



PROJECT INVITATION, RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL VALUES COMPATIBLE WITH COOPERATIVE LEARNING

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To cite this article:

Arato, F., Davidson, N., Sharan, Y. & Stevahn, L. (2023). Project Invitation, Religious and Spiritual Values Compatible with Cooperative Learning. *Autonomy and Responsibility Journal of Educational Sciences* 8(2). 85-88. DOI: [10.15170/AR.2023.8.2.7](https://doi.org/10.15170/AR.2023.8.2.7).

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.15170/AR.2023.8.2.7>.

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Project Invitation, Religious and Spiritual Values Compatible with Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is an educational methodology developed in the secular world. Its roots are in the fields of educational philosophy (Dewey 1916). Constructivism (Vygotsky 1934,2012) sociology (Cohen 1986) and psychology, e.g. Deutsch (1949), Sharan (1980), Slavin (1983), Johnson and Johnson (1989). Cooperative learning research has shown distinct advantages in its application in secular education including academic achievement, development of higher order thinking skills, self-esteem and self-confidence as learners, intergroup relations including friendships across racial and ethnic boundaries, development of interpersonal skills, and the ability to take the perspective of another person.

After fifty-plus years of secular engagement with cooperative learning, some of us finally realized that the key concepts and values of CL have compatible values in spiritual and religious traditions around the world. To explore this notion, we are assembling a small team of authors who each have enthusiasm for cooperative practices and personal knowledge of a particular religious or spiritual tradition. The goal is to write a series of articles on the spiritual/religious values consistent with CL (which might later comprise an edited volume).

The traditions would include but not be limited to:

- Christianity (e.g. Catholicism, Protestant denominations, Society of Friends, United Church of Christ...)
- Unitarian/Universalism, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Johrei, Bahai, Islam, Sufism
- Indigenous peoples, e.g. Maori in New Zealand, Native American,
- Others?

To get started with this piece on spiritual values connected with CL, we can look for pertinent quotations including spiritual, ethical, or moral precepts in varied religious or spiritual traditions. We can search for quotes using key words aligned with cooperation. Here is a starter list of pertinent words. Please feel free to add to it.

- Cooperation, Collaboration, Working together, Interdependence, Mutual support, Community
- Social skills, Teamwork skills
- Equity, Diversity, Social justice
- Peace, Dialogue, Conflict resolution
- Caring, Compassion, Friendship or friendliness, Love
- Unity, Oneness, Interconnectedness

- Wisdom, Deep Understanding, Mindfulness
- Faith, Stewardship

The research methodology will employ qualitative methods based on analysis of texts in the varied religious or spiritual traditions. We will be looking for occurrences of keywords related to cooperation, collaboration, working together, and so on. Starting with the key words, we will identify pertinent quotations of sayings and illustrative passages. For each religious or spiritual tradition, we will weave together the quotations into a coherent whole.

Alternative wordings

Authors of the various papers might choose slightly different wordings for the title and descriptions in their papers.

- For example, values might also be labeled as ideals, precepts, beliefs, teachings, concepts, notions, ...
- Then one can say underlying CL, compatible with CL, connected with CL, in commonality with CL, consistent with CL, supporting CL,...

So one among many versions would say, spiritual and religious values supporting CL. There are many possible choices. Do you have a favorite wording? What resonates with you?

We are seeking for scholarly papers that will be radiant, illuminating, inspiring, uplifting, renewing...etc. The papers should be engaging at all three levels: heart, mind, and spirit. These desired conditions should flow naturally, given the infinite, all-encompassing Source of the religions and spiritual movements.

These papers should not be pedestrian scholarship. The papers should clearly elucidate the religious and spiritual values that support cooperation in life and in learning. Of course, they need to be factually, and conceptually accurate, and well-grounded and documented in the sacred texts. A strong collection of quotations of sayings and passages will lead naturally to an illuminating paper that touches the heart, mind, and spirit of the reader.

Progress report:

The Catholic paper is complete and submitted to a journal.

The Jewish team has a good fourth draft.

The team on Indian Sanatan dharma culture is exploring ideas.

Forming new teams

Would you be interested in forming a new team to explore the relationship between CL and a spiritual or religious approach in which you are deeply involved?

If so, please contact Neil Davidson at neild@umd.edu

Publication goals

As of now, our plan is to publish separate papers in appropriate spiritual or religious journals. Doing so will encourage the spread of CL to religious or spiritual traditions that might not otherwise consider it. And each paper will share illuminating insights that deepen our understanding of the fundamental values of CL.

Might these publications eventually be brought together in an edited volume? That would depend on our ability to form a strong editorial team. Are there any volunteers who want to write a pertinent chapter, who are capable and experienced editors, and who want to take on major responsibility for producing this edited volume?

Comments, pro and con, and suggestions on this project are welcome. Please send them to Neil Davidson, neild@umd.edu, and to Ferenc Arato, koopcsop@gmail.com.

And of course, we will continue our main emphasis on CL In the secular world of education.

Cooperatively yours,

The NICLEE Cooperative Leadership Team,
Ferenc Arato, Neil Davidson, Yael Sharan, Laurie Stevahn