

Running head: PUBLISH OR PERISH: WHAT ABOUT TRANSFORMATIONAL
SCHOLARSHIP?

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Abstract

This paper discusses the need for transformational scholarship from a Christian world view and why forced productivity is not constructive. The research is exploratory in nature and is meant to: (1) Establish a definition of transformational scholarship for faith-based institutions; (2) Determine if faculty members consider transformational scholarship significant beyond meeting promotion requirements; and (3) Determine if the institutions represented by faculty members, support publications and/or conference presentations for promotion requirements if they encompass topics on transformational scholarship and/or topics where there is an integration of a Christian world view. The authors define *Transformational Scholarship* as: “. . . research conducted in the highest traditions of academic inquiry which is meant to contribute knowledge, not merely for the sake of adding knowledge to an existing understanding, but for the sake of bringing about change in the character of individuals and how they relate to and engage the world around them. From the Christian world view perspective this scholarship is also meant to gain a better understanding of the will of God as delineated in Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Based upon a survey administered to members of the Christian Business Faculty Association (CBFA), and the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE), the results were significant with regard to: (1) Those who identified themselves as Admin/Other were given adequate time by their institution to develop transformational scholarship as compared to faculty; (2) Those who identified themselves as Assistant Professor or lower considered transformational scholarship or research from a Christian world view

perspective more important than other forms of research significantly greater than Full Professors; (3) Those who identified themselves as Assistant Professor or lower significantly thought that the promotion or tenure process at their institution was given additional weight with respect to transformational scholarship versus other forms of scholarship as compared to Full Professors; (4) Those who identified themselves as having had one or more conference publications or one or more non-refereed publications have experienced or witnessed others promoted or granted tenure in large part due to research of a transformational nature; (5) Those who identified themselves as “other than a 4 yr private non-profit university” would forgo a promotion to use time to research topics that included transformational scholarship as compared to 4-yr private non-profit; and (7) Those who identified themselves as Assistant Professor or lower would significantly forgo a promotion to use time to research topics that include transformational scholarship as compared to Full Professors.

“The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind. . . .

Despite dynamic success at a popular level, modern American evangelicals have failed notably in sustaining serious intellectual life.” Mark Noll

Publish or Perish: What About Transformational Scholarship?

Publish or perish is the aged-old adage played out every day for faculty striving to attain promotion or earn tenure. Should not content be transforming, or in the words of William Savage (2003), “Do you have anything worth writing about, and, if you do, does it belong between hard covers?” (p. 41). Savage contests that “the important thing, the thing from which the prestige of the department and university derives, is publication. Who cares if no one reads it? Who cares if no one wants to read it? For that matter, who cares if it is unreadable?” (p. 42). Where has this lead faith-based institutions which strive to draw near to their non-sectarian competitors? Have faculty fallen into the same mire and neglected the challenge to transform the minds of our eager students? Paul writes in Romans 12:2 “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Is the academy publishing to meet the demands of the world or attempting to attain transformation?

Stuart Fowler (1991) argues that no conscious choice is required when conforming to the world. We shape our lives to a false normality, a practical denial of God’s mercies. We are challenged in our faith-based institutions to teach a Christian worldview, but how many in the academy are publishing with the same vigor, the same intensity displayed in the classroom? Our *unconscious* choice in publishing most often

conforms to the requirements of a promotion panel. Too often, we are in search of the next conference where a paper, thrown together in haste, could be presented. We search for a less than reputable journal where a revision of a past article may be accepted. As time draws nearer to promotion, are we simple scrambling to check a box?

Faculty members are asked to work beyond the classroom environment counseling students, serving on committees, and attending fund-raising events. This is time consumed away from research but, “without the service work that these faculty members perform, colleges would not be able to function” (Fogg, p. 14). Where will faculty find the time needed to prepare course lectures and research that will transform the mind?

What is the academy producing to transform the minds of students and peers, to further the Christian world view in the academic setting? Walsh and Middleton (1984) claim the academy resides in a dual environment, living with a split vision, teaching toward one goal and researching for another.

As we wrestle to integrate our faith into the classroom, should we not wrestle with integrating transformational scholarship into our writing? Fowler (1991) contends, “We cannot achieve transformational scholarship by adding a Christian component to the secularist framework of practice. Our first move in the transformation of academic life, then, must be to assert the inevitable role of religious faith in the practice of every academic discipline” (p. 98). Nord (1998) goes on to say, “Too much education is relentlessly fixated on economic and technological development—both of which are important, of course. But, *in the end*, one of the things most people learn is that the

greatest sources of meaning in life come not from wealth and technological wizardry but from altogether different realms of experience" (p. 183).

We are challenged to rise to a higher calling as we work within the secular framework. The rules have been set, but it may be time to redefine the ultimate goal . . . publish or perish or just perish the thought? What is the next step?

The Study

This study is exploratory in nature and is meant to: (1) Establish a definition of transformational scholarship for faith-based institutions; (2) determine if faculty members consider transformational scholarship significant beyond meeting promotion requirements; and (3) Determine if institutions represented by these faculty members, support publications and/or conference presentations for promotion requirements if they encompass topics on transformational scholarship and/or topics where there is an integration of a Christian world view. We conducted a survey which included 24 binary questions, percentages of agreement or disagreement, and a five-point Lykert-type scale with response options ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." This survey was posted utilizing "Survey Monkey" at <http://www.surveymonkey.com>. Eight-hundred and forty faculty members were contacted through the Christian Business Faculty Association (CBFA) and the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE) email lists and asked to complete the survey. IACBE is a programmatic accrediting body for business and business-related degree programs at the baccalaureate and graduate degree levels representing more than 190 colleges and universities. IACBE was chosen for its diverse representation of faith-based and secular institutions, the variety of baccalaureate and graduate schools located throughout the U.S.

One-hundred and ten faculty members from CBFA and IACBE responded. These faculty members represented both faith-based and non-faith-based institutions. Since the study addressed transformational scholarship from a Christian world view, respondents who served at non-faith-based institutions were asked to stop after question number 13 and to exit the survey. This is not to say that their responses were not valuable but were beyond the scope of this study.

Several assumptions guided our research: (1) Since the respondents who completed the entire survey represented faith-based institutions, they were professing Christians; (2) Since they were professing Christians, they would agree that both the Biblical Old and New Testaments represent the word of God; (3) Their Christian faith was expressed in their world view; and (4) They understood the notion of integrating their Christian world view into their research. In the final analysis, of the 110 respondents, 96 represented faculty members from faith-based institutions.

Transformational Scholarship Defined

We were unable to find a definition for “Transformational Scholarship” in the current literature. Hence, we chose to derive a definition from several sources by exploring the words separately and combining them later to arrive at a rational definition. The term “Transformation” means to change one thing into another (Webster’s Dictionary) and “Transformational” is an adjective reflecting the succeeding noun has the capability to bring about this change. “Scholarship” as defined by the CBFA Scholarship Task Force in its 2002-2003 report to its members states that scholarship is;

“The creation, study, and critical assessment of knowledge and wisdom. This includes, but is not limited to, research for publication in order to advance current

academic understanding. However, dissemination of scholarship allows others to benefit. This definition also specifically includes knowledge about pedagogy.”

(Christian Business Faculty Association Minutes – 2003 Annual Meeting, October 18, 2003)

The Task Force went on to further define Christian scholarship as:

“Any scholarship done by a Christian to the glory of God. Christian scholarship is not defined by subject, analysis, or dissemination venue. The key is the person pursuing the scholarship and his or her motivation.” (Christian Business Faculty Association Minutes – 2003 Annual Meeting, October 18, 2003)

This provides a foundation to define “Transformational Scholarship” as scholarship or research that has the potential to bring about change. However, as Christian scholars, who attempt to live in accordance with the word of God, as spelled out in the Bible, we sensed the potential for scholarship to be less than transformational if not birthed out of our renewed minds. In other words, we felt that to some degree, we had and were moving through the *renewing* process ourselves and thought it important to help others to do this through our research findings.

In particular, we were drawn to the scripture in the New Testament book of Romans, chapter 12, verse 2 which reads, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.” We know that the Apostle Paul was speaking to the Roman Christians during a time when they were struggling with developing a world view that reflected their new-found values in Christ. They desired to know the perfect will of God but struggled with the pressures presented

by the preponderance of a pagan world view. Walsh and Middleton (1984) comment, “Our world view determines our values. It helps us interpret the world around us. It sorts out what is important from what is not, what is of highest value from what is least. A world view provides a model of the world which guides its adherence in the world” (p. 32). The Christian worldview is theistic in the sense that it believes in the existence of one supremely powerful and personal God (Nash, 1992). This is the very issue that we are addressing in this paper.

If our world view helps us interpret the world around us and sort what is important from what is not, should we not as academics and scholars *allow* our world views to inform our research and therefore position it to potentially *transform* the minds of the readers? Is this not in line with the admonition that Paul gave to the Romans who were faced with the same pressures of conforming to the world that we are faced with today? Should not our scholarship be transforming in nature since it is birthed out of our world view that considers what is important and what is not? Why, by any means, would we spend valuable time researching, gathering data, reducing it, and drawing conclusion that are devoid of the influence from our Christian world view? Anything less, in Walsh and Middleton’s perspectives, would be of lesser value. Based upon these perspectives we have arrived at the following definition of “Transformational Scholarship:”

“Transformational scholarship is based upon research conducted in the highest traditions of academic inquiry which is meant to contribute knowledge, not merely for the sake of adding knowledge to an existing understanding, but for the sake of bringing about change in the character of individuals and how they relate to and engage the world around them. From the Christian worldview perspective

this scholarship is also meant to gain a better understanding of the will of God as delineated in Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Findings

Although the survey that was administered is a first attempt to address the concerns of this research, it is far from conclusive. In so far as it has provided a window into the research psyche of Christian scholars, and their commitment or lack of it with regard to transformational scholarship, it has accomplished this.

We utilized SPSS in our analysis to arrive at the results that follow. Questions 14-24 of the survey addressed the transformational nature of the research environment that the respondents operate in using a 5-point Likert scale. The reliability for questions 14 - 24 was moderate (Cronbach's alpha = .79). Questions 1 - 13 were nominal scale variables; respondents were grouped into two or more classifications (i.e., academic rank, university enrollment, and so forth). Significant findings were as follows:

Question 16 “I am given adequate time by my institution to develop transformational scholarship.” T-test: ($t=2.23$, $p=.03$). Faculty ($M=2.29$), Admin/Other (2.88). Those who identified themselves as Admin/Other were given adequate time by their institution to develop transformational scholarship as compared to faculty.

Question 17 “Do you consider transformational scholarship or research from a Christian worldview perspective more important than other forms of research?” ANOVA 1: ($F=4.53$, $p=.02$). Assistant Professor or lower ($M=3.79$), Prof ($M=3.03$). Those who

identified themselves as Assistant Professor or lower considered transformational scholarship or research from a Christian world view perspective more important than other forms of research significantly greater than Full Professors.

Question 19 “In the promotion or tenure process at my institution, additional weight is given to transformational scholarship versus other forms of scholarship.” ANOVA 2: ($F=3.33$, $p=.03$). Assistant Professor or lower ($M=2.71$), Prof ($M=2.06$). Those who identified themselves as Assistant Professor or lower significantly thought that the promotion or tenure process at their institution was given additional weight with respect to transformational scholarship versus other forms of scholarship as compared to Full Professors.

Question 20 “I have experienced or witnessed others promoted or granted tenure in large part due to research of a transformational nature.” T-test approaching significance: ($t=1.96$, $p=.053$). None ($M=2.33$), One or more (2.79). Those who identified themselves as having had one or more conference publications have experienced or witnessed others promoted or granted tenure in large part due to research of a transformational nature.

Question 20 “I have experienced or witnessed others promoted or granted tenure in large part due to research of a transformational nature.” T-test: ($t=3.82$, $p=.0002$). None ($M=2.20$), One or more (3.06). Those who identified themselves as having had one or more non-refereed publications have experienced or witnessed others promoted or granted tenure in large part due to research of a transformational nature.

Question 24 “I would forgo a promotion to use time to research topics that include transformational scholarship. T-test: ($t=2.55$, $p=.01$). All others ($M=3.75$), 4 yr private

NP (M=2.88). Those who identified themselves as “other than a 4 yr private non-profit university” would forgo a promotion to use time to research topics that included transformational scholarship as compared to 4-yr private non-profit.

Question 24 “I would forgo a promotion to use time to research topics that include transformational scholarship.” ANOVA 3: (F=4.83, p=.02). Assistant Professor or lower (M=2.71), Prof (M=2.06). Those who identified themselves as Assistant Professor or lower would significantly forgo a promotion to use time to research topics that include transformational scholarship as compared to Full Professors.

There is a significant difference between those who perceived their university as distinguishing itself as a transformational scholarship university ($t = -2.23, p = .028$). Those respondents who said their university had some research focus (M = 3.44) was significantly greater than those who referred to their college as a teaching university (M = 2.90). This suggests that if those universities emphasized research, the respondents felt it was significantly more transformational research focused. This is validated using a correlation with the “dummy variable” teaching only vs. teaching with research (question 2) and the transformational scholarship university (question 14).

There was a significant difference in those respondents who experienced or witnessed others promoted or tenured due to the research of a transformational nature ($t = -3.82, p = .0002$). Those who said they publish non-refereed research (M = 3.06) was significantly higher than those who did not publish at all (M = 2.20). This suggests that if they took part in non-refereed scholarship they perceived a greater potential for promotion or tenure due to transformational research endeavors. Instead of looking at differences, however, we looked at relationships (correlation). There is a significant ($p =$

.0002) correlation between the “dummy variable” non-refereed research and promotion perception of question 20 ($r = .368$).

There were no other significant findings using t-tests for questions 1-13 with any of the other transformational questions (questions 14-24). Our research suggests some moderate links between promotion and transformational scholarship.

Conclusions and Future Research

A review of the research questions was to first establish a definition of transformational scholarship for faith-based institutions; second, determine if faculty members consider transformational scholarship significant beyond meeting promotion requirements; and third, determine if the institutions represented by faculty members, support publications and/or conference presentations for promotion requirements if they encompass topics on transformational scholarship and/or topics where there is an integration of a Christian world view.

The first research question was discussed earlier as part of the literature review. Research questions two and three have provided some significant findings. Transformational scholarship is important among some identifiable characteristics and constructs. There is a level of importance for transformational scholarship with certain groups. Moreover, transformational scholarship is tied to a “*publish or perish*” mentality.

Interestingly, those identifying themselves as assistant professors, instructors, or lecturers felt that transformational scholarship from a Christian world-view was significantly more important than did full professors. This same group also felt transformational scholarship was tied to promotion and tenure as compared to full

professors. In fact, they further indicated they would be willing to forego a promotion to study transformational topics. Associate professors had no significant differences with either assistant or full professors.

The second area of significant findings occurred along the lines of publishing. Administrators and those other than faculty felt they had time to develop transformational scholarship. Another way of looking at it is faculty as a whole felt they had no time to publish transformational works. With respect to publish or perish those who published non-refereed and conference works tied promotion and tenure to lower levels of publication. Refereed journals, however, fostered no significant transformational scholarship findings. If a respondent identified themselves as part of a university that did some form of research (teaching and research, research only, etc.) they viewed transformational scholarship as a distinguishing form of publishing. Teaching university respondents, on the other hand, saw no link with transformational scholarship.

The third area occurred around promotion and university identifiers. Respondents indicating they belonged to a college or university other than 4-year private non-profit universities were willing to forego promotion to do transformational scholarship. This was not the case for 4-year private non-profit universities. This is probably due to the fact that many 4-year private non-profit universities are teaching-only focused.

It appears that Savage's claims have some merit. Although faculty members from research institutions feel they are forced into productivity because of promotion and tenure requirements, it is important to consider how attitudes can be changed to encourage transformational scholarship. Junior faculty may be the ones to lead the charge

since they have indicated they would forego promotion to engage in transformational scholarship.

There is a need for faculty to legitimize, acknowledge the value, and contribute in building the base of business writings reflecting transformational titles. Faculty members resist change due to demands on time for teaching, committees, student issues, and planning for the future. There is a tendency to retreat to the familiar secular sources and that which adds to recognition in a personal portfolio. Reflective time on subjects where we integrate our faith will not only assist students to understand the Christian worldview, but deepen their connection between faith and business, and lead us to loving God with all of our minds, an intellectual endeavor.

Our faith-based colleges and universities must take research seriously. A teaching institute must encourage faculty to take initial steps toward research and to include their findings in their teaching. As we teach, however, we must commit to being more than mechanistic. Charles Birch (1990) discusses the “mechanistic universe in which archaic notions must give way to a God that is part of the process of creation” (p. 76). Setting ourselves apart from non-sectarian schools by integrating faith into curriculum is a good start, adding transformational scholarship will lift us above the bar of mediocrity.

Encouraging one another to break the cycle of publishing for promotional sake could mean collaboration between faculty seeking promotion and those who have reached tenure or signed multiple-year contracts. By supporting each other, new areas of research will emerge giving way to new sources of publication.

Delimitations and Further Research

Too few non-sectarian schools responded to the survey and therefore comparisons with faith-based schools were inconclusive concerning general research questions. Furthermore, respondents from non-sectarian schools were asked to discontinue the survey prior to the questions concerning transformational scholarship. Additional research could include, surveying faculty members specifically from non-sectarian schools, surveying graduate students to determine their views of transformational scholarship and if the research is valued in the classroom, surveying administrators to determine if they would be willing to invest university budget dollars to support transformational scholarship, and surveying teaching faculty to identify transformational research topics in which they are interested.

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