homeownership in the Woodlawn Focus Area, as well its implications. The ostensibly race-neutral program fits into Bobo, Smith and Jones’s (1997) concept of “laissez-faire racism,” a type of racism that “relies on the market and informal racial bias to re-create, and in some instances sharply worsen, structured racial inequality” (p. 17). More recently, Ewing (2018), in turn, underscores that racism “lives not in individuals, but in systems” and “our society follows a pattern, churning out different outcomes for different people in ways linked to race” (p. 12). When understood in the context of the eligibility requirements, the marketing of Woodlawn to homebuyers, and the University’s history in the city’s South Side, we recognize the racism embedded in the EAHP. The program fits into the University’s longstanding tradition of promoting a Whiter South Side of Chicago.

“THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO AGREEMENT TO GET RID OF NEGROES”

Until the 1890s, Woodlawn was a small community of Dutch farmers. The 1893 World’s Fair in Jackson Park brought 20,000 new residents to Woodlawn. While Black people made up a mere two percent of Woodlawn’s population in 1915 (Moore and Williams, 2011), by 1920, the Great Migration swelled Chicago’s Black population to 110,000. Although approximately 85% of the Black population was concentrated into an area from 22nd to 55th streets (i.e., the “Black Belt”), some middle-class African-American families moved to Woodlawn (Hirsch, 1998; Seligman, 2005).

White property owners attempted to bar and intimidate Black homebuyers through racially restrictive covenants and racial violence directed at Blacks as well as the real estate agents and mortgage lenders willing to work with them. The neighborhood had become a popular place for University faculty to settle and in 1928, the Woodlawn Property Owners Association, with covert legal and financial support from the University (Plotkin, 2001), organized a restrictive covenant in the northwestern portion of Woodlawn to prevent the sale of property to Black households (Kamp, 1987). A 1937 Chicago Defender editorial referred to the restrictive covenants as “The University of Chicago Agreement to get rid of Negroes” (Moore and Williams, 2011).

To better understand the University’s role, one might look at the “Security Map” of Woodlawn associated with the discriminatory real estate practice of “redlining.” The map, created by the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) between 1935 and 1940 (fig. 1), laid out color-coded areas according to credit worthiness. Those in red were seen as high risk or “Hazardous” while areas highlighted in yellow were “Zones in Transition,” or “Definitely Declining” (Nelson, Winling, & Connolly, 2018).

Figure 1. “Security Map” created between 1935 and 1940. The overlaid black box is the EAHP Woodlawn Focus Area. Source: Robert Nelson et al., “Mapping Inequality”

Figure 2. EAHP-designated Woodlawn Focus Area. Source: The University of Chicago EAHP Brochure, Created October 7, 2015
Most of the majority-Black West Woodlawn was graded as “Hazardous.” The mixed White and Black East Woodlawn, closer to campus, was seen as a “Zone in Transition.” By the 1960s and the end of redlining, the racial character of the entire neighborhood had transitioned, with Black people making up the majority of Woodlawn residents (Seligman, 2005). The overlaid black box in Figure 1 shows the current Woodlawn Focus Area. Figure 2 is a map of the Woodlawn Focus Area from an EAHP brochure. The Woodlawn Focus Area is nearly identical in geography to the yellow-coded area on the “Security Maps” from the era of redlining. Through the provision of the highest amount of down-payment assistance, the University is incentivizing University-affiliated homeownership in this majority-Black area, attempting to transition it back from one that is majority Black and low-income to one that is increasingly Whiter and wealthier.

According to Derek Douglas, the University’s Vice President for Civic Engagement, the tiered system is meant to “spur some sort of critical mass rather than having new residents and faculty scattered all over.” He says the program was created to “encourage a collection of people, a group to move into a certain area” because “one or two people in every neighborhood [which] wasn’t making that big of a difference because it was too spread out” (Semuels, 2015). The University’s desire to create a strong presence and influence in the Woodlawn Focus Area is intended, indeed, to change the composition of the area.

“IT’S OPEN TO ALL UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES ...”

In early 2019, in an effort to better understand the characteristics of this “critical mass,” I spoke with an EAHP staff person and asked if they could provide me with the racial breakdown of EAHP participants. They declined my request and followed up by stating, “it’s open to all University employees, so whoever applies for it.”

This is technically accurate. With no race-based eligibility criteria, the program is race-neutral. By looking closely at her use of the term “all,” however, we better understand who “all” includes, and equally important, who it excludes. Restricted to full-time benefits-eligible University employees (with sufficient wealth to purchase a home), it is most accessible to White people. According to the University of Chicago’s 2016 Climate Survey, Black employees comprise 3% of faculty and 17% of staff, while White employees comprise 61% of faculty and 60% of staff. Racial makeup alone means more White employees have access to the EAHP. Black workers are also much less likely to receive benefits than White workers (Sullivan, Meschede, Dietrich & Shapiro, 2015). The University’s move towards privatization means that all of the cleaners, food service workers, and security guards are contract workers without access to the EAHP. More broadly, Black Chicago households have a much lower median income than that of White Chicago households: roughly $71,000 for White and $30,000 for Black (Marksjarvis, 2017). Wealth, however, is a better measure of the ability to buy a home than income due to the capital needed for homeownership. In 2013, the median net wealth of Black families nationwide was a mere $11,000, compared with $142,000 for White families. It is not surprising that in 2017, 66% of first-time homebuyers were White, and 9% were Black (Rieger, Spader & Veal, 2019). Wealth is “more often used to create opportunities” (Shapiro, 2004, p. 34). This includes the opportunity for homeownership in Woodlawn. Thus, a more accurate description of EAHP is that rather than open to all who are eligible, it is open to a majority of White employees and a much smaller proportion of Black who are full-time, benefits eligible, and receive a good salary. Since there is no data on the racial makeup of program participants it is possible that employees of color utilize the EAHP in the Woodlawn Focus Area at a higher rate than White employees. However, the racial patterns of University employment and the racial income and wealth gap point to this program’s likely outcome of a Whiter, wealthier Woodlawn. In other words, the market-driven, “laissez-faire racism” of a program like EAHP thus helps to facilitate the eventual displacement of Woodlawn’s lower-income, Black residents while remaining “race-neutral.”

“WE’VE HOPED THAT IT WILL SPARK INTEREST IN MARKETING THIS NEIGHBORHOOD IN A DIFFERENT WAY”

The above quotation is from an Atlantic article that highlights the EAHP (Semuels, 2015). In the article, Joanna Trotter, former Office of Civic Engagement staff person, identifies the program as a catalyst for a “different way” of marketing Woodlawn. Trotter’s statement evinces the University’s goal in attracting a different type of consumer to purchase a home in Woodlawn. A look at the EAHP’s marketing brochure sheds light on who the University aims to attract. The brochure features section titles like, “Join the neighborhood” and “Live here.” It includes a neighborhood map, a list of local resources, images and neighborhood history. The portrait of Woodlawn leaves out the majority-Black, lower-income residents who actually live there and constructs a whitewashed (literally) version of history. According to the pamphlet, Woodlawn is a place rich in White history alone. The Neighborhood section emphasizes periods when
White residents primarily lived in the neighborhood (Seligman, 2005). In addition to featuring Hugh Hefner’s time in Woodlawn, the profile does highlight two famous Black residents: playwright Lorraine Hansberry and anthropologist Allison Davis. The University chose to exclude most of Woodlawn’s Black history—the influx of the Black population, popular jazz clubs, the residents’ rights group, The Woodlawn Organization, and the famous street gang, the Blackstone Rangers (Moore & Williams, 2011).

As David Harvey (1996) writes, “Places do not come with some memories attached as if by nature but rather they are the contested terrain of competing definitions” (p. 309), and by centering what I call Woodlawn’s “White origin story,” the brochure erases Black history.

The whole of Woodlawn is marketed as a University neighborhood. Although the University occupies just a small portion of Woodlawn, it claims the entire area in its brochure: “Site of the University of Chicago’s south campus, Woodlawn is the second most popular community in the Mid-South Side for University of Chicago employees to call home.” By inference, it is also promoted as a White space. Many universities, based on statistics alone, are, “visibly White spaces, whether one considers the student body, faculty or administration” (Tusmith & Reddy, 2002, p. 2). While Black people often view these “White spaces” as “off limits,” White people experience these spaces as “unremarkable ... normal, taken-for-granted reflections of civil society” (Anderson, 2014, p. 10). White students form a plurality of undergraduate students, and as previously discussed, White people make up a majority of faculty and staff (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). The EAHP marketing aims to attract White homeowners who will feel comfortable in the projected White space of Woodlawn, regardless of the current racial makeup. The images in the Woodlawn profile thus appear selected to attract White employees. The images are the Statue of the Republic, the facade of the Museum of Science and Industry, and the Osaka Japanese Garden. These structures were constructed for the 1893 World’s Fair Columbian Exposition and are located in Jackson Park, which spans Hyde Park, Woodlawn, and South Shore. Including only these images is a telling choice for several reasons. First, as the brochure acknowledges, Jackson Park itself is, “located on Woodlawn’s eastern border,” rather than in the community’s center. Second, the images of elegant structures and landscapes represent an idealized, inauthentic order, in contrast to the poverty and disinvestment that is a current reality in much of Woodlawn. Finally, the World’s Fair symbolized both the “ascendancy of the United States among the world powers” and the discrimination against and exclusion of Blacks. As historians Rudwick and Meier (1965) detail, African Americans “found themselves excluded from prestigious positions on the Exposition Committee ... and practically unrepresented in the exhibits” (p. 354). This racism spurred Ida B. Wells and Frederick Douglass to print a booklet, “The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World’s Columbian Exposition: The Afro-American’s contribution to Columbian literature” to explain why they had been “kept out of representation in any official capacity and given menial places” (Wells, 1893; Rudwick & Meier, 1965). To center the structures of the World’s Fair is to center the history of White presence in Woodlawn.

“LEVI IS FORCING HIS WAY INTO OUR COMMUNITY, WANTED OR UNWANTED, INVITED OR UNINVITED”

The University established the South East Chicago Commission (SECC) in 1952 in order to have a larger influence on development in the neighborhoods surrounding the University. Said University Chancellor Lawrence Kimpton about its establishment: “It is extremely important that we maintain a community in which our faculty and students desire to live ... to combat the forces of uncertainty, and deterioration at work in the neighborhood, the University had taken the initiative in the organization of the South East Chicago Commission” (Fish, 1973, p. 15). The SECC designed the Hyde Park Kenwood urban renewal program, which displaced thousands of African Americans. Its subsequent targeting of Woodlawn for urban renewal generated fears of a “‘Negro removal’ redux” (Moore and Williams, 2011, p. 15).

In response, residents formed The Woodlawn Organization (TWO) to combat University encroachment (Fish, 1973; Moore & Williams, 2011; Todd-Brelant, 2015). In December 1960, a TWO delegation appeared at a Chicago Planning Commission meeting to protest an ordinance proposed by Julian Levi, SECC Executive Director (and brother of future Provost Edward Levi) that would have allowed the University and SECC to expedite their urban renewal plans. TWO leader Reverend Farrell told the Commission, “you are being used by Levi and the University of Chicago. Levi is forcing his way into our community, wanted or
unwanted, invited or uninvited” (Fish, 1973, p. 15). TWO claimed victory when, in the office of Mayor Daley, a deal was struck that stopped University southward expansion at 60th Street (Fish, 1973; Moore & Williams, 2011).

While the University has kept its agreement, its influence in Woodlawn is growing. A 2011 article on the University’s Facilities webpage discusses the University’s “plans for growth along the south side of campus” and its “ongoing projects which are revitalizing the campus south of Midway Plaisance, creating a sense of place and destination and stronger ties to the neighboring Woodlawn community” (The University of Chicago, 2011). Developments in Woodlawn have included the South Campus Residence Hall (2011), the Logan Center for the Arts (2012), the Keller Center (2019), and the soon-to-be opened Woodlawn Residential Commons. When the Woodlawn Residential Commons dormitory opens, more undergraduates will live in Woodlawn than in Hyde Park for the first time (Cholke, 2018). The EAHP fits into this broader framework of University expansion south into Woodlawn, rooted in its first bid to expand south in the 1960s. Borrowing the words of Reverend Farrell, the University wants to expand its influence to the Woodlawn Focus Area, “wanted or unwanted, invited or uninvited.” The EAHP is one mechanism for University expansion south.

CONCLUSION

The EAHP, and its particular focus on Woodlawn, represents a contemporary manifestation of University-backed efforts to promote a Whiter Southside. Taking into account the realities of disparate access to the seemingly “race-neutral” EAHP, the marketing of the program, and the University’s history, we can understand University expansionist efforts and the EAHP itself as inherently racist. The program produces varied outcomes linked to race. By subsidizing the move of wealthier White residents into the Woodlawn Focus Area, the University generates increased home and property values and rising rents, and hence the displacement of current residents. The negative impacts of such displacement include the fracturing of social networks, disruption in school and employment, mental health issues related to housing instability, and cultural displacement when “behaviors and values of the new resident cohort dominate and prevail over the tastes and preferences of long-term residents” (Hyra, 2015, p. 1754).

It is highly unlikely that top University administrators, as architects of the program, will take steps to address the racism and racial implications of the EAHP. It is thus contingent on staff, students, faculty, and broader community members to organize around the issue and put pressure on top administrators to address the racism and racial implications of the program. As with many racist policies and programs, there is a question of reform versus abolition: is it possible to reform the EAHP in order that it is a program with a foundation of racial equity or is it better to abolish the program altogether? It is critical to center the voices, experiences, and opinions of people harmed by, or excluded from, the program in order to come to a collective response to this question and a path forward. In terms of reform, possible routes may include doing away with the locational requirement attached to the program, the inclusion of the lower-paid, and likely more racially diverse, workforce of contract workers, and investigating ways to both target and provide additional support to non-White employees seeking homeownership opportunities. Outside of the bounds of the EAHP, the University could use its resources to expand homeownership for longtime community members through programs like the Preservation of Affordable Housing’s Renew Woodlawn. However, with the historical and current reality of University-backed efforts related to housing and development as a guide, any reformed or new efforts must be approached with great care and caution to ensure anti-racism and racial equity are at the forefront.

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The University of Chicago. 2011. South campus revival: Facilities focus. https://facilities.uchicago.edu/about/facilities_focus/archive/south_campus_revival/


THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO OFFICE
OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT RESPONSE TO
“TOWARDS A WHITER WOODLAWN”

Alyssa Berman-Cutler

June 3, 2020

The University of Chicago Employer-Assisted Housing Program (EAHP), like so many initiatives of the University’s Office of Civic Engagement (OCE), aims to strengthen the University’s commitment to build a campus community that is more connected to its neighbors. The OCE team appreciates the opportunity to respond to the article “Towards a Whiter Woodlawn” and clarify, given our mission and programs, the misrepresentation of a program of value for our shared community. While we take issue with several of the arguments the article presents, here we would like to clarify five key points.

THE PROGRAM IS DESIGNED TO BE A BRIDGE TO HOMEOWNERSHIP FOR A WIDE ARRAY OF PARTICIPANTS

Dating back to 2003, the UChicago EAHP was established with input from the community and in accordance with national best practices and all applicable Fair Housing Laws as a way for the University to support its employees to become contributing members of our neighboring communities.

The article argues that the program’s eligibility requirements effectively restrict its participants to white, wealthy employees but points to no actual data to support that claim. In fact, our data shows only 40 percent of EAHP homeowners throughout the program’s history have been white. When program participant numbers are compared to the total percentage of African-American University employees, the data supports...
that African-American employees actually use the program and have used the program at a higher percentage than white employees.

We also know that 46 percent of participants reported an annual household income of less than $60,000, and the average household income for participants is $73,587. While those are higher than the median income in the area, the program is designed to serve as a bridge to homeownership, meaning it is a resource for moderate income employees, many of whom had rented previously, who want to take the next step in investing in their community when they may not have been able to otherwise close that gap. Accordingly, the program’s required homebuyer counseling, which wasn’t mentioned in the article, is often cited as one element of the program that participants have found most valuable.

Employer-assisted housing programs are a strategy many anchor institutions across the country use as a way to enable the economic power of their employees to support the community. The idea is by having employees live nearby in communities that are more economically challenged, universities keep dollars in the community that can help to support the kind of vibrant retail and other amenities that all communities desire.

IN CONTEXT, THE PROGRAM’S MARKETING MATERIALS CELEBRATE NINE DIVERSE NEIGHBORHOODS

Selectively framing a Woodlawn profile page as the program’s “brochure,” as the article does repeatedly, is misleading. In fact, the Woodlawn profile is not the program’s brochure, and the single piece of collateral material is taken out of its broader context. The far more inclusive and actively-used brochure, which is provided to University new hires and others about the program, is also available and clearly labeled on the respective websites of the Office of Civic Engagement and the University’s Human Resources department. That primary EAHP brochure highlights a mix of nearby attractions including Blanc Gallery, Promontory Point, The DuSable Museum, South Shore Cultural Center, Little Black Pearl Art and Design Center, and more, as well as a diverse array of past participants and information. Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago’s Renew Woodlawn organization, a trusted community partner listed on the program’s main website, also works closely with EAHP to promote and execute the program. Additionally, a number of other documents, FAQs, and links on the HR page and the UChicago Local page offer a wide variety of relevant information about Woodlawn and the other program neighborhoods. The fact that none of these readily available materials were mentioned in the article is curious to say the least, and that degree of omission in data collection is disappointing.

The Woodlawn profile page the article cites is one of nine community profile pages the UChicago Local website links to along with pages on North and South Kenwood, Douglas, Oakland, Grand Boulevard, Hyde Park, Washington Park, Greater Grand Crossing, and South Shore. The document was created in 2014 and has not been updated to reflect the latest iteration of the program.

PROGRAM FOCUS AREAS WERE DESIGNED TO CHANGE AND THE WOODLAWN FOCUS AREA PREDATED RISING PROPERTY VALUES

With a reference to the proposed Obama Presidential Center in the first sentence and statistics about the recent rise in Woodlawn property values throughout, the article wrongly accuses the EAHP of establishing and promoting its Woodlawn Focus Area to draw whiter, wealthier employees to Woodlawn specifically. In reality, the Woodlawn Focus Area was designated in 2014, long before the Obama Center was announced in 2016 and the subsequent 2017-2018 property value spike.

The focus area was selected because of Woodlawn’s proximity to the University campus and because, at the time, the neighborhood’s relative lack of development compared to Hyde Park made it a community with diverse housing options for employees. As the article mentions, for several decades, the University was not involved in any development south of 61st Street in Woodlawn. That changed when the University opened a public charter school on 64th Street in 2006 that prioritizes Woodlawn residents for admission. The University has worked closely with the Woodlawn community over recent years, and community residents and organizations, and through various community-led planning processes, have identified 63rd Street as one of the key corridors where they wanted to see additional development. The Woodlawn Focus Area was therefore selected to help support and complement this community-identified goal by channeling more economic power into the area, not for the nefarious reasons the article implies.

The focus area was also always intended to shift to different neighborhoods over time. With guidance from the Office of Civic Engagement-led Community Development Working Group and other community input, the EAHP team, along with community partners, are exploring which neighborhood to shift the focus area to next.
THE LOCAL HOUSING MARKET IS NOT, AND HAS NOT HISTORICALLY BEEN, A REFLECTION OF THE PROGRAM

An examination of Woodlawn housing data shows that property values have risen and fallen in line with the city as a whole in recent decades. In 2014, when the Woodlawn Focus Area was established, Zillow data shows the average home value in the neighborhood had dropped by more than $100,000 in the wake of the 2008 recession. Those numbers only started to rise again after the Obama Center was proposed in 2016. Since it started in 2003, the EAHP has provided assistance to 324 homebuyers, or an average of about seven homebuyers per year. Suggesting then that the program is driving or seeking to drive property values up and African American residents out through that small a population and within an ever-changing market is a flawed argument. Again, the program wasn’t designed to operate at such a scale that it might impact the housing market but instead as a way for the University to support its employees to live locally and support the community.

The idea that local residents are being displaced by wealthy outsiders because of the EAHP breaks down further when one considers that of those 324 homebuyers, nearly 66 percent were already living and renting on the South Side before they purchased their home through the program. In Woodlawn specifically, several decades of dramatic population loss come into play. At its peak in 1960, real estate and city data shows Woodlawn had 81,000 residents and 30,000 homes. Today, it has 25,000 residents and 13,000 homes, and only 10,600 of those homes are occupied. The fact that the city of Chicago now owns much of the neighborhood’s vacant land also dispels the notion that the program is squeezing residents out of a densely populated, University-controlled housing market.

OTHER ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT RACE-RELATED MOTIVATIONS ARE UNFOUNDED

The author misconstrues out-of-context quotes from department leaders and misrepresents our brief interaction. Minimal due diligence would have included engaging with program staff or participants or community partners to address and clarify specific questions and issues, in addition to supporting earlier claims about program collateral materials and housing market data with appropriate context and verified research. Without concrete evidence to support these assumptions, the article’s analysis and conclusions that EAHP is driven and sustained by racial motivations is woefully incomplete at best.

On the contrary, community residents have time and again reiterated to EAHP staff and participants that they desire more economic diversity in their neighborhoods. Presumptions that the program builds on shameful historic practices like redlining are similarly baseless. EAHP has been a program that has received consistent positive feedback from participants, the University, and members of the external community.

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Alyssa previously served as executive director of Uptown United, a community development organization in Chicago’s Uptown neighborhood. She also worked as a zoning and land-use attorney at Foley & Lardner LLP. She is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Chicago Law School.
DEVELOPMENTAL ESTRANGEMENT
AND THE RE-EMERGENCE OF LOVE

David ben-Jonah Bezalel

Author’s Note

As clinical social workers, a common professional experience seems to be encountering clients who regulate therapeutic exchanges with a protective, defensive remove and/or hostility. Two concepts may be helpful, in theory and practice, when considering and engaging exactly such clients. The first concept is estrangement; the second is cherishment. The former names a problem, and the latter offers a solution. This paper explores a history of psychodynamic thought and contemporaneous evolutions and augmentations of as much which may help our understanding and our treatments.

Within the psychoanalytic tradition, the work of many theorists (Klein, Winnicott, Suttie, Kohut, etc.) revolve, at least in part, around the important presence of responsive caregivers and the perils of their absence. Fonagy’s (2001) Attachment Theory and Psychoanalysis provides us with a catalog of thinkers who engaged these questions of caregiving and its lack. Ferenczi, he writes, described “the potentially traumatic nature of the adult’s failure to understand meanings in the child’s psychological world ... with lack of sensitivity” (p.158) while in Erikson the caregiver ideally functions as a “coherent being who reciprocates one’s physical and emotional needs” (p. 161). He points out that D. N. Stern asserts an “intersubjective bond ... connects baby and parent [through] interactive patterns [which] all contribute to ... eventual security [and the child’s eventual] capacity for intimacy” (p. 119). Klein, meanwhile, thought “sensitive caregiving would be ... a parent capable of absorbing and retransmitting the infant’s psychological experience in a ‘metabolised’ form” (p. 160).

In his Perspectives from Developmental Psychopathology, written with Mary Target, Fonagy (2003) adds that Mahler posited ideal caregiving as “early symbiotic gratification and ... emotional availability” (p. 89) while Sullivan asserted that “the extent of the mother’s tenderness determines
One of the most grievous of possible experiences,” he writes, “is that of disintegration rather than integration” (p. 207). In his later _Psychodynamic Psychotherapy for Personality Disorders: A Clinical Handbook_, Fonagy (2010) writes, “our understanding of others and ourselves critically depends on whether as infants our own mental states were adequately understood by caring, attentive, nonthreatening adults” (p. 188). To all of these perspectives, we can add Winnicott’s argument that a concordant and attuned reflection by the caregiver of the child’s own self-state is “essential for the establishment of the baby’s self-representation” (p. 161) and the infant’s “potential for unique individuality of personality (termed a True Self personality organization), which can develop in the context of a responsive holding environment” (Ogden, 1990, p. 143).

From this small sample of a wide range of theories we see the canonical importance of attuned, reflective, sensitive relationships, especially in caregiving. The absence of such relationships seems to bring manifold pathologies and painful disappointments, or a lingering sense of exile resulting from the internalization of any number of painful, salient moments of missed-connection throughout our lives. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, in tandem with the analyst Faith Bethelard, coined the remarkably useful term “cherishment” to name what heals such a sense of pain and estrangement.

**ESTRANGEMENT**

Estrangement emerges as a result of negative care-giving reactions (missed-opportunities characterized by a lack of caregiving sensitivity or active hostility) as well as by problematically present attempts at sensitivity (missed-opportunities characterized by an abundant but false, or complicating, caregiving sensitivity). While the absence of sensitivity is more intuitive, problematically present maladaptive reactions by a caregiver can likewise cause harm. Fonagy (2001) gives this example of parents unable to identify moments when the child himself experiences a sense of achievement but offer uncritical and excessive praise hinder the replacement of omnipotent self-representation with a realistic sense of self just as much as do parents who pay little attention to their child. Both leave the child with an unattainable, unrealistic, or partial system of values and ideas. (p. 110)

Thus even the affirmative reactions by a misattuned caregiver can generate what Fonagy and Target (2003) call elsewhere “a tendency toward disintegration rather than integration” (p. 207).

Suttie (1935) explains estrangement as a failure to achieve recognition. “One of the most grievous of possible experiences,” he writes, “is that of having to accept grudging [caregiving], since the unwilling [caregiver] shows no satisfaction in our pleasure—rejects our love responses and manifestly refuses to love us” (pp. 65-66). This lack of recognition forces a child’s development “to proceed by a violent change with repression instead of by gradual process,” and thus “does not produce really mature minds, but merely hardness and cynicism with a core of anxious, angry, infantility” (p. 96). In cases where “the parent is unempathic or insensitive, the idealized but faulty parental image will be internalized in place of the representation of the child’s own capacities” (Fonagy, 2001, p.109). Feelings of conflicted disavowal, painful disconnectedness, and repressive self-regard are the instigating moments of privation that thrust a person into a sense of psychic exile and psycho-social estrangement. Once a person has been exiled into the psycho-social realms of estrangement—without attunement or reciprocity—“the world,” Young-Bruehl (2000) writes, “is simply too dangerous and perversive, too uncherishing, for spontaneity, for expressing cherishment needs directly” (p. 211).

As a result of such estrangement, we create defensive, cold, insincere (or sincerely disingenuous) personas. We hide because it is safer and then perhaps forget we are hiding. Considering the aforementioned luminaries who have tried to think through withdrawal and an exile, I couldn’t help but wonder if all the above frames have been forged in the fires of each clinician’s own developmental experiences, hammered into subsequent unconscious symbolic organizations, and wielded as uniquely individuated theoretical constructions. I imagine the same “choice” has been encouraging my own understanding, conceptualization, and expressions as well. I think of estrangement as a kind of unresolved and enduring isolation based on a series of salient missed-opportunities for connection at developmentally important nodal moments throughout the lifecycle.

Estrangement as a kind of psycho-social isolation, or sense of exile, is both intrapsychic as well as intersubjective. Not only does an estranged person experience an intrapsychic sense of exile and painful difference, there is a literal Other subject (or over time, Others) who encouraged, at least once, this sense of exile, and the two realms revolve in turns, and at length in the relationships of the estranged. Even if a person experienced in estrangement could not name the sensation of difference, or the origin of their sense of exile, I imagine that estrangement emerges as an internalized reaction to all the salient moments of missed connection throughout an individual’s life, and the complicated psychic organization which naturally follows. Young-Bruehl (2000) speaks of clients who experience cherishment-frustration: “their expectation to be loved comes under a blanket of expectation to be rejected. They have rejected parts...

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1 Object relations theorists would say “object” or “objects” here.

2 We might be able to use this as an important source of painful similarity and influence sense of psycho-social difference in the conflicted relationships of people with Borderline Personality Organization, and in the breakdown of Narcissism, both of whom are unstable, for example, to clarify that nurturing, safe, fulfilling connections. We might also be able to use estrangement in the everyday organizations of self-states from people without diagnosable diagnosis, simply the everyday people of our lives.
of themselves. We began to think of thwarted [cherishment-hope] as expectation of rejection” (p. 48).

Estrangement is a form of perpetual rejection.

**CHERISHMENT**

Cherishment is a form of enduring acceptance. Cherishment goes beyond even the momentary satisfactions of recognition, for through an enduring, spontaneous, and relational responsiveness and engaging, unthreatening, and reciprocal awareness there is an internalized sense of reliable caregiving and care-receiving possible throughout life (Pieper, 1990; Pieper & Pieper, 1999; Pieper & Pieper, 2001).

Young-Bruehl (2000) draws on literary examples and other cultures and languages to express the kind of cherishment-consciousness that emerges from elemental caretaking. She highlights the Greek word *storge*, and the Japanese word *amae*, in which “the need to be loved is a biological given at birth, even in puppies, and not something created in response to anxiety and danger” (p. 54). She references Walt Whitman as one “able to alleviate himself in ... loving-kindness” (p. 59) and quotes Tolstoy, who in old age wished “to nestle against some tender and compassionate being and weep with love and be consoled” (p. 58). Having received cherishment, one is able both to be cherished and to be cherishing. Cherishment is thus a kind of healing salve which can treat the protective wound of estrangement. But in the face of estrangement, says Young-Bruehl, our natural inclination for cherishment retreats, burrows down, is hidden, quieted.

In psychotherapy, however, there emerge smoldering embers of cherishment’s hope, the hope of finding fulfilling connection, communion, and meaningful, reciprocal, fulfilling understanding. In order to help a person emerge from estrangement, the cherishing liberator must begin by entering into a client’s complicated brambles of semi-adaptive coping mechanisms, defenses, and resistances; protective False Self States surround the ember of authentic True Self States and their cherishment-hopes. As social workers, when encountering a client’s defensive gestures, we can be sure that in even the most truculent case, some kind of cherishment hope likely still exists. For according to the Japanese analyst Takeo Doi, such cherishment-hope “constitutes the underlying unconscious motive in [engaging with] treatment,” no matter what specific illness or dilemma or crisis the patient may present” (cited in Young-Bruehl, 2000, p. 13). In time, the process of allowing oneself to seek cherishment, and to be cherished, and to be cherishing lets a patient see the semi- and mal-adaptive nature of some of their behaviors. They begin to understand, too, however, “that it is no longer necessary for them to be ill in the old way” (p. 33). Thus slowly and circuitously begins a healing process maintained by the cherishing therapeutic relationship. Naturally, there seem to be as many ways of fulfilling cherishment hopes (and guiding/accompanying each other into the safety of holding environments in which cherishing can be actualized) as there are humans and moments of potential connection unfolding in time.

**ENCOUNTERING THE TABOO ON TENDERNESS**

Throughout the therapeutic treatment of estrangement, we might discover that our clients have developed a distrust of love-relationships. This manifests, according to Suttie (1935), as a taboo on tenderness, and that along with this reticence comes a lingering rage. People in estrangement have learned to “avoid the pain of privation” and this avoidance spreads “in order to exclude all reminders of painful loss and all incentives to ‘dangerous’ appeals or indulgences” (Suttie, 1935, p. 88). What results from the absence of cherishing indulgence, for our estranged clients, is a learned rejection of most opportune moments involving cherishing potentials (the positive aspects of tenderness must on these occasions be sacrificed in tandem with its too-painful negative aspects as well). Thus emerges what Suttie calls estrangement’s self-insulation from love hunger by the “cultivation” of a “loveshyness” [which to varying degrees] demands a psychic blindness to pathos of any kind—a refusal to participate in emotion. It can be carried to such a point that the individual is not only “steeld against” the appeal and suffering of others, but he actually dreads appealing to their sympathy (p. 88).

Along with loveshyness comes a rage decrying the absence of a true-safe-love’s receipt. The defensive1 burial of this cherishment-hope and deprivation-rage seem to be vital in the origins of estrangement. Using Suttie’s theories, we can see that these originating moments of estrangement, hinging on separation anxiety, force a repression of the True Self that then naturally conjures a correlative “hatred” of the unattuned caregiver and, it stands to reason, unattuned caregiving. For social workers, an awareness of the hidden rage, what Suttie calls hatred, is essential for the estranged client’s convalescence.

True healing involves “overcoming the anxiety-buttressed resistances” (Suttie, 1935, p. 208). These resistances are the figurative brambles mentioned earlier. It seems that as clinicians, we will likely face rage when helping a client overcome resistance and this rage-expression may be a

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1 E.g., splitting, dissociation, repression, etc.
good sign of progress as healing. A client’s rageful love-hunger expressions directed at us as their literal or figurative (transference) recipient, should remind us of the utility and strength in gentle endurance and responsiveness. Wachtel (2011) tells us that some patients become “deeply conflicted and inhibited with respect to [earnest emotional True Self expressions]” and when such patients learn such feelings are not quite as threatening then there is therapeutic change taking place (p. 116).

If a client’s messy emotional expressions of long-hidden needs, desires, and thoughts are uncomfortable for us as clinicians and if those expressions would be inappropriate for anywhere else in life outside of therapy, then the good [social worker] ignores to some degree the adequacy and appropriateness of the patient’s initial expressions of a previously warded-off feeling. If new territory is being reappropriated for the expanding conscious self, that is what is most important at first. Later there will be time for the fine-tuning” (Wachtel, 2011, p. 117).

By exactly not repeating the rejection of an estranged client’s caregivers, we help remove some of the client’s anxious and self-protective resistances to receive cherishment. By helping a client navigate transferralent and literal relational expressions of their buried love-frustration and deprivation-rage, old anxieties can be quieted. And in this more peaceful safety is where healing occurs through earnest expressions of a True Self’s frustrations and hopes, at last. Or as Suttie (1935) says, “[healing] consists in the removal of frustration, whereupon hate is not ‘overcome’ by love, but having no more reason for existence, is reconverted into love” (p. 208).

THE RE-EMERGENCE OF LOVE

What happens in healing cherishment is a complicated and nuanced dance of recognition, nurturing, sensitivity, attunement, mirroring, reciprocity, interaction, symbiosis, metabolizing, and articulating. But these all may occur in the most ordinary ways. As McWilliams (2004) says, “commonplace kindness or consideration is extraordinary” (p. 102). And through the emergence of this ordinary-extraordinary cherishment, healing begins. “Somehow, the therapy—the tie between you and your analyst—has to reach deeply into that core expectation, beneath all the defenses you’ve erected around it, and release its warmth to go like rays throughout you, relax you, grow you, allow you to feel again the expectation of love—from your therapist and, slowly, somehow, more generally” (Young-Bruehl, 2000, p. 7). Essentially one might say, as Ferenczi suggested, that we learn to love by being loved, in life and in therapy.

To argue that cherishment is a balm for estrangement insists that some kernel of hope survives most traumas in the expectation of meaningful and reciprocal communion. As social workers, we can be confident that each client has within some motivating force for connection and a desire to be understood despite all abandonments, abuses, failed-moments of connection, painful misunderstanding, or violence. With the work of our healing arts and sciences, it seems we can arrive safely, through the wreckage, to the point of cherishment. Aided with a practical understanding of estrangement and cherishment, we can help clients (and each other) find reasons to make life worth living. And with people for whom otherwise ideas such as healing and connection would rightly seem foolhardy and incredibly painful to approach, we can sit patiently waiting for the signs of hope.

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4 The impression I have is that leading with the chin isn’t the correct response but that greater flexibility and ability to work with clients’ rage-expressions is very useful.
DAVID BEN-JONAH BEZALEL is a social work mental health provider, a psychotherapist in training, and worked for over a decade in childcare before joining the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration community. He is grateful to be pursuing the completion of his graduate degree at the University and is honored to be included in this edition.

There are thought to be approximately eight million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. workforce—a conservative estimate given the difficulty counting such workers (Lee, 2018). Most occupy low-wage jobs in agriculture, construction, food-service, domestic work, and day labor. Federal laws like the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 limit the rights and protections of these workers. Employers use the threat of immigration enforcement to create an atmosphere of coercion and exploitation in which undocumented workers are reluctant to report abusive employer practices. Research shows that immigrant workers experience 300 more workplace fatalities and 61,000 more workplace injuries annually than native-born workers, and undocumented immigrants are more likely to experience dangerous working conditions than legal immigrants (Lee, 2018).

The IRCA prohibits employers from consciously hiring unauthorized workers, requires all employers to collect immigration status information on all employees using Form I-9s, and sanctions employers who hire unauthorized workers (Wishnie, 2003). The IRCA does not, however,
ban undocumented workers from serving as independent contractors. Between lax enforcement of the hiring guidelines and the independent-contractor loophole, undocumented workers often find low-wage (and often unsafe) jobs in the United States with employers able to avoid any legal responsibility for issuing overtime pay and protections in the case of injuries (Lee, 2018). As a result, undocumented workers often lack, in practice, the rights and protections enshrined in the laws that could benefit them.

For example, a study of Mexican migrant farm workers in the Midwest determined the stressors contributing to higher levels of anxiety and depression were “rigid work demands, hard physical labor, and employer exploitation” (Joseph, 2011, p.176). Additionally, other workers often toil without the basic rights of breaks, food and water, as well as earning substandard wages (37% receive less than minimum wage) and experiencing wage theft (76% experience wage theft) (Green, 2014). Again, these workers are often afraid to call attention to unfair work practices because they fear employer retaliation of deportation (Kristen, Banuelos, & Urban, 2015).

In 2014, an estimated 22% of undocumented immigrants worked in private households (Desilver, 2017). The majority of these domestic workers are female. In addition to unregulated pay, they are often victims of physical and mental abuse, ranging from rape and verbal abuse to 12-hour work days with little to no breaks and no overtime pay (Davis, 1993). Similarly, male undocumented immigrants often seek out day labor positions by standing near businesses or parking lots and this visibility makes them vulnerable to police, security guards, and anti-immigrant groups (Ojeda & Pina-Watson, 2013). Due to daily work competition, they are often chosen by independent employers based on their perceived physical health and may be abandoned after finishing work tasks (Ojeda & Pina-Watson, 2013).

This article examines further the effects of immigration law on undocumented work. It investigates the types of discrimination that undocumented workers face as well as the rights and protections that federal and state laws grant them. It looks, in particular, at first-generation undocumented Latinx workers and discusses some foundations of workplace discrimination, as well as outlining the individual cost and response of that population. Lastly, it sketches the role social workers can play on behalf of first-generation undocumented Latinx workers.

RIGHTS AND PROTECTIONS OF THE UNDOCUMENTED WORKER

Undocumented workers do have rights and protections. Federal and state laws prevent workplace discrimination and offer remedies for employer violations. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the Department of Labor (DOL), the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) all enforce workplace protections regardless of immigration status (Gleeson, 2010). Undocumented workers are entitled to minimum wage, overtime pay, breaks, and tips and are protected under health, safety, and anti-discrimination laws as well (“Undocumented Workers’ Employment Rights,” n.d.). However, ongoing systemic failures to enforce employer sanctions and limit the involvement of immigration law in labor disputes discourage undocumented workers from fighting unfair work treatment (Wishnie, 2003).

An undocumented worker bringing a dispute to court risks punishment if found to have used false documentation in obtaining work. For example, an undocumented worker unfairly terminated from a job is not actually entitled to back pay or reinstatement because such remedies would directly violate the IRCA (Wishnie, 2003). Anti-retaliation provisions make it unlawful for employers to use undocumented status to terminate employment in retaliation of a worker complaint. However, if employer retaliation does occur, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) can still follow up on a report and attempt to deport the undocumented worker (“Undocumented,” n.d.). While states like California and New York have passed bills to help protect undocumented-worker rights in lawsuits, and some workers may find that they are eligible for U or T visas—those visas reserved for the undocumented victims of crimes—rights and protections are not uniform or well understood and thus are easily side-stepped by employers (Kristen et al., 2015).

THE FOUNDATIONS OF DISCRIMINATION

Workplace discrimination against first-generation undocumented Latinx immigrants can be understood as an effect of a larger dynamic sociological pattern in which positive values are attributed to in-groups (i.e., groups we feel that we belong to) and conversely negative values ascribed to out-groups (i.e., groups we feel that we do not belong to) (Allport, 1954). Rejection of out-groups is founded on implicit attitudes and stereotypes that in turn produce discriminatory behavior (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006). The prejudice against first-generation Latinx immigrants is fueled by broad anti-immigrant sentiment often tied to perceptions of economic
and resource scarcity (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 2000; Cobb et al., 2019). In 2015, then-candidate Donald J. Trump promoted anti-immigrant sentiment when he used media appearances to proclaim that Mexico was only sending the United States drugs, criminals, and rapists (Reilly, 2016). This type of rhetoric scapegoats Latinx immigrants and further encourages those with similar views to confirm their biases (Sapolsky, 2017).

Stereotyping of first-generation Latinx immigrants paves the way for ethno-racial profiling and criminalization. Laws like Arizona’s SB-1070, which codifies “reasonable suspicion” as a legitimate basis for asking individuals to prove immigration status (Joseph, 2011), perpetuates an “illegality” of all Latinx individuals by failing to acknowledge implicit and explicit biases of authority figures. Additionally, our social systems constantly criminalize undocumented adult first-generation immigrants by deeming them undeserving of support and opportunities as well as disregarding their pre-migration hardships and trauma—the very conditions that forced them to migrate in the first place.

These political and social attitudes come together in the workplace. Political and cultural forms of discrimination are exacerbated by institutional and structural discrimination as those in power are unwilling to abide by current laws or stand up for the fair treatment of those seen as a vulnerable “out-group.” Thus, first-generation undocumented Latinx immigrants not only lack knowledge of American workplace laws and their own rights and protections (Gleeson, 2010), but lack access to resources and community networks while facing language and cultural barriers that might, in some small ways, mitigate their vulnerabilities.

**INDIVIDUAL COST OF WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION**

The vulnerabilities of individual first-generation undocumented Latinx immigrants are determined by several variables. They are determined in large part by intersecting identities (e.g., ethnicity, class, gender, sexual preference) that may serve to buffer or exacerbate the negative effects of perceived discrimination. A study revealed that “having Latino ethnicity, being women, residing in the United States for a longer time, and experiencing a downgrade in social status (compared to their previous status in the country of origin) are associated with greater odds of a depressive episode” (Joseph, 2011, p. 171).

They are also shaped by social status and social capital. Because immigrant groups tend to be disadvantaged in social capital and tend to use kin and ethnic ties to access resources that are overall homogeneous, low socioeconomic status (SES) may easily be preserved (Lin, 2000). Low SES further creates psychological harm that directly causes poor health and stress, both of which lead to increased vulnerability to diseases (Sapolsky, 2017). The demanding work schedules of undocumented immigrants also facilitate poor diets, increasing susceptibility to weight gain and lack of sleep, which in turn create physical health problems that go unsolved due to lack of access to basic health care (Joseph, 2011).

The overt threat of employer retaliation and the possibility of ICE raids both at home and at work have a strong negative impact. Such threats build a hypervigilance that while serving as a protective measure, may do harm as well. While being vigilant for discrimination may buffer from adverse consequences, research has shown that greater vigilance and mistrust can impair learning and increase underperformance (as seen among African American students) (Steele, 2010). Navigating workplace environments where more-subtle forms of discrimination exist can take a greater toll on first-generation immigrants because subtle and difficult-to-recognize discrimination may do more damage to individuals than overt discrimination. Subtle discrimination creates uncertainty. The uncertainty causes psychological distress due to the cognitive demands needed to comprehend the event; demands not present in perceiving overt discrimination (Noh, Kaspar & Wickrama, 2007)—a study of adult Korean immigrants in Toronto revealed that while overt discrimination was associated with an erosion of positive affect, subtle discrimination was directly associated with depressive symptoms (Noh et al., 2007).

These findings show that anything in excess can cause harm. In the case of undocumented immigrants, a high level of mistrust in the government and in health facilities can hinder the opportunities to seek legal aid to combat workplace discrimination or seek proper mental- and health-care, even from organizations that provide services for this specific population.

**RESPONSES TO WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION**

A study of Hispanic undocumented immigrants from Houston, Texas and Little Rock, Arkansas found that participants with strong racial-ethnic identity reported overall improved well-being, life satisfaction, personal self-esteem, and cognitive health, along with fewer depressive symptoms—all owing to a sense of belonging and purpose correlated with a stronger connection to an ethnic group (Cobb et al., 2019). These results are consistent with findings of increased racial-ethnic identity centrality (i.e., the measure of how significant an individual’s attachment to their ethnic/racial background is in defining their identity) working as a coping mechanism against discrimination in the population of African American young adults (Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Does racial-ethnic centrality
therefore serve to attenuate the effects of discrimination? Other research argues that immigrants who have high racial-ethnic centrality may feel the ill-effects of discrimination even more because immigrants are less likely to report being the targets of discrimination and more likely to have less experience coping with its consequences (Yip, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2008). This should be taken into account when observing the high number of undocumented immigrants who do not report workplace discrimination.

Although first-generation undocumented Latinx immigrants are more vulnerable, coping mechanisms can strengthen the longer they reside in the United States. In-group networks develop and resilience is strengthened—a pattern found in a study of Koreans living in Canada where greater acculturation improved coping with the negative effects of discrimination and a lessening of depressive symptoms (Noh & Kaspar, 2003). More specific to the Latinx undocumented community, heritage, religious and cultural values, and perspectives on work can also serve as protective coping strategies. A study on undocumented Latino male day laborers from Texas found that high levels of spirituality served as a protective factor against the role of discrimination in life satisfaction (Ojeda & Pina-Watson, 2013). Having a sense that religion is important was also found to be related to lower levels of depression among Mexican adults (Ojeda & Pina-Watson, 2013). Likewise, Familismo, which "emphasizes the importance of loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity toward one’s family,” has also been found to promote mental health and mitigate the effects of discrimination (Ojeda & Pina-Watson, 2013, p. 271). However, the strength of these cultural values can be limited depending on the physical proximity of family. In analyzing how one’s personal view on work can buffer discrimination effects, the same study on Latino male day laborers found that when participants viewed work as a means for survival rather than personal fulfillment, perceived workplace discrimination did not lower life satisfaction (Ojeda & Pina-Watson, 2013). Therefore, the way in which undocumented immigrants perceive the importance and meaning of the work that they do may aid in distancing them from the negative environments too often created in the workplace of undocumented immigrants.

CONCLUSION

In the United States, labor laws, rights, and individual protections exist to combat potential discrimination in the workplace. Unfortunately, undocumented immigrants, who occupy some of the most important jobs in our economy, face many injustices detrimental to their well-being. Exploitation in the form of strenuous physical work, long hours, and substANDARD wages are intensified by potential employer retaliation and encouraged by the deep-rooted influence of immigration law in labor dispute cases. Intensified by anti-immigrant sentiment, these conditions promote negative mental and physical health outcomes in communities of undocumented immigrants, many of whom have already undergone a great amount of trauma. While there are some mechanisms to mitigate the effects of this experienced discrimination, there are things one can do to advocate for fair rights and protections on behalf of this group.

To provide the undocumented immigrant community with the tools of empowerment that they need, we must provide accessible services in a culturally sensitive manner and be willing to direct to alternate resources when knowledge fails us. Furthermore, it is important to be aware of the rights and protections offered to undocumented workers in one’s locality, city and state. Due to a large amount of undocumented immigrant populations concentrated around particular regions of the country, some states and localities have extended support to this community by becoming sanctuary cities or creating laws to expand rights. If working with social policy, investigating these locations are vital to create social systems that assist this population in gaining more rights and protections across the country. While it is challenging to find undocumented populations willing to participate in studies, it is essential that we expand the ethnic backgrounds of the populations we work with in order to discover differences in patterns of discrimination, individual costs, and coping mechanisms. By doing so, we will have a deeper comprehension on the ways in which we can alter our own practices to support specific groups.

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ON THE ETHICS OF MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTIONS

Howard Ruan

Abstract

Since the introduction of mindfulness-based stress reduction in 1979, secular mindfulness has risen in popularity and used in many settings. This paper explores the ethics of mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) in light of the contention that secular mindfulness is a misappropriation of Buddhist practice. This paper examines the presumed synonymity between traditional Buddhist mindfulness and secular mindfulness, emphasizing issues of conceptual integrity, postmodern secularism, and modernist globalization. The paper argues, finally, that the two constructs require redefinition.

Since Jon Kabat-Zinn developed his mindfulness-based stress reduction program in 1979, secular mindfulness has risen in popularity as a therapeutic technique deployed for the management of adverse psychosomatic phenomena. This paper explores recent debates about the ethics of mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) given what some call its misappropriation of Buddhist practice. It asks: what constitutes the “right” ways of practicing mindfulness, and on what grounds are such arguments made? I first examine some of the arguments for and against the presumed overlap of traditional Buddhist and secular mindfulness. I then examine some of the framing issues embedded in the confusion between them, paying attention to conceptual integrity, postmodern secularism, and modernist globalization. Through my exploration, I contend that the debate mistakenly assumes that “Buddhist mindfulness” and “secular mindfulness” are synonymous, and that a generative dialogue might emerge from more precise definitions of these two practices.

At the core of the debate is a concern that the scientific rendering of mindfulness may entail a misappropriation of Buddhist practices that traditionally involve an integrated soteriological framework of ethical virtues (Monteiro, Musten, & Compson, 2015). Kabat-Zinn writes, “Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally” (as cited in Purser...
& Millilo, 2015). For Buddhists, however, meditation (under which mindfulness is merely one type of practice) is not reducible to a single technique nor an isolated or even relevant aspect for all adherents of the faith (Faure, 2009).

Monteiro, Musten, and Compson (2015) argue that though traditional Buddhist and contemporary secular perspectives vary, they nonetheless share the common goal of reducing suffering in the world. Purser (2015) claims that contemporary mindfulness implicitly criticizes traditional Buddhists and avoids the crucial issue of “mystification”—the presumed link between Buddhist practice and secular mindfulness. By pointing out the contemporary mindfulness movement’s assumption that the essence of the Dharma (the teachings of the Buddha) can be found in a single practice, Purser exposes tensions present not only in the mindfulness literature but also in the Buddhist tradition. The social history of Japanese Sōtō Zen Buddhism, for example, shows that practices resembling Kabat-Zinn’s mindfulness are not representative of the tradition as a whole, and that such meditative practices were overshadowed by ritual and magical priorities (Williams, 2004). To assume that the constructs of “Buddhist mindfulness” and “secular mindfulness” contain the same content is to miss much larger historical and cultural contexts that frame the debate in its current form.

To limit our scope, we should note that Kabat-Zinn’s formulation of mindfulness is informed by his training by Zen Buddhist teachers, a sect that, particularly in its contemporary manifestation, prioritizes meditation as Buddhist practice par excellence (Faure, 2009). What avenues are available for clinicians to utilize a technique that has shown great promise without committing cultural misappropriation? The Theravada Buddhist monk Ajahn Amaro (2015) argues that because the Buddha’s teachings are ultimately pragmatic, there is no real issue here: Buddhists have no exclusive proprietary rights to mindfulness, and clinicians delivering MBIs should feel comfortable sharing Buddhism’s pragmatic ethics as a potential resource with clients. To ensure that holistic well-being is sustainable beyond short-term symptomatic relief, practitioners could use traditional Buddhist concepts (like generosity) to improve and extend the effects of interventions, but the ethics of incorporating traditional Buddhist morality into MBIs is a complex problem (Monteiro, Musten, & Compson, 2015). In contrast, Gordon et al. (2015) rehearse the extant argument that if secular mindfulness is deficient in its authenticity, then traditional Buddhism can offer a (superior) corrective. Gordon et al. critique this argument, stating that the Buddha himself employed plural methodologies of liberation, and that such diversity was intentionally unified under the mission of tailoring practice for the sake of enlightenment. A singular, unequivocally “true” method within Buddhism cannot be found. Therefore, it can be argued that secular mindfulness is not necessarily less robust or less authentic but can be interpreted as yet another expression of the pragmatism of the Buddha’s program.

Indeed, to argue against secular mindfulness because there is a “right” way to practice mindfulness, or that Buddhism “owns” mindfulness practice, is to possibly violate the spirit of certain fundamental Buddhist principles. Marx (2015) shows that secular mindfulness’s dis-identification with Buddhism is validated under the purview of upāya, or skillful means. Under this doctrine, a truth can manifest in different ways according to the contexts of the audience in order to deliver appropriate and effective medicine. This interpretation can be pushed even further by referral to another Buddhist principle: the tenet of anātman, or non-self (the lack of inherent, stable identity) guarantees that no primordial standard or truth can be found, and thus no “right mindfulness” can be validly discovered. For Marx (2015), the preservation of conceptual integrity would entail the preservation of Buddhism’s soteriology—that of the total transformation of our sense of self and the world in order to reduce suffering—but for the Buddhist tradition to lay exclusive claim would be to compromise the accessibility of a practice that has been adapted according to upāya for contemporary needs. Thupten (2019) argues for a particularly strong distinction: that contemporary mindfulness is a new phenomenon, and that as it concerns scientific research, it is morally neutral or independent of ethics and compassion. He is careful to state that the relationship between mindfulness and ethics is nonetheless important but instead relocates it to the domains of culture and the humanities.

Demanding that Buddhism reclaim mindfulness as its property may do more harm than good. As Lindahl (2015) argues in response to Monteiro, Musten, and Compson (2015), clinging to “Right Mindfulness” (or traditional mindfulness within the Buddha’s Eightfold Path, his program for attaining enlightenment) may jeopardize the continued use of this practice in secular settings. Because such professional ethics require informed consent of clients to participate in treatment, explicitly (re)infusing secular mindfulness with religious components may render ineffective or problematic a therapy that otherwise appears to be highly effective and popular. If secular mindfulness were to be made ethically unavailable by a fight over rightful ownership, then it can be argued that it would go against the heart of the Buddha’s teaching to make inaccessible a practice that has spoken to the needs and demands of today’s audience.

There is concern that without Buddhist ethics, mindfulness is reduced to symptomatic relief or, worse, a means-end relationship that may reinforce the sense of self (in contradiction with Buddhist teachings of non-self).
But mindfulness practice does not occur in an ethical vacuum. Any field of discipline employing mindfulness techniques must navigate respective codes of professional ethics as well as individualized moral worldviews of clients. Even if MBIs do not immediately function according to a religious ethical framework, practitioners nonetheless function according to networks of moral systems (Krägeloh, 2016). Thus, practitioners should provide guidance and reinforce the integration of MBIs with clients’ personal moral frameworks. In order to meet the needs of a modern Western public that has become increasingly secular, it may be necessary to appeal to personalized moralities and ethics rather than traditional religious frameworks to legitimate and provide religiously-inflected therapies. Sun (2014) suggests that this appeal was the point of Kabat-Zinn’s recontextualization of mindfulness practice—oversimplification was a strategic and necessary move in order to reframe Buddhist practice to be more commonsensical and culturally acceptable for mainstream medical care and the American public. Purser and Milillo (in press), however, argue that “denatured” mindfulness is no more than a privatized self-help technique that can potentially reproduce oppressive and unequal power structures. Secular mindfulness, denatured of its religious-ethical origins, they argue, does not point toward an investigation of structural forms of suffering and questions of liberative justice.

Conversely, Palitsky and Kaplan (in press) argue for a pluralistic approach that would implement a religion-informed dissemination of MBIs, stating that the practitioner’s pre-determination of the relevance of religion to MBIs or avoidance of addressing religion at all may be to the detriment of client autonomy and intervention experience. The very fact of mindfulness’s religious heritage for both client and practitioner is a potential determinant of the efficacy of MBIs. Considering the prevalence and range of mindfulness-influenced therapies such as mindfulness-based stress reduction, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, dialectical behavior therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, and more, it is incumbent upon practitioners to exercise critical reflexivity regarding the contexts of mindfulness in relation to clients’ needs, worldviews, and culture (Thompson & van Vliet, 2018). Practitioners need skill in cultural humility, or more specifically in this case, religious or spiritual sensitivity in the navigation of religious-secular constructs.

That secular mindfulness accords with the doctrine of अक्षुण्ण in the Buddhist tradition does not quash the difficulties of conceptual integrity across different constructs. It is important to emphasize that a movement away from religious ethics to secular ethics is not a movement toward value neutrality. As Panaïoti (2015) argues, there is “a lingering attachment to the metaphysics of robust selfhood in the psychological sciences”—a metaphysics that is diametrically opposed to the Buddhist metaphysics of non-self. Indeed, the fear of the supposed traditional Buddhist is that a teaching of non-self could be mobilized to strengthen a sense of self. But if strengthening a sense of self is required to reduce suffering, then this paradox may be where Buddhism and the psychological sciences can find ground for mutual learning. Even within the sūtra genre of Buddhist religious literature, we can find internal disagreements and creative re-workings of the non-self principle, particularly in the polemical discourse of the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, which argues for the reality of a permanent, unchanging self. Taking the psychological and cognitive dimensions of Buddhism on its own terms may aid secular psychological sciences with greater definitional precision, and it may benefit the coherence of cognitive and/or behavioral approaches.

In their literature review, Hanley et al. (2016) find that mindfulness studies suffer from standard criticisms of scientific inquiry, such as methodological flaws and inadequate sample diversity (see Baer, 2003). MBI-specific gaps include a need for greater clarity of conceptual and operational definitions, better differentiation between mindfulness meditation and mindfulness-based interventions, attrition factors, adverse effects, and more. Thus a more beneficial and productive interpretation is available and the soteriological mission of Buddhism can be enhanced by a mutual dialogue with the psychological sciences in hypothesizing, testing, and theorizing increasingly appropriate and effective methods by which people can be liberated from suffering. But this would also require that evidence-based practices of the psychological sciences are equally open to the non-positivist and non-rationalist methods of healing housed within the diverse Buddhist tradition.

Part of the difficulty in ascertaining the boundaries, relationships, and functions between mindfulness as a religious practice and mindfulness as a secular adaptation stems from the culturally-specific Western binary of “religious” vs. “secular” becoming outdated (Compson, 2017). To frame mindfulness within this dichotomy is to take on a modernist attitude of reification that has since become irrelevant. Echoing Plato’s Euthyphro, Compson (2017) asks what makes a religious value religious rather than just a value. She ultimately comes down on value ambiguity and urges for a “postmodern, postsecular openness to interplay and dialogue between narratives” that is capable of inclusivity and generativity.

That we have difficulty differentiating, for example, what “religious” or “spiritual” means may be part of the greater ambiguity that is the relationship between religious and secular modes of being. Frisk (2012) argues that post-secularity is a much more appropriate and more meaningful term; as a result of such postmodern deconstruction of
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view hopelessness as a depressive disorder but rather as the sign of a good
Frisk, L. (2012). The practice of mindfulness: from Buddhism to secular mainstream in a
We must take care to not presume that we now occupy a value-free zone. Sharf (2015) remarks how the anthropologist Ouyesekere did not
view hopelessness as a depressive disorder but rather as the sign of a good
Buddhist whose salvation is linked to seeing hopelessness as the nature of the world. What makes for mental health or an aspirational state of being in the Buddhist sense is not necessarily in agreement with the ideal of contemporary mindfulness practice. In other words, we cannot assume that the constructs of “Buddhist mindfulness” and “secular mindfulness” share the same conceptualizations of problem, method, and solution. But here the conversation can restart at this intersection of Buddhism and science.
Intersections between disciplines occur, Christian theological ethicist Gustafson (1996) tells us, “whether one wishes to admit it or not” and academic honesty and pragmatic utility urges practitioners to grapple with the variant sources from which valuations, descriptions, and prescriptions are derived and from which epistemological and ontological standards are established. The moral psychology of (one kind of) Buddhism argues that the deconstruction of our sense of self and a whole-hearted recognition of the impermanence of all phenomena is the very key to well-being, and we must put this in direct conversation with the veiled valuations of Western

REFERENCES

Framing and Agenda Setting Following the Mass Shooting Terror Attack in Christchurch, New Zealand

Kira Bensman Monin

Abstract

Despite thousands of gun-related deaths and injuries in the last decade, the United States federal government has yet to enact comprehensive gun reforms. Meanwhile, New Zealand recently experienced the deadliest mass shooting in its history, and within one week, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern had announced major reforms. This paper analyzes the Prime Minister’s response and her power in shaping the discourse of the event in the immediate aftermath of the shooting. It focuses on her public statements in the six days that followed the event, and analyzes them with the concepts of framing and agenda setting.

In 2008, my high school in a commuter town outside New York City was put on lockdown because of a potential shooter. For three hours I hid in a library closet with six other students and a librarian. We had no cellphones and no idea what was happening outside. While we had experienced post-9/11 anthrax and bomb scares, this was our first gun-related lockdown and it has haunted me since. While no one was hurt that day, I now see that I was coming of age in an epidemic of mass-shootings. America has an enormous gun problem, which is a complex tangle of interconnected social, political, and economic issues. On the policy side, federal legislation related to guns is weak and riddled with loopholes; state legislation varies widely; lobbyists fund politicians (Gambino, 2018); and an 18th century war-time constitutional amendment is the principal argument for unrestricted access to 21st century technology. The results of this complex tangle are clearer to see. Each year some 136,000 people are shot in the United States (Giffords Law Center, 2019). The firearm homicide rate in 2015 was 25 times higher than the rate in 28 high-income
countries combined (Grinshteyn & Hemenway, 2019). According to 2017 figures, the US civilian population of 326 million people owned a total of 393 million guns—almost half of the world’s supply (Ingraham, 2018). And between 2009 and 2018, there were at least 180 instances in which at least one person was shot on the property of a K-12 school (Walker & Petulla, 2019).

According to the website Everytown for Gun Safety (2019), mass shootings are defined as those in which the shooter murders four or more people. Between 2009 and 2018, there were 223 such shootings—killing 1,280 people and injuring 937 others. Mass shootings tend to take place in homes, but were deadlier when in public places such as schools, concerts, shopping malls, synagogues, and nightclubs (Everytown, 2019). After mass shootings, the phrases “thoughts and prayers,” “more guns,” “lone wolf,” and “mentally ill” saturate public discourse, but “terrorism,” “toxic masculinity,” “domestic violence,” “hate crime,” and “racism,” among others, do not. Mass shootings such as those at Sandy Hook Elementary School (2012) and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (2018) sparked major advocacy campaigns, protests, and increased claims-making and political action by the public. Some states and retailers have made small policy changes, but the federal government has yet to agree to any kind of comprehensive reform.

This paper, therefore, turns to New Zealand to present an alternative approach for social workers seeking to mitigating the terror of gun violence. Comparative practice and global perspectives are important to social work because in order to learn about ourselves and our social environments, we must also look at others around the world in theirs. In this case we look carefully at the words of New Zealand’s Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern following the March 15, 2019 mass shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand, where an Australian national entered the Al Noor Mosque and Linwood Islamic Centre during Friday prayers and killed 51 people and wounded 49. The gunman, who eventually pled not guilty to over 90 counts of murder and attempted murder, had used social media both prior to and during the attack, and his accounts have been linked to various white supremacist ideological groups (Hollingsworth, 2019). The event captured the world’s attention and reignited debates about global far-right extremism, islamophobia, white supremacy, internet subculture, mental health, and gun reform.

It was in this context that Prime Minister Ardern issued seven public statements: March 15 at 4:00 p.m. (2019a); March 15 at 7:00 p.m. (2019b); March 16 at 9:00 p.m. (2019c); March 16 at 3:30 p.m. (2019d); March 17 at 4:00 p.m. (2019e); March 18 (2019f); and March 19 (2019g). She gave a press conference with Minister of Police Stuart Nash about their reform decisions on March 21 (2019h), and then together introduced further reforms on September 13 (2019i). Individually and collectively these demonstrate clear deviations from the American pattern of political response and highlight her strategies of framing agenda-setting. In her remarks she focused on the Muslim, immigrant victims and their trauma; she narrated the story of New Zealand as a welcoming, diverse, cooperative community for all with no tolerance for extremist terrorism; and she immediately enacted reforms such as a ban on military-style assault weapons and the establishment of a government buy-back program. In September, six months after the shooting, further gun reforms were introduced, including the creation of a national registry and shortening the length of firearms licenses to five years (Ardern & Nash, 2019b).

FRAMING THE EVENTS

Prime Minister Ardern broadcast or released at least seven formal statements in the week following the shooting. While local and international media reported and interpreted the events in numerous ways, Ardern was clear and consistent. She framed the event as an extreme tragedy; incompatible with their New Zealand’s values. Moreover, she set a strict deadline for introducing comprehensive policy reforms that would reduce chances of a reoccurrences, and subsequently announced those reforms.

We can understand the approach and impact of her statements through the works of Benford and Snow, who explain that collective action frames are “intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists” (2000, p. 614). That is, such frames inspire actions for social change and “negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change” (p. 615). Diagnostic framing identifies the social issue, its causes, and who should be blamed for it. Prognostic framing proposes strategies to solve the problem. Motivational framing “provides a ‘call to arms’ or rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action, including the construction of appropriate vocabularies of motive” (p. 617).

Prime Minister Ardern’s speeches began with diagnostic framing and then increasingly turned prognostic and motivational. She emphasized that the mass killing was “an act of extraordinary and unprecedented violence” (Ardern, 2019a) and a “clear … terrorist attack” stemming from “extremist” ideology that will not be tolerated in New Zealand. She also described her sadness and the act of violence as extreme, further diagnosing the situation to be unsuitable with New Zealand’s values; we do not “condone racism” nor are we “a safe harbor for those who hate”
Prime Minister Ardern’s prognostic framing appears when she called for thorough investigations into the attacks and failed security mechanisms, and then laid out action plans for the coming days, which included respecting the privacy of grieving families (Ardern, 2019c; 2019g). Within this framing, she also emphasized public safety, the need to provide logistical and financial support to the mourning families, and the necessary healing of the entire community and provided more strategic updates to develop a picture of the government’s response, such as raising the national security threat level and strengthening intelligence and police investigations. Ardern’s (2019b) offered the “strongest possible condemnation of the ideology of the people who did this” and insistence that “[W]e utterly reject and condemn you.” Both utterances are prognostic and motivational since they promote solidarity amongst New Zealanders.

Prime Minister Ardern reiterates the values that make New Zealand an inclusive society and by repeating them, she reinforces their importance as a foundation for moving the country forward. She modeled these values of diversity and inclusion a number of times, such as when she wore a headscarf when visiting Christchurch in mourning and by incorporating Islamic prayers into her Parliament speech (Ardern, 2019b). Ardern also acknowledged respect for Muslim burial customs and announced various forms of support for the affected, like deployment of social workers (2019d); advice for explaining the news to children (2019e); multiple reminders about the crisis hotlines (2019e; 2019f; 2019g); and significant financial assistance (2019e). She established various forms of supports for healing and care to show that solidarity, collaboration, and community are both prognostic and motivational frames for the aftermath of the attack.

Ardern also included motivational framing in her speeches by declaring that extreme violence would not be tolerated and that the affected communities are in fact the true New Zealanders, unlike the shooter (2019b; 2019e). By restating New Zealand’s values in this manner, she called on the public to reject the extreme violence and to use compassionate solidarity with their Muslim neighbors as a form of collective action. Also, as both prognostic strategy and motivation for action, Ardern brought the gunman to justice not by spotlighting him, but by centering the victims and the community in mourning. In her March 18 speech to Parliament, she shared the names and acts of bravery of some of the victims and declared:

He is a terrorist. He is a criminal. He is an extremist. But he will, when I speak, be nameless. And to others, I implore you: speak the names of those who were lost, rather than the name of the man who took them. He may have sought notoriety, but we in New Zealand will give him nothing. Not even his name. (2019g)

It is here that she constructs a “vocabulary of motive” for collective action, choosing the language of moving forward with compassion for the victims over that of notoriety and revenge for the past (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 617).

Over the course of her speeches, Ardern’s prognostic framing seems designed to prevent further tragedy. She referred to the need for gun reform, investigating intelligence institutions (2019f), interrogating the role of social media (2019g), and confronting racism and extremist ideology (2019b). This is, however, also motivational framing because it acknowledges the public’s thoughts and emotions in response to hearing solutions. In her speech to Parliament (2019g), Ardern worked “to mobilize potential adherents” (government officials, the gun industry, social media platforms, etc.); “garner bystander support” (e.g., the New Zealand public, the gun lobby, and people around the world); and “demobilize antagonists” by reinforcing the idea that extreme violence and bigotry are not tolerated in New Zealand (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614).

Prime Minister Ardern’s frames in the aftermath of the Christchurch massacre have been inclusive and flexible, acknowledging and encouraging dialogue amongst various interest groups and being transparent about successive updates. Instead of calling for revenge, she focused on healing and progress to support New Zealanders now and protect them more thoroughly in the future.
AGENDAS AND WINDOWS FOR ACTION

Kingdon (1995) defines an agenda as “the list of subjects or problems to which government officials … are paying some serious attention at any given time” (p. 3). When a specific item has proposals that are actually being considered, they become part of the decision agenda (Kingdon, 1995). The day after the Christchurch shootings, Prime Minister Ardern announced that gun reform would be foremost on the agenda and that “gun laws will change. There have been [previous] attempts … [but] now is the time for change” (Ardern, 2019c). To understand the potential impact of Ardern’s call for swift reform, one should look at previous occasions when gun reform was on the government’s agenda.

Previous attempts at gun reform in New Zealand have been largely unsuccessful and consistently slow to develop. In 1992, two years after its then-deadliest mass shooting, in Aramoana, New Zealand amended its Arms Act, creating a new license category that covered military-style semi-automatics (MSSAs) but did not account for the easy, illegal conversion of other semi-automatics into MSSAs (“Australia,” 2019; Lopez, 2019). According to Lopez (2019), there is no constitutional right to own firearms, though many in the gun lobby view any reforms, including the creation of a firearms registry or shorter license validity, as violations of their legal rights (“Australia,” 2019). After 1992, the gun lobby successfully blocked both major and minor attempts at reform. In 1997, after the previous year’s Australian Port Arthur massacre, and a massacre and two police shootings in New Zealand, the Thorp Report was released with 60 comprehensive recommendations, but there was no legislative action that followed. Much smaller reforms, Arms Amendment Bills Nos. 2 (1999) and 3 (2005), also failed due to increased pressure from gun lobbyists (“Australia,” 2019). A “largely technical and minor” amendment was passed in 2012 (Lopez, 2019). In 2016, after a police raid discovered large caches of MSSAs, another investigative committee was formed and produced a report with 20 recommendations. The next year saw seven of those recommendations were followed, and the conversation on gun reform was renewed and back on the government agenda (“Australia,” 2019).

Policy windows, according to Kingdon (1995), are urgent, time-limited opportunities for political action, usually after a significant event or change in power. In Australia, the Port Arthur massacre did in fact open a policy window during which the country was able to institute major gun reforms. Within twelve days, the National Firearms Agreement (NFA) was introduced, instituting a firearms registry, banning semi-automatic weapons, and establishing two rounds of government buy-back programs. Since the establishment of the NFA, there have been zero mass shootings (“Australia took action”, 2019). The urgency generated by the Port Arthur massacre elevated the status of gun reform on the government’s agenda and has subsequently protected the Australian people.

In New Zealand, it took the Christchurch massacre to open a similar policy window for action on comprehensive gun reform, an opportunity which Prime Minister Ardern seized. Within two days of the massacre, Ardern declared the need for change and that gun policy would be on her immediate agenda (Ardern, 2019c; 2009a). Within three days she had met with her cabinet to discuss “a range of weaknesses in [our] gun laws” and stated that “within 10 days of this horrific act of terrorism, we will have announced reforms which will, I believe, make our community safer” (2019f). On the Tuesday following the Friday attack, Ardern spoke in front of Parliament to honor the victims and also to reiterate these changes and explore the need to investigate social media platforms: “they are the publisher, not just the postman. There cannot be a case of all profit, no responsibility” (2019g). After Ardern’s confirmations that gun reform would be on the priority agenda, the media began to discuss her alternatives, many of which had been considered in previous reform attempts. These included a buy-back program, bans on all semi-automatic arms, and the creation of a comprehensive registry (Watkins, 2019).

On March 21, six days after the massacres at Al Noor Mosque and Linwood Islamic Centre, Prime Minister Ardern and Minister of Police Stuart Nash moved on to the decision agenda: immediate bans on all military-style semi-automatic and assault rifles, high capacity magazines, and parts that can convert other guns into these styles; amnesty for turning in illegal weapons; an Australia-style buy-back program; and tighter regulations, licensing, and registration processes (Ardern & Nash, 2019a). To dissuade the gun lobby, they also acknowledged that not all gun owners are potential criminals:

To owners who have legitimate uses for their guns, I want to reiterate that the actions being announced today are not because of you and are not directed at you … [they] are directed at making sure this never happens again (Ardern & Nash, 2019a).

Ardern took advantage of the policy window by announcing these decisions quickly, while the nation was still in mourning and attention had not been diverted elsewhere.

CONCLUSION

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has been praised across the world for her leadership and commitment to healing in the aftermath of a terror attack (Fifield, 2019; Roy, 2019). She framed the killings in Christchurch as


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