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The Case for Humane Education in Social Work Education

by

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Abstract

Humane education is a form of education focusing on the intersectionality between human rights, environmental preservation, and animal protection. It is a solution-focused discipline striving for a healthier world for people, the environment, and animals. The argument throughout this banded dissertation is that humane education can potentially inform and collaborate with social work and social work education for expanding the ecological, person-in-environment perspective to include the natural world and other living species.

The first product is a conceptual article making the case that humane education is an inter-disciplinary bridge for helping social workers and educators continue to expand their definitions of environmental justice (eco-centrism) and human-animal relationships so that student ecological consciousness includes the welfare of humans, animals, and the broader ecosystem.

The second product is research-based disseminating findings from interviews with social work educators and humane educators. Utilizing a qualitative research method, this exploratory study consisted of six semi-structured interviews exploring the similarities and differences between social work, social work education, and humane education. Three were conducted with social work faculty from the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work's Institute for Human-Animal Connection, and three with faculty from the Institute for Humane Education.

The third product is a conceptual article making the case for humane education in social work education as an integration of the Christian faith tradition and social work. For Christian social workers and educators, additional arguments are made for humane education and social work education based on Biblical mandates that involve caring for God's creation.

        Collaborating in pursuit of creating a better world is opportune and timely for social work

and humane education. Humane education has the potential to complement or integrate with

social work and social work education particularly considering the social work profession's

continued understanding and expansion of environmental ethics & environmental justice, and

human-animal relationships. Implications for social work education and areas of future research

are discussed, as the literature connecting to the two disciplines is limited.

        Keywords: humane education, social work education, person-in-environment, ecological

        perspective, environmental justice, ecological justice, human-animal relationship

Dedication

This banded dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Nicholas, for his unconditional love, patience, and support, as well as for his shared desire to live out with me our role and responsibility as representatives of the caretaker species. It would be unusual for me to not also include our four furry, rescue children in this dedication as they remind both Nicholas and I everyday of how wonderfully unique and special are each individual members of the web of life-for Cedric (canine), Gretel (canine), Giles (feline), and Heissen (feline). To my parents, Doug and Nancy, whose affirmation of my heart for people, the Earth and all creatures great and small from the beginning has been central to my identity, and sense of purpose. And lastly, to my students (past and present), who are central to my motivation for embarking on this journey in the first place.

Acknowledgements

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The Case for Humane Education in Social Work Education

This banded dissertation examines the connections between humane education, social work, and social work education. The central argument throughout is that social work and social work education can learn from and partner with humane education in their shared pursuit of a better world. While there are commonalities between the two disciplines, there is also opportunity for social work and social work education to broaden its person-in-environment and ecological frameworks to include the natural environment and other living species. Humane education focuses on the interconnectedness between human rights, environmental preservation, and animal protection (Weil, 2004; Weil, 2016).

At its historical roots, humane education is the promotion of humaneness through an educational process in which students are aware of the needs of all other living things is increased by teaching of kindness and compassion toward people, animals, and the environment (Itle-Clark, 2013). Humane education is a product of the humane movement. In the United States, it began with the American Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) began in 1866 by George Angell who is considered the "father" of humane education (Whitlock, 1973; Unti & DeRosa, 2003; Itle-Clark, 2013). Various forms of humane education have developed since then with present day humane education programs varying in emphasis and scope. However, humane education has not been formally integrated into educational curriculum due to lack of teaching materials, familiarity with the subject by teachers and administrators, as well as lack of educational policies requiring its integration (Whitlock, 1973; Itle-Clark, 2013).

The focus of this banded dissertation stems from the Institute for Humane Education's humane education framework. Emphasizing grades K-12 and college, "Humane education has as its goal the creation of a humane world through humane citizenship" (Weil, 2004, p. 59).

Additionally, humane education has "the goal of providing students with the knowledge, tools, and motivation to be conscientious choicemakers and engaged changemakers for a healthier world for people, animals, and the environment" (Weil, 2016, p. 4). Just as in social work education, humane education seeks to cultivate students to become changemakers who transform the world around them (Weil, 2004). Within the Institute for Humane Education humane education framework, there are four elements of humane education. Those four elements are the following:

(1) Providing accurate information (so we have the knowledge to face challenges),

(2) Fostering the 3C's: curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking (so we have the tools to meet challenges),

(3) Instilling the 3R's: reverence, respect, and responsibility (so we have the motivation to confront challenges), and

(4) Offering positive choices and tools for problem solving (so we will be able to solve challenges) (Weil, 2004, p. 19-20; Weil, 2009, p. 3).

Several social workers and social work educators have also been considering the importance of environmental ethics and environmental justice in social work (Besthorn, 2008; Faver, 2013; Gray & Coates, 2012; Jones, 2013; Miller & Hayward, 2014). This is expanding more broadly within social work education due to the Council on Social Work Education's 2015 Education Policy and Accreditation Standards. In addition, there are social workers and social work educators looking at the importance of human-animal relationships in the helping process, as well as the potential correlations between violence against animals and violence against humans (Risley-Curtiss, Rogge, & Kawam, 2013; Tedeschi, Fitchett, Molidor, 2005). Yet, the profession as a whole does not have a unified position on its role and responsibility to the natural and

nonhuman worlds. This reality is concerning particularly in light of the intersecting issues people, the environment, and animals face due to the growing ecological crisis of the 21st century.

As a profession informed by numerous other disciplines throughout its evolution, humane education can be another contributor. Like social work, humane education strives for compassion and social justice in society. Lessons may be learned from humane education whereby the person-in-environment and ecological frameworks are more inclusive of the natural environment and animals. In doing so, social workers may gain a better understanding of the interconnections between humans, the natural world, and animals, which may then inform the explicit and implicit curriculum as well as assessment in social work education. Social work professionals, educators, and students have the ethical responsibility to engage in practice that is competent, evidence-based, and evidence-informed, and r being informed by the reciprocity between humans, the natural world and animals is pertinent for engaging in ethically responsible practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of social work.

Conceptual Framework

With its holistic emphasis on the intersectionality of people, the environment, and animals, humane education can help social work education raise the ecological consciousness of social work students. Social work education essentially is the socialization of students into the social work profession. Through socialization into the profession, their perspectives based on experiences and worldview are reformulated to new meaning schemes that coincide with or at times conflict with the values and theoretical frameworks of the social work profession.

Besides the ecological perspective and person-in-environment frameworks, the underpinning theoretical framework for this banded dissertation is transformative learning

theory. Transformative learning theory assumes that meaning derives from experiences and meaning is influenced by cultural and psychological assumptions and presuppositions in which a person has culturally defined frames of reference (California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project, n.d.; Kitchenman, 2008; Mezirow, 2003; Mezirow, 2009). In other words, a person's worldview is subjective, and meaning is constructed by way of one's worldview and experiences.

Currently, social work and social work education tends to reflect the Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) that suggests the earth is limitless in its resources, that nature is strong enough to adapt and recover from modern industrial practices, and that humans will one day be able to control all of nature. This paradigm is an example of the assumption by transformative learning theory that meaning schemes are rooted in culturally defined frames of reference. Yet, the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) purports an environmentally conscious worldview that reflects care, concern, and understanding of interconnectedness based on the interdependency between humans, nature, and other species (Dunlap, 2008; Dunlap, Van Liere, Mertig, & Jones, 2000). This is the new meaning scheme and consciousness raising the social work profession needs to better fulfill its mission.

There are two broad theoretical frameworks within transformative learning theory. The first theoretical orientation emphasizes learning that examines how people reformulate their perspective. Emphasizing personal transformation, this perspective reformulation occurs due to the alteration of meaning schemes through experience, critical reflection, critical discourse, and action (California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project, n.d; Mezirow, 2009).

The second theoretical orientation of transformative theory is comprised of a combination of personal transformation *and* social transformation influenced by Paula Freire's emancipatory

transformative process through conscientization leading to societal transformation (Langan,

Sheese, & Davidson, 2009; Lange, 2009; Taylor, 2009). It sees individual/personal

transformation through critical reflection, alteration of meaning schemes, critical discourse, etc.

linked with social change/social transformation in which the learners become cognizant of power

and political consciousness to transform not only their own lives, but society as well (Mezirow,

2009).

Mezirow was influenced by Paulo Freire's emancipatory transformative process

emphasizing social transformation as well as personal transformation (Kucukaydin & Cranton,

2012). In other words, the act of transformation by way of critical reflection, alteration of

meaning schemes, critical discourse, and so on leads to societal transformation. The more

learners rediscover their power, the more they are able to transform society to a more egalitarian,

non-oppressive, and just world (Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2012). This particular philosophy of

transformative theory is congruent with social work and humane education's emphasis on

justice. It is an empowerment theory that recognizes the important interaction and intersection

between the person and the environment (social structures). It acknowledges the role privilege

and power play in the perpetuation of oppression thus reflecting Freire's emphasis on

consciousness for the sake of social change and reform.

Therefore, as stated previously, both social work education and humane education at their

core seek to develop students so they can transform the world around them. Humane education

can be complimentary to social work education applied through the lens of transformative

learning theory. Humane education can help social work students be socialized into the

profession whereby their ecological consciousness includes the natural environment and other

species. It can help students engage in critical-dialectical discourse and critical self-reflection,

which in turn empowers students to be conscious and informed social workers and citizens of the global world (Mezirow, 2003; Weil, 2004).

Summary of Scholarship Products

This banded dissertation makes the case for humane education as a disciplinary collaborator for social work and social work education in its journey toward a more ecocentric approach to practice and education. With its focus on the interconnectedness between people, the environment, and animals, it is argued throughout all three-scholarly products that humane education has the potential to complement or integrate with social work and social work education.

The first product is a conceptual article making the case that humane education is an inter-disciplinary bridge for helping social workers and educators continue to expand their definitions of environmental justice (eco-centrism) and human-animal relationships so that student ecological consciousness includes the welfare of humans, nonhuman species, and the broader ecosystem.

The second product is a research-based article that presents findings from interviews with social work educators and humane educators. This research study explored the similarities and differences between social work, social work education, and comprehensive humane education. Utilizing a qualitative research method, this exploratory study consisted of six semi-structured interviews. Three were conducted with social work faculty from the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work's Institute for Human-Animal Connection, and three were with faculty from the Institute for Humane Education. Questions were organized around a content focus area, which included the following: the history of the institution and its programs, the journey of each faculty member that led them to the teach at the institution, pedagogical and

theoretical frameworks that construct and influence the curriculum, understanding of humane education and social work education and their similarities and differences, as well as how the two might complement each other. Research findings indicate both similarities and differences as well as the opportunity for interprofessional collaboration. Teaching implications and future research are discussed.

The third product is a conceptual article making the case for humane education in social work education as an integration of the Christian faith tradition and social work. For Christian social workers and educators, additional arguments are made based on Biblical mandates that involve caring for God's creation. These include the argument that as the servant species and fellow members of the web of life humans are called to care for the natural world and all its inhabitants as interconnected and interdependent manifestations of God's love.

Discussion

The articles in this dissertation suggest that social work as a strengths-based profession can take the lead in seeking creative and effective strategies for addressing the intersecting issues faced by humans, the environment, and other species. It may be challenging for some, however, to shift from the Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) to the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) and incorporate it as a part of the generalist framework. The mission of the social work profession is to seek mutually beneficial relationships between people and society. And yet, this is no longer enough. Certainly, social work cannot be the answer to all the intersecting issues humans, the environment, and other living species experience. Nevertheless, social workers and social work educators have a responsibility to shift away from a human-centric perspective toward a more inclusive frame of reference for the well-being of humans, animals, and the natural world.

The opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration between social work education and humane education is evident in that humane education has the potential to complement or integrate with social work education particularly considering the social work profession's continued understanding and expansion of environmental ethics & environmental justice (eco-centrism), and human-animal relationships. There is currently minimal literature joining the two disciplines. Moreover, interprofessional and interdisciplinary collaboration is a norm and prominent part of the social work intervention approaches to practice. Therefore, the overarching goal of this banded dissertation is to begin gaining a better understanding of the commonalities between humane education and social work and social work education.

Implications for Social Work Education

While it is argued throughout this banded dissertation argues that humane education may be of service to the social work profession broadly speaking, the primary proposed target area for the incorporation of humane education principles and paradigms is in social work education where social workers are first socialized into the profession. For instance, integrating humane education resources, activities, and exercises into the curriculum at both the BSW and MSW levels could broaden the ecological perspective and consciousness of future social workers. This in turn will further their competence as practitioners.

Connecting with the Institute for Humane Education (IHE) to host workshops and/or seminars for social work educators could help them understand humane education. It could provide an opportunity to learn about tools and resources that could integrate well with social work curriculum. This is one way in which social work educators could engage with humane education for developing assessment measures for core competency three-- advancing human

rights, social justice, economic justice, and environmental justice-- as well as the broader social work curriculum.

One of the participants in this dissertation's research article suggested that faculty consider co-teaching a humane education and social work master's level course as an experiment. An idea such as this would be an important teaching lab for the two disciplines It could also be used as a scholarship of teaching research-based case example for future research and teaching implications. Additionally, a step further could include to do a collaboration such as this across campuses on a larger scale as a pilot course.

Additionally, Ryan (2011) makes the argument for an expanded Code of Ethics, which includes the social work profession's responsibility to the welfare of animals themselves as a counter-argument to the social work profession's historically anthropocentric and speciesist frame of reference to nonhuman animals. This expanded and more inclusive Code of Ethics could be incorporated throughout the curriculum at both the BSW and MSW levels.

For social workers and educators who identify with the Christian faith tradition, there is a need for remembering the God-given call to live more fully into the role of "servant species" (Linzey, 2009, p. 3) to God's creation. And so, there is a need for expanding the dialogue among social work educators based out of Christian higher education institutions. This dialogue could begin through organizations such as the North American Association of Christians in Social Work at its Annual Convention, for example. Moreover, the integration of faith and practice in social work programs based out of such institutions may include teaching about broader ecological and person-in-environment perspectives based on the Biblical mandate to care for all of God's creation, and not just the human species. As faith plays an important role and motivator in Christian social workers' and educators' decision to enter the profession (Brandsen & Hugen,

2007), making these connections for and with students is important for teaching. A more specific way to make these connections could be through MSW programs based out of Christian institutions could incorporate a humane education concentration as part of its program offerings, for instance.

Implications for Future Research

Due to the minimal literature and formal connections between social work, social work education, and humane education, there are numerous possibilities for continuing research. There is much needed for bridging the gap in the literature about social work education and humane education to substantiate the argument that these two disciplines mirror each other in many ways, and to answer questions about how they are different. For example, a qualitative study using in-depth interviews with social work faculty from social work programs who have an emphasis on the human-animal relationship coupled with interviews with faculty from the Institute for Humane Education could provide some answers to the similarities and differences between the two disciplines.

Examination of the Institute for Humane Education's educational programs, curriculum, syllabi, and pedagogical frameworks would also be a helpful and productive future research study for comparing the two disciplines. This will allow for moving beyond a philosophical argument for humane education and social work education to the practical through consideration of theoretical frameworks and pedagogical approaches.

Other social work programs that emphasize human-animal relationships could be surveyed regarding their knowledge base and understanding about humane education, and the similarities and differences between the two discipline. Examples of such programs could include Arizona State University School of Social Work, which offers a Graduate Certificate in

Treating Animal Abuse in partnership with the school and the Animals and Society Institute. Another program could be the University of Tennessee Knoxville College of Social Work in partnership with the College of Veterinary Medicine, which offers a MSSW Veterinary Social Work Certificate, a Postgraduate Veterinary Social Work Certificate Program, an Animal Assisted Interactions Certificate, and an Animal Related Grief and Bereavement Certificate. Or a final example could be Michigan State University's School of Social Work and the College of Veterinary Medicine's Veterinary Social Work Services (VSWS).

Another research opportunity could be to conduct surveys of social work programs that have incorporated the 2015 Education Policy and Accreditation Standards asking questions about how they have interpreted and integrated the updated version of competency three – advancing environmental justice – into their curriculum. Additionally, a research study example might entail a qualitative study using in-depth interviews with students regarding their perception of humane education concepts and principles. This in turn may inform how social work educators can develop current and/or new courses that better incorporate the additional component of competency three more deliberately and clearly into the explicit curriculum.

Interviewing social workers who complete a certificate program or Master's degree through the Institute for Humane Education could also generate useful insights. For example, interviews could be conducted with social workers who complete the recently developed early child development humane education certificate through the Institute for Human-Animal Connection (IH-A) at University of Denver's Graduate School of Social Work. This program was launched with encouragement and approval by the Institute for Humane Education (IHE) whose educational programming does not include pre-K.

Conclusion

Incorporation of a more inclusive ecological perspective and person-in-environment lens in social work education is important for the teaching and training of future social workers. Utilizing the knowledge base, experience, and wisdom of humane education will further open the door for social work education to have generalist practice curricula that includes an expanded view of the environment beyond the historical view of only the social environment. Meeting accreditation requirements is not sufficient of a motivator for social work programs to do this. An expanded ecological consciousness and competence within the profession is necessary for effective and evidence-based social work practice.

For social work students' meaning schemes and dominant paradigms to be transformed to a more ecocentered framework for practice, social work educators (and social work practitioners) first need to broaden their ecological consciousness. They first need to take the lead in increasing their understanding and application of the person-in-environment and ecological frameworks to be inclusive of the natural environment. Social work educators cannot teach and facilitate learning about content they themselves have limited competence in. And so, it behooves, social work educators to embrace an expanded ecological perspective to lead the charge within the profession to educate, train, and socialize students into the profession so they are better equipped to address the intersecting issues experienced by people, the environment, and nonhuman species.

Thus, the case for humane education in social work education is a call to social work and social work educators to enter this broader ecological perspective journey for the good of all-humans, the environment, nonhuman species. Shared goals and values are evident between social

work and humane education. This banded dissertation and its contents are one contribution and

attempt to begin bringing the two disciplines together more formally.

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The Case for Humane Education in Social Work Education

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Abstract

Humane education is a form of education focusing on the interconnectedness between human

rights, environmental preservation, and animal protection. While social work and social work

education has emphasized human rights, the ecological, person-in-environment perspectives

need to be expanded to include environmental preservation and animal protection. This article

makes the case that humane education is an inter-disciplinary bridge for helping social workers

and educators continue to expand their definitions of environmental justice (eco-centrism) and

human-animal relationships so that student ecological consciousness includes the welfare of

humans, nonhumans, and the broader ecosystem.

Keywords: humane education, social work education, person-in-environment, ecological

perspective, environmental justice, ecological justice, human-animal relationship

The Case for Humane Education in Social Work Education

Social work education plays an important role in cultivating competent practitioners who will fulfill the profession's mandate "to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (National Association of Social Workers, 2008, p. 2). Social workers operate with an ecological perspective and a person-in-environment lens, assuming a reciprocal relationship between the person and the social environment (Gitterman & Germain, 2008). Hawkins (2010) specifically points out the historical neglect of the natural environment as part of these theoretical frameworks.

Social work educators have an opportunity to facilitate a broader ecological perspective and person-in-environment lens in which the health of the natural world, animal welfare, and human well-being are all connected. Examination of social work's responsibility to the natural world has been on the rise in scholarly literature within the last ten years, and there has been more dialogue about a paradigm shift toward ecological consciousness within social work practice, education, and scholarship (Gray, Coates, & Hetherington, 2013; Hawkins, 2010). Various approaches for an expanded ecological consciousness have been recommended in the literature, (Gray & Coates, 2015; Jones, 2013; Miller, Hayward, and Shaw, 2012; Schmitz, Matyók, James, and Sloan, 2013), and these will be used to make the case for humane education as a valuable collaborator for making this shift in social work education.

Humane education is a form of education at the K-12 and college levels that focuses on the interconnectedness between human rights, environmental preservation, and animal protection (Weil, 2004; Weil, 2016) Its goal is to create "a humane world through humane citizenship" (Weil, 2004, p. 59). Humane education serves as a catalyst for social change by implementing

and acting upon humane values for the good and benefit of all living beings, whereby the

relationships between the earth, humans, and all living beings are transformed into relationships

based on compassion, kindness, and mutual respect (Weil, 2004). The social work profession

also has an ethical responsibility to seek the welfare of all creation as it moves away from

anthropocentrism (i.e. humans are the most important species; nature exists for human uses) and

and speciesism (i.e. discrimination based on species) toward ecocentrism (i.e. responsibility to

and for natural/nonhuman world; human worth is not more than nature) (Faver, 2013; Gray &

Coates, 2012; Jones, 2010; Ryan, 2011; Wolf, 2000) and toward an ecosocial approach to social

work practice (Norton, 2012).

Rooted in transformative learning theory, this article suggests that humane education is

an interdisciplinary bridge for social work education as it expands toward a more ecocentric and

ecosocial framework. Transformative learning theory examines how people reformulate their

perspectives through the alteration of meaning schemas based on experience, critical discourse,

and actions that emphasize personal transformation (Mezirow, 2003; Taylor, 2009). As a result

of these altered meaning schemas, learners become cognizant of power and political

consciousness to transform not only their own lives, but society as well (Mezirow, 2003; Taylor,

2009). The more learners rediscover their power, the more they are able to transform society to a

more egalitarian, non-oppressive, and just world (Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2012). This is

congruent with social work and humane education's emphasis on justice.

The current meaning scheme within social work and social work education regarding the

natural environment is the Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP). The Dominant Social Paradigm

suggests the earth is limitless in its resources, that nature is strong enough to adapt and recover

from modern industrial practices, and that humans will one day be able to control all of nature

(Dunlap, 2008; Dunlap, Van Liere, Mertig, & Jones, 2000). This paradigm is an example of the assumption by transformative learning theory that meaning schemes are rooted in culturally defined frames of reference. Yet, the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) purports an environmentally conscious worldview that reflects care, concern, and understanding of interconnectedness based on the interdependency between humans, nature, and other species (Dunlap, 2008; Dunlap, Van Liere, Mertig, & Jones, 2000). This is the new meaning scheme and consciousness raising the social work profession needs in order to better fulfill its mission.

Again, according to transformative learning theory, an important purpose of education is the cultivation and development of students so they in turn may transform the world around them. This purpose is also implicit in the purpose of humane education and social work education (Weil, 2004). Humane education could be complimentary to social work education in cultivating the New Ecological Paradigm within the profession underpinned by the lens of transformative learning theory.

Although there is much more research on social work, environmental justice, and ecological justice, as well as the human-animal bond and animal-assisted interventions in social work practice, a dialogue in the literature pertaining to inter-disciplinary connections between social work education and humane education is minimal. In light of the need for social work education to have a greater voice in the conversation about ecological justice for the good of all, an opportunity is apparent for incorporating humane education. In so doing, humane education may serve as an approach for helping social work students to broaden their ecological consciousness and worldview in which health of the natural world, animal welfare, and human well-being is interconnected.

The central argument throughout this article is that social work and social work education have an opportunity to learn from and partner with humane education in their shared pursuit of a better world as humane education aims to address the intersecting issues impacting people, animals, and the environment (Weil, 2016). While speaking broadly to the entire social work profession, this article emphasizes social work education specifically as the area for connecting social work and humane education beginning first with the historical roots of humane education and the initial connections between the two disciplines. This article will then examine how social work and social work education has interacted with the natural environment and nonhuman animals by first unpacking the historical interpretation of the ecological perspective and person-in-environment frameworks, and the shifting environmental perspective in social work. Articulation of the difference between environmental justice and ecological justice follows, and includes brief examples of the role of ecological justice in social work education and students' perceptions. Regarding social work's interactions with nonhuman animals, an overview of the role of animal welfare and human-animal relationships is considered for further comprehension of the relationship social work has had with the natural world. Implications for teaching and future research are addressed upon conclusion of this examination.

History of Humane Education

Foundational to humane education is the promotion of humaneness in which awareness of the needs of all other living things is created in the student through the educational process (Faver, 2009; Weil, 2004). It was and continues to be a kindness-to-animals ethic in which positive treatment of animals is connected to positive treatment of other humans (Arbor, Signal & Taylor, 2009; Unti & DeRosa, 2003). Humane education is a product of the humane movement. The first anti-cruelty, animal welfare society entitled the Royal Society for the

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) was founded in England by Lewis Gompertz in 1824

(Ascione, 2005). In 1866 in the U.S., Henry Berg started the American Society for the Protection

of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) in New York (Ascione, 2005). In 1868, George T. Angell who

is considered the "father" of humane education, founded the Massachusetts Society for the

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA) (Ascione, 2005; Faver, 2009; Unti & DeRosa,

2003).

Angell advocated for a national compulsory humane education whereby socialization of

the young in the formal systems of education would reduce the spread of cruelty, and

implementing kindliness would decrease adult crimes (Unti & DeRosa, 2003). He made the

argument that the teaching of humanity, and a connection between the kindness-to-animals ethic

through the incorporation of humane education into formal schools was a strategy for addressing

social unrest, ensuring public order and universal benevolence (Unti & DeRosa, 2003).

Addressing social unrest, ensuring public order and universal benevolence are implicit in the

purpose of the social work profession whereby a mutually beneficial relationship between people

and the social environment has historically been the focal mission (Hawkins, 2010). The

historical roots of humane education speak to this shared purpose, and therefore, may serve as a

partner in serving the common good.

Current humane education efforts. To this day, humane education has not been

formally institutionalized and integrated into the K-12 curriculum due to lack of teaching

materials, familiarity with the subject by teachers and administrators, as well as lack of

educational policies requiring its integration (Unti & DeRosa, 2003). Currently, standardized

testing and student performance outcomes are deemed the priority because of legislative policies

and funding. This makes incorporating humane education into the curriculum and teaching

strategies secondary regardless of whether it is valued by educators or school systems.

Nonetheless, there are side partnerships and collaborations between humane societies and animal

control organizations with schools which do provide education in some form to students where

those partnerships exist (Unti & DeRosa, 2003). Faver (2009) makes the argument that since no

universal, school-based humane education programs are mandated or funded, professionals like

social workers could advocate for the incorporation of such programs in schools by partnering

with child welfare organizations and animal welfare organizations.

Humane education organizations. Despite humane education being a specialization by

some K-12 educators, various forms of humane education have developed. There are three types

of organizations that promote the humane education movement and they are: (1) national animal

protection organizations, (2) national non-profit organizations that promote humane education,

for instance the National Humane Education Society and the Institute for Humane Education,

and (3) community-based animal welfare organizations, i.e. humane societies and animal shelters

(Faver, 2009).

Through organizations such as the Institute for Humane Education, the more

traditional/historical expression of humane education that which was centered primarily on

animal welfare has expanded to a more comprehensive expression of humane education with its

focus and education to include not only animal protection, but also explicitly human rights, and

environmental preservation (Weil, 2004). Nevertheless, the overarching goal remains the same to

create and promote a humane world by way of humane education for the cultivations of a

humane citizenship (Weil, 2004). It is fair to argue that the promotion of a humane world

through social justice is a primary mission of the social work profession, and in turn social work

education. Consequently, the potential for interdisciplinary collaboration is propitious.

The institute for humane education. The Institute for Humane Education was founded in 1996 (Weil, 2004; Weil, 2009; Weil, 2016), and focuses on education at the K-12 and college levels. Within the Institute for Humane Education, there are four elements of humane education that serve as the foundation for humane citizenship. They are the following:

(1) Providing accurate information (so we have the knowledge to face challenges),

(2) Fostering the 3C's: curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking (so we have the tools to meet challenges),

(3) Instilling the 3R's: reverence, respect, and responsibility (so we have the motivation to confront challenges), and

(4) Offering positive choices and tools for problem solving (so we will be able to solve challenges) (Weil, 2004, p. 19-20; Weil, 2009, p. 3).

A fifth element of humane education is referred to the three I's: "Inquiry, Introspection, and Integrity" (Weil, 2009, p. 5).

It may be argued that the Institute for Humane Education is continuing the work begun by George T. Angell in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in his attempts to universalize humane education. Through its master's and graduate certificate programs, humane education and Most Good, Least Harm (MOGO) workshops and online courses, the Institute for Humane Education seeks to educate those who educate in various capacities and settings to help grow a humane society through humane citizenship (Institute for Humane Education, n.d.; Weil, 2009). Moving forward, for the purposes of this article, when referring to humane education the author will be referring to the Institute for Humane Education's expanded definition of humane education, which entails human rights, animal protection, and environmental preservation (Institute for Humane Education, n.d.; Weil, 2004).

Humane Education and Social Work

Although there has been a significant increase in the literature with regard to social work and environmental justice, as well as some attention to the human-animal bond and animal-assisted interventions in social work practice, inter-disciplinary connections between social work, social work education, and humane education exist minimally. There is some referral to the historical definition and framework of humane education and social work in the literature (Faver, 2009; Faver, 2013). And yet, an argument might be made that social work's roots did at one time take into account the welfare of all creatures and a sense of responsibility to all based on a historical connection.

Social reformers were involved in campaigns for the abolition of slavery, education, housing reforms, workplace reforms, the protection of children, and the prevention of cruelty to animals (Ryan, 2011). In learning about the development of the child welfare system, social work students study the case of Mary Ellen Wilson who experienced abuse and neglect at the hands of her foster mother, Mary Connolly (Ascione, 2005). Through Henry Bergh and the American Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), Mary Ellen was removed from the abusive home since there were no child protection laws in place at that time (Ascione, 2005; Ryan 2014). Based on this event, the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was created (Ascione, 2005). Anti-cruelty to animals served as a template for the creation of legislation to counter cruelty, abuse, and neglect of children (Ryan, 2014). Therefore, social work does have connections to humane education principles, and now has another opportunity to rekindle and nurture that relationship in a more explicit and interdisciplinary way.

Ecosocial Work

One of the focal areas for generating change in humane education is its emphasis on environmental issues and the impact these numerous concerns have on all facets of the natural world. There is a growing body of work commenting on how the social and natural environments are disconnected or separate from each other, and social work has begun to explore a more ecocentric focus in the assessments and interventions of working with individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations (Besthorn; 2013; Faver, 2013; Gray & Coates, 2015; Hawkins, 2010; Jones, 2013).

A more comprehensive ecological paradigm in social work whereby both humans and nonhumans share the earth continues to shift from a human-centered ecosystem approach toward a more ecocentered and integrated framework for promoting change (Miller, Hayward, and Shaw, 2012). This has come to be called "ecosocial work", a term that puts greater emphasis on the "human-nature connections" (Norton, 2012, p. 306). Ecosocial work is an anti-oppressive approach to social work practice in which human well-being is connected to the natural world and includes an understanding of the human-nature relationship in its intervention levels for promotion of environmental sustainability and ecological justice (Norton, 2012).

Expanding the ecological perspective in social work. Historically, and presently, the social work profession tends to focus on the person in the social environment, more than the person in a social *and* natural environment (Besthorn, 2008; Hawkins, 2010; Miller & Hayward, 2014; Wolf, 2000). Critics of this perspective argue that the social work profession has operated within anthropocentric and speciesist paradigms. They argue that social works have an ethical and moral responsibility to expand their understanding of "the environment" to include the natural environment/nonhuman world shifting toward an ecocentric paradigm (Besthorn, 2013;

Faver, 2013; Gray & Coates, 2015; Hawkins, 2010; Jones, 2010; Jones, 2013; Matsuoka &

Sorenson, 2013; Ryan, 2011; Wolf, 2000) in which the ecology of the environment is

interconnected and inseparable from the social environment. In other words, what happens to the

natural environment/nonhuman world impacts the person in the social environment, and vice

versa (Besthorn; 2013; Faver, 2013; Gray & Coates, 2015; Jones, 2013). And yet, with the

growing ecological crisis including "exponential population growth, pollution, pesticide

production and use, food insecurity, lack of access to potable water, toxic waste dumping and the

depletion of the earth's natural resources" (Miller & Hayward, 2014, p. 281), social work has

moved toward a greater awareness and recognition of the need for an expanded ecological

conscious, orientation, and ecosocial approach through various forms of scholarly publications

(Besthorn, 2013; Faver, 2013; Gray & Coates, 2015; Hawkins, 2010; Jones, 2010; Jones, 2013;

Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2013; Norton, 2012; Ryan, 2011; Wolf, 2000). Thus, humane education

can have a role in expanding social workers' and educators' consciousness of the environment

such that it includes an understanding of the interconnectedness and interdependency of all

members of the ecosystem.

Environmental Justice and Ecological Justice

At first glance, ecological justice and environmental justice might be interpreted as

holding the same meaning, however, there is in fact a distinction between the two. Based on the

historical definition of environmental justice and the environmental justice movement in the

U.S., environmental justice primarily focuses on how the natural environment exists for and

serves humanity; therefore, the concern for the environment only goes as far as human interests

(anthropocentrism and speciesism) in that humanity has a right to a clean and safe environment

(Besthorn, 2013; Miller, Hayward, and Shaw, 2012). Therefore, rights of the natural world are

not articulated within the human-centric profession of social work. Although the natural world

does have value, human interests tend to surpass the interests of the natural world (Besthorn,

2013). This view is evident in the National Association of Social Worker's (2015)

Environmental Policy Statement, and in the Council on Social Work Education's (2015)

Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) that now includes environmental justice

as part of a core competency. While these are positive steps in the right direction, a more

inclusive terminology has been suggested in the literature; "ecological justice" (Besthorn, 2013;

Jones, 2013; Miller, Hayward, and Shaw, 2012).

Ecological justice presents a shift in perspectives in which humanity is in service to the

natural world (Besthorn, 2013; Miller, Hayward, and Shaw, 2012), whereas environmental

justice focuses on how the natural world affects humans. Ecological justice focuses on the

negative consequences of human actions on the natural environment (Besthorn, 2013; Miller,

Hayward, and Shaw, 2012). It recognizes that the human world does not exist in a vacuum

separate from nature (Miller, Hayward, and Shaw, 2012) and "stresses that humans are

systematically embedded and biologically embodied beings whose ethical responsibilities

emerge from and *extend to* all non-human beings and entities" (Besthorn, 2013, p. 39).

This view of ecological justice is congruent with the philosophical principles of humane

education and its pursuit of environmental concerns. Humane education could therefore serve as

an interdisciplinary collaborative partner to help social workers and social work educators

cultivate an expanded understanding of environmental justice that include ecological justice.

Social Work Education and Ecological Justice

Making connections between the health and wellness of the natural environment, animal

welfare, and human well-being resulting in a broader ecological worldview for social work

students is an important role of social work education. In order for social work education to do so, however, Jones (2013) argues for a transformed ecologically oriented social work education.

This article seeks to make the argument for humane education as an approach in the conversation for continuing this curriculum development and assisting in the normalizing of ecological justice within social work education, and therefore, the social work profession. Even so, it is important to mention some of the social work scholars and educators who have already conveyed suggestions for transforming the social work curriculum to include a more ecocentered focus.

Miller, Hayward, and Shaw (2012) describe 17 Principles of Environmental Justice developed by the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991. They argue that these 17 principles can help social work move away from an anthropocentric focus and further develop an ecological justice framework and continue the conversation regarding the role of nature in social work (Miller, Hayward, and Shaw, 2012). The principles emphasize harmony and unity within ecological systems, the reality of interdependence between these systems, and the role of personal responsibility in addressing resource depletion and inequitable distribution of resource (Miller, Hayward, and Shaw, 2012). Principle 16 focuses on the education of both present as well as future generations, and when applied to social work education, they cite examples in the literature where this is being done by using service learning or community education regarding food insecurity and food access (Miller, Hayward, and Shaw, 2012).

Jones (2013) makes the case for an ecologically transformed social work education through ecological literacy, Indigenous ways of knowing, ecospirituality, and a critical approach to education. Ecological literacy pertains to the comprehension of natural systems, Indigenous

ways of knowing refers to the important role Indigenous perspectives play understanding the

reciprocal relationship between humans and the natural world, and ecospirituality recognizes the

spiritual dimensions of the human-nature relationship (Jones, 2013). Regarding a critical

approach to education, Jones (2013) also notes the necessity for ensuring that an ecologically

orientated social work education is rigorous in its approaches, and he argues that many of these

transformed approaches are in congruent with current approaches to social work education.

Similar to Jones (2013), Gray and Coates (2015) cite examples of integrating

environmental perspectives within the social work curriculum. For instance, they propose a

rethinking of social justice and the humanistic values and theories that inform social work, and a

broadened theoretical framework that promotes comprehension of environmental issues and their

impact (Gray and Coates, 2015). They also suggest conducting community-based assessments in

which environmental factors are assessed in macro level practice courses, or examining the role

of political and economic institutions in policy courses and the extent to which they support

policies that negatively impact the environment (Gray & Coates, 2015).

Schmitz, Matyók, James, and Sloan (2013) describe a multidisciplinary team and case

studies approach in a course on environmental sustainability. Drawing from various disciplinary

lenses such as peace studies, economics, and the natural sciences in addition to social work, the

course examined how together these disciplines might collaboratively address the various

environmental problems in search of environmental sustainability (Schmitz, Matyók, James, and

Sloan, 2013). Case studies on water conflicts, disaster relief in Haiti, environmental degradation

in the face of war and poverty in Somalia, as well as a hands on community gardening project for

learning about sustainable agriculture were utilized as pedagogical approaches for engaging

students to work in multidisciplinary teams for tackling environmental issues at the local,

national, and international level (Schmitz, Matyók, James, and Sloan, 2013).

        Ecological worldview for social work students. For social work students' perspectives,

there is a growing recognition of the connection between the health of the natural world and the

well-being of all species. For instance, Faver (2013) examined the environmental beliefs and

concerns about animal welfare amongst social work students in the U.S.-Mexico border region

utilizing the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) Scale. Her findings showed a correlation between

concern for animal welfare and environmental beliefs, however, as the correlations were not

strong, Faver (2013) argued for social work educators need to strengthen their focus on fostering

an ecological worldview within students' practice in which the welfare of all humans,

nonhumans, and the broader ecosystem are connected in order to work toward social, economic,

and environmental justice.

        In addition, Miller and Hayward (2013) also utilized the New Ecological Paradigm

(NEP) Scale to measure U.S. social work students' attitudes, interests, and practices related to

the environment. They also examined the students' views on the place of environmental issues in

social work curriculum. Miller and Hayward's findings indicated a strong concern and interest in

environmental issues and a desire to see more integration of environmental and ecological justice

issues into the social work curriculum.

        These two examples show how ecocentrism is already impacting social work education.

This is both positive and hopeful in that the integration of a broader ecological perspective into

social work curriculum increases the knowledge, values, and skills of students. However, these

examples are not the norm in social work education; therefore, the work to develop the social

work curriculum so that social work students can better address environmental issues of the 21st

century continues. To do so would impact their pursuit of cultivating a mutually beneficial relationship between people, society, and the natural world. And so, partnering with humane education could broaden social work education beyond the two examples cited (and others) so that the well-being of the natural environment and other species is included.

Social Work and Human-Animal Relationships

Humane education recognizes the disconnect and inconsistency in the treatment of some species of animals over others. This disconnect and inconsistency between how animals are treated and cared for is linked to the negative and harmful impacts on humans and the environment. Humane education makes the case for the inclusion of animals in the pursuit of a more just and peaceful world (Weil, 2004), and can provide social work with a rationale for broadening its focus on relationship by including other species and their relationship to humans (Risley-Curtiss, Rogge, & Kawam, 2013; Tedeschi, Fitchett, Molidor, 2005).

Risley-Curtiss (2010) found that some social workers take into account the role of companion animals in the lives of their clients and include animals in their practices. However, there is greater need for education, training, and research on the incorporation of animal-assisted interventions and factors impacting social workers' inclusion of animals in their practice (Risley-Curtiss, 2010; Ryan, 2011; Risley-Curtiss, Rogge, & Kawam, 2013; Tedeschi, Fitchett, Molidor, 2005). MacNamara and Moga (2014) recommend the inclusion and integration of human-animal relationships curriculum at both the foundational and advanced social work education and training levels. In a 2004 unpublished study, Risley-Curtiss (2010) found that only 7 out of the 230 schools of social work that responded to a survey included content on the human-companion animal bond (HCAB) focusing specifically on animal-assisted therapy (AAT).

Today, there are a number of well-established schools of social work whose curriculum hve a distinct focus area(s) on social work and the various types of human-animal relationships in social work practice. For instance, the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work's Institute for Human-Animal Connection (n.d.) is "a center for the study of the interrelationship and health of people, animals and the environment and offers graduate certificates in Animals & Human Health (AHH) Certificate, Equine-Assisted Mental Health Practitioner Certificate, and Animal Assisted Social Work (AASW) Certificate. Also, Arizona State University School of Social Work (n.d.) offers a Graduate Certificate in Treating Animal Abuse in partnership with the school and the Animals and Society Institute. The University of Tennessee Knoxville College of Social Work (n.d.) in partnership with the College of Veterinary Medicine offers a MSSW Veterinary Social Work Certificate, a Postgraduate Veterinary Social Work Certificate Program, an Animal Assisted Interactions Certificate, and an Animal Related Grief and Bereavement Certificate. A final example of social work education integrating human-animal relationships in the curriculum is Michigan State University School of Social Work (n.d.) and the College of Veterinary Medicine's Veterinary Social Work Services (VSWS), which provides a learning environment for veterinary students, field placement opportunities for social work graduate students, grief and loss support for clients making difficult decisions about their companion animals, and community outreach.

Animals, social welfare, and social justice. An understanding of the capabilities and complexities of the cognitive, emotional, and social abilities of nonhuman animals has played an important role in social work's recognition, understanding, and valuing of nonhuman animals in social work practice (Matsuoka and Sorenson, 2014). The inclusion of animals in social work practice and social work education programs has primarily been through the lens of assessing the

role of companion animals in a family system, the link between animal cruelty and various forms

of violence against humans (i.e. child abuse, domestic violence), and the integration of and

partnering with animals as part of an intervention strategy with clients (Matsuoka and Sorenson,

2014; Risley-Curtiss, 2010; Ryan, 2011; Risley-Curtiss, Rogge, & Kawam, 2013; Tedeschi,

Fitchett, Molidor, 2005). A special interest group of the National Association of Social Workers

New York Chapter (NASW-NY) called the Social Workers Advancing the Human Animal Bond

(SWAHAB) (n.d.). focuses on many of these areas in their mission.

    Matsuoka & Sorenson (2013) and Ryan (2011), emphasize the interconnection between

the welfare of humans and the welfare of animals, and how the social work profession has

overlooked this link as it pertains to animal welfare and animal rights. Yet, this is not part of the

social work profession's historical perspective. As stated previously, social reformers in the

nineteenth century valued animal welfare and founding members of the Society for the

Prevention for Cruelty to Animals held the view that "extraordinary moral sensibilities were

informed by a conviction as to the interrelatedness of suffering and cruelty across species

boundaries" (Ryan, 2014, p. 82).

    Matsuoka & Sorenson (2013) argue for an inclusion of animals in the definition of social

welfare as the human-animal relationship is "intertwined with issues of social welfare such as

exploitation, oppression, inequality, and poverty" (p. 23) and animals, like humans, have

inherent value and rights, and therefore should not be "exploited, subjected to violence, or

killed" (p. 23). Wolf (2000) and Ryan (2011) make the argument for an expanded Code of

Ethics, which includes the social work profession's responsibility to the welfare of animals

themselves as a counter-argument to the social work profession's traditional anthropocentric and

speciesist precedent. In other words, Wolf (2000) and Ryan (2011), along with Matsuoka and

Sorenson (2014) contend that social work should extend its commitment to social justice to include nonhuman species because as sentient beings they have inherent value and worth. MacNamara and Moga (2014) maintain this argument with the petition that social workers advocate for and create policies that benefit animal welfare, protection, and care. In so doing, the social work profession and social work education continues its understanding of the interconnectedness and interdependence between persons and their social *and* natural environment. That said, the need for more dialogue, more research, more inclusion of animal welfare in social work education is necessary for helping students maintain a broader, more holistic person-in-environment lens. Humane education can help social work embark on this journey.

Conclusion

Not only do social work, social work education and humane education complement each other, humane education can assist social work educators in how to teach social workers in training to promote social change. This is a timely recommendation as the Council on Social Work Education's (2015) Education Policy and Accreditation Standards provides an opportunity for social work programs to incorporate a more ecocentric curriculum.

As previously noted, Competency 3: "Student advances human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice" (CSWE, 2015, p. 7) already indicates a clear connection between social work education and humane education. Incorporating humane education principles within the remaining eight competencies could also be done. For instance, when teaching about the person-in-environment framework for generalist practice, faculty could incorporate humane education principles to intentionally expand the definition of "environment" beyond the traditional definition to include the natural environment. With the inclusion of

humane education principles, assessment measures would also need to be designed and tested to determine their effectiveness in the social work curriculum.

Future research is necessary for bridging the gap in literature regarding social work education and humane education to substantiate the argument that these two disciplines mirror each other in many ways, and to answer questions about how they are different. Due to the minimal literature and formal connections between social work, social work education, and humane education, there are numerous possibilities for continuing research. For example, a qualitative study using in-depth interviews with social work faculty from social work programs who have an emphasis on the human-animal connection coupled with interviews with faculty from the Institute for Humane Education could provide some answers to the similarities and differences between the two disciplines. Another research study example might entail a qualitative study using in-depth interviews with students regarding their perception of humane education concepts and principles. This in turn may inform how social work educators can develop courses that better incorporate the additional component of Competency 3- advance environmental justice- more deliberately and clearly into the explicit curriculum. An examination of the Institute for Humane Education's educational programs, curriculum, syllabi, and pedagogical frameworks would also be a helpful and productive future research study for comparing the two disciplines.

With social work and social work education broadening its ecological perspective and person-in-environment lens to include the natural environment, there is work to do in terms of making this more expanded view a part of the social work profession. Workshop presentations, paper presentations, poster sessions, and/or round table discussions at social work conferences would be a good place to dialogue and consider the case for humane education and social work

education. Furthermore, exploring opportunities for inter-disciplinary collaboration between social work educators and humane educators has the potential to complement or integrate with social work education.

Social work and social work education has evolved and adapted throughout history based on the needs and assets of a particular time and context in history. The human race, the natural environment, and the nonhuman animals of this world need social workers and social work educators to lead and continue collaborating with other disciplines to develop and expand its ecological perspective. No longer may the environment, or human-animal relationships merely be areas of specialization and interest for small groups of practitioners and educators. With its role to teach and train beginner and advanced social workers, social work education can take the lead within the profession for cultivating future generations of social workers joining with and learning from humane education to address the intersecting issues experienced by humans, animals, and the environment.

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Social Work, Social Work Education, and Comprehensive Humane Education:

A Potential Collaborative Partner?

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Abstract

There is a growing understanding of the interconnectedness between the human world and living

world within social work and social work education. For instance, the Council on Social Work

Education's (CSWE) 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) emphasizes

the importance of social work education programs working to develop competence and

demonstrate behaviors whereby students "advance human rights and social, economic, and

environmental justice" (p. 7) under competency three. This research study explored the

similarities and differences between social work, social work education, and comprehensive

humane education. Utilizing a qualitative research method, this exploratory study consisted of

six semi-structured interviews. Three were conducted with social work faculty from the

University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work's Institute for Human-Animal Connection

and three with faculty from the Institute for Humane Education. Research findings indicate both

similarities and differences as well as the opportunity for interprofessional collaboration.

Implications for teaching and future research are discussed.

Keywords: humane education, social work education, ecological perspective, environmental

justice, human-animal relationship, living world

Social Work, Social Work Education, and Comprehensive Humane Education:

A Potential Collaborative Partner?

The ecological perspective and person-in-environment lens are two important

frameworks in social work for informing practice. Both conceive a reciprocal relationship

between the person and the social environment (Gitterman & Germain, 2008). In social work

education, there is an opportunity to help students foster broader ecological understandings and

application of these two frameworks in which the health of the natural world, animal welfare,

and animal rights, *and* human well-being are connected. Historically, the natural world has not

been a part of the ecological perspective and person-in-environment frameworks (Hawkins,

2010). However, there has been an increase in the social work literature considering the

profession's responsibility to the natural and nonhuman worlds. This ever-increasing discourse

emphasizes a paradigm shift toward a broader and more inclusive ecological consciousness

within social work practice, education, and scholarship (Gray, Coates, & Hetherington, 2013).

Various approaches to an expanded ecological consciousness have been recommended in the

literature (Gray & Coates, 2015; Jones, 2013; Miller, Hayward, and Shaw, 2012; Schmitz,

Matyók, James, and Sloan, 2013). This expanded ecological consciousness in social work and

social work education will foster stronger social workers who are even more equipped to fulfill

the profession's mandate of social justice. Thus, it is proposed that humane education may serve

as a valuable collaborator and partner for such an ecological paradigm shift in social work and

social work education.

Humane education is a product of the humane movement. Historically, it has been

defined as a kindness-to-animals ethic connecting positive treatment of animals to positive

treatment of other humans (Arbor, Signal & Taylor, 2009; Unti & DeRosa, 2003). Throughout

this article, the present-day definition of humane education utilized will be the Institute for

Humane Education's (IHE) definition. The Institute for Humane Education defines humane

education as a problem-solving, solution-focused form of education at the K-12 and college

levels. It focuses on the interconnectedness between human rights, environmental preservation,

and animal protection, and "has as its goal the creation of a humane world through humane

citizenship" (Weil, 2004, p. 59; Weil, 2016). Through "solutionary-focused learning" (Weil,

2016, p. 5), this form of comprehensive humane education at IHE serves as a catalyst for social

change empowering students to be solutionaries (Weil, 2004; Weil, 2016). In so doing, students

may then implement and act upon humane values for the good and benefit of all living beings.

Transformation of healthy and thriving relationships between the earth, humans, and all living

beings are rooted in compassion, kindness, and mutual respect (Weil, 2004).

For the social work profession, it too has an ethical responsibility to seek the welfare of

all the living world. However, it currently operates predominantly out of two human-centric

paradigms: anthropocentrism- the belief that humans are the most important species; nature

exists for human uses, and speciesism- discrimination based on species versus ecocentrism-

responsibility to and for natural/nonhuman world; human worth is not more than nature (Faver,

2013; Gray & Coates, 2012; Jones, 2010; Ryan, 2011; Wolf, 2000) and an ecosocial approach to

social work practice (Norton, 2012).

Nevertheless, social work has slowly been moving away from the human-centric

paradigms of anthropocentrism and speciesism toward ecocentrism and ecosocial work practice.

In ecosocial work, a greater emphasis is placed on the expansion of "human-nature connections"

(Norton, 2012, p. 306). Given the growing understanding of the interconnectedness and the

interdependency between the human world and nonhuman world within social work and social

work education, the opportunity to learn from humane education is, thus, apropos.

This study explored the similarities and differences between social work, and in

particular, social work education and humane education as defined by IHE seeking to answer the

following questions: How are humane education and social work/social work education similar

and different? Based on these comparisons, how might humane education complement or

integrate with social work and social work education, particularly in light of the social work

profession's continued understanding of environmental ethics, environmental justice, and

human-animal relationships? Utilizing a qualitative research method, this exploratory study

consisted of six semi-structured interviews. Three were conducted with social work faculty from

the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work's Institute for Human-Animal

Connection and three were conducted with IHE faculty in order to begin a more deliberate

dialogue between the two disciplines with the overarching research questions.

Review of the Literature

There currently is minimal explicit literature on the connections between the social work

profession, social work education, and humane education. However, there are social work

educators who are familiar with and have referred to the historical definition and framework of

humane education in the literature with a minimal relation to social work education specifically

(Faver, 2009; Faver, 2013). Additionally, during this research study, University of Denver's

Graduate School of Social Work's Institute for Human-Animal Connection was in the process of

soon-to-be piloting a certificate program on humane education & interventions for early learners'

professional development. This certificate program is different from the various offerings

through the Institute for Humane Education (IHE) whose educational programming does not include pre-K.

There has been a significant increase in the literature with regard to social work and environmental justice (Besthorn, 2013; Faver, 2013; Gray & Coates, 2015; Jones, 2010; Jones, 2013; Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2013; Norton, 2012; Ryan, 2011; Wolf, 2000), as well as the human-animal bond and animal-assisted interventions in social work practice (Matsuoka and Sorenson, 2014; Risley-Curtiss, 2010; Ryan, 2011; Risley-Curtiss, Rogge, & Kawam, 2013; Tedeschi, Fitchett, Molidor, 2005). Indeed, social work has had connections to humane education principles and values in the past. Organizations and societies on anti-cruelty to animals were foundational for the creation of legislation to counter cruelty, abuse, and neglect to children (Ryan, 2014). Thus, there is an opportunity to rekindle and nurture that relationship once again in a more explicit interdisciplinary and collaborative manner.

Ecosocial Work

Present day humane education also includes an emphasis on environmental issues such as pollution, overpopulation growth, and depletion of natural resources, (Miller & Hayward, 2013) and the impact these numerous concerns have on all facets of the natural world (Weil, 2004). As such, within numerous scholarly literature, it is evident that social work is expanding its ecological conscious, orientation, and ecosocial approach (Besthorn, 2013; Faver, 2013; Gray & Coates, 2015; Jones, 2010; Jones, 2013; Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2013; Norton, 2012; Ryan, 2011; Wolf, 2000).

For instance, in ecosocial work, a greater emphasis is placed on the expansion of "human-nature connections" (Norton, 2012, p. 306). It is an anti-oppressive approach to social work practice inclusive of the interconnecting human-nature relationship in its intervention

levels for promoting environmental sustainability and ecological justice (Norton, 2012) for

humans, nature, and other species.

Whereas environmental justice focuses on how the natural world affects humans, such as

the injustices and inequalities experienced by humans as a result of environmental issues and

concerns, ecological justice focuses on the costs imposed on the natural environment as a result

of human intervention (Besthorn, 2013; Miller, Hayward, and Shaw, 2012). It recognizes that the

human world is not separate from nature (Miller, Hayward, and Shaw, 2012), and therefore has a

role and responsibility to care for nature and its nonhuman inhabitants (Besthorn, 2013).

With its emphasis on environmental preservation and the links between human rights and

animal protection (Weil 2004; Weil, 2016), humane education connects to the third competency

of the 2015 EPAS: advance human rights, social, economic, and environmental justice. Social

work education can help students make the connections between the health and wellness of the

natural environment, animal welfare, and human well-being. Doing so will foster a broader and

more inclusive ecological worldview in students, and can be accomplished through what Jones

(2013) calls a transformed ecologically oriented social work education.

Two studies in particular, demonstrate a beginning embarking into ecologically oriented

social work education. Student interest and concern in environmental issues and animal welfare

were measured utilizing the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) Scale (Faver, 2013; Miller &

Hayward, 2013). The broad findings were similar in both studies in arguments made for social

work educators to strengthen students' ecological worldview through more integration of

environmental and ecological justice issues into the social work curriculum (Faver, 2013; Miller

& Hayward, 2013). These two examples depict beginning steps toward ecocentrism into social

work education, yet they are not the norm. Thus, the work continues to develop social work

curriculum that better prepares social work students for addressing the complicated

environmental issues of the 21st century. This can be done by partnering with humane education

to expand and broaden this social work curriculum beyond the two examples noted above in

which the well-being of the natural environment and other species is included.

Social Work and the Human-Animal Relationships

The inclusion of animals in social work practice and social work education programs has

primarily been through the following lenses: the lens of assessing the role of companion animals

in a family system, the link between animal cruelty and various forms of violence against

humans (i.e. child abuse, domestic violence), and the integration of and partnering with animals

as part of an intervention strategy with clients (Matsuoka and Sorenson, 2014; Risley-Curtiss,

2010; Ryan, 2011; Risley-Curtiss, Rogge, & Kawam, 2013; Tedeschi, Fitchett, Molidor, 2005).

While some social workers do take into account the role of companion animals in the lives of

their clients, and/or include them in their practices (Risley-Curtiss, 2010), there is a greater need

for education, training, and research on the incorporation of animal-assisted interventions as well

as the scenarios in which social workers' include animals in their practice (Risley-Curtiss, 2010;

Ryan, 2011; Risley-Curtiss, Rogge, & Kawam, 2013; Tedeschi, Fitchett, Molidor, 2005).

Regarding social work education specifically, in an unpublished study in 2004, Risley-Curtiss

(2010) found that only 7 out of the 230 schools of social work survey respondents included

content on the human-companion animal bond (HCAB) in their curriculum focusing specifically

on animal-assisted therapy (AAT).

Other voices in the social work literature make the case for the human-animal

relationship as a central lens for practice due to the interconnectivity between the welfare of

humans and the welfare of animals. Matsuoka & Sorenson (2013) argue for an inclusion of

animals in the definition of social welfare as the welfare of humans and animals is reciprocal. Furthermore, Wolf (2000) and Ryan (2011) make the argument for an expanded Code of Ethics. They contend an expanded Code of Ethics includes the social work profession's responsibility to the welfare of animals challenging the social work profession's historically human-centric worlview. Ultimately, Wolf (2000), Ryan (2011), and Matsuoka and Sorenson (2014) all assert that social work should broaden its social justice framework to be more inclusive of nonhuman species as they are sentient beings with their own inherent value and worth just like the human species.

Foundations of Humane Education

Advocating for the welfare of all living things is foundational to humane education (Faver, 2013; Weil, 2004). Raising awareness in students of the welfare and needs of humans, the environment, and animals is central to the educational process of humane education. As stated previously, humane education is a product of the humane movement, which formerly commenced in the 1800s. Beginning with the first anti-cruelty, animal welfare society entitled the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), it was founded in England by Lewis Gompertz in 1824 (Ascione, 2005). Henry Berg started the American Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) in New York in 1866 (Ascione, 2005). George T. Angell, who is considered the "father" of humane education, founded the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA) in 1868 (Ascione, 2005; Faver, 2009; Unti & DeRosa, 2003).

Angell advocated for a national compulsory humane education movement in the formal education systems arguing this would reduce the spread of cruelty, and implement kindliness, thus decreasing the likelihood of adult crimes when youth grow up (Unti & DeRosa, 2003).

Similar to present day humane education as presented by the Institute for Humane Education,

Angell saw the incorporation of humane education into formal education as a strategy for

addressing social unrest, ensuring public order and universal benevolence (Unti & DeRosa,

2003). Within social work, these issues and concerns are implicit to the profession's purpose.

Humane education's history connects to this shared purpose. It demonstrates a similar focus and

potential partner for a broader, more inclusive social justice framework.

An Interprofessional Opportunity

In recent years, through organizations such as the Institute for Humane Education (IHE),

the more traditional/historical expression of humane education (kindness-to-animals ethic) that

has been centered primarily on animal welfare has expanded its focus and education to include

not only animal protection, but also explicitly human rights, and environmental preservation

(Weil, 2004; Weil, 2016). The overarching goal remains the same to create and promote a

humane world by way of humane education for the cultivations of a humane citizenship (Weil,

2004; Weil, 2016). The promotion of a humane world through social justice is a primary mission

of the social work profession, and in turn, the potential for interdisciplinary collaboration in

social work and social work education is favorable.

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Research Method

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Utilizing a qualitative research method, this exploratory study consisted of six semi-

structured interviews. The research sample entailed purposive sampling in which two institutions

were targeted. Three interviews were conducted with social work faculty from the University of

Denver Graduate School of Social Work's Institute for Human-Animal Connection (IH-A), and

three interviews were conducted with Institute for Humane Education (IHE) faculty. This was

done in order to begin a more deliberate examination of the two disciplines with the overarching

research questions. Once again, the overarching research questions were the following: How are humane education and social work/social work education similar and different? Based on these comparisons, how might humane education complement or integrate with social work and social work education, particularly in light of the social work profession's continued understanding of environmental ethics, environmental justice, and human-animal relationships?

Study Sample

Prospective participants from the Institute for Humane Education (IHE) were identified through an initial e-mail communication with the President of IHE who then forwarded the information regarding the study to the IHE faculty. IHE faculty who responded to the inquiry for participation were interviewed for the study. The initial goal was to have four faculty from each institution, however, three individuals responded from IHE, and therefore, in order to be consistent with the humane educator and social work educator ratio, three and three was the final participant numbers for the sample size.

The Institute for Human-Animal Connection (IH-A) at the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work was selected as the social work education focus for the study due to the program's emphasis on human-animal interactions, as well as explicit language on the program's website regarding humane education. The director of IH-A was initially contacted who provided recommendations for social work faculty who might be interested in participating. Those faculty members were contacted and agreed to participate totaling three participants to remain consistent with the number of interviewees from IHE.

Prior to the study's commencement, the research proposal went through the IRB process at the researcher's home institution under an expedited review. Participants signed an informed

consent letter prior to the interview indicating their participation to be voluntary, their names would be kept confidential, and their responses would be coded in a de-identified way.

The qualitative interviews with the humane education faculty at the Institute for Humane Education and the social work faculty of the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work's Institute for Human-Animal Connection were conducted through Skype and Google Hangout. The majority of the interviews were conducted through Skype and were audio recorded both through the online video communication system, as well as through a digital audio recorder as backup. The interviews lasted for approximately one hour each.

Data Collection

Open-ended questions were predominately utilized for the semi-structured interviews. Questions were organized around content focus areas, which included the following: the history of the institution and its programs, the journey of each faculty member that led them to the teach at the institution, pedagogical and theoretical frameworks that construct and influence the curriculum, understanding of humane education and social work education and their similarities and differences, as well as how the two might complement each other. The same questions were asked of both faculty groups; however, the historical/contextual related questions were adjusted to suit the faculty context at either the Institute for Human-Animal Connection at the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work or the Institute for Humane Education.

All participants from both IHE and IH-A had prior teaching experience either in higher education and/or organizational and program development education formats. All participants had experiences of interacting with and working with nonhuman animals in various informal and formal capacities throughout most of, if not their entire lives. All of the interviewees participated in the online interviews from their homes in which the sounds and/or sites of the outdoors were

heard and/or seen. References to dogs sleeping on a chair, needing to go out, or barking in the

background was made during some of the interviews. Notes were taken of key themes upon

completion of each interview.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted first by reading each interview utilizing selective coding and

developing categories based on the content focus areas of the questions asked of the

interviewees. From there, key themes were pulled throughout. This was done for each set of

three interviews from the two institutions. The analysis then continued with a side by side

comparison of the responses to the questions from both institutions synthesizing broader

overarching themes. Despite the small sample size, the themes that evolved out of the interviews

suggest future research opportunities particularly at such a time as this in which the conditions of

the ecological systems in the 21st century demand it, and the fact that social work education

programs are now required to address environmental justice issues in the curriculum under the

2015 Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Educational Policy and Accreditation

Standards (EPAS).

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Findings

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The findings are organized according to the ways the broader research questions were

dimensionalized. The questions were designed to begin more broadly and eventually lead into

more specific questions. In order to provide a clear understanding of the context each participant

was speaking from, questions about the historical development and program offerings of each

institution were asked. Before presenting the results that more specifically address the

overarching research questions, some preliminary, contextually-based findings will first be

disseminated.

Institutional Backgrounds

Both the Institute for Humane-Education (IHE) and the Institute for Human-Animal Connection (IH-A) began their development approximately 20 years ago. The University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work is a clinically focused MSW program. IH-A began as a result of student demand for a social work course focusing on animal-assisted therapy due to one faculty member having the knowledge-base and past experience who was able to teach the course. The single course led to outside funding permitting the development of a certificate program, and eventually a concentration in the MSW program. Amongst its various program offerings, IH-A recently launched an early childhood humane education certificate program. IH-A's focus areas are on the role of animals in therapeutic settings, animals in communities, and One Health, or what is often referred to as conservation social work. The faculty interviewed hold various roles within IH-A that include administration, program development, curriculum development, and/or teaching in various degrees based on their roles.

The Institute for Humane Education was developed for people to become comprehensive humane educators. Again, at IHE humane education refers to human rights, environmental preservation, and animal protection, whereas the traditional, common understanding of humane education has referred to kindness-to-animals ethic typically through educational programs by humane societies. The Institute for Humane Education was previously called the Center for Compassionate Living. It first began as an online certificate program, and eventually through an affiliation with Cambridge College in Cambridge, Massachusetts it eventually developed into a Master of Education program. In 2011, IHE concluded the partnership with Cambridge College and launched with Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana, and has various degree, certificate and workshop offerings. Similar to the IH-A faculty, the IHE faculty interviewed hold

various roles within IHE that include administrative, program development, curriculum development, and/or teaching in various degrees based on their roles.

For both IHE and IH-A, the institutional development was essentially a grassroots effort in which their development has followed a similar 20-year trajectory. Many of the faculty interviewed either were a part of the development process from the beginning, or became affiliated somewhere along the way, and are now part of each institution's current development.

Life Experiences and Educational Background

The life experiences and educational backgrounds of the faculty interviewed presented some common themes. Some of those themes were shared more between the faculty based on their home institution. However, across the board for all six faculty there were some influential life experiences that led them and motivated them to their current places of work and roles.

For all the faculty interviewed, previous exposure and experience with animals and/or the natural world was a common theme throughout. Examples included the following:

- being raised by parents who instilled an appreciation and respect for animals, people, and the environment;

- riding horses at a young age and/or being exposed to therapeutic horseback riding for people with disabilities or people with mental illness;

- personal experience with animals as friends in good times and in bad;

- international learning experiences such as the Peace Corps;

- working for humane societies and nature-based education programs at a wildlife rehabilitation center; and

- an overall care for the well-being of people, animals, and the environment.

All of these various experiences played an important role. A social work faculty at IH-A who had grown up with dogs and worked with horses in various capacities over the years indicated:

>"…I think really my interest is rooted in that personal experience to have then found a way, miraculously, to turn it into a profession, which is a story of a lot of our students when they get here. It's like 'wow, I never knew there was something that brought together my desire to help people, and my love and passion for animals' and this is no different for myself."

One of the humane education faculty at IHE shared a similar reflection in that she had not realized the possibility of combining her understanding of the interconnectivity of people, animals, and the environment modeled by her parents with a career.

>"So, you know, helping people, helping animals, thinking about the environment, and how it was all connected. Then, I had no thought of working with, uh, being a teacher or doing anything with animals and the environment and people."

The educational backgrounds of the faculty from both IHE and IH-A were reflective of the challenge of finding a degree program that connected to the overarching passion of working with people, animals, and the environment. Beginning with the faculty interviewed from IHE, a humane education degree was unavailable at the time of their undergraduate and graduate school journeys. All three have degrees from the humanities. For the social work faculty interviewed, none of them have an undergraduate degree in social work. Naturally, all three have their MSW degree, however, a social work concentration/certificate program emphasizing the human-animal bond, for instance, was only in existence for one of the faculty at the time of earning her MSW degree. Thus, perhaps this is reflective of social work education having minimal opportunities

for social work students who are interested in the human-animal bond, and/or the environment to make those connections in social work practice, and so these components are sought elsewhere.

Motivation to Teach

Participants were asked to share their motivation for teaching at IHE or IH-A. It should be noted once again that some of the faculty interviewed played key roles in the development of their respective programs, and so the motivation to teach is reflective of the desire to create the programs in the first place. For the social work faculty at IH-A, the love of work and job, the desire to connect people to knowledge and resources for working with people and animals, the love of teaching, and to bridge the connection between humans and animals for students on their own unique journey was expressed. A social work faculty stated:

> "It's definitely not your standard run of the mill brand of social work. So I love teaching
>
> because I love helping our students to find a way to turn their passion into a true
>
> profession, a true job for themselves."

For the humane education faculty at IHE, stated motivations for wanting to teach comprehensive humane education through IHE was due to the desire to want to teach other humane educators about humane education, because humane education is an educational approach creating change to transform self and systems, the quality of the students who are changemakers from different disciplines, and the accessibility of the program through the online learning approach. As one humane educator put it:

> "And then very quickly what really sold me, and what has sold me ever since, is the
>
> quality of students that this program attracts. These are our changemakers. They're
>
> activist educators. They're artists who want to put their art in service of the greater good.
>
> They're medical professionals, they're computer people. Everybody sees, you know, they

really just see that we cannot remain disconnected from the choices that we make. You

know, it's almost as if we have generic concepts of ourselves, that we're just objectively

moving through the world making decisions based only on what we like and what we can

afford. So to broaden that… the people who are already awake to the idea that, you know,

we can perpetuate, transform, and create healthy systems. We can do it, you know. And

education is the way to do it."

Theoretical & Pedagogical Frameworks

To gain a better understanding of the educational frameworks and practices of each

institution, faculty were asked to describe the theoretical and pedagogical frameworks utilized.

The social work faculty from IH-A spoke about the theoretical framework of the person-in-

environment expanded to include the natural environment, ecological theories, and social

systems theory expanded to include animals. The program has a strong focus on animal well-

being and humane education. In addition, biophilia theory is a major theoretical framework,

which focuses on the integration of knowledge across disciplines. A broad teaching philosophy

shared was that teaching and learning are rooted in a self-examination-objectivity spectrum; i.e.

teaching and learning integrates self-examination and self-inquiry combined with "evidence-

supported models of information and knowledge for moving students toward objectivity".

The IH-A faculty also indicated that teaching and learning also are about giving students

a place at the table for a collaborative partnership between faculty and students as students' prior

knowledge and experience influences their learning. Examples of pedagogical approaches

utilized in the program include the following: experiential learning both in and out of the

classroom, hands-on experience with dogs both in and out of the classroom, working across

disciplines to increase professional skill set, site visits in the community, guest speakers, videos, readings, discussions, webinars, advocacy focused events, and field work.

      For the IHE faculty, in general, the faculty indicated that humane education is adaptable and can be incorporated in many contexts, and therefore, it has flexible theoretical frameworks. Nonetheless, two of the faculty interviewed indicated Paulo Freire's critical consciousness as an important theoretical framework for student-centered learning that is problem-solving based. Developing free thinkers, practicing self-reflection and self-examination by both the student and the faculty was a teaching philosophy expressed. Pedagogical approaches for the primarily online learning environment included project-based assignments, film festivals, discussion posts, salons (synchronous sessions), writing, reflective and research essays, peer mentoring between students, as well as a one-week residency component in the summer.

Humane Education Defined

      Moving into the more specific semi-structured interview questions, participants were asked to define humane education in their own words. The social work faculty's definitions of humane education emphasized themes such as helping learners to understand and apply what it means to be humane, humane education focuses on the relationship with the living world for both human and nonhuman participants. It teaches empathy for all creatures, it is a process of self-reflection and self-examination by people in their relationship with the living world. It has an end goal of a peaceful and united global community. One theme expressed by two of the social work faculty was that of humane education being more valued during periods of safety versus when people feel stressed or threatened. For instance:

      "That idea that we could take a step back and examine the health and well-being of our

      relationship with the living world is a sign of well-being. You know, so I think of it in

many ways, I guess, as a psychological dimension, as much as a program concept." [and]

"I think really that's when we see it manifest is when people are safe they are capable of

being humane."

The humane educators defined humane education as a social justice program that

includes animals. It is solution-focused. Its goal is to teach people to live ethically, peacefully,

justly, and sustainably. Humane education is a heart and mind focused, contemplative discipline

rooted in an examined life of making compassionate choices. As one humane educator

commented on the definition of humane education:

> "I want humane education to be synonymous with education, so that when we're talking
>
> about education, education will be, um, solutionary focused. It will always be relevant to
>
> the real world and global ethical issues. It's not that you wouldn't learn math too, it's just
>
> that everything you learn would be in service to how do you live ethically, peacefully,
>
> and justly and sustainably on this planet."

Social Work Defined

Participants were also asked to define social work in their own words. Social work

faculty defined social work as a broad profession, working for social justice at different levels, it

is its own professional discipline with its own language, concepts, models, paradigms, body of

research and evidence, it is a strengths-based profession that shows compassion and care for

others.

Humane education faculty defined social work as having different venues of practice. It is

a respected and established profession with historical roots. Social work does the work to "keep

society functioning in an equitable way." One humane education faculty member described

social work as a professional buddy.

"I guess it's helping people to achieve... to get their needs and wants met by helping them do whatever work they need to do, or in some cases advocating for them or in some cases helping them advocate. So, it's like having a buddy to help you. That's what I would say. A professional buddy."

Similarities between Social Work Education and Humane Education

Moving into the overarching research questions, the faculty were asked to share their understanding of how they think social work education and humane education might be similar to each other. For the social work faculty at IH-A, they all expressed that both disciplines are social justice focused with a broad understanding of systems that exist with various forms of injustice. One faculty stated that the two are "completely, largely identical frameworks" that are "equally broad in many regards". In reflecting on how social work, social work education, and humane education are both rooted in social justice, one faculty member stated

"Ya, well, I would hope that social justice would be humane. Um, it's not always. Justice is a unique concept. Um, yet absolutely in my way of thinking they overlap… that the actions that are the most just are also humane."

In speaking about the similarities, the IHE faculty shared responses such as the two being "on the same train working for positive change", both work for social justice, both have a goal of improving the world and empowering "other people to bring equity, to bring justice", both are broad disciplines, and there is a "fundamental connection between social work and humane education." In speaking about the similarities, however, one IHE faculty member expressed a challenge in articulating a similarity:

"That's an interesting question because I don't think of social work as a field that's a field delivered to children. I feel like social work education is what you do, right? You're

educating future social workers. Um, and so this is where humane education becomes

really complicated, but humane education is what you give to young people, but we

educate future humane educators just like you educate future social workers, but humane

educators do something so different than social workers, that um, that I'm having a hard

time wrapping my brain around the Venn diagram, to be honest."

Although overall the IHE faculty noted similarities, the differences between the two disciplines

were more readily articulated.

Differences between Social Work Education and Humane Education

Whereas the two disciplines were seen to have connections and similarities by faculty

from both IHE and IH-A, differences were also identified and communicated. For one IH-A

faculty, while "the concepts of humane education and social work education should be

fundamentally connected," they are not. A primary difference expressed by the social work

faculty was that of social work being blind to and not paying attention to the living world, which

is a key component of a more comprehensive definition of humane education defined by IHE.

One faculty member stated in reflecting on the programming at IH-A in the context of the

broader social work education and social work field:

"Well, I think social work education, you know, it may be that... this probably isn't

exactly answering your question, but I think one of the remarkable things about our field

of human-animal interaction and One Health, in particular, is that social work has really

been blind to many elements, many dimensions of the work we're doing now in this area,

um, to the point that we... it's quite, um, it's quite curious really. I mean and maybe a little

more sinister than that. You know it's hard to imagine that a bright, smart group of

professionals in these areas wouldn't have considered aspects of the living world, um, to a

greater degree. I'll give you just an example. If we know more about the impact of a

liquor store going into a neighborhood, uh, and we don't know what happens when you

cut down all of its forests or poison its rivers, um, as social work practitioners what does

that mean about our real advocacy for the community? For me, you know, what it

suggests is that we have a bias or maybe even worse than a bias would be, you know, a

pretty distorted view of significance that only human contributions, kind of the built

environment, are the only things that matter, which would represent a fairly well-

recognized tendency towards very human-centric, a human-centric agenda. That very

blind spot, you know, is starting to show up as THE most significant risk for human

beings as well for everything else on the planet.

One faculty member stated how social work and social work education has a more

clinical focus that operates "across the spectrum of life" concentrating on "the historical

narrative of the individual" versus humane education focusing more on students in the classroom

at various ages, or sometimes with adults. Another perspective shared was that humane

education tends to focus more on animals, and social work and social work education focus more

on people. However, the opportunity for the two to come together is at a good time as social

work is recognizing more the importance of nonhuman animals and the human-animal bond.

All of the humane education faculty mentioned some form of interaction, past experience,

exposure to interacting with social workers whether that was through personal relationships with

friends or family who are social workers, or students at IHE who are social workers. One faculty

member described human education as not being as well known or as well-established or

respected of a discipline as social work and social work education.

The IHE faculty stated that humane education purposefully includes animals and the environment in its discipline, and is not as person and/or family focused as social work and social work education is in its emphasis. Another difference noted by IHE faculty was that in social work and social work education any inclusion of animals tends to be related to animal-assisted therapy, or the human-animal bond for helping people cope with issues such as trauma. Another difference expressed was the perspective that unlike social work and social work education, humane education focuses on systemic change.

"Um, social workers, I believe, are almost exclusively focused on improving the world for people. Um, there may be a side benefit if there's like animal abuse in the home, and a social worker steps in because that is a sign of, um, abuse of children that maybe the animal gets some protection by virtue of the social worker coming in, but um, but humane education doesn't have the same goal. It's more... creating systemic change for people, animals, and the environment, so creating a world, um, where people, animals, and the environment can thrive."

This above perspective was reflected in an expressed understanding of what social work is and what social workers do based on a professed limited understanding of what social work and social work education is, as well as based on people the faculty member knows who are social workers. In reflecting on the biggest difference noticed between humane education and social work and social work education, another faculty member commented that animals are the main difference.

"I mean we have a whole history of othering things. The other people, and the other animals. It's like there's always something between us and the other, so we don't have to actually connect what we're doing with that suffering that we see, and so in humane

education, we really shine the light on that, and I don't think that's so much the case... I

think the animal piece is probably the biggest difference between social work, which is

not to say we haven't had social workers in our program who are there specifically to get

the animal piece, but I would say that's the difference."

Lessons Learned

Faculty were asked to reflect on what might social work and social work education learn

from humane education. In reflecting on the interconnectivity humane education brings to the

table, one IH-A faculty spoke about hope.

"And I think humane education can really help in a way that gives social workers hope

because it connects it beyond just that individual person in front of you. It connects it

beyond your community mental health center that you might be working in. When you

talk about humane education you're talking about kind of the connection to the animals

around you, the people around, the environment around you. I feel like it can be really

grounding for social workers to have this perspective. I think that there are times when

social workers can feel hopeless cuz you're seeing so many horrible things happen. And if

you're seeing 40 hours a week, horrible things, I think humane education can bring some

hope to that dynamic that it can bring some understanding. It can help social workers

ground themselves in their own sense of empathy and understanding of how come the

world is connected and works, and it can help their client then feel more connected to the

world around them because often times clients are completely isolated and not connected

to the world around them, and perhaps that's one of the greatest problems that our society

faces is that we're so disconnected from the world around us…"

Another comment made about lessons learned was that of social work education and social work redefining the person-in-environment to include the living environment in order to produce effective social work practice interventions in which all ecological systems (not just human systems) are understood.

> "…one of our challenges as social workers, you know, is this area of values and ethics as we start to, um, examine things like sustainable practices for living, um, right, or the treatment of other non-human animals we realize there are real problems, and they're real social justice issues. They're often criminal in nature, that we're engaging in behaviors that are antithetical to the very things that we profess as part of our profession, so I think there are painful, kind of painful thresholds that we're gonna have to walk through as a profession if we want to be effective, and it's gonna require that we bring the living world into our profession in order to be effective now.

The IHE faculty stressed the importance of social work students, educators, and practitioners examine how the choices they make effect people, animals, and the environment. In reflecting on how humane education consciously and intentionally makes connections between systems as suggestion for social work, a faculty member stated

> "…I mean social work education these days, so forgive me if this sounds like I'm offering something you already do, but I would say that one of the things would be to truly embrace interconnectivity and intersectionality. That if we see things as separate the solutions... like you might have one solution that could affect several different areas and challenges, but if we continue to teach and view things as separate even... you know there's child development, there's teenagers, there's adult development... we tend to compartmentalize and chunk information, and once we break out of that and we begin to

see a whole spectrum of information that could be useful to us in bringing about change,

you know, by looking at connections. So how are animal issues, you know, how are

animal issues connected to environmental racism? This is our work. It's not that the

connections are always immediately visible, but they exist if you believe that everything

is connected, and that education should help us see connections. We're not just absorbing

all these different threads of information, and hoping that some of them find their way to

each other inside us through our practice, we're taking that information and shining light

on connections... finding them, creating them...”

Complement Each Other

In order to understand how social work, social work education, and humane education

might work together, the faculty from both institutions were asked to reflect on how they thought

the two might complement each other in the pursuit of justice for all- in both human and

nonhuman worlds. Social work faculty at IH-A spoke about how social work and social work

education need to incorporate and integrate more of humane education values and principles into

its body of knowledge and practice approaches.

“We don't need to reinvent the wheel. If we integrate these two concepts of animal-

assisted social work, humane education, my impression is that it teaches people how to

take action on issues and matters that are important to them- professional social workers

or professionals in general.” “…so I think it just makes for a better more well-rounded

practitioner to not just see the animal room in an animal-assisted scenario, but to tie it

into these grander scheme pictures of animal rights and welfare in general... to tie animal-

assisted therapies broader into this sense of nature-based therapeutics connection to the

living world. I think these are things that can help improve human health overall. It can

kind of improve the kind of professional, um, repertoire of our social workers."

Another response given emphasized the necessity of social work and social work education to

expand its understanding of the world and rethink its relationship with living systems as this is

the direction the field must go. Therefore, there is an intentionality and "self-scrutiny to move

past blind spots" social work must undergo, and incorporating humane education is a way to do

that.

"…so as we understand concepts like belief in animal mind, animal sentients, and these

other elements too that have kind of expanded our relationship or understanding of

relationship with animals, then once we go down that road we start to realize that animals

have their own agenda, their own rights really, and that those rights are not given to them

by us, but that exist as a feature of being included in a social justice framework. And so I

think what it will ultimately do is that it will call us out as to whether or not we really

believe in social justice, you know, structures, or don't. And I think it will reveal a real

struggle for kind of our own morality. On the other side of it, however, is that when we

do go down that road we start to apply these as rights, you know, real rights that animals

might have... our world expands in some of the most amazing ways that really allows us

to rethink our relationship with living systems and improve our lives in dramatic ways."

IHE faculty spoke about the importance of social work needing to give animals and the

environment a place at the table. A desire for an interprofessional, interdisciplinary partnering

was expressed in response to comments about how social work, social work education, and

humane education are on parallel paths with paths that cross often due to working in many of the

same existing systems. An idea proposed was to co-create and pilot a social work and humane

education course at the master's level and start with the students in the course as a sort of lab. In

reflecting on this idea, the faculty member stated:

> "A lot of times things begin that way. It helps clarify thinking. Like what would a social
>
> work student need to know, what would a humane educator need to know? Like to really
>
> do the hard work of bringing those things together in a single course could be like a little
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> microcosm for how to bring those things together in a wider way."

Discussion

The social work faculty interviewed from the University of Denver's Graduate School of

Social Work Institute for Human-Animal Connection and the faculty interviewed from the

Institute for Humane Education presented broad themes about the similarities and differences

between social work, social work education, and humane education. Responses regarding

similarities between the two disciplines emphasized working toward social justice and improving

the world, both being broad disciplines frameworks, both are empowering and systemic in focus.

Differences noted, however, focused primarily on the absence of the living world and

nonhuman animals in social work and social work education from both the IH-A faculty

(generally speaking, outside its own program) and the IHE faculty. The similarities and

differences, nonetheless, were seen as opportunities for partnership in which both social work,

social work education, and humane education may learn from one another, and work together

engaging with the interconnections and intersectionalities that perpetuate systems of injustice for

people, animals, and the environment.

Interpretation of Findings

There seemed to be a clearer understanding by the social work faculty of what humane

education is, and less of a clear understanding of what social work is from the humane education

faculty. Social work seemed to be seen by the humane education faculty as a profession that was more micro and mezzo focused based on interactions with family, friends, and colleagues in their own lives who are social workers.

The primary interpretation of the findings noted is that both the social work faculty and the humane education faculty identified animals and the natural environment as a missing and vital component to social work and social work education. As noted in the literature review, social work and social work education has gradually been expanding its understanding of the ecological perspective beyond the welfare of the human and built world. For instance, ecosocial work places a greater emphasis on the expansion of "human-nature connections" (Norton, 2012, p. 306). As such, given the growing understanding of the interconnectedness and the interdependency between the human world and nonhuman world within social work and social work education, the question of how might social work and social work education work together was one of the overarching research questions of this study.

It is evident that there is a need for social work to expand its understanding of the environment to include other species and the natural world by both faculty groups. The humane education faculty spoke about how their discipline is interdisciplinary in that many of their students come from various professional backgrounds. The social work faculty spoke about the importance of getting out of the social work silo and learning to work across disciplines. However, when asked how that might be done in partnership between the two disciplines explicit strategies were for the most part vague and unclear. This may be reflective of the siloed mindset referred to by the social work faculty that requires an intentionality of not only dialogue, but also collaborative partnership such as through joint research efforts, co-teaching, co-presenting, and program development, for instance.

Implications

Important implications from this study are pertinent to teaching and future research. An implication for teaching could be to follow up with the suggestion made by the humane education faculty member who proposed co-teaching a humane education and social work master's level course as an experiment. An idea such as this would not only be an important teaching lab for the two disciplines, but could also be used as a scholarship of teaching research-based case example for future research and teaching implications. The proposed suggestion could even go a step further to do a collaboration such as this across campuses on a larger scale as a pilot course.

A limitation of this study is that it is a small sample size, however, its purpose was to begin a conversation between two disciplines who as one of the humane education faculty put it, are on parallel paths. The purposive sample of the social work faculty from the Institute for Human-Animal Connection resulted in responses that were conducive to seeing connections between humane education and social work and social work education, which is both a strength and limitation of the study. Also, the very fact that IH-A already heavily incorporate knowledge and skills emphasizing the intersectionality between people, animals, and the environment in its curriculum does, in fact, make the program unique to the general social work education field.

Therefore, future research could entail interviewing other social work education programs with a human-animal interaction components to its curriculum to ask the same questions asked of the social work faculty at IH-A. Examples of such programs could include Arizona State University School of Social Work (n.d.), which offers a Graduate Certificate in Treating Animal Abuse in partnership with the school and the Animals and Society Institute. Another program could feature or utilize the University of Tennessee Knoxville College of

Social Work (n.d.) in partnership with the College of Veterinary Medicine, which offers a

MSSW Veterinary Social Work Certificate, a Postgraduate Veterinary Social Work Certificate

Program, an Animal Assisted Interactions Certificate, and an Animal Related Grief and

Bereavement Certificate. Or a final example could be Michigan State University School of

Social Work (n.d.) and the College of Veterinary Medicine's Veterinary Social Work Services

(VSWS). Another research opportunity could be to conduct surveys of social work programs that

have incorporated the 2015 EPAS, and asking questions about how they have interpreted and

incorporated the updated Competency 3: "Student advances human rights and social, economic,

and environmental justice" (CSWE, 2015, p. 7) into their curriculum.

Conclusion

The opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration between social work, social work

education, and humane education is evident. Humane education has the potential to complement

and enhance social work education particularly considering the social work profession's

continued understanding and expansion of environmental ethics & environmental justice (eco-

centrism) and human-animal relationships as noted in the literature review. Both social work and

humane education seek a world rooted in social justice. The ecological crises of the 21st century

demand the attention and voice of social work and social work education. Expansion of the

person-in-environment lens and ecological perspective to include the natural environment is

necessary. Joining with humane education with the first step of co-creating and co-teaching a

course is moving in the direction of collaborative partnership. This research study was also a first

step in working toward an interdisciplinary, collaborative partnership. These disciplines have

their own strengths they bring to the table. However, for the good of all (humans, non-human

animals, and the environment) working together can help bring about even great opportunities

change.

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The Case for Humane Education in Social Work:

A Christian Perspective

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Abstract

The role of humanity in relation to the natural world and other species has become distorted. While social work has predominately placed its attention on human needs, social work practice and education are now broadening their use of the ecological perspective and person-in-environment lens to include the natural environment and nonhuman animals. For Christian social workers and educators, additional arguments   based on Biblical mandates include the argument belief that the "earth groans" because of human "ecological amnesia, and recovery involves recognizing that humans are a servant species, interconnected with all of God's creation and responsible for a more inclusive relationship with the natural environment. As social work practitioners and educators move beyond anthropocentrism and speciesism toward ecosocial work, this article suggests that the discipline of humane education is a resource and a potential collaborator given its focus on the interconnectedness of human rights, environmental preservation, and animal protection.

Keywords: humane education, social work education, ecological perspective, environmental justice, human-animal relationship, Christianity, integration of faith and practice

The Case for Humane Education in Social Work: A Christian Perspective

Does the earth exist for humans and humans alone? The underlying view presented here is that the earth does not exist for humans alone. That humans have the responsibility to care for and serve creation is a biblical mandate for those who identify with the Christian tradition.

So, what does the world need from humans as a species? How can we be a blessing and not a curse to creation? Among social workers, there is a growing movement to expand the person-in-environment and ecological perspectives to be more inclusive of the natural environment and other species (Gray & Coates, 2015; Hawkins, 2010; Jones, 2013; Miller, Hayward, and Shaw, 2012; Schmitz, Matyók, James, and Sloan, 2013). This has not historically been the case, and in fact the natural environment and other species has been neglected within these two frameworks (Hawkins, 2010).

This article invites Christian social workers and social work educators to expand these perspectives by collaborating with the discipline of humane education based on shared values and orientations to justice. This invitation defining social justice more inclusively is based on several Christian arguments, which will be presented first. These include the belief that the "earth groans" because of "ecological amnesia," that humans are a caretaker species, and that caring for creation includes caring for all of God's creatures. Finally, a case will be made for humane education as a collaborator with social work based on changing paradigms (moving from anthropocentrism and speciesism toward ecosocial work), and the compatibility of purposes and values between the two disciplines as well as congruence with the Christian beliefs presented.

The Earth Groans because of Ecological Amnesia

The Biblical mandate to care for creation by humanity is one in which we have fallen short. As Paul states in the book of Romans, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" (Romans 8:22, New International Version). Depictions of the whole creation groaning in this present time of the 21st century are vast. There is a growing disconnect from the natural world and other forms of life resulting in a mounting ecological crisis due to issues, for instance, such as population growth, exploitation and depletion of natural resources, pollution, lack of access to food, and so on. (Miller & Hayward, 2013).

Bahnson & Wirzba (2012) call this disconnect "ecological amnesia" (p. 28) and argue that the church has a "reconciliation deficit disorder" (p. 21). The damage caused by ecological amnesia and a reconciliation deficit disorder relates to humanity's' relationship to and role in creation. Generally speaking, we Christians have come to believe that God cares primarily for humans because we are created in the image of God, and God's love for creation is hierarchical with us at the top. Yet an important reason our uniqueness was given to us was to partner with God in the tending and caring of all creation- human world, natural world, other living beings. We are members of the web of life interconnected and interdependent.

Pertaining to the smallness of humanity in creation, Berry (1996) refers to the Book of Job and the voice in the whirlwind whereby the primary message to Job is "the Creation is bounteous and mysterious, and humanity is only a part of it – not its equal, much less its master" (p. 98). As such, the ecological crisis of the 21st century is rooted in a view that the Earth's natural resources and non-human inhabitants exist for human purposes, and humanity is the center of creation.

Inclusive reconciliation of creation. There is a misinterpretation that God's work of reconciliation is not inclusive of all creation- human, natural/living world, and non-human (Bahnson & Wirzba, 2012). But as Linzey (2016) argues, Christians are "to value life because of the Lord of life. And once we have begun to do this, our anthropocentric horizons can be replaced by a theocentricity or 'God-centeredness' in which we live each day in the realization that we are not the centre of all that is valuable" (p. 17). Valuing "life because of the Lord of life" stems from our inherent connection to all of creation. It is how and for what we were constructed. It is conducive to our survival, flourishing, and thriving.

For Christians, by moving away from an anthropocentric paradigm, we are better able to engage in the work of restoration and renewal of creation as expressions of worship and glorification of God our Creator. Wilson (1984), a biologist and naturalist, coined the term biophilia as an articulation of his hypothesis for humans' internal need and drive for connectivity to the natural world and other forms of life. Again, for Christians this connectivity is rooted in our faith tradition and understanding of Scripture starting in Genesis.

Like Bahnson & Wirzba's (2012) "ecological amnesia" (p. 28), Louv (2012) refers to this disconnect as the "nature-deficit disorder" denoting the costs of human alienation from nature, and its impact on our physical, mental, and societal health. This term was coined by Louv (2005) in his book *Last Child in the Woods* not as a medical diagnosis, but rather as a phrase to describe the gap between children and nature, and the negative consequences. For Louv (2012), he charges humans to reunite with nature as it is essential to not only surviving as a species, but also thriving. And so, the inclusivity of all creation in God's redemptive work through Christ in which all things are made new is rooted in our very nature and role in creation.

For Christians, the understanding of "stewardship" has often reflected our tendency towards domination and exploitation for human gain (Faver, 2009a; Faver, 2009b; Wirzba, 2015). The lack of understanding that all life is interconnected and interdependent rests in what Bahnson & Wirzba (2012) describe as people's separation from the land both physically and existentially. The various reasons for this disconnect, for this ecological amnesia, from Louv's (2012) perspective has to do with the following matters: "the proliferation of electronic communications; poor urban planning and disappearing open space; increased street traffic; diminished importance of the natural world in public and private education; and parental fear magnified by news and entertainment media" (Children and Nature Network, n.d.). Recognizing this ecological amnesia is a necessary step toward orienting ourselves as a caretaker species.

Humans as a Caretaker Species

Our faith lens as Christian social work practitioners and educators shapes our identity and sense of call within our areas of practice. As Scales, Harris, Myers, and Singletary (2012) assert, "the paths toward life as a Christian and as a professional social worker are traveled simultaneously…" (p. 131). The Christian faith (however it is interpreted) is not separate from practice, but involves a reciprocal relationship between our faith and our social work practice in which each critiques the other, shaping our practice and our faith (Brandsen & Hugen, 2007).

Christians have a moral and an ethical responsibility to seek the welfare of all the living world. Therefore, so too do Christian social workers and educators. Hymns such as *For the Beauty of the Earth, This is My Father's World, All Creatures of Our God and King, All Things Bright and Beautiful, and How Great Thou Art* express this commitment and declare the beauty and magnificence of God's creation, but there is a disconnect when Scripture is utilized to argue for and justify the use of the Earth, and abusing or exploiting its nonhuman inhabitants. Some

theological perspectives interpret having "dominion" over the earth as dominating it, rather than exercising stewardship, care, and protection" (Faver, 2009a, p. 370). The conventional "dominion worldview" reflects the Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) that suggests the earth is limitless in its resources, nature is strong enough to adapt and recover from modern industrial practices, and humans will one day be able to control all of nature (Dunlap, 2008; Dunlap, Van Liere, Mertig, & Jones, 2000). In contrast, the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) purports an environmentally conscious worldview that reflects care, concern, and understanding of interconnectedness based on the interdependency between humans, nature, and other species (Dunlap, 2008; Dunlap, Van Liere, Mertig, & Jones, 2000).

Within the Christian tradition, there is a need for a remembering, a renewing, and a transforming of the mind whereby we recognize and live more fully into our role of "servant species" (Linzey, 2009, p. 3) to God's creation. Regardless of profession, for those who identify as Christians, a shift from an anthropocentric (humans are the most important species and nature exists for human use) (Wolf, 2000) to a theocentric (God-centered) lens (Linzey, 2016) and a greater emphasis on an ecocentric (i.e. nature-centered as opposed to human-centered) lens (Miller, Hayward, and Shaw, 2012) is required.

Ecosocial work. A paradigm in which we the broader social work profession may awaken from our ecological amnesia is through a more comprehensive ecological paradigm wherein both humans and nonhumans share the earth. This paradigm in social work perpetuates the shift from a human-centered ecosystem approach toward a more ecocentered, social justice framework for promoting change (Miller, Hayward, and Shaw, 2012). This is also known as ecosocial work in which a greater emphasis is placed on the expansion of "human-nature connections" (Norton, 2012, p. 306).

Within social work, there are two particular ecocentered frameworks for producing

change- ecological justice and environmental justice. Ecological justice presents a shift in roles

in which humanity is in service to the natural world (Besthorn, 2013; Miller, Hayward, and

Shaw, 2012). Environmental justice focuses on how the natural world affects humans while

ecological justice focuses on the negative consequences of human intervention on the natural

environment (Besthorn, 2013; Miller, Hayward, and Shaw, 2012). Essentially, just as Bahnson &

Wirzba (2012) have expressed the interdependency between humans, the natural world, and

other species, ecological justice is a framework in which the human world is not detached from

nature (Miller, Hayward, and Shaw, 2012). This movement is also in line with Wilson's (1984)

biophilia and Louv's (2005) argument that humans need to reconnect with nature in order to both

survive and thrive.

It is important that we social work practitioners and educators continue to expand our

understanding and practice of environmental justice. The recent 2015 Education Policy and

Accreditation Standards (EPAS) is a clear example of this shift in priority with the addition of

environmental justice for the third competency (Council on Social Work Education, 2015).

Environmental justice is a positive movement in the right direction, but Christian social workers

and educators understand that ecological justice is more in line with our roles as stewards,

servants, and caretakers who recognize the interconnected web of life. As Christian social

workers are called to remember who we are, and to remember that this is our Father's world. In

fact:

> To say that our world *is* "creation" rather than a "corpse," a "material mechanism," or a
>
> "natural resource" means that we need to see it and our involvement with it in a
>
> particular, God-honoring sort of way. It is not a material mechanism that runs according

to its own laws. It is instead the material manifestation of God's love operating within it

(Wirzba, 2015, p. 15).

Consequently, God's love is made manifest in our tending and caring for his creation. As

members of creation, we have a responsibility to care for our Father's world as a living

"creation" rather than a "corpse," or a "material mechanism" or a "natural resource" to be

exploited for our own human-centric purposes. And so, Christians in social work practice and

education have the opportunity operationalize our role and responsibility in creation that is more

reflective of this truth. Since this is our Father's world, may we treat it with the respect God

requires of us, expressing our gratitude for this gift, while loving and protecting it. Our faith

tradition beckons our leadership in this endeavor, opening us to a wider view of God's creation.

All Creatures of Our God and King

If creation is the manifestation of God's love, then so too are all the inhabitants of

creation, not just we the human species. A few well-known scriptures may foster a new

understanding when examined through a different lens. "So in everything, do to others what you

would have them do to you…" (Matthew 7:12, New International Version). "…Love your

neighbor as yourself. There is no greater commandment than these" (Mark 12:31, New

International Version). "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers

and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40, New International Version). We must

challenge ourselves to consider that perhaps these Scriptures also include all of God's creation,

not just the human species. In other words, what would be different in our lives if we strove to

treat all living beings as we wish to be treated as much as possible?

Linzey (2009) argues that since animals are God's creatures, they, therefore, have God-

given rights and have intrinsic value as individuals. Hyland (2000) also echoes this notion of

humans ordained to be loving caretakers of animals, and not cruel abusers as God created them in love just as humans were created in love. Not only that, but they are sentient creatures who belong to God and not to us, and God loves them. Therefore, we must take seriously the belief that God is the Creator of all things and the implications of that.

Yet, just as the ecological crisis of the 21st century is an explicit indication of poor stewardship of creation, there are many ways in which our relationship with nonhuman animals is harmful, oppressive, exploitative and damaging to both the human and nonhuman animals. Some examples are: Pet overpopulation and the predicament of homeless animals; the meat, dairy, and fur industries; animals in sports and entertainment (Ex. bull fighting, dog fighting, cock fighting, zoos, circuses, and aquariums); medical research and experimentation on animals (aka Vivisection); and wildlife preservation and protection (All-Creatures, n.d.).

It is fair to say that, in general, most social workers are against violence and cruelty-- towards humans and nonhumans. Social workers and educators tend to be compassionate people. It is why we go into social work in the first place. We all want to eliminate oppression, violence, and exploitation. Yet, even we participate in objectification, and deindividualization, for instance, when we make violent references to other living species through expressions such as "beating a dead horse" or "killing two birds with one stone."

But animals can make us better people. They open our hearts and raise our oxytocin levels (Daley Olmert, 2009). They contribute to our spiritual development helping us to widen our circle of compassion, raising our awareness of interconnectivity of all life, and even expand our understanding of diversity (Faver, 2009a). For social work practitioners and educators, the values and principles of our profession are, in fact, sufficient to include a social work responsibility toward nonhuman animals (Faver, 2009a).

An understanding of the capabilities and complexities of the cognitive, emotional, and

social abilities of nonhuman animals has played an important role in social work's recognition,

understanding, and valuing of nonhuman animals in social work practice (Matsuoka and

Sorenson, 2014). Incorporating animals in social work practice and education has primarily been

through the lens of assessing the role of companion animals in a family system, the link between

animal cruelty and various forms of violence against humans, and partnering with animals in

intervention strategy with clients (Matsuoka and Sorenson, 2014; Risley-Curtiss, 2010; Risley-

Curtiss, Rogge, & Kawam, 2013; Ryan, 2011; Tedeschi, Fitchett, Molidor, 2005).

Matsuoka & Sorenson (2013) and Ryan (2011) emphasize this interconnection between

the welfare of humans and the welfare of animals. They make the argument that we, the social

work profession, have overlooked this link pertaining to animal welfare and animal rights. This

is not surprising in light of the predominately anthropocentric worldview within our profession,

as well as the broader society. So too, does this perception persist in the Christian faith tradition

minimizing the value, worth and ethical sensitivity to animals as merely emotionalism or

sentimentality by those who would be their advocate. And yet as Linzey (2009) questions:

> Is it obvious that the Creator who creates and sustains millions of species only cares for
>
> one of them? Is it really credible that throughout the long period of the evolution of life
>
> on this planet that all species have no other *telos* [purpose] – save that of serving human
>
> kind? (p. 11).

For the social work profession, recognizing the connection between the welfare of

humans and animals was in fact a part of our profession's historical perspective. Social reformers

in the nineteenth century valued animal welfare. For instance, founding members of the Society

for the Prevention for Cruelty to Animals understood "the interrelatedness of suffering and

cruelty across species boundaries" (Ryan, 2014, p. 82). Today, there is no question about the correlation between animal cruelty and violence against humans (Matsuoka and Sorenson, 2014; Risley-Curtiss, 2010; Risley-Curtiss, Rogge, & Kawam, 2013; Ryan, 2011; Tedeschi, Fitchett, Molidor, 2005).

Matsuoka & Sorenson (2013) contend that animals should be included in the definition of social welfare as the human-animal relationship is interconnected, and animals, like humans, have inherent value and rights. In addition, both Wolf (2000) and Ryan (2011) argue that social work should expand its Code of Ethics whereby the social work profession has an ethical responsibility to the welfare of animals in an attempt to counter the social work profession's historically anthropocentric and species reference to nonhuman animals. Both of these arguments connect to Linzey's (2009) argument that as God's creatures, animals have God-given rights and intrinsic value whose welfare matters.

Moving beyond anthropocentrism and speciesism. In other words, social work should extend its commitment to social justice by including nonhuman species because they are also sentient beings with their own inherent value and worth. MacNamara and Moga (2014), as well as Faver (2009b), suggest that social workers create and advocate for policies that promote animal welfare, protection, and care. In so doing, the social work profession would continue the expansion of our commitment to the interconnectedness and interdependence of persons and other living beings in both social and natural environments.

For social workers and social work educators who are Christians, our faith lens challenges us to consider the insights of our colleagues above who have concluded the need for a more inclusive social justice framework and ecological perspective. To live our professional and personal lives in a manner that respectfully cares for God's creation and other creatures, is to

perpetuate the manifestation of God's love as the servant species in the web of life. For this

reason, the argument for humane education as a valuable collaborator and partner for such an

ecological paradigm shift in social work and more specifically social work education is being

made.

Humane Education and Social Work Collaboration

Humane education can be a resource and potential collaborator with social work

practitioners and educators. Social work education socializes social workers into the profession,

and therefore, having a more inclusive ecological perspective and person-in-environment lens

that includes the natural environment and other species would be an important first step in

expanding the generalist model of social work practice in social work curricula across the

country.

Just as the relationship between the person and the social environment are interrelated

and interconnected (Gitterman & Germain, 2008), so too is the relationship between the person

and the natural environment. Fortunately, several social work practitioners and educators already

recognize this interdependence between persons and the natural environment (Besthorn, 2013;

Faver, 2013; Gray & Coates, 2015; Hawkins, 2010; Jones, 2010; Jones, 2013; Matsuoka &

Sorenson, 2013; Ryan, 2011; Wolf, 2000). By drawing on the work in humane education, social

work education has the potential to make a curricular adaptation so that this expanded view of

the environment is readily accessible to all, and not just the purview of a few.

Since social work already has a history of interdisciplinary collaboration with disciplines

such as psychology, sociology, ecology, economics, and political science, partnering with

humane education would be a logical addition to our collaborative tradition. Humane Education

can expand social work's ecological perspective and person-in environment to include the

natural environment and care for nonhuman animals. Humane education's pursuit of human rights, environmental preservation, and animal protection (Weil, 2004; Weil, 2016) could be a new collaborative partner for widening social work's compassion and pursuit of justice for all making "all" more inclusive.

      The case for the partnership. Humane education's paradigm is congruent with the social work mission. Humane education is a form of education that already exists at K-12 and college levels. A primary leader in the humane education movement is the Institute for Humane Education (IHE) whose goal is to train and provide professional development for those wanting to teach on the interconnectedness between human rights, environmental preservation, and animal protection (Weil, 2016). Called comprehensive humane education at IHE, it "has as its goal the creation of a humane world through humane citizenship" (Weil, 2004, p. 59; Weil, 2016). Humane education serves as a catalyst for social change by implementing and acting upon humane values for the good and benefit of all living beings. (Weil, 2004). It is a paradigm representing the importance of caring for all parts of the web of life. Essentially, humane education strives to cultivate attitudes and behaviors that demonstrate kindness, compassion, respect, and responsibility toward all living beings and the earth we share together. This lens of interconnectedness is not only reflective of perspectives that some social workers already have identified in the literature as indicated above, it is also reflective of the Christian worldview of love, justice, compassion, kindness, mercy, and service.

      There appear to be primarily two explicit voices in the social work field making the case for humane education as a resource and potential partner. Faver (2009b) recommends social workers promote and utilize humane education in both social work practice and within social work curriculum. She argues that through humane education, all people regardless of discipline,

would benefit from an increased ecological consciousness, care, respect, and responsibility for the earth and its nonhuman inhabitants, but we social workers, in particular, should strive to create such opportunities in practice and education.

The University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work's Institute for Human-Animal Connection (IH-A) (n.d.) is another voice in social work that argues for the interrelationship between people, animals and the environment through its various graduate certificates. In 2016, IH-A (n.d.) launched a humane education & interventions for early learners' professional development certificate program. This was done with encouragement and approval by the Institute for Humane Education (IHE) whose educational programming does not include pre-K.

Humane education, social work education, and christianity. Humane education not only reflects the values of the social work profession, it also reflects the values and worldview of the Christian faith tradition mentioned previously. We have a Biblical mandate to widen our circle of compassion to include all of God's creation as Christians who are social work practitioners and educators. For this reason, the primary proposed target area for the incorporation of humane education resources, tools, and perspectives are in social work education where social workers are first socialized into the profession. Integrating humane education resources, activities, and exercises into the curriculum at both the BSW and MSW levels will broaden the ecological perspective and consciousness of future social workers. This in turn will further their competence as practitioners.

With the inclusion of environmental justice as part of the Council on Social Work Education's (2015) Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) third competency, all social work education programs will need to examine their curricula to adjust and meet this requirement. Connecting with the Institute for Humane Education (IHE) to host a workshop

and/or seminar could help social work educators understand humane education and learn about tools and resources that could integrate well with social work curriculum is one way in which social work educators could engage with humane education for developing assessment measures for competency three, and the broader social work curriculum. Another option might be for an MSW program to create a concentration that is focused on humane education.

The proposal to collaborate with humane education in social work is not merely to assist with meeting accreditation requirements. The intention is to also expand the social work profession's person-in-environment framework and ecological perspective. It is about raising the profession's ecological consciousness and shifting to an ecocentered framework for promoting change (Miller, Hayward, and Shaw, 2012). And, for social work programs in Christian higher educational contexts, there is an opportunity to take the lead in integrating humane education as an expression of our faith rooted in the belief that God is the creator of all.

On Earth as it is in Heaven

For many Christians, pursuing restoration, renewal, and reconciliation of God's Kingdom on Earth through social work and social work education is a strong motivator. And so, it behooves us to open our minds and hearts, widen our circle of compassion, and expand our lens from anthropocentrism and speciesism to a more ecocentered approach. Christian social workers and educators have a responsibility to integrate our faith and practice in a way that is theocentric (God-centered) in our understanding of stewardship and service to God's creation. Although social workers and educators may not be able to do everything in our pursuit of justice, we all are committed to the generalist foundational for professional practice.

The question now is whether or not social work will reframe its person-in-environment framework and ecological perspective to include the natural world and nonhuman animals. The

interconnectedness and reciprocity of these relationships are essential for being able to fully to

truly engage in effective and evidence-informed practice regardless of the particular field of

practice. No longer can the natural world be a specialization in social work education and

practice for those social work educators, researchers, and practitioners who are particularly

interested in environmental and ecological justice. No longer can nonhuman animal species be a

concern and specialization for those social work educators, researchers, and practitioners who

have a strong fondness and appreciation for the human-animal bond. We all must alter our

perceptions and engage with our human-centric biases. Humane education can serve as a

potential collaborator with the social work profession, and as a resource for making these

connections. May we be "transformed by the renewing of our minds," awakening from our

ecological amnesia, remembering who we are, and our role in God's creation (Romans: 12:2,

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