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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the need for an empirical examination of the interaction between Crisis Intervention strategies and religions. While there seem to be obvious obstacles to crisis intervention within the major tenets of most of the world's religions, there has been little to no accessible research on the subject. This paper will focus only on Buddhism, a religion that gets much attention in regard to mental health. In the practice of crisis and trauma intervention, a person who holds to traditional Buddhist views should theoretically suffer more severely with PTSD symptoms because of Buddhism's emphasis on Karma. The belief in Karma seems to be parallel to Just World Theory, which is a major cause of victim blaming and victim guilt. An inability to resolve these issues is especially problematic for people suffering from PTSD. However, no empirical research has been done to study this issue. Empirical research should be done in order to prove the connections between belief in Karma and secondary wounding in people experiencing crisis and trauma. Then, steps can be taken to diminish the connection between belief in karma and increased chances of secondary wounding.

RELIGION AND CRISIS AND TRAUMA INTERVENTION

From a popular level, many see spirituality as helpful in seasons of crisis. In the long-term, and for smaller crises, this is probably true. Religion provides answers and a sense of security for its adherents. However, there are some religious ideas that can be problematic in overcoming trauma. These problems must be dealt with in order for a person to find a sense of normalcy and healing amidst crisis and trauma.

A 2012 study by Edmonson, Park, and Wortmann discusses possible links between spirituality and PTSD (Wortmann, Park, and Edmonson, 2011). In their study, they compared deeply held spiritual beliefs with other cognitions that affect how a person handles PTSD. When trauma occurs and the world no longer feels like a safe place, people begin to make cognitive reappraisals about their worldview and way of thinking.¹ According to the hypothesis of Edmonson, Park, and Wortmann, spiritual reappraisals should affect a person with PTSD as deeply, if not more deeply, as cognitive reappraisals. The researchers made a distinction between spiritual discontent and spiritual reappraisals. Spiritual discontent would be something along the lines of, "anger with God, questioning God's love, or wondering whether one has been abandoned by God." This is seen as maladaptive in that it can lead to depression, PTSD symptoms, and even suicide. Although shifting the blame to God may seem helpful to the person in this struggle because it fills the void of perceived lack of control, the person must also see God as good, or else blaming God will deteriorate into a continuous perceived threat from him. Rather than this person being fearful of other people and feeling the world is no longer a safe place because people can hurt him, or natural disasters are looming, the person feels threatened because God is no longer safe. This is consistent with the idea that a person suffering

¹ A cognitive reappraisal would be a change in worldview, or other general expectation about how the world should function, based on real experience.

from PTSD often feels threatened or hypervigilant to stimuli. A spiritual reappraisal would be similar to a cognitive reappraisal, but having to do with a spiritual thought or idea rather than a general idea about the world. When a previously held spiritual view is inconsistent with experience, it leads to cognitive dissonance, and an attempt to fit the circumstance into religious philosophy.

This study tests whether or not "spiritual struggles" such as spiritual discontent and spiritual reappraisals are "mediating factors in maintaining PTSD symptoms" (Wortmann, Park, and Edmonson, 2011). According to the results, (using factors such as spiritual discontent, reappraisals to a punishing God, and reappraisals of God's power), a spiritual struggle is, "a partial mediator of PTSD symptoms."

The point of this kind of research is to examine whether a person's spiritual beliefs can play a role in the onset and maintenance of PTSD symptoms after a trauma or not. This is not to say that everyone who experiences spiritual struggle in the context of trauma will have a harder time with PTSD than someone who has no religious affiliation. Certainly, a lot of people who are not religious have a sense of justice that is reappraised after some sort of seemingly unjust trauma. As the study mentioned, a cognitive reappraisal is a common factor in dealing with trauma. It would be reasonable to assume that the experience of spiritual reappraisal and discontent would be compounding factors of that cognitive reappraisal associated with PTSD. Because the religious adherent holds to a concrete view that is a major part of their belief system, if the trauma seems to negate some part of that belief, then reconciling the two factors, belief and real experience, will be important in overcoming PTSD.

The research was done from a more Western, Judeo-Christian worldview. The types of struggle the researchers were looking for were only things that would be relevant to someone of a religion that holds that:

1. There is a god with whom someone can have some sort of relationship.
2. This god has authority over good and evil and intervenes in the world.
3. There is a sense of good and evil that order the world under normal circumstances.

However, not every religion fits into those presuppositions about religious struggle. In fact, most do not attribute the universe and its systems to a single god, some do not make major distinctions between good and evil, and some do not attribute constant virtues such as goodness, omniscience, relatability, and sovereignty to their deities. There is a clear need for research within individual religions to identify doctrines that mediate spiritual struggle.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the need for an empirical examination of the interaction between Crisis Intervention strategies and religions. While there seem to be obvious obstacles to crisis intervention within the major tenets of most of the world's religions, there has been little to no accessible research on the subject. This paper will focus only on Buddhism, a religion that gets much attention in regard to mental health. Since those obstacles exist in theoretical and philosophical terms, it is reasonable to believe that they exist in practical terms. In the practice of crisis and trauma intervention, a person who holds to traditional Buddhist views should theoretically suffer more severely with PTSD symptoms because of Buddhism's emphasis on Karma. The belief in Karma seems to be parallel to Just World Theory, which is a major cause of victim blaming and victim guilt. An inability to resolve these issues is especially problematic for people suffering from PTSD. More research must be done that is specific to each religion, as it is practiced, in order to decide whether or not doctrines of that religion are actually

in conflict with the principles of crisis intervention that are actually helpful to people. The purpose of such study is not to demonize any religion, but to find ways to help those who hold to it in times of crisis and trauma.

Buddhism is the religion of choice for this paper because it gets a lot of attention in the realm of mental health. In such contexts, it is often cited as more of a philosophy than a religion. Because it is an Eastern religion that has been deeply affected by Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, many teachers, and many places, Buddhism is and has historically been an open religion, that adapts and is affected by its surrounding context. For this reason, this paper will outline only the basic tenets of Buddhism and provide a literature review of probable effects of having those beliefs on trauma intervention. This paper will use both the orthodox beliefs of Buddhism and the personal testimonies of Buddhists affected by victim blaming as a result of their belief in karma. By doing so, a need for further empirical research will be established. There is no need to discuss the details of every Buddhist sect in this paper. The views presented here are generally true for Buddhism as a whole. There are many different groups of Buddhists including Theravada, Mahayana, Tibetan, Pure Land, Zen, and others. This paper is intended to represent the majority of Buddhism.

INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM

Buddhism began with Siddhartha Gautama, a prince born in India, who was sheltered from the evils and harshness of the world in his family palace until he married and had a son. At that time, he was somehow exposed to death, dying, and suffering for the first time. Siddhartha was disgusted by what he saw. He left his family to roam the countryside, seeking truth that could free the world from suffering. He practiced a life of extreme asceticism, meditation, and study. In his deep meditation, he became enlightened and was set free from suffering. After this,

many followed and became his disciples. He died and was no longer obligated to suffer (Williams, 2005, p. 189).

The Buddha's teachings are found in various texts. This teaching is called Dharma and is the only thing the Buddha left as a successor (Williams, 2005, p. 191). As a result, the Dharma is the ultimate authority in Buddhism but is also open to subjective interpretations (p. 194). The Dharma itself was never written by the Buddha but was passed on through oral transmission by his disciples. They formed a consensus of his teachings and used group recitation to keep them intact. Eventually, these texts were also written down. There are three major texts which form the "Three Baskets," called *sutras*, the sermons of the Buddha, *Vinaya*, prescriptions for the monasteries, and *Abhidharma*, a description of reality as seen by an enlightened person (p. 195).

These texts outline the major beliefs of Buddhism. The purpose of Buddhism is to escape suffering and to find peace. This is a negative view of life and of the world. Certainly, a Buddhist can find enjoyment in life, but ultimately, the goal is to stop living. There is no God necessary in Buddhism. Instead, the philosophy relies on natural and supernatural systems. Buddhists are not concerned with the need for a God to have set those systems in place. Buddhists are not necessarily atheists, but the role and character of God are not concerns. At least, concerns about a God or gods should not overshadow the immediate concern of getting better position in and eventually out of the cycle of rebirth. In Buddhism, the world as we know it is considered to be illusion because all the things in it are impermanent. This includes people, who are *anatta*, which means, "not self" (Williams, 2005, p. 189). People are composed of a flow of consciousness, feelings, intentions, and changing bodies. Although people are impermanent, they are kept in this world by the system of Karma, which causes rebirth. The goal of Buddhism is to escape the system of rebirth and to experience Nirvana, which is non-existence. Nirvana means, "flame

unbound," like a flame burning without a candle, wick, or any other source. The point is to be released from embodied life, not as in Hinduism where people become one with the universe, but to be released into nothing (Allan).

A basic summary of the doctrines of Buddhism can be found in the Four Noble Truths. The first truth is that life is *dukkha*, or suffering (Allan). There is both subjective and objective suffering (Krishan, 1989, p. 164). Subjective pain is pain that is external, pain caused by other people, emotional pain, and the like. Objective pain would be the pain caused by having a physical body and the things associated with it: physical pain, sickness, and death. According to Buddhism, life is characterized by these pains.

The second truth is that the cause of suffering is clinging or grasping (Allan). The object of this clinging can be anything because all that is in this world is illusion. Ultimately, the object of clinging is probably life itself, because that is the cause of rebirth into this world full of suffering. A Buddhist would say that it is futile to cling because nothing in this world is permanent. People are soul-less, and life is suffering. Clinging even applies to grief:

In the same family, when one of the parents, children, brothers, sisters, husband or wife dies, those surviving mourn over the loss, and their attachment to the deceased persists. Deep sorrow fills their hearts and grief-stricken, they mournfully think of the departed. Days pass and years go by, but their distress goes on. Even if someone teaches them the Way, their minds are not awakened. Brooding over fond memories of the dead, they cannot rid themselves of attachment. Being ignorant, inert, and illusion-bound, they are unable to think deeply, to keep their self-composure, to practice the Way with diligence, and to dissociate themselves from worldly matters. As they wander here and there, they

come to their end and die before entering on the Way. Then what can be done for them? (Inagaki, 1994, pp. 286-287).

All subjective pain and evil are caused by clinging (Krishan, 1989, p. 164). The concept of clinging in Buddhism also applies to ideas, hopes, and feelings (Sherman). A Buddhist would likely say that it is important to let go of these things, because when ideas and hopes fail to meet expectations, people are left hurt because they desired something that was illusory. In summary, it is better to have no expectations or goals than to have any, because if those goals fail it will cause pain. Again, the cessation of pain and suffering is the ultimate goal in Buddhism.

The third truth has to do with Nirvana, which causes the cessation of both objective and subjective pain (Allan). The way to overcome subjective suffering is to stop clinging, even to human beings, because even those human beings will die or leave causing further suffering to those who love them. The only way to overcome objective pain is to be bodiless and lifeless. This is different than the Hindu model of Moksha, in which a soul is able to escape rebirth and become one with the divine universe (King, 2005, p. 152). In Buddhism, there is no self or soul, so an escape from rebirth is a cessation of existence.

The fourth truth explains how to get to Nirvana and out of suffering (Allan). There is a path outlined by Buddhism, called the Eight-fold path. It is one vehicle to enlightenment which is a step toward Nirvana. Buddhism is highly pluralistic, meaning that there are multiple vehicles and routes to enlightenment, and is only concerned with everyone finding what works for them. Since the path to enlightenment involves right behavior, Buddhism accepts the paths that encourage an ethical ideal because it is possible that such a path will lead to enlightenment. Once enlightenment has been reached there is no need to cling to that vehicle any longer because the

clinging may keep a person from Nirvana anyway. That being said, the eight-fold path is presented as a consistent option for enlightenment seekers.

The eight-fold path is really a perspective- and action-transforming exercise (Allan). First, a person must have the right view. This refers to seeing the world and this life as illusion. Second, is right emotion or attitude. A person must understand their emotions, especially negative emotions, and let them go. Third is right speech. This entails speaking with clarity, truth, and *ahimsa*, which means without harm. Fourth is right action; *ahimsa* is also very applicable here. Right action refers to being ethical, protecting others, and avoiding malice. The fifth is very similar to the fourth, but perhaps a more abstract version. Where the fourth applied to everyday actions, the fifth is a more general, abstract call for an ethical society. The sixth is right effort, meaning one must perform to the best of his ability. The seventh is right mindfulness, referring to being fully aware in any given situation. A Buddhist is to be fully present and focused. Beyond this is the eighth step which is the practice of meditation for enlightenment. In this step, the person is wholly focused on a single object, emptying his mind to open himself up to enlightenment. Enlightenment is the necessary gift a Buddhist must receive to be taken out of the cycle of rebirth. Enlightenment is the knowledge and understanding one must have to escape the cycle of rebirth and be outside the reach of Karma.

KARMA

A more thorough discussion of Karma is necessary for the purpose of this paper. Karma is one of the key doctrines of Buddhism and adds a thorough theodicy to the religion. Max Weber considered it to be the most thorough of all religious theodicies in modern religion (Kisala, 1994, p. 72). It is common to most philosophies that fall under the Eastern Worldview. People can have no idea what the four noble truths are, and still believe in Karma. That being

said, there are different views of Karma that have nothing to do with Buddhism, and even evolving views of Karma within Buddhism. The view presented here represents the basic definition of Karma. Other Buddhist views of Karma begin with this view, adding their own nuances.

Karma is the impersonal, universal law of retribution. Karma is a permanent and unalterable force that keeps the self in the cycle of rebirth (Inagaki, 1994 p. 32). The law of Karma is the cause of all things having to do with the existence of life. It rewards good behavior and punishes bad behavior (33). Karma is responsible for a person's place in life (Krishan, 1989, p. 163). Karma means any action as well as the consequence of that action (Radice, 1959, p. 83). So, a person who has immeasurable suffering was given their due because of Karma. The person who inflicts suffering on others will also suffer. Although the victim of his hatred was receiving the effects of Karma, if not for this life, then for a previous birth. People are absolutely unequal in that their current state is the direct result of Karma, the impersonal force of retribution in the universe (Krishan, 1989, p. 163). People are where they are because the universe, without flaw, deemed it appropriate. A person can hope for a better state in the next life by doing good deeds and by letting go. Karma keeps people in the cycle of rebirth because of their own desires and because they cling to life. The goal of Nirvana is to cease existing completely and to be exempt from the process of re-birth. In order to reach that goal, a person must take care of their Karma by outweighing their bad deeds with good. It may take hundreds of lifetimes to work off the Karma built up by bad deeds and clinging.

According to Karma, what happens to a person is the direct result of something that he or she has done earlier, either in this life or a previous one. Bad deeds must be punished by Karma,

which is inescapable (Radice, 1959, p. 83). However, bad deeds are punished in just proportion with the deed itself. This is highlighted by the Buddha in the Anguttara Nikaya:

‘It is as if, O priests, a man were to put a lump of salt into a small cup of water. What think ye, O priests? Would now the small amount of water in this cup be made salt and undrinkable by the lump of salt?’

"Yes, Reverend Sir."

"And why?"

"Because, Reverend Sir, there was but a small amount of water in the cup, and so it was made salt and undrinkable by the lump of salt."

"It is as if, O priests, a man were to throw a lump of salt into the river Ganges. What think ye, O priests? Would now the river Ganges be made salt and undrinkable by the lump of salt?"

"Nay, verily, Reverend Sir."

"And why not?"

"Because, Reverend Sir, the mass of water in the river Ganges is great, and so is not made salt and undrinkable by the lump of salt."

"In exactly the same way, O priests, we may have the case of an individual who does some slight deed of wickedness which brings him to hell; or, again, O priests, we may have the case of another individual who does the same slight deed of wickedness, and expiates it in the present life, though it may be in a way which appears to him not slight but grievous.' (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/bits/bits040.htm>).

So, according to the Buddha, Karma is always right and does not punish more severely than it should. In fact, Karma can be offset by doing enough good deeds. Working backward, one can see a great tragedy, and see it as wholly just retribution for some grievous past sin. This is true even when the person has no idea what that bad deed was.

There is an element of Karma that begins to sound like determinism. If a person is born in a certain state and endowed with certain punishments because of previous sins, it seems that a person has no control over their fate. However, Karma cannot be considered true determinism because at some point, either in this life or a previous one, people have had choices that lead to those outcomes. Rather, Karma is autonomy, but people are slaves to their choices. There is no grace in Karma.

KARMA AND VICTIM BLAMING

The main problem with the doctrine of Karma is its potential for exacerbating the problem of victim blaming. For adherents to Buddhism and other Eastern religions, the cause of all suffering is Karma: bad things happen because an individual deserves them. Karma is never unjust or heavy-handed as the Buddha said.

Because it can be a problem, Buddhist blogs, forums, and articles have provided ways of separating Karma from victim blaming. One such way is viewing Karma as one of many forces at work in the universe. When tragedy happens that seems to be grossly disproportionate to anything that a person has done, it is the work of a force other than Karma (O'Brien, 2015). There are also sects of Buddhism, such as Pure Land Buddhism, which believe that people can be credited righteousness from benevolent Bodhisattvas (Inagaki, 1994, p. 39). If a person has faith in the Bodhisattvas (or says the name of Lord Amitabha ten times), the merits of the Bodhisattvas can off-set the karmic accumulation of that individual. Another tactic is to point out

changing views of Karma, such as in the new religious movements in Japan: Tenrikyo and Rissho Koseikai (Kisala, pp. 76-78).² Both of these groups emphasize looking at life in a more positive way than traditional Buddhism. Although there is suffering in this life, these groups also see joy. In fact, in Tenrikyo, suffering brings about joy, because it allows Karma to refine a person, and make him better. The other group, Rissho Koseikai, emphasizes the role of ancestors in karmic accumulation (p. 79). According to the article, one's state in life is made up of half of the deeds of one's ancestors, and the other half is of one's actions in previous lives (p. 80). The author of this article uses this as evidence that the view of Karma has evolved, which is true, but it is not to say that when something bad happens, a person does not feel as though it is somehow his or her fault. In fact, it would seem that the weight of a bad circumstance on a person who believes in Karma that is affected both by ancestors and the intervention of bodhisattvas would feel immensely more crushing. If good ancestors and the merits of the enlightened are not enough to keep something from happening, then those circumstances are most definitely the victim's fault. In light of the factors of ancestor Karma and Bodhisattva Karma, there are a few options: we can know that the bodhisattva's theoretical Karma is good, the only real variable is the goodness of the ancestor's Karma. In one case, the ancestors have blessed the person, and the bodhisattvas have graciously imputed their merits; if a person is hit a crushing blow, it is because the person is to blame. If the ancestors were bad, then the person only must deal with the shame of their ancestors, and suffer because of them. This theodicy is still one which applies blame to someone other than the actual evil.

² It should be reiterated that these are not traditional Buddhist views. Kisala, the author of this article, is trying to show that changes are being made in beliefs about Karma. Those changes have not necessarily been brought back to traditional Buddhism, either in its Mahayana or Theravada form. Both Tenrikyo and Rissho Koseikai represent minority new religious movements. Tenrikyo has more to do with Shinto religion than Buddhist religion.

Another view of Karma is that it allows what is best to happen (Sherman). This is a popular idea used to reconcile the ideas of Karma as retribution and a seemingly undeserved tragedy. While it does not dismiss the idea that what happens to a person is the fault of the person, it changes the focus: instead of focusing on what happened or whose fault it was, focusing on the proper response, which according to Kirra Sherman in a response to her father-in-law's attitude and search for meaning in another relative's suffering from cancer, is to carry oneself with grace. According to Sherman, everything that happens is in the end, good. The Universe keeps all things in balance, and a person experiencing seemingly negative things can experience them as good, if he responds correctly. It is all in the attitude. The author goes on to talk about letting go. After all, according to Buddhism, life is suffering. That suffering cannot be stopped until life is stopped. In order to stop the cycle of rebirth, one must completely let go of anything he or she clings to. In this case, it would seem that the person was clinging to their own idea of good, instead of seeing reality as good. In her example, this was a young woman with terminal cancer. The good that Sherman saw in this was the opportunity to carry herself with dignity and grace amidst the seemingly negative life experience. Although it may be helpful for a person to find such a positive opportunity in such a terrible dealing as cancer, it seems unhelpful to call it good. All in all, cancer is bad; death is bad; pain is bad; misery is bad. No matter what purpose a person can find in it, it will not change the fact that the person is experiencing a terrible thing. It seems that it would be more helpful to a person to acknowledge the unfairness, and the terribleness of that situation, rather than to ignore it. Then, acknowledging that this situation is not good, the person can find goodness and an opportunity to be brave, and accept their circumstances.

Regardless of the accuracy of describing Karma as victim blaming, there are Buddhists who have undergone tragedy and struggled with the idea of Karma. Buddhist forums and blogs provide a place for Buddhists to share their experiences and gain perspective and wisdom from one another and are a testament to the struggle to understand Karma and self-blame. One man asked a question on the forum New Buddhist.Com, about his childhood. He was apparently abused as a child, and his question was: "If Karma is the result of our past actions, how does this play into child abuse? What could one have done to have abuse start on them before they are even old enough to understand right and wrong (Karma and Child Abuse, 2006)?" Commentators answered his question with understanding, but asserted that, "Karma ripens when the conditions are appropriate for them to ripen..." and,

Although the child never did anything to anybody in this life, it's obvious that in a past life he must have done something to create these causes. As my teacher puts it, there are no victims in Buddhism. That doesn't mean it's a blame game. The whole point of the teaching is to put a stop to the endless cycle of Karma by making other choices instead. So Karma, as you correctly point out, when properly understood, is an opportunity, not a reason to feel bad about yourself or guilty.

Others offered more helpful perspectives, but no one corrected the above responses.

Even among the more positive new Buddhist movements, this sort of victim blaming takes place. A mother of a sick child and follower of Rissho Koseikai, explains how she joined the Sangha:³

³ A Sangha in Buddhism is analogous to a congregation in Christianity. The woman in the illustration was joining a local Rissho Koseikai group.

Around that time, there was a person from Rissho Koseikai who used to come to the hospital [where her son was hospitalized] all the time. And she said, "It seems like your family has a lot of Karma accumulated. You had better make a large offering, donate some money." I really got mad then and felt like what she said was completely unforgivable. Someone with my problems, a widow with children like me, and here she wants to take my money on top of that! But in the end, I was so troubled and so concerned with helping my child that I did make a donation, with the feeling that it was just like throwing money away. I don't know if there is any connection, but my child started getting a little better, so I started bringing him to Rissho Koseikai with me so that we could chant the sutra together. And within three months he was completely cured, just as if nothing had ever happened. I don't know what caused the cure, but anyway becoming submissive and doing as I was told, giving it a try, at any rate, seems to have been what was important. Most people require two years of hospitalization, and even then they often aren't cured and many have to keep coming back to the hospital. Some people even attempt suicide. But with my son it ended up being such a short period of hospitalization, and now he has even gone on to university and graduate school, so I can only feel gratitude. But still, at that time when I was told, "Your Karma is very deep. In a previous life, you did something wrong, that's why your son is sick like this, and why your husband died, and why you have to look after his parents. All these troubles are because you did something wrong," I felt really depressed, although it did get me to do my best in chanting the sutra and all. But

there should be a different way of saying it, a more positive way of directing people. (Kisala, p. 86-87).

According to the woman's testimony, it seems that Karma was at fault for her troubles with her son, her late husband, and her parents. If Karma was at fault, then she was at fault, because Karma only acts in accordance with one's own deeds. She admits that she was greatly hurt by hearing that it was her fault, but grateful that her efforts at earning better Karma were rewarded so quickly. Imagine, though, what the woman must think about her husband's death, and her parents. If she had only known earlier that it was her Karma that was the problem, could she have saved them too? This story was cited as an example of the evolving positive view of Karma in the article by Kisala. This is probably because the woman was able to change her Karma by doing good, but the author does not seem to care that the moral of this story is that her troubles were her fault.

This same author goes on to quote Obeyesekere (Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Princeton), who says,

I cannot know what the future holds in store because I do not know what my past sins and good actions have been. Anything could happen to me: sudden changes or alterations of fortune are to be expected, for my present existence is determined by past Karma (regarding which I know nothing). I may be a pauper today, tomorrow a prince. Today I am in perfect health, but tomorrow I may suddenly be struck down by fatal disease. It is my fault that this is so, but my conscious experience cannot tell me what this fault is. (Kisala, p. 76).

According to this idea, not only can it be certain that what happens to a person was caused by that person, but that person will have no idea what the cause was. The person is only assured that

he is the causer. For this reason, the woman from the earlier story was at fault for the health of her family. Her situation was alleviated because she humbled herself and sought penitence in the form of good actions: recitations of the Lotus Sutra and financial contributions to the Sangha. If this is true, then when a person is undergoing a great crisis, it is best for friends to behave like Job's friends, asking him to repent for sins he was not aware of so God would stop punishing him (Walton, 2008, pp. 333-346).⁴

Tragically, it is common for people of all religions and worldviews to struggle with secondary wounding from victim blaming. However, seeing that the idea is reinforced by a religious philosophy could cause more problems than victim blaming might for a person who is not from that worldview. Further empiric research is necessary to see how often the belief in Karma exacerbates secondary wounding from victim blaming, and what can be done to alleviate that issue. Theoretically, it would seem that the belief in Karma should mediate such secondary wounding, but there have not been ample studies to discuss the prospect empirically.

CRISIS AND TRAUMA INTERVENTION

Crises and trauma are a fact in this world, regardless of location, culture, or religion. A Buddhist would call this *dukkha*, the first of the four noble truths. Most, if not all, people will experience a crisis in their lifetime. A crisis is usually recognized by the presence of four common elements:

- a hazardous event,
- vulnerability,

⁴⁴ In the Bible, Job is a righteous man who suffers greatly. He loses his family, his land, and his health. His friends come to be with him in his time of need, but they all believe that the retribution principle is true, that is, bad things happen to people that deserve them. Believing this, they urge Job to repent for a sin that he has never committed in order to placate God's wrath. Job resists, and the point of the narrative becomes not about the retribution principle, but that bad things do happen to good people, but people can still trust that God is wise and in control of the Universe.

- precipitating factors,
- and a state of active crisis. (Wright H. N., 2011, pp. 129-131).

The hazardous event can be many things, but in general begins a domino effect in which a person's plans, identity, or livelihood are seemingly turned upside down. Vulnerability, in the discussion of crises, refers to any factor that would derail a person's coping ability to a situation.

A precipitating factor in a crisis would be a final event which brings a person into active crisis.

Active crisis is likely occurring if the following are present:

- stress, (which can be indicated by physical or emotional symptoms),
- feelings of helplessness or lack of control,
- overwhelming need to escape the situation,
- an impaired ability to cope with the current situation or others.

Not all negative situations become crises: if a person has good coping mechanisms, realistic views, and healthy, supportive relationships, that person is likely to come away from a hard time unscathed. However, the intensity of such a negative situation may prove to be more than even the strongest, healthiest people can bear.

Crises come in phases. A person knows when a crisis occurs; it hits hard and fast (Wright H. N., 2011, p. 143). A person reacts to the event with the activation of the sympathetic nervous system, characterized by hyperarousal, the inability to think with clarity, feelings of numbness, and confusion (p. 144). People in this initial phase also often experience guilt and self-blame, which they can either wallow in or project onto someone else (p. 146). People in this state need a good listener who can help correct misguided blaming and guilt and help them find a sense of normalcy in how they are reacting (p. 147).

In the second phase, a myriad of intense emotions appears (Wright, H. N., 2011, p. 147). These may be obvious to the person, or the person can be totally unaware and unable to express how he feels. If people react negatively to the individual's story or emotional expression, he is going to have a much harder time doing it again, and will likely withdraw. The person will have a general sense of confusion in this phase. The person's needs in this phase include consistent support and checking on, help with everyday tasks, a chance, or even prodding to talk about the crisis and its effects, and a calm and stable presence (p. 150).

In the next phase, the person who experienced the crisis is beginning to see glimmers of hope (Wright, H. N., 2011, p. 154). This person is beginning to move on and to accept what was lost in the crisis. Replacing that lost thing or attaching to a new idea or goal at this point is exciting progress that needs to be encouraged. However, progress gained at this point is easily lost and much patience is needed from both the person who has experienced the crisis and the people helping him.

In the final phase, a person has a more consistent sense of hope and confidence (Wright, H. N., 2011, p. 155). This person has been able to let go of the doubts that previously plagued him. He takes initiative in his progress. At this point, the person is able to reflect on the experience and see how he has grown as a result.

To give people the best chance of coping and recovery, crisis intervention must happen immediately (Wright, H.N., 2011, p. 161). It is urgent that someone begin working with a person in crisis, in his physical presence, to restore his sense of balance. Otherwise, the person is in danger of a reckless self-treatment because he is likely desperate to end the feelings associated with crisis. This person needs emotional support such as listening, reassurance, grounding techniques, validation, and direction (p. 163-165). A person in crisis can have a difficult time

knowing what the next step is, and it is the responsibility of a counselor to help guide them through that process with intentionality. There should be definite goals for the person, appropriate to his crisis.

Trauma is more extreme than a crisis. People experience trauma when something happens that destroys their ability to feel safe in the world anymore. The events that cause trauma are events that cause a person to feel out of control, events in which a person feels his life is in danger, events in which a person sees something incredibly gruesome, etc. Roughly 75% of Americans will experience an event that is considered traumatic and 25% of those people will be considered traumatized by those events (Wright, H. N., 2011, p. 190). Whether or not a person who experiences such an event is affected and the degree to which that person is affected depend on several factors including personality and the immediacy of intervention (p. 191). However, a person's previous mental health and resiliency are not guarantees that a person will not develop PTSD (Matsakis, 1996, p. 15). The feelings of helplessness that characterize a crisis are deeper and harder to overcome in a person who has experienced trauma, because they are coupled with derealization and depersonalization. Trauma has neurological effects: the experience of trauma causes the brain to act differently than in people who have not experienced trauma, which exacerbates the psychological effects of trauma.

Experiencing trauma can lead to the development of stress disorders such as Acute Traumatic Stress Disorder and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. According to the DSM-V, criteria for diagnosing PTSD includes exposure to a traumatic event, and symptoms of avoidance, negative cognitions and mood, arousal, and re-experiencing the event (APA, 2013). For it to be considered PTSD as opposed to a more acute disorder, the symptoms must persist for more than 30 days.

There are several ways in which a person can re-experience a previous trauma, including intrusive thoughts, nightmares, and flashbacks. In these instances, the person feels as if he is again in the traumatic event, experiencing the same emotions, threats, and even physical reactions as he did in the original event (Matsakis, 1996, p. 22). Flashbacks include the stereotypical flashbacks most people know about, in which a person, in his mind, goes back to the event and re-experiences it. Flashbacks can also include auditory flashbacks and somatic flashbacks. These types of flashbacks would entail experiencing physical stimuli that occurred in the actual event such as hearing sounds and physical reactions.

Avoidance symptoms are also important to the PTSD diagnosis. These symptoms often co-occur with triggers, or things that bring up memories or reactions associated with the trauma. As the list of triggers grows, so does the list of stimuli a person feels he must avoid to protect himself from re-experiencing the event. A person can react to these triggers by shutting off his emotions completely; this is called numbing (Matsakis, 1996, p. 25). A person might be able to stop feeling emotions completely in cases where negative emotions are extreme. This means that the person is also numb to positive emotions. People who are experiencing numbing need help to recognize and deal with their emotions to recover. In some cases, the person may forget some of the aspects of the trauma as a coping mechanism (p. 27).

A third diagnostic criterion is negative alterations in cognition and mood (APA, 2013). A person may lose the ability to remember the specifics of the trauma. A person may subject himself to self-blame or the blame of others who have nothing to do with the event itself. This person may see himself as bad and deserving of the tragedy. He may experience anhedonia, which is disinterest in activities that would have been previously seen as important or enjoyable. This is a major diagnostic criterion for depression. Since the person has experienced something

that many have not experienced, especially the people that are in their social network, he may feel alienated from others, because he feels that he cannot relate to others in the same way as he did before. The trauma typically causes people to see the world as a dangerous place or people as capable of hurting them.

The final symptom cluster is alteration in arousal or reactivity. The person may be irritable or aggressive. Anger is often an attempt at self-preservation (Wright, H. N., 2011, p. 181). The person may also engage in reckless behaviors that are atypical for that person. A common alteration in arousal is hypervigilance. When a person is experiencing hypervigilance, his sympathetic nervous system clicks on and he is on edge as if he needs to protect himself from harm. The person may experience fear and anxiety, rapid heart rate, and other autonomic responses. This hypervigilance is associated with sleep disturbances such as insomnia and an exaggerated startle response, and it points to a lack of emotional security.

A person who is experiencing such symptoms in conjunction with a trauma needs intervention. The person must deal with the trauma with the assistance of a qualified individual. This is the best way to regain a sense of normalcy, though it will likely be a difficult experience.

COMPLICATIONS WITH TRAUMA INTERVENTION: SECONDARY WOUNDING

People who experience trauma often also experience secondary wounding associated with the trauma. This is an obstacle to progress for someone with PTSD and complicates the trauma to yet another degree. The most pertinent examples of secondary wounding for the purpose of this paper have to do with Just World Theory.

Just World Theory is the idea that the world is part of a system of retribution (Matsakis, 1996, p. 94). Good things happen to good people, and bad things happen to bad people. This idea has existed since ancient times, as evidenced by the book of Job. In this book, a righteous man is

subjected to great suffering, and his friends assure him that the world is just, so he must have sinned. In order to stop the immense suffering he was enduring, Job must repent although he did not know what to repent for. Job refuses, and maintains that he is righteous, but his friends continue to argue with him. Job's story is a perfect illustration of the effects of Just World Theory. Job's friends could not handle thinking that such awful circumstances had nothing to do with Job's actions. Just World Theory is the source of a big problem for people who are the victims of any crime or trauma. According to Just World Theory, bad things happen only to people who somehow deserve it.

Just World Theory does seem to have a purpose in helping people cope. When people are exposed to victims of a trauma, it exposes the generalized vulnerability of humanity to trauma. Rather than dealing with the fact that tragedies can happen to anyone, people seem to naturally find a way to blame the victim for his or her circumstance. It serves a function of society: to reinforce the notion that people can control their futures. No one wants to admit that they are just as vulnerable to attack or tragedy as others. Instead, people choose to think that they are somehow better than those who do experience tragedy and attack. People generally do not consciously choose to blame victims in order to inflict further harm on them. In fact, Just World Theory continues because people are not thinking intentionally about victims at all. The theory is purely self-serving.

This idea is parallel to the foundation of Buddhism. When Siddhartha is exposed to illness, death, old age, and suffering for the first time, he struggles internally. He wrestles with the fact that people could suffer in such horrendous ways in a just universe. Out of this wrestling comes the philosophy of Buddhism. It is interesting to note that the Buddha keeps the Hindu concept of Karma in which people get what they deserve. Not only so, but the Buddha adds that

all life is suffering and that the proper response is to escape—to cease to exist. Buddhism seems to be an extreme and conscious acceptance of Just World Theory. This is because Just World Theory is a natural human response to crises. People simply do not want to believe that they are unable to control circumstances. If a crisis is somehow that person's fault or those people's fault, then those who have done nothing wrong will never suffer harm.

In effect, Just World Theory is victim blaming. Victim blaming often happens in conjunction with sexual assault, or other crimes. A woman is often blamed for her own sexual assault because she was drunk, wearing something revealing (though "revealing" is highly subjective), in a "dangerous" part of town, or in some other way, "asking for it." This type of blame can come from anyone, including friends, law enforcement, and the general public. The problem is fed by ignorance, especially the thought that such crimes can be avoided by taking general precautions. Instead, the emphasis should be placed on the person who committed the crime against someone else. That person is just as likely to commit that crime against anyone: it probably had nothing to do with the person who actually became the victim. When a blaming a victim, what is really being said is that the proper judgment was handed down on that person by nature, the universe, God, or a criminal (Herman, 1997, p. 67). In blaming the victim, people are saying that the action was somehow justified, whether they do so consciously or unconsciously. When this happens to victims of trauma, it confirms their fears: the world is not a safe place, it was somehow their fault, and they are not normal.

Victim blaming is a very pervasive problem. In the fall of 2012 in Missouri, a high school freshman named Daisy and her friend were invited to a party (Peck, 2013). Both were given an extensive amount of alcohol, and Daisy was raped. The rape was recorded on the cell phone of one of the rapist's friends. Daisy was carried to her front yard and left in sub-temperatures, where

her mother found her crying. Her mother took her in, ran a bath for her, and noticed signs of rape. She immediately took her to the emergency room, where the doctor found evidence of vaginal tears indicating sexual activity. Daisy remembered what had happened and told the doctor and her mother. Charges were filed against both the rapist and his friend who recorded the event. However, because of the prominence and popularity of the rapist and his family, the charges were suddenly and mysteriously dropped. Because the charges were dropped, all the evidence meant nothing to the community. They blamed Daisy for being drunk, even though she was able to say "no," repeatedly. Soon after, Daisy's mother was fired. Daisy herself was threatened, suspended from the cheer squad, and she felt unsafe to leave her home. Many students actually told Daisy she should kill herself. The family had to move because of the incident. Not only so, once they moved, someone burned their house down. Even though all the evidence pointed to Daisy being raped, she was blamed and made to leave her school and her town. Eventually, her rapist was found guilty of a lesser sexual crime (Diaz and Efron, 2014). This is a very obvious case of victim blaming. Because Daisy was drunk, she was asking for sex. It did not matter that she said no, and it did not matter that Missouri Law said sex with an intoxicated fourteen-year-old is rape. In Daisy's case, the outcome of victim blaming was her attempted suicide and her family relocating.

Just World Theory and Victim Blaming perpetuate the common problem of self-blame experienced by sufferers of PTSD. People in the midst of PTSD often deal with guilt associated with how they reacted initially to the trauma. They also often feel that they are somehow to blame for their trauma. This is a negative coping mechanism for the trauma. Instead of giving in to the fact that in that moment they lacked control, they hold onto a largely irrational sense of control, in that they are to blame (Matsakis, 1996, p. 74). This is a negative coping mechanism

because it causes the person to believe a lie, and to ignore the real issue, which is that he was powerless to do anything about the event. Getting a person to accept that fact is a huge step in recovery. The real issue for a person suffering from PTSD is that the world is no longer a safe place in his mind because of his experience. In reality, the world is not a safe place anyway.

Tragedy can strike anyone. But, when a person can hold to the lie that he was responsible somehow, and that lie is reinforced by culture, religion, or individuals, then that person does not have to deal with the fact that the world is not a safe place. When that person does not deal with that fact, the belief becomes that he is invaluable, bad, or in some other way deserving of bad things. This type of thought is highly destructive and will not mediate healing.

If Buddhism is in any way associated with the problem of victim-blaming and secondary wounding, it needs to be more carefully studied. Perhaps the main reason why this connection has been ignored is because there are also popular and seemingly positive connections between Buddhist practices and mental health therapies. When Western people think of using Buddhism as a tool for preserving their mental health, they are likely thinking about the positive aspects of Buddhism. In Buddhism, it is important to treat people with kindness. It is important to let grudges and false expectations go. It is important to be still and to relax in this world of busyness and chaos. Certainly these big ideas are important and even helpful to people. These big ideas associated with Buddhism come from several practices and doctrines. Two of these practices are meditation and mindfulness. While these practices are related and can be done in conjunction with each other, they are not synonymous. Both of those seem like they should be good things and they certainly can be. However, mindfulness and meditation used in modern mental health therapies are not necessarily the same as practiced in Buddhism. Meditation, as practiced in Buddhism, is about emptying one's mind completely for the purpose of reaching enlightenment

and breaking out of the cycle of rebirth. This kind of meditation does increase focus, lowers heart rate and blood pressure, and overall helps a person to relax, but that is not the point of Buddhist meditation (Rubin, 2001, p. 122). The point of Buddhist meditation is to actually make people better people, to let go of all attachments, and to add a good deed to counteract the negative effects of karma. If the Buddhist goal becomes a person's goal in meditation and meditation fails to meet that expectation the person is likely to get caught in a cycle of self-blame. The thought could be that the reason it is failing is because they themselves are inferior, and they should just try harder. If this is the mindset, all the proposed health benefits are likely to be mitigated by the fact that meditation itself has become the stressor. This is not the point of using meditation, or something like it, in a mental health therapy. In such therapies, the point is probably more closely aligned with controlling racing thoughts, overcoming physical autonomic responses that are misplaced, and coping with stress in general. The use of meditation in a mental health context should be distanced from the purpose of meditation in Buddhism. There are other breathing and relaxation techniques that can be used in order to avoid such confusion.

Another seemingly positive practice of Buddhism is mindfulness. Again, the purpose of mindfulness in Buddhism and the purpose of mindfulness in mental health therapies are not the same. Remember, Buddhism is about being unattached and escaping negative emotions. The purpose of mindfulness in Buddhism is not simply to understand and deal with emotions but to get rid of them altogether (Rubin, 2001, pp. 123-124). Certainly, getting rid of or ignoring emotions is not the goal of any mental health professional. Emotions are important indicators that should be taken into account and handled. When Buddhism or Buddhist practices are used successfully in conjunction with any sort of mental health therapy, it is very unlikely that the practices and philosophies lifted from Buddhism are actually representative of the purposes of

the practices in Buddhism. The two simply cannot coexist because the goals of each are so very different. There are certainly good and helpful ways to practice mindfulness and meditation, but these helpful ways have nothing to do with the philosophy of orthodox Buddhism. It is better to disassociate these practices from Buddhism altogether in order to avoid confusing orthodox Buddhism with helpful psychology for hurting people.

UNIVERSAL NEED FOR TRAUMA INTERVENTION

Since traumatic events happen all over the world, it is reasonable to assume that trauma intervention is necessary everywhere in the world. Although PTSD may appear differently in different cultures, it does appear. It is then an ethical obligation to understand how PTSD is dealt with in other cultures and how it appears so that trauma intervention is possible for these people.

Buddhism is generally seen as an aid to the mental health field. This is because the religion teaches things like mindfulness, the acceptance of suffering, and letting go. In fact, some would say that there is no need for trauma intervention in Buddhism practicing cultures because Buddhism fulfills all the same roles which are watered down to be only stress relief, dealing with suffering, and interpersonal relationships (Hunter, 2014). In one article, the author even makes the claim that Buddhism is the beginning of psychology, that the Buddhist scriptures are on par with modern neuroscience, and that meditation is as good as therapy. The basic problem with this article, is that the author equates modern mental health diagnoses with Buddhist principles. The two are not trying to communicate the same principles. The "neuroscience," the article refers to is basic neuroanatomy explained in Buddhist terms (Thera, p. 226). It also makes a point to say that the Buddha did not make any comment on the physical location of the seat of consciousness, although the major view at the time was in the heart (Thera, p. 330).

PTSD does appear in Buddhist contexts. Buddhist philosophy even commonly influences the worldview of the Japanese people, a people group widely believed to be non-religious. After the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, over 30% of the children exposed to the tragedy met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD (Kyodo, 2014). After that tragic event, it is known that many in Japan turned to Buddhism and even Buddhist exorcists to deal with the trauma (Haunted by trauma, tsunami survivors in Japan turn to exorcists, 2013). In order to help the Japanese people still affected by the 2011 tsunami, the connection between Buddhism and secondary wounding needs to be made clear through empirical research.

CONCLUSION

To highlight a connection between Just World Theory and Karma is not to demonize any Eastern Philosophy. Just World Theory is a natural response to a tragedy. Just as people do not hold these beliefs to intentionally hurt others, the Buddhist belief in Karma is not an intentional attack on survivors of the tragedy. However, this does not mean that the theory of Karma is excusable in its potential to cause secondary wounding through victim blaming. The reason why there is a problem with the theory of Karma is because it gives religious weight to Just World Theory. While a non-religious philosophy or belief can be redirected with a new perspective, religious beliefs, especially central religious beliefs, are firmly held. Karma is a fundamental part of Buddhism. If it is parallel to Just World Theory, this is highly problematic. Although as previously stated there are changing views on Karma, these views have not yet been sufficient to break the ties with Just World Theory.

Though there may seem to be positives in using Buddhist principles for trauma intervention, to holistically swallow Buddhism is impossible because it cannot be disconnected from Karma. There are several studies about the positives of including Buddhist principles in

trauma intervention, and those programs seem to be successful

(http://ahimsacounseling.org/buddhist_psychotherapy/; Wright, 2011; Brazier, 2007, pp.155-

156). However, in the times that those programs were successful the problem of Karma and secondary wounding was largely ignored. There are two possible inferences that can be drawn from this lack of seeing Karma as an obstacle. First, it could be that, even though the evidence suggests otherwise, belief in Karma is really not a problem or source of secondary wounding in trauma. If this is the case, then it means that no one believes Karma is what Buddhism says it is. Second, and more likely, is that although the belief in Karma can be a source of secondary wounding, practitioners have continuously reframed the view of Karma, rather than ignoring the fact that secondary wounding is a problem in trauma intervention. If there is even a chance that Karma is connected to secondary wounding, then research must be done to show the connection and find a way to help the people affected by it.

Although the connection between Karma and secondary wounding is not commonly addressed as an issue in trauma intervention, it is likely that there is a connection. Theoretically, the problem should exist because of the ubiquity of self-blame in connection to trauma and the potential for the doctrine of Karma to exacerbate it. Even if the proposed view of Karma is debated, it is likely that a person suffering from PTSD would see the law of Karma as evidence of his own guilt. A person who has experienced a great crisis or trauma does not need help engaging in self-blame. It is highly unlikely that a system of Just World Theory and victim blaming sanctioned by a religion would not be a factor of harm in an adherent who experienced trauma. Empirical research and studies should be done to verify whether or not this is a problem since no such research seems to be available.

If the connection can be empirically proven, then steps can be taken to mitigate the negative effects of believing in Karma for followers of Buddhism. Since it seems that there are ways of interpreting Karma in a way that does not promote victim blaming, then in dealing with a Buddhist in a trauma intervention context, those ideas need to be discussed. The Eastern world is not immune from crisis and trauma. Just as it is unethical and irresponsible to deny people physical relief because of their worldview and religious belief, it is equally unethical and irresponsible to deny people psychological relief for those reasons.

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