SOCIAL WORK & CHRISTIANITY

WHICH WAY?

NACSW

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SOCIAL WORK & CHRISTIANITY

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Social Work & Christianity (SWC) is a refereed journal published quarterly in March, June, September, and December by the North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW). The purpose of SWC is to support and encourage the growth of social workers in the ethical integration of Christian faith and professional practice. *SWC* welcomes articles, shorter contributions, book reviews, and letters which deal with issues related to the integration of faith and professional social work practice and other professional concerns which have relevance to Christianity.

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Which Way?

Peter Szto

*T*HIS IS A COMMON QUERY WE ASK ABOUT DIRECTIONS. Should I go left? Should I go right, or remain confused? Back in the day, Noah asked, should I get to Nineveh or travel to Joppa? Despite a host of modern inventions like car navigation and Google maps, decision making is still challenging. So true for social workers as well. Career decisions, finding the right soulmate, making practicum choices, and resolving ethical dilemmas do not come easy.

Indeed, life is full of unknown risks about what to do and where to go. I debated for years whether to remain a psychiatric aide or to follow my mother's nudging and pursue the MSW. I deliberated months on end on a dissertation topic. Should I focus on mental health? Should I do original research in China? Endless questioning! And I still ponder today what I want to be when I grow up.

Questions about directions in life are really questions involving faith. How to see what's around the corner without a periscope? How to see into the future without reliable and credible evidence? How to have conviction on things not seen? How to believe in something without good data? In an age that demands material evidence and proof, the validity of biblical faith seems far-fetched, if not outlandish. Yet Christians in social work are people of faith who believe in a resurrected redeemer who enables us to see through a glass darkly. Christian vision can penetrate the fog of faithlessness, doubt, and skepticism with an assurance of salvation and sanctification. The author of Hebrews puts it this way, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (English Standard Version, 2001, Hebrews 11:1). One theologian on the certainty of our faith said, "The only proof for the existence of God is that without God you couldn't prove anything." (Van Til, n.d.). It is truly amazing how God's grace enables us to see His Kingdom through the eyes of faith. It is this faith that provides us direction. And finally, the abolitionist hymn

writer, John Newton (1772), affirmed this same certainty in song when he wrote, "I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see." Our God continues to provide us direction. I pray you find direction in this issue through the authors and their words.

Peace,
Peter ❖

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A Foot in Both Worlds: Overcoming Barriers to Systemization Between Secular and Sectarian Organizations in Homelessness

Jennifer Frank

In 1987, the United States federal government began funding homelessness services. In the decades that followed, it mandated their systemization based on "best practices." Divergence from these practice modalities jeopardized federal support. In Emerson County, the rural county discussed here, this initiative encountered resistance to its narrow definition of eligible clients, certain best practices, and the terms of acceptable systemization. Dissenters preferred broader eligibility and were committed to a long-term transitional housing model that required clients to participate in services that helped them become "housing ready." Most dissenters were evangelical Protestant agencies that emphasized the power of Christian "transformation," which transitional housing was well-suited to support. This model ran counter to the federal best practice of "rapid rehousing," which made services optional and dispensed with transitional housing. This paper analyzes how local system builders, committed to inclusion and communitarian governance, consistently improvised cooperation to accommodate both federal rules and dissenting practices. Social workers seeking to make effective organizational connections in homelessness services might consider strategies of communitarianism, a respect for the limits of strategic accommodation, and the utilization of individuals with a "foot in both worlds" who can communicate effectively across difference.

Keywords: homelessness; Housing First; faith-based organizations; qualitative research

I N THE EARLY 1980S, THE VISIBILITY OF HOMELESSNESS became widely concerning and anti-homelessness advocacy intensified, which resulted in the first significant piece of federal legislation addressing homelessness since the Federal Transient Act of the 1930s (Kusmer, 2003). In 1987, the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act began a shift in community efforts to address the destitute. Guidelines in the McKinney Act clarified what constituted as homelessness as well as the types of services that would address it. This federal initiative encountered different local organizations pursuing opposing approaches to mitigating homelessness. In Emerson County, the fictional name given to the largely rural site of this study, creation of an intervention system in line with federal policies and their associated rules took years of continuous negotiation. At each turn of federal requirements, Emerson's system builders contended with constituent programs deeply divided about philosophy and practice, usually according to their secular or religious purposes. Most secular organizations adjusted readily to federal mandates, but Protestant, evangelical organizations balked. Federal funds were predicated on broad collaboration, but if system builders pushed federal requirements on these faith-based organizations (FBOs) too assiduously they risked losing necessary service partners. Skirting the rules too obviously risked funding.

Several evangelical FBOs provided services to the homeless population in Emerson County, including a century-old rescue mission that controlled the majority of shelter beds. While they were legal nonprofits and took no public money, their aims were inherently religious, and they were largely uncompromising about their program methods. Consistent with David Campbell's (2002) observation contra the assumptions of Charitable Choice advocates and others (e.g., Monsma, 1996), these evangelical organizations stood apart on cultural grounds, not because of legal or regulatory concerns (see also Ebaugh et al., 2006). They wanted to help homeless people, were not completely opposed to all forms of cooperation, and knew that Emerson needed a secure flow of federal dollars. However, they were not interested in any bargaining that might align them with secular aims and methods that could divert them from their mission.

Previous research examined the nature of accommodation and resistance between nonprofit grantees of federal funding for homelessness services and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s authority to implement its priorities in local communities (Frank & Baumohl, 2021). This paper analyzes how the system builders of Emerson County achieved success among and between secular and sectarian organizations who, at the outset, did not even have agreement as to how to define homelessness. To meet these goals, the system builders of Emerson County drew on familiar communitarian principles enacted through longstanding relationships among people

who volunteered or worked for local homelessness agencies, church congregations, and coordinating bodies. They moved through different positions in this network and several had worked for both FBOs and secular agencies. They participated in committees of the county inter-faith council, the community mental health agency, the community action agency, and the United Way, all key actors in system building. They had a "foot in both worlds," as respondents put it. In the end, they found ways to engage the evangelical FBOs without compromising them. The system builders agreed that "doing what was best for the community" was paramount and thus created "concurrent systems" of service in Emerson that finessed some specific requirements of federal funding while honoring the spirit of federal intent.[1]

Methodology

Study Site: Emerson County[2]

Settled in the early 18th century, Emerson County is home to 500,000 residents of 60 municipalities, with a city area of about 60,000 residents. Historically, deep cultural, political, and racial differences persist between the county and the city of Emerson. The surrounding county is predominantly rural and deeply religious, with the settlement of many Christian denominations, notably Anabaptists and Mennonites. While the county is reliably Republican, many Mennonite groups, though religiously conservative, are fervent supporters of social action and sometimes a more progressive vision of social justice. These groups spurred many of the social welfare initiatives that followed the advent of homelessness in the 1980s. However politically and theologically conservative, evangelical organizations were important and sometimes refractory participants in Emerson's response to homelessness. In the following discussion, I have distinguished them as EFBOs.

The city stands in contrast to the county politically, religiously, and culturally. The county is also materially better off than the city. The unemployment rate runs significantly lower, in 2015 it was 7% compared with the city's rate of 14%. The county's annual median household income of $57,000 is much higher than the city's average of $34,000. About 3% of the county population utilizes cash assistance compared with 10% of city residents, and only 9% of county residents are on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) compared with 30% of city residents. Consequently, the public perception that poverty and homelessness in Emerson County are city issues is relatively accurate.

Data Collection

Case studies are useful in understanding phenomena as they relate to a specific case or unusual instance (Yin, 2003). This study was an historical

case study of one local community that achieved a successful integration of disparate homelessness services providers, in an area marked by both secular and sectarian organizations, situated in a very religiously-oriented community. This case study tells the story of how such a community was able to bridge organizational and ideological divides in order to collaborate at the systemic level.

The researcher conducted a total of 33 qualitative interviews over a six-month period. Interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes and several respondents completed a follow up interview. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed by hand. Transcriptions were uploaded to Nvivo for analysis. At the outset, a purposive sampling strategy was employed to identify potential informants. Because the study covered several decades of homelessness services (1990s-2015), the researcher crafted a timeline of local events to organize the data. Informants were then associated with the relevant time periods, according to their interaction in the homelessness service field during a particular time, and questions were tailored accordingly. That is, depending on when they worked in the field questions about particular events or projects had more or less relevance and the interview guide was tailored. Respondents were asked to share the names of other relevant informants who might be important to speak with using a snowball sample technique. In addition to qualitative interviews, documentation, such as relevant report, meeting minutes, flyers, and media materials, was collected to triangulate the data generated by the interviews.

Data Analysis

Based on an initial scan of themes from the interviews, a rough scaffolding of critical time periods was created to help organize subsequent data. These time periods roughly related to critical events, such as policy implementation or ideological shifts in practice. Documents and transcripts were first organized in Nvivo into the time periods to which they related. Interview transcripts and supplemental materials were uploaded to Nvivo for qualitative analysis. A grounded theory approach to data analysis was used for the qualitative interview transcripts. Line by line coding was used to analyze the interviews which produced over 200 unique codes. These codes were collapsed into major themes from the study which informed the development of the theoretical framing implicated here. The overarching themes about divides included: the definition of homelessness, Housing First, ending homelessness, and the issue of best practices. Themes that seemed to indicate useful strategies in bridging the secular/sectarian divide included: "making it work" as a community, the development of "concurrent systems," the notion of doing what's best for the community, and as the title of the paper

indicates, employing the relational sensibilities of individuals with "a foot in both worlds." These themes, and in some cases specific phrases that respondents used, describe the nature of how collaboration between organizations came to function effectively.

Literature Review
Federal Homelessness Policy Demands Community Collaboration

Because they were set apart from mainstream programs, the McKinney Act of 1987 created what seemed to be a parallel universe of homelessness services. In most places the programs that resulted were an array of independent, nonprofit agencies pursuing divergent ways to serve people with complex needs often incidental to the agencies' primary goals (Hambrick & Rog, 2000; Khadduri, 2016; Oakley & Dennis, 1996). This act defined eligibility for care solely by housing status-sleeping rough or in a place not intended for human habitation. Homeless people represented a novel set of clients for agencies with no housing experience (Culhane & Metraux, 2008). In other words, homelessness was previously viewed as an artifact of the poverty experience, something that happens to you if you are poor enough. The McKinney Act and its array of homelessness interventions which operated outside of mainstream services (e.g. public assistance) began to shift the focus to homeless people as a unique new type of social service clientele, who needed a specific set of programs aimed at alleviating their housing problems. The McKinney Act defined homelessness pragmatically, connecting this specific definition with program eligibility and eventually funding. As time went on, HUD required communities to work together, eventually calculating homelessness prevalence and service outcomes at the community level rather than the program level.

In 1996, intensifying earlier requirements for continued funding, McKinney mandated that a broad complement of community agencies act in concert to deal with homelessness and demonstrate their collaboration. Every community with McKinney funds was required to develop a Continuum of Care (COC) (Watson, 1996). This change affected over 500 communities and applied significant pressure for detailed system planning and changed the nature of funded services (Dennis et al., 2000).

A service-rich transitional housing homelessness services infrastructure dominated the organizational landscape entering the 1990s, with stays in transitional housing lasting upwards of 2 years. While transitional housing programs varied, services usually included case management, goal setting, health services, life skills training, and employment assistance (Burt 2006; 2010). Predicated on the contending belief that homelessness was the result of deep and enduring personal troubles (Baum & Burnes, 1993), shifting away from this modality of transitional housing would become

a problem, especially given the investments and "path dependency" transitional housing represented (Pierson, 2000).

In 2000 and again in 2001, the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) announced at its annual conference the ambitious goal to "end homelessness" in 10 years. The NAEH's 10-year blueprint initiated a process for moving people out of shelters and into permanent housing as quickly as possible. Communities were also to begin data collection at the community level. These strategies required that communities facilitate systemic collaboration (Colangelo, 2004; NAEH, 2006). Localities were encouraged to follow federal initiatives and best practices, such as developing their own 10-year plans to end homelessness. However, although the federal government encouraged local plans and arranged technical assistance, it provided no financial support beyond that offered already by McKinney (Rice & Sard, 2007; Suchar, 2014). To end homelessness in 10 years, local communities were strongly urged to adopt a "housing first" approach (Gulcur et al., 2007; Tsemberis et al., 2004; 2010). Housing First programs promote providing housing as the first service, and usually use a standard lease agreement with traditional rental housing (NAEH, 2016). In 2010, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) released its 10-year strategic plan to end homelessness called *Opening Doors* (USICH, 2015). The federal plan reflected a preferred focus on Housing First as the strategy of choice for communities to address homelessness (USICH, 2015). It prioritized preventing and ending veteran homelessness in 2015, ending chronic homelessness by 2017, ending family homelessness by 2020, and establishing community plans to end all types of homelessness.

The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH) reinforced several federal initiatives that had been piloted within communities in the years prior through the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HUD, 2009; 2011; 2016). These federal policy shifts in HEARTH with which local communities needed to contend included an emphasis on a specific definition of homelessness, a preference for Housing First modalities (now called Rapid Re-housing or RRH), and systemic community coordination including outcomes tracked via Homelessness Management Information Systems (HMIS) and measured at the community level. Pressures to conform around these issues would become points of contention between faith-based and secular agencies.

Faith-Based Social Services

Social services in the United States have a long history among communities of faith, with many long-standing social welfare programs having sectarian roots. While many traditionally religious organizations

have moved away from these origins in recent years (e.g. YWCA) many religious organizations still persist and in some areas dominate the social service scene.

Public funds are essential to human service nonprofits, including many committed to traditions of faith (Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Monsma 1996). This was true even before various Clinton-era "Charitable Choice" laws (1996-2000) erased some limitations on FBOs' eligibility for federal support (Ammerman, 2005). To comply with Constitutional requirements concerning church-state relations, religious nonprofits must abide by Internal Revenue Service rules and use public funds only for purposes that are not inherently religious. They may not compel worship and must provide clients with choices about where to be served (White House Office, 2001). However, FBOs using public money for human services are not routinely monitored for unconstitutional expressions of faith (Frederickson & Witt, 2011). Even so, evangelical congregations are much less likely than their mainstream counterparts to seek public funds or provide social services, whether directly or indirectly (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001; Ammerman, 2005; Ebaugh et al., 2006; 2007; Sager, 2011). Evangelical charities have long been wary of losing their autonomy through cooperation with secular or religiously liberal systemizers. By the 1890s, Catholic, Jewish, and liberal Protestant leaders cooperated readily with non-denominational charity organizers, but evangelicals kept a sometimes-hostile distance. "We've had enough of this godless social service nonsense!" roared the famous evangelist Billy Sunday in 1915 (Marty, 1980, p. 465).

Among evangelical FBOs, rescue missions are inconsistent in their dedication to human services, but not in their rejection of government money or their tendency to operate as closed systems. Before World War I, the Salvation Army and other missions attending to the poor and homeless were notably aloof from system building and emerging standards of practice in the secular world. They fought publicly and occasionally with charity organizers seeking to impose on matters practice methods, administrative formality, local accountability, and financial transparency (see Carstens 1907a, 1907b; McKinley, 1986, p. 73-74). In terms of secular collaboration, Carsten (1907a) notes that the Salvation Army was "content to work at cross purposes rather than join hands with others, for fear of indirectly subjecting its work to others' scrutiny" (p. 119).

A century later, in a blunt critique of federal systemizers of services to people experiencing homelessness, the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions (AGRM) observed that while some missions enjoyed a healthy synergy with local government, in other cities the programmatic requirements of federal funding and the general federal "influence" had soured the public's attitude toward missions. Such perceived insult to their

mission resulted in further retreat from relationships with government (AGRM, 2014).

Findings

The findings from this case study indicate the strategies employed by one local community to bridge these organizational divides between EFBOs and secular organizations and how to define the problem, how to address it, and how to work together as a community.

Themes from 33 qualitative interviews provided the following findings for this study. These findings indicate that a variety of structures, events, and individuals acted as the influential and relational conduits to produce success in addressing homelessness. The study's findings are organized by the systemic divides that had the potential to fracture the community's homelessness services system: the definition of homelessness, Housing First, Ending Homelessness, and conflicts regarding what constitutes Best Practices. The discussion that follows will explicate the strategies and structures employed by the community to successfully overcome these divides.

In Emerson, the prospects of McKinney funding meant that organizations that had primarily been operating autonomously would need to convene around the issue of homelessness. In the early 1990s, a small group of representatives from primarily secular agencies began meeting together to discuss the issue. Often framed as "case consultation" this group eventually became a decision-making entity and was often referred to by many (if not most respondents) as "the table." As time moved forward in Emerson, conflicts in ideology and practice would be dealt with at "the table" and strategies to getting stakeholders "to the table" and the distribution of money "on the table" were paramount.

The flexible membership of Emerson's Interagency Council for the Homeless (ICH), which hosted the table in the early years, fostered such informality. The ICH grew out of the case conference meetings and was a network for discussion and brainstorming with flexible and informal membership. According to the director of Sunrise Community Services (a secular agency that grew from Mennonite concern with racial discrimination in housing), it operated "like the Unitarians, you just come" (Sunrise Respondent #2, 6/2015). It encouraged inclusion and equality; roles were undefined and tasks taken up ad hoc.

Prior to federal mandates, coordination of homelessness services in Emerson was achieved through informal mutual adjustments discussed at the table. In the early 1990s, Emerson's McKinney funds, almost exclusively from HUD for emergency shelter, were administered by the county housing agency, which solicited proposals and made awards. The first joint HUD application was written in 1996 by the ICH with

help from the United Way. The City was the grantee, as per HUD policy. As federal requirements increased, the ICH grew and undertook more complex tasks, but remained informal and only vaguely hierarchical. The yearly COC application was a collaborative product, and the county mental health agency became the grantee, receiving McKinney funds for administration. Agencies funded through the grant received their money directly from HUD. In 2008, with finalization of a local 10-year plan, a larger and more formal ICH became what was called the Emerson County Coalition to End Homelessness (Coalition). Decisions made at this table had serious implications.

By 2012, the Coalition used a committee of members without conflicts of interest to rank programs for HUD funding with a standard tool attuned to HUD's priorities and the measurable goals it set for the attributes and outcomes of community systems. To achieve the maximum HUD allocation, a local system had to align closely with HUD priorities.

Over time, differences in ideology around the nature of homelessness became evident. Organizations that were not receiving money from HUD did not feel compelled to restrict their eligibility to those meeting HUD's definition of homelessness. As HUD shifted in preferred modality for addressing homelessness from the model of transitional housing of the 1990s, to that of Housing First in the early 2000s, organizations pushed back on this as well. Many religious organizations seemed to prefer longer term stays in transitional housing that lent themselves to building relationships that they hoped would be "transformative" in people's lives (Kings Way Respondent #1, 10/2015). These practice differences also seemed to relate to ideological differences about what may have produced homelessness in the first place. Solidarity within the group was strengthened by the necessity to work around federal requirements that threatened their determined accommodation of irreducible differences.

Emerson's collaborators had to reckon with federal demands in light of various divisions in ideology and practice that were discovered around the table. Programs around the table either received HUD funds or did not; they were faith-based or secular; they served homeless people stymied by a variety of circumstances and tended to understand the larger problem through the experience of their clients, for whom they were advocates. Sanctuary House, for example, worked with survivors of domestic violence and had a different perspective on services and housing from the YWCA, a low-rent landlord for poor women generally, or the Barbara Finkey House, which worked with those suffering from HIV/AIDS.[4]

HUD's definition of homelessness

The systemization implemented by the Coalition, particularly concerning who could be served and how, reached its zenith with the

implementation of a process for what was called Centralized Intake. In Emerson, this was named the Centralized Intake and Referral Program (CIRP) and it began in 2013. CIRP deployed a standard assessment tool across the system to effectively restrict services to only those who met HUD's definition of literal homelessness.

Programs serving those who did not meet HUD's definition balked at their clients' exclusion from other agencies' services and resources, especially lengthy rent subsidies for which RRH clients were eligible. Agencies without HUD funds could serve a broader clientele and do so in whatever ways they thought fit. Religious or secular, these non-HUD funded organizations were resolved to serve households that were doubled-up – living with friends/family – (and thus not homeless by HUD's definition) and determined to provide intensive services focused on relationships, healing, and long-term goals. These program features made them different, and in their opinion, filled a gap in the service environment and reflected what their funders wanted to see. As a respondent from the secular House of New Beginnings put it, transitional housing programs performed a critical role by helping those "doubled and tripled-up families that are piling on top of each other" because of HUD's constraints (House of New Beginnings, 9/2015). The King's Way transitional housing program, working with church congregations to mentor families through financial struggles and homelessness, cited the U.S. Department of Education's definition of homelessness as a basis for accepting families in doubled-up arrangements. These "invisible homeless" included in the Department of Education's definition, which affected only schools, produced almost five times the population defined by HUD (State Department of Education, 2016)[5]

Resistance to HUD's definition had two further touch points. First, it was federally imposed, a sore spot with organizations proud of taking no public funding and skeptical of the federal government's contributions to a good society. Similarly, while HUD sought to restrict limited resources to those with greatest need, some agencies rejected this basis for rationing, believing that households with lesser need often were better investments because they could more likely sustain housing (Kings Way, Respondent #1, 10/2015; Harmony House, 9/2015).

Housing First

Programs with HUD money were obliged to play by HUD's rules. After the HEARTH Act, this meant relocating homeless people into permanent housing while providing optional services (e.g. education, financial counseling, treatment). Organizations without HUD funding had their own stakeholders to consider as they developed their programs, with HUD's priorities only a concern in terms of the larger county's application

to HUD being supported by their cooperation. Organizations wanted their clients to have access to resources in the community that met their needs, but the friction of this tradeoff was evident at the point when programs were asked to change. Further, EFBOs in particular pushed back on the notion of Housing First at its core, preferring the longer-term stays offered by transitional housing programs, which offered more time for the relationship building that they felt was conducive to "transformation" for families (Kings Way Respondent #1, 10/2015).

Ending Homelessness

The Coalition's Evangelical Faith-Based Organizations (EFBOs) rejected the narrow scope of HUD's definition of homelessness, its programmatic focus on "chronic homelessness" (an administrative category that includes severe impairment of some sort, usually mental illness), and its demand for rapid rehousing of the literal homeless. Further, EFBOs often held that *ending* homelessness was not possible. As one respondent put it, they had in mind the "theological piece," likely *John 12:8*: "You will always have the poor among you" (Kings Way, 10/2015). They understood poverty (and homelessness, more specifically) to be an inevitable aspect of the human condition and necessary to elicit works of charity and love that redeem both giver and recipient. From this perspective, service to the poor demonstrates a commitment to faith and its institutions and *only incidentally* provides a place to stay. Homelessness results more from a breakdown of relationships (with self, with others, with God) than unjust material conditions (GRRM Respondent #1, 9/2015). EFBOs nodded to deprivation, but their services favored long-term healing relationships and they were committed to their point of view. For example, promotional materials from one EFBO, The Lighthouse, shared this message:

> When church communities commit to build mutual, authentic friendship with homeless women and children, they demonstrate obedience, experience transformation, and connect with Jesus in new ways that revitalize their faith. Churches that worship together as rich, poor, and middle class can experience spiritual and relational transformation and renewal (The Lighthouse 2016, 1).

As a caseworker from another EFBO, King's Way, emphasized that housing is "a vehicle for transformation of someone's life" (Kings Way Respondent #2, 10/2015). While other secular supporters of transitional housing valued transformation, the EFBOs' focus on spiritual transformation through Christ seemed to set them apart. EFBO staff spoke passionately about how their programs sought to connect with clients.

They desired to "come alongside" them in their journey and provide a relational context for healing. As the minister of The Great Refuge Rescue Mission (GRRM) explained:

> Mother Teresa said our biggest deficit is relational poverty and…we work with people in financial poverty and housing poverty but really we're all disconnected from God, self, and others (GRRM Respondent #1, 9/2015).

Within this healing relationship, rigorous accountability was needed to produce the desired result. The counseling component of King's Way transitional housing required clients to think hard about choices and consequences, noting that it was the counselor's job to "walk alongside" clients. King's Way and others (including some secular agencies) believed that "low-demand" programs like rapid rehousing were inconsistent with a philosophy of accountability.

Providing services was also seen as a way to mobilize the church. Congregants who aid the poor were engaging in a religious practice by doing so. One EFBO noted that it was their mission to provide these opportunities, perhaps more so than providing services for clients. The King's Way's director noted that the tangible services that they provide directly to clients is the "secondary piece" or a "vehicle for the church to engage their neighbors to seek life transformation" (Kings Way Respondent #1, 10/2015).

Discussion

The findings above explored the nature of the major rifts within the homelessness services community, particularly between secular HUD funded agencies and non-HUD funded EFBOs, that needed to be bridged. These findings delineated what the national trends explained in the literature review looked like on the ground, in practice, in a local community. The discussion that follows will explore the strategies that Emerson County used to successfully bridge those divides.

Doing What's Best for the Community

Social workers making organizational connections in homelessness services might consider how to best frame what could be a shared goal. Here, appeals to collaboration that nodded to "doing what is best for the community" seemed to be heard. To facilitate optimal coordination, it was acknowledged that agencies came to the table for different reasons. Some mainly pursued the interests of their organization and occasionally said as much, but most claimed to be doing what was best for the community or pursuing a confluence of organizational and community goals. All agencies wanted to know what others were doing. Awareness

of the organizational field and policy development facilitated appropriate positioning in terms of opportunity and risk. GRRM did not seek HUD funding, yet its director observed: "If there is a committee controlling millions of dollars and developing a 10-year plan to end homelessness and you are the executive director of the Mission, you want to be at that table" (GRRM Respondent #3, 8/2015).

Agencies that foreswore HUD money nonetheless recognized its value. They came to the table so as not to interfere. HUD requires that non-HUD funded agencies be included in local planning through mandatory COC components, such as participation in HMIS and the Housing Inventory Chart (HIC). Representatives of non-HUD funded programs clearly understood the importance of their participation to the community at large. The community's large evangelical rescue mission, though they received no federal dollars, had the majority of the shelter beds in the county. The executive director of The Lighthouse, an EFBO for homeless women and children noted that even though they were not getting money, they participated because it was part of their organizational mission. She noted that part of that was to participate with HMIS even though their funding did not mandate participation. She stated: "that's partly what HMIS is all about so that we can track data and so that we can look at what services are needed." It seemed then that HUD funds and HMIS data were a proxy for collective power. Non-HUD funded organizations did not want to interfere with the potential of these resources.

Protecting Organizational Interests & Identity

Social workers making organizational connections in homelessness services might consider how to encourage EFBOs to articulate the limits of their organizational accommodation. Here, EFBOs needed to consider meeting internal goals despite the demands of others. For some this meant remaining true to a mission and methods at odds with HUD. For others, it meant falling in line with HUD's best practices. While agencies depending on HUD needed to demonstrate what HUD looked for, non-HUD funded programs had to accommodate their own funders. Typically, these funders were drawn to these organizations because of their missions. Change, especially where tenets of faith were concerned, risked support of their own funders. It was essential to avoid mission drift either by resisting trends or convincing funders that change was consistent with their faith. For example, EFBOs were troubled when asked to restrict eligibility based on HUD criteria, repurpose their transitional housing units, or accept referrals only from the centralized intake program.

Organizational interests also seemed to include retaining the authority to select clients. To prevent recurrence of homelessness, King's Way required stable and adequate income from employment or long-term

public benefits like Supplemental Security Income (SSI) that would not "disappear" like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or child or spousal support. Substance use, sometimes detected by drug testing prior to admission, could also prohibit eligibility at King's Way and elsewhere.

Partnership Vs. Collaboration

As resources for non-HUD eligible clients became scarce, through RRH and subpopulation prioritization, non-HUD funded programs were forced to seriously assess their beliefs. EFBOs in particular did not appreciate pressure to compromise, and several went through periods of reflection on their organizational values. GRRM spent over two years clarifying its mission, vision, and values and developed programming and staffing accordingly. The identities of the EFBOs were further strengthened through collaboration among themselves as a subsystem within the COC through a process of deliberate coalition building and mission work. As a result, the EFBOs began to strengthen the bonds among themselves. Ultimately, their caucus became a Coalition subcommittee. By clarifying their missions, the EFBOs strengthened their identities and underscored their differences with the Coalition's other partners. However, newly confident in their commitments, they were more likely to participate at the table, not less. King's Way established what their relationship to the system should look like based on a clear if idiosyncratic distinction between "partnership" and "collaboration" (Kings Way Respondent #1, 10/2015). While partnership was analogous to "playing softball together," collaboration was more like creating "a softball team" (Kings Way Respondent #1, 10/2015). King's Way saw the potential for many partnerships between EFBOs and other organizations, but collaboration was reserved for other EFBOs because their "ministries are on the same page as we are." King's Way would "partner" with non-evangelical organizations and "collaborate" with other EFBOs because "the motive for serving would be the same…. We have to be careful with real collaboration because we need to be true to our mission" (Kings Way Respondent #1, 10/2015).

This process complete, staff felt more able to defend their point of view at the table. Clearly defining their places in the county system were critical to occupying a seat at the table confidently and without compromise. As the president of GRRM explained, the "fear of compromise" is strong in evangelical circles and threats to their adherence to Christian values undermine collaboration (GRRM Respondent #1, 9/2015). "Knee-jerk defensiveness" needed to be avoided so that collaboration might occur when possible. Being at the table demonstrated "team play." Independence was interpreted as

bad citizenship and bad practice. As a mainstream minister observed, "working with the homeless population is not a competition, it is a collaboration." Even so, funding realities often made it seem like both. Seated at the same table, agencies were faced with simultaneous requirements to share and compete. Previously, they could act alone and avoid this reality, but at the table, the workings of their programs became visible to each other. It was easy to see where duplication might exist, what worked and what did not by HUD's metrics, where agencies were competing for funds, where additional funds were available, and how resources might be joined for the greater good.

Particularly for EFBOs, sometimes making it work meant establishing inter-organizational relationships and sometimes it meant pulling away from them. For example, the development and implementation of a winter shelter and Community Drop-in Center (CDIC) involved secular Coalition members, GRRM, and the larger EFBO community. Providing safe accommodations for those sleeping rough in the cold directly engaged the churches and their enthusiastic volunteers. The CDIC brought GRRM to the table because the program would serve and keep occupied during the day many chronically homeless people already involved with the Mission's shelter. Through the persistent work of the CDIC subcommittee, with its representatives from various organizations and multiple members from GRRM, the Mission agreed not only to be a partner on the project, but to host it on Mission property in spite of the program's low-demand character. This was a complete departure from GRRM's insistence on sobriety and chapel attendance and represented a huge system-building success. However, a partnership between King's Way and Sunrise Community Services that initially developed due to resource limitations, couldn't bear the weight of different program aims. In such collaboration, Sunrise provided budget counseling, case management, and housing placement for King's Way's transitional housing clients. But as the shift to RRH commenced, supportive services like Sunrise's Toward Independence Program focused on housing homeless families as quickly as possible. This conflicted with King's Way's goal of longer-term personal transformation through accountability. As a result, King's Way concluded that it was better to do its own case management and recruit church mentors to provide budget counseling rather than collaborate. In the end, social workers making organizational connections in homelessness services might consider how EFBOs define collaboration and partnership and allow them to move toward one or both on their own terms. Pushing organizations harshly or coercing them to change their programs in a way that fail to align with their missions could be counterproductive to systematization.

"A Foot in Both Worlds"

Consistent participation of EFBOs was predicated upon individuals skilled in emphasizing commonalities across the secular and sacred boundaries. Because getting partners around the table was a "purely invitational thing," engaging groups with no financial incentive to participate needed to be built through personal relationships. These generally involved persons of faith working in secular organizations and persons of faith who worked in an EFBO who could accurately empathize with the motivations of the other. These individuals were often said to have a "foot in both worlds" or to be a hybrid.

Organizations were referred to in the same manner. For example, Sunrise Community Services, founded by Mennonites in the 1960s, was not considered a EFBO by the 1990s. Much of its support continued to come from the faith community, but its mission was secular. Sunrise, as its executive explained, came from a "faith perspective" but appreciated that homelessness was about public policy failure. Sunrise services sought to "hold [clients] accountable," but recognized the influence of mental illness, cognitive ability, and structural forces on their housing situation. Many of those employed at Sunrise belonged to a faith community but served in a secular organization concerned with social justice outcomes that were the point of their service, not incidental to recruiting clients to their faith. As a result, individuals employed by Sunrise seemed to have the useful skill of communicating in both spheres effectively and were said to have "a foot in both worlds."

Similarly, GRRM's president in the immediate post-HEARTH era could straddle the cultures. Open, jovial, friendly, and able to appreciate different perspectives, he was inclined more than his predecessors at the Mission to keep a foot in both worlds. He welcomed discussions about the diversity and complexity of the homeless experience, finding them particularly useful to expose stereotypes and damaging assumptions. He emphasized that appreciation went both ways, noting that United Way's liaison to the Coalition, who did not identify as a person of faith, demonstrated patience, kindness, and acceptance of those who did. This promoted collaboration.

> [The United Way liaison] was critical because the religious community is so big here. ... A guy that just wants to write off the religious community as ... prejudiced and insular and as though they had nothing to offer [would be problematic]. Even if he didn't resonate with the personal perceived value system and all that kind of stuff. ... I mean, a guy like [him] allowed us to learn how to hang in the community, participate in the process. I look at him as a pretty cool guy.

These relationships could mediate serious conflicts. In 2014, GRRM experienced a financial crisis and hired a new president from outside the community to overhaul the organization. He closed multiple programs, including a transitional housing program for women in a neighboring county, and for most of his short tenure, he did not come to the table, returning the Mission to its previous insularity. Key employees who had been active at the table left the Mission during this president's term.

At this time, CIRP had recently opened and struggled with where to send people, as GRRM, the system's largest shelter, had stopped accepting referrals. The new president refused invitations to the table, but a former pastor, once a FBO director, was persistent, able to "speak his language" and engage him as an "interpretive voice" from the Coalition (Emerson Interfaith Council, 6/2015). As a result, some motives for the Mission's renewed distance became clearer (they had a mold problem), and the president came to the table for the short time he remained in the position, attending Coalition Leadership Council meetings with the ex-minister. After his departure, both GRRM's subsequent president and social worker regularly came to the table.

HUD mandates sometimes required the Coalition to request that agencies modify programs to meet a larger systemic goal. Negotiating such changes successfully was critical to making it work as a community, and many of these changes were facilitated by someone who seemed to have "a foot in both worlds." For example, as the system geared up to decrease the number of transitional units available and serve only the literal homeless, programs were asked to produce a plan to indicate how they were going to eliminate units of transitional housing. King's Way, an EFBO that provided transitional housing for families experiencing homelessness with an emphasis on "the transformation piece" initially balked at this initiative (Kings Way Respondent #1, 10/2015). To be sure, King's Way did not intend to change its program. However, in response to this potential conflict, a Sunrise employee with "a foot in both worlds" helped to negotiate a compromise. The Coalition emissary suggested a simple change in the occupancy agreement that would accommodate both "worlds." Changing the occupancy agreement to designate the first 30 days "emergency housing" allowed the clients of King's Way access to services that required, per HUD, a designation of literal homelessness. After the first 30 days, a family still at King's Way signed another agreement for transitional housing, noting the additional opportunity here for King's Way to be selective in their "intake process."[9]

Conclusion

Given the deep understanding of the ideological and practice differences among organizations, Coalition staff noted the importance

of avoiding a system completely driven by HUD's goals. In pursuit of a system that used all available resources, the Coalition employed several strategies to capitalize on goodwill and negotiate differences among members. Because progress as a community needed to be collectively tracked and the limits of organizational resistance had been tested to capacity, system builders needed to devise a new strategy to keep all of the relevant players "at the table." Because HUD funding could only be applied to households who met HUD criteria, and EFBOs demonstrated a firm understanding of the value of those resources for their clients and wanted to "do the right thing," everyone was invested in constructing a narrative that accommodated everyone. The notion of "concurrent systems" or "parallel systems" of care was a useful mechanism to delineate how organizations with diverse ideological and programmatic logistics were able to continue to function effectively. Households referred to the centralized intake who met HUD's criteria were referred to agencies that were able to serve them and households who presented at central intake that did not meet HUD's criteria were referred to agencies not bound by these distinctions.

In a small community that needed to negotiate the limits of resistance around organizational and ideological change, what could change did, and what could not change was often called something else. Emerson rewrote the narrative about their homelessness services system around this principle, noting that the front-facing community messaging was key "Years of practice behind us, we are fluid in the messaging translation" (ECCEH Respondent #2, 6/2015). This "messaging translation" carefully accommodated ideological differences and instead found common ground between differences, specific to the audience. While organizations could not necessarily agree upon what constitutes homelessness, they could agree that showing compassion to "do the right thing" was common ground. Devising commonalities was especially important to bridging the distance between evangelical and other organizations.

Emerson's system evolved in response to a set of policies and rules that applied throughout the United States, and its development was intuitively sensible. David Campbell (2002) anticipated most elements of its accommodation of EFBOs, including the important mutual socialization that must occur over a long period of time. Still, it is unknown if Emerson's system-building process resembled other efforts undertaken since the COC requirement was added to the McKinney Act in 1996. Emerson's small size, communitarian traditions, density of churches and evangelical congregations specifically, the importance of EFBOs to the success of the project, and the network of relations among system builders who could work across the secular/evangelical divide, seem to be auspicious and perhaps uncommon conditions for successful cooperation. Without them,

it is easy to imagine evangelical FBOs as determined holdouts, individually or collectively. Unlike mainstream Protestant FBOs, and those developed by Jews and Catholics, that is their history.

Implications

The process of system building between secular and sectarian organizations is not a new challenge to social workers. The Charity Organizers of the late 19th century were faced with very similar obstacles in their efforts to "systematize charities" and create more efficient social work systems (Trattner, 1999). But at the same time, their aims to provide "not alms but a friend" (Trattner, 1999, p. 96) also seems to resonate with the EBFO efforts indicated here to "come alongside" participants and help coax them toward "transformation."

Social work education programs might work to emphasize these macro and mezzo level strategies that help to finesse organizational divisions. Similarly, interpersonal micro level social work strategies, such as empathy, attentive listening, and cooperation, might be helpful tools as indicated here. The essence of communitarianism as an alternative ideology might provide common ground for the consideration of divergent organizations.

Emerson County employed several critical measures to address homelessness systemically, in light of conflicts and differences in perspective around the problem of homelessness, which might prove useful in other similar communities. The narrative of the case study shared here might have gone much differently, with splintering and service fragmentation powerful enough to harm an already marginalized population. In Emerson County, the utilization of particular individuals who were able to communicate in both secular and religious circles seemed to provide a bridge to connecting these two disparate social service worlds.

Social workers in communities experiencing divisions in perspective regarding how to interpret and address homelessness, or any other relevant social problem, might employ the skills demonstrated above. To bridge the divide between EFBOs and secular organizations, identifying individuals with "a foot in both worlds" may greatly assist in producing effective intra-organizational communication. Such individuals may have a more thorough grounding in the need of EFBOs to stay true to their mission, an understanding of the best ways to frame any potential partnership, and a particular fluency in appropriate messaging around the limits of ideological and pragmatic resistance.

Finding common ground among organizations who have different motivations for collaboration - and for providing services in the first place – is necessary. Here, identifying the shared mantra of "doing what was best for the community" seemed paramount. In other communities, this mantra might be different but similar strategies of relationship

building on shared ideals would be effective. Further, collaboration on specific projects, where resources are shared over a common goal, may help to build the intra-organizational relationships necessary for long-term collegiality and success. Social workers leading these macro efforts might consider these findings to support relevant community change efforts.

Limitations

This study encountered limitations typically seen in qualitative studies, such as the inability to thoroughly generalize the findings. Because this study relied heavily upon interviews, the ability of respondents to recall accurately events and motivations that occurred in the past was necessary. However, sometimes memories fail or are clouded by other contexts. The study relied heavily upon program and community leadership, as it was a story of organizational collaboration, and therefore, cannot provide insight into the perspectives of the individuals who utilized homelessness services programs. Future research is needed to understand the perspectives of those with lived experience. Finally, the author of this study worked within the homelessness services in this community. Having professional relationships with many of the respondents may have biased their responses. However, those longstanding relationships are what allowed this study to take place.   ❖

Endnotes

[1]Quotes are used throughout when certain phrases were used by multiple respondents and appeared as nvivo quotes that characterized explanatory themes in useful ways.

[2]Pseudonyms are used for all organizations, and I did not cite specific references for U.S. Census data to protect the anonymity of the location. Specific descriptions of the county and city are included to add context to the study and were derived through community research, which are not directly cited as to also preserve the anonymity of the location.

[3]The Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program was part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

[4]Many subpopulations of homeless clients had legitimately different needs that ultimately would result in specialized services within a larger system (Khadduri 2016), but each subpopulation also was subject to differential moral evaluation and location in a hierarchy of respectability and deservingness that created conflict among their champions (see Rosenthal 1996).

[5]I did not provide a full citation for this reference in order to obscure the identity of Emerson County. It is apparently common for EFBOs and other nonprofits outside the circle of HUD funding to emphasize their service to those neglected by government programs (see Campbell 2002; AGRM 2014). Non-HUD funded organizations in Emerson were supported by foundation grants, donations from individuals and businesses, and the financial support of the many congregations throughout the county.

[6]Annual COC funding applications required that programs be ranked in order of importance and ranking them by HUD priorities produced a higher score and greater likelihood of funding. Therefore, the Coalition scored COC programs on the outcome measures HUD required. Lagging performance jeopardized funding.

[7]The income requirement reserved the program for households with the greatest chance of becoming independent. This is a common practice in transitional housing. Without a valid way to predict future homelessness, it is impossible to know if this is unethical "creaming" or prudent risk avoidance (Lipsky 1980).

[8]The new GRRM president's reluctance to explain the circumstances or come to the table was likely due to his disinclination to cooperate with unknown locals whose evangelical commitments were not to be assumed and to whom he felt no obligation.

[9]While this change gave credence to the system's need for emergency shelter in lieu of transitional housing, it also worked for King's Way. Under the new 30-day occupancy agreement, families not "willing to do mentoring and the budget coaching" could "walk away from it" early on, thus permitting the program to screen out clients regarded as unlikely to succeed.

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Beliefs and Practices: The Role of Spirituality in Coping with Race-Based Stressors Experienced by Middle Aged Christian Black-White Couples

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify how Christian Black-White married couples use spirituality to address race-based stressors within their interracial union. Six couples comprised of Black women and White men participated in the study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with each spouse and conjointly with each couple. A thematic analysis of the data revealed three common stressors which were parental disapproval, experiencing racism and discrimination, and raising biracial children. The analysis also revealed that theological beliefs and spiritual practices were used to mitigate the identified stressors. The findings suggest that there were four theological beliefs that assisted couples: God ordained their marriage; racism and discrimination are the result of sin; their identity is in Christ rather than their race; and since God had forgiven them, they were to forgive those who have been racist or discriminatory. The spiritual practices included using prayer, applying love, and confrontation. This study's findings suggests that spiritual beliefs and practices can mitigate the race-based stressors experienced by Christian Black-White couples. Implications for clinical practice and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

Keywords: Black-White couples, interracial, spirituality, stressors, Christian

RESEARCHERS HAVE INVESTIGATED THE INFLUENCE of spirituality on physical, emotional, and relational health (Dollahite & Lambert, 2007; Hodge, 2015; Koenig, 2012, Mahoney, 2010). Spirituality is often defined in the clinical literature as a personal understanding of the sacred or transcendent that influences one's search for meaning and purpose, which may or may not have a religious framework (Oxhandler & Parrish, 2017; Starnino et al., 2014). Further, research has suggested a link between spirituality and marital satisfaction (David & Stafford, 2015; Ellison et al., 2010; Hatch et al., 2016; Kasapoglu & Yabanigul, 2018; Kelly et al., 2020; Olsen et al., 2015). Social scientists have also explored how spirituality is utilized by married couples to address concerns such as communication (David & Stafford, 2015), problem-solving (Rauer et al., 2015), and intimacy (Hernandez-Kane et al., 2018). These studies have incorporated white and ethnically diverse couples; however, the participants are often exclusively monoracial couples thereby excluding interracial couples from quantitative and qualitative inquiry.

Interracial couples strive for similar levels of marital satisfaction as their monoracial couple contemporaries (Killian, 2013; Killian, 2015). Unfortunately, there is a paucity of research investigating whether spirituality mitigates or exacerbates the difficulties germane to interracial couples. Although interracial marriage was legalized 53 years ago, these unions still experience various stressors due to endemic racism within the United States (Burton et al., 2010; Ross & Woodley, 2019). Moreover, due to the history of slavery and white supremacy in the United States, Black-White couples experience the stressors of racism and discrimination more often than other interracial combinations (Cashin, 2017, Killian, 2013; Robinson, 2017).

Qualitative research is uniquely positioned to interview Black-White married couples who practice spirituality through faith traditions such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Additionally, there is a gap in the clinical literature inquiring specifically whether the use of spirituality by Christian Black-White couples addresses or worsens the race-based stressors they endure. The number of Christian Black-White married couples in the United States has yet to be quantified by a credible organization, data suggests that a significant percentage of Black-White couples may incorporate spirituality into their union. It is estimated that since 79% of adult Black Americans and 70% of adult White Americans identify as Christian (Pew Research Center, 2018). The following literature review illustrates the stressors impacting Black-White couples, the strategies they employ to mitigate their impact, and demonstrates the dearth of research investigating the role spirituality potentially plays in Black-White couples.

Literature Review

Stressors Impacting Black-White Couples

Interracial relationships comprised of Blacks and Whites have increased steadily since the Supreme Court legalized their unions in 1967 (Pew Research Center, 2017). Hence, researchers have explored which stressors adversely impact marital satisfaction and stability for Black-White couples (Bratter & King, 2008; Kuroski, 2017; Zhang & Van Hook, 2009). Bratter and Eschbach (2005) found that these couples can experience an increase in psychological distress due to racism and discrimination; while their physical health may be diminished due to marginalization (Yu & Zhang, 2017). The pressure of parental disapproval (Bell & Hastings, 2015) along with relationship stigma (Vazquez et al., 2019) are common stressors for Black-White couples. Additionally, microaggressions have been continuously cited as a stressor for Black-White relationships (Bell & Hastings, 2015; Bratter & King, 2008; Killian, 2012; Seshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2013).

The stigma and rejection Black-White couples experience from families and friends can create anxiety and depression (Hill & Thomas, 2000; Rosenthal et al., 2019, Robinson, 2017). Moreover, Black individuals who marry into White families may endure the stress of questioning whether they had betrayed their race by marrying a White partner (Childs, 2005; Leslie & Young 2015). Qualitative researchers have also noted that many White spouses experience vicarious stressors of bearing witness to racism experienced by their Black partners (Afful et al., 2015; Twine & Steinbugler, 2006; Walt & Basson, 2015; Yancy, 2007). Additionally, scholars have found that the different racial identity of both the Black and White partner could create relational distress since each of their social positions influences their perceptions of racism and discrimination (Afful, et al., 2015; Leslie & Letiecq, 2004; Ross & Woodley, 2019).

Strategies Utilized by Black-White Couples

Researchers have explored the strategies implemented by Black-White couples to mitigate the stressors affecting their relationship. After conducting a meta-analysis of the literature, Foeman and Nance (1999) proposed that Black-White couples progress through four distinct stages to buffer relational stressors. These stages included the task of individual racial awareness, protecting their union to reduce experiences of discrimination, the formation of a couple identity, and intentionally maintaining their relational gains. Killian (2013) used a grounded theory approach to conduct semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 20 Black-White couples. His results revealed an intentionality to create a couple identity to assist in negotiating the effects of racism and discrimination.

He discovered some couples avoided discussions about incidences of discrimination to protect their spouse from anxiety or anger. These same couples would also disassociate from one another in public if they perceived the possibility of emotional or physical harm. However, other respondents in his study made a purposeful effort to directly respond to incidents of racism and discrimination. Additionally, some couples deprioritized their racial differences by pointing to a shared religious faith.

Seshadri and Knudson-Martin (2013) confirmed the findings of Killian (2001, 2003, 2012) utilizing a qualitative grounded theory analysis of seventeen interracial couples of various combinations including Black-White couples. They discovered four strategies used by couples to manage the stressors of racial differences. The first was the creation of a "we", where couples united with a shared set of core values and similar personal goals. The second consisted of framing racial differences as attractive and an opportunity for personal growth. The third strategy was emotional maintenance, defined as validation and support for their partner when racist and discriminatory experiences occurred. The fourth strategy was to maintain relationships with approving family and friends thereby creating relational boundaries for those opposed to their union. All four strategies centered on enhancing their relationship and protecting their partners from racist and derogatory actions.

Spirituality Assisting Black-White Couples

The clinical literature has identified a shared faith or value system as strategies to alleviate the stressors Black-White couples experience (Killian, 2012; Seshadri & KnudsonMartin, 2013). However, the literature has not elucidated the specific ways these couples implemented their shared faith or spirituality. Furthermore, there is a paucity of research investigating whether spirituality mitigates or perhaps exacerbates the specific stressors for Black-White couples. Previous research does suggest that spirituality can mitigate the negative effects of racism for individuals (Charters et al., 2008; Lazar & Bjorck, 2008; Szymanski & Obiri, 2011; Utsey et al., 2000), but this research has not been explored with Black-White couples. Only one study has specifically explored the impact of spirituality with Black-White couples while two additional studies have investigated the use of spirituality with different interracial pairings.

Vazquez et al. (2019) surveyed 180 individuals in a Black-White marriage and assessed for their experiences of stigma, religious or spiritual well-being, and overall couple satisfaction. These participants identified as Roman Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, or None. The findings suggested that an individual's religious or spiritual well-being mediated the negative impact of stigma and enhanced couple satisfaction.

However, these results were reported by only one spouse within each relationship, therefore it is uncertain if their partner shared the same experience of spirituality mitigating the stressor of stigma. Furthermore, the survey results did not specify the exact spiritual beliefs or practices by these respondents to mediate the negative impact of stigma.

Pereyra et al. (2015) paired data from 611 couples comprised of Latina women-Anglo men and Latino men-Anglo women to determine the effects of negative communication and spirituality on the perception of relationship quality. They found that spirituality mediated the relationship between negative communication and couple satisfaction. However, spirituality was broadly defined so it is uncertain which specific religion or spirituality was practiced by these participants. In addition, 74% of the couples were not married and the average length of these relationships was not defined. It is unclear whether these demographics may or may not have played a pivotal role in how spirituality impacted these relationships.

Sossah (2012) conducted a qualitative project with eight interracial Seventh-Day Adventist couples in the Philippines. These eight couple pairings were evenly divided between Asian-Black or Asian-White. These couples identified child rearing, communication, and negative reactions from friends as stressors affecting their relationship. These respondents stated that the Biblical teachings of marriage influenced how they should respond to stressors as husband and wife. Participants of this study noted that identifying roles of husband as a spiritual leader and wife as a homemaker fostered marital harmony. However, exactly how these specific roles were implemented in their relationship was not discussed. It was also unclear which specific spiritual practices these couples engaged in to assuage their relational stressors. Additionally, these couples believed that they should govern themselves from a Biblical framework, but specific scriptures were not identified, nor the resultant practices of each spouse and couple based upon those verses.

Research Question

Future research is needed to address specifically, how spirituality can mitigate or exacerbate race-based stressors adversely impacting Christian Black-White couples. The research question for this study is: How do Christian Black-White couples perceive and apply spirituality to cope with the race-based stressors of an interracial relationship? This qualitative study focused on a homogenous sample of married couples comprised of Black women and White men, who both identify as Christian and American and have been married for at least five years. This investigative study has the potential to not only add to the clinical literature but also has implications for clinicians and clergy who utilize spirituality as an intervention with Christian Black-White couples.

Methods

Padgett (2017) suggests qualitative research methods are ideal when researchers wish to explore an insider perspective from respondents, and little is known about a particular subject. This study of Christian Black-White couples meets both of those standards. The purpose of this study is to understand, from the insider perspective of respondents, how Christian spirituality mitigates or exacerbates the stressors of an interracial relationship.

Data Collection

The initial data collection plan consisted of conducting conjoint remote interviews with 6 to 10 Black-White couples through a university password protected HPPA compliant Zoom account. This author recognized that the presence of a spouse could potentially bias responses during conjoint interviews; but this study sought to determine how couples used their shared spirituality to address the stressors within their relationship. A previous quantitative study with Black-White couples (Vazquez et al., 2019) had only explored the influence of spirituality from the perspective of one spouse. Interviewing couples conjointly could possibly provide a rich explanation as to how spouses integrate spirituality to address the unique stressors impacting their marriage. By interviewing the couples together, the interviewer can ascertain how both spouses recall the stressors and strategies used and identify any disagreement between partners.

Recruitment

The inclusion criteria for this study included married couples comprised of Black women and White men who both identify as practicing Christians and Americans and have been married for at least five years. Selecting this homogenous sample increased the likelihood of reaching saturation since respondents would be of the same marital status, interracial pairing, nationality, and religion. A developmental stage theory of marriage suggests that being married for five years is often when there is an increase in the likelihood of stressors adversely impacting the martial union (Kovacs, 2000); along with the possible implementation of spirituality to mitigate or exacerbate these concerns. Additionally, this researcher informed participants that spirituality would be defined as their Christian faith, theology, and practices. While race-based stressors would be defined as situations or experiences, they deemed worthy of their attention or perhaps emotionally or relationally distressing.

The exclusion criteria included other possible ethnic combinations of interracial couples who do not identify as Christian. Also, Black-White married couples with a Black husband and White wife were excluded, as

well any Black female and White male couples if one or both spouses were not born in the United States. The reason to exclude Black men married to White Women is that the race-based stressors they may experience could differ significantly compared to White men married to Black women due to their different social locations within America. An additional reason for these exclusion criteria is that other interracial couples practicing different faiths, who are not married, with one or both spouses not being raised in America, may have uniquely different stressors and experiences. Subsequently, they may or may not employ different spiritual practices to mitigate stressors compared to the intended respondents of this study.

Once the study received University IRB approval, this author distributed the project flyer to a total of 26 different senior pastors of churches located in the following States: New Jersey, New York, California, and North Carolina. The flyer was also posted on the author's Facebook and Instagram accounts to obtain respondents. When a potential couple responded to the research flyer a brief telephone screening process was conducted to confirm their criteria eligibility and schedule the individual and conjoint interviews. Each couple received a $25 generic gift card electronically as an expression of gratitude for their time and contribution to the study.

Sample

The recruitment methods garnered six Black-White Christian couples willing to participate in the study. These couples resided in Colorado, Georgia, New Jersey, and North Carolina and had been married for an average of 25 years. Five couples were members of nondenominational churches while one couple attended a Black Baptist church. Nine of participants identified as a minister or pastor within their respective churches. All their names used in this article have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis guided data analysis and incorporated the six-step process as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first step ensured that all interviews were transcribed so that this researcher could become familiar with the data. This was followed by the second step of developing initial codes which lead to the third step of identifying the relationship between codes and possible themes. In the fourth step the data were clarified and evaluated for contradicted preliminary themes and memos were written. The fifth step consisted of refining specifics of each theme allowing for the sixth step of producing a final manuscript.

This qualitative study also employed the following techniques to ensure rigor: peer debriefing, member checking, triangulation. For peer debriefing, this researcher was assisted by a doctoral faculty advisor who

checked all key codes. Also, during the initial conjoint interviews this author and his doctoral advisor sensed that some wives were not able or willing to discuss in greater detail their experiences with their spouse present. Accordingly, the data collection plan was revised to incorporate individual interviews with each spouse while also conducting the conjoint interview. Each individual interview ranged from sixty to ninety minutes while most of the conjoint interviews were ninety minutes in length. In terms of member checking (Padgett, 2017) respondents were notified once the overall themes were solidified to determine if the themes matched their lived experiences. Lastly, triangulation was utilized by reviewing the literature to confirm or contradict findings within this study.

In terms of reflexivity, this researcher is a White man married to a Black woman and has provided counseling to interracial couples as an ordained reverend and licensed social worker for a large multicultural Christian church within Central New Jersey. Throughout this process, this researcher remained aware of the intersection of my identity and potential implications for this study. The similarity of shared religion and interracial relationship status with intended respondents may have aided in the recruitment process. The unintended consequence of recruiting through senior pastors was respondent's discovery of clergy status of the researcher. This knowledge may have influenced participants to disclose more information during the interviews or it could have discouraged disclosure. Furthermore, due to the social location of race and gender, Black wives may have been hesitant to discuss freely their experiences of racism by White people with a White male researcher. Due to these reflexivity concerns peer debriefing, member checking, and meetings with the academic advisor were used to recognize any biases that could compromise the findings of the qualitative inquiry.

Findings

The data analysis revealed that respondents identified the stressors of parental disapproval, experiencing racism and discrimination, and raising biracial children. Respondents used both theological beliefs and spiritual practices as the strategies for mitigating these stressors. The findings suggest that there were four theological beliefs that assisted couples: God ordained their marriage; racism and discrimination are the result of sin; their identity is in Christ rather than their race; and since God had forgiven them, they were to forgive those who have been racist or discriminatory. The spiritual practices utilized by these couples were prayer, applying love, and confrontation. These theological beliefs and spiritual practices were based on their understanding of the Bible. The findings will begin by detailing the identified stressors, then theological beliefs will be explored, concluding with spiritual practices.

Parental Disapproval

Nine of the twelve respondents reported that their parents or in-laws did not approval of their interracial relationship. Both husbands and wives revealed that the disapproval was based on race, not religion, or other personality characteristics. At times the parental disapproval was openly expressed even before couples considered marriage as illustrated by Chris.

> Direct quote from my father, because Linda was like the third serious girlfriend, I had that was black and he wasn't happy with the first two. So now Linda comes along and she's not only black, but she has four kids. And his direct quote was, "Do you go out looking for the biggest pieces of trash you could find?"

Parental disapproval caused Frank to wait a year before informing his parents that he had married Renee. Mary did not inform her father of her marriage to Eric until after their nuptials were completed. These respondents stated that the parental disapproval did not create marital stress but rather personal stress in the form of anxiety, frustration, or fear, as expressed by Mary:

> I hate to say it, but with my dad I had to conceal my husband's identity from him because my brother at one time wanted to bring a white girl home. And my father told him if you do, I would disown you. So, I had that in the back of my mind the whole time when I was dating my husband, but he would talk to my husband on the phone, but he never caught on that he was white. And he kept asking for pictures. And I knew that would never happen because he would break us up.

Experiencing Racism and Discrimination

Couples described incidents of racism or discrimination at work, restaurants, shopping malls, grocery stores, and church. For instance, Anthony believed he was fired from his job a few weeks after posting a picture of his wife and son in his cubicle. He reported his job performance reviews were solid so his dismissal could not be based on incompetence. He confronted his employer, but they denied race was involved in the firing. Eric and Mary described discriminatory experiences of being excluded from work and community events along with poor customer service at restaurants. Jasmine and Darren discussed racist and discriminatory experiences in a church they attended. They felt the pastor and members were unwilling to recognize and address the discriminatory practices and cultural insensitivity that was occurring in the congregation and community.

Couples stated that these racist or discriminatory experiences didn't create marital conflict but rather personal frustrations and an acknowledgement of the pain their spouse experienced. Renee and Frank's comments summarized the sentiments of the respondents: Renee: When all this racism is coming at you, you feel that it's a problem with you, that it's something wrong with being Black. There's nothing wrong with being Black. I was made this way. I can't help it and I can't hide it you know.

> Frank: I don't think it impacted our marriage. I think both of us see these things happening in the world. And we're very cautious in what we say to each other, never to attack each other. And the thing is I can't feel all the pain that she perhaps has felt over the years, but anyone with any common sense, intelligence and integrity can see that there's a lot of biases.

Raising Biracial Children

The most reported concern regarding their biracial children involved issues encountered in school with their peers, teachers, and administrators. For example, Renee revealed her sons were disproportionately blamed and punished for behavior compared to their White classmates. Jasmine decided to homeschool her children after racially insensitive comments were repeatedly uttered on the playground. Ebony stated her child wasn't given academic opportunities that were afforded to White students, and she had to address administration to rectify those situations. Respondents also cited being concerned about how their children would be treated in society as people of color. For example, Chris mentioned his 19-year-old son had been pulled over by the police more in the past year than he has his entire life.

Despite these concerns, respondents consistently reported raising biracial children did not cause marital stress or difficulties. Instead, they acknowledged the personal distress experienced as parents. Alex stated it this way:

> Not in our marriage, so to speak. But of course, you know with the thing that's been going on the last couple of years with Black Lives Matters and everything like that. It's those types of things, with racial injustice and things like that, not necessarily with our marriage, but just in general, where we've had to really tug on Christ. Because our children, if they go out, a police officer would see them as Black. They would see that. So that is more of an issue, not a conflict with us, but societal issue more so.

Theological Beliefs

There were four theological beliefs that helped to mitigate the stressors of parental disapproval, racism, discrimination, and raising biracial children. Respondents believed that God had ordained their marriage and as such honoring God was more important than honoring their parents desire that they not marry interracially. This theological belief was summarized by Janet: I was confident, as I told my dad, that this was pleasing unto God. And as much as he was my biological father, I was going to honor my spiritual Father at that time, with what God was doing in my life with David.

Couples expressed the theological belief that racist and discriminatory attitudes and actions are the result of sin and the unrepentant hearts of people. Chris captured it well when he said, "it comes from a place of hate, they have unrepentant hearts, they're a product of sin, their hearts are yet to be regenerated." Respondents repeatedly stated that even though racism exists, God would protect them and their children from dangerous people and unfair treatment. Ebony stated, "we're still believing that God is the one who surrounds us, that we are under the shadow of His wings, that He has angelic protection that will help us when we need help."

Respondents also espoused the theological belief that as Christians their identity was no longer based on race but faith in Jesus Christ. They did not deny the relevance of race in America but asserted that being a Christian is their primary identification individually and as a couple. They cited Galatians 3:28 to explain this theological perspective which states, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Theologically these couples also believed since God had shown them grace, love, and forgiveness they were to demonstrate that same grace, love, and forgiveness to others.

Jasmine elaborated on this theology:

> Forgiveness is not dependent on their response whatsoever. It's my decision before the Lord, what am I going to do with my heart? And to recognize that I have sinned, and I need forgiveness. And so, because I am in need of God's grace and have received God's grace, I have to make the decision to wrestle through this for the sake of my own heart.

Spiritual Practices

Respondents utilized the spiritual practices of prayer, applying love, and confrontation to mitigate stressors of parental disapproval, experiencing racism and discrimination, and raising bi-racial children.

Prayer

Couples prayed individually and collectively to solidify their union against the difficulties of marital life. When faced with parental disapproval, respondents prayed that God would change the hearts, minds, and eyes of their parents to see their marriage differently.

Janet's prayer for her father included "just guide him, change his heart, just open his eyes to it." When discrimination or rejection in the community became difficult to endure, they would ask God to carry the burden for them. Mary said, "I had to just give it over to God at one point and let it go because it was too much to bear." However, respondents would also pray for those who perpetrated discriminatory actions against their family. Eric said, "I would pray for those people that are discriminating against us, that they would open their eyes, and they would soften their hearts." Respondents would also use prayer to examine their conscience to ensure they are not harboring resentment due to the experiences of racism and discrimination.

Respondents also spent time praying to examine their motives for wanting to confront racism and discrimination. Darren stated, "one of the things that we dealt with in prayer, and I know that we discussed it and we prayed over it separately and as a couple, is the purpose in confrontation." If prayer led to the assurance that confrontation was appropriate, they would then pray for guidance to communicate in a manner to improve rather than worsen the situation. Additionally, the experiences of racial discrimination caused respondents to pray for the protection of their family. Their prayers solicited God's power to keep them out of harm's way and specifically to protect their children.

Applying Love

Participants used the spiritual practice of demonstrating love citing Matthew 22:39 (love your neighbor as yourself) and Romans 12:21 (overcome evil with good). Alex mentioned "you always go back to Christ and you have to love your neighbor as yourself." Renee used this spiritual practice with her disapproving in-laws saying "I had to love them. I had to treat them differently." Participants also used phrases such as "kill them with kindness" and "combat hate with love" as the rationale for using love to address or cope with stressors. For instance, Linda combated hate with love by inviting Chris's father to their wedding despite the father being racist. Respondents also mentioned extending forgiveness demonstrated love to those who were hostile to their union. Mary quipped, "You have to follow the commandment that you have to forgive others' trespasses. You can't hold a grudge."

Confrontation

Respondents also used confrontation as a spiritual practice to address racism or discrimination directed at them or their children. The Biblical phrase they referenced for confrontation was "winning back your brother or sister", and the scriptures cited were Matthew 18:15-17 and Titus 3:10, 11. Darren and Jasmine used this process with a former member of their church. The church member used a racial slur to describe Black people in their presence. Darren and Jasmine first confronted him by asking to meet at the church to discuss the matter privately. They hoped to confront him in love by explaining the offensive nature of the racial slur in hopes he would understand the severity of his words and in their words "repent". The church member did attend the meeting but would not change his use of words. Darren and Jasmine then incorporated their pastor in hopes that this member would change but it proved unsuccessful. At that point they no longer associated with this member but did not harbor resentment toward him while continuing to employ the practice of praying for this gentleman. This Biblical principle of "winning back your brother" provided couples with the means to address offensive behavior. Most utilized this spiritual practice of confrontation for family members, friends, and church members. This spiritual practice was sparingly used with strangers in the community.

Discussion

This study is the first to implement semi-structured individual and conjoint interviews with Christian Black-White couples to ascertain how they utilize spirituality to cope with identified stressors. The results confirm previous research focused on Black-White couples in general and more importantly, expands our knowledge of the specific population of Christian Black-White couples. Scholars have identified parental disapproval (Bell & Hastings, 2015), racism and discrimination (Leslie & Young, 2015), and raising biracial children (Twine &

Steinbugler, 2006) as stressors that negatively impact marital satisfaction and stability for Black-White couples. The findings of this study suggest these are also common stressors experienced by Christian Black-White couples. The respondents of this study, however, did not correlate these stressors as the cause of significant marital dissatisfaction or discord. Participants consistently acknowledged these stressors as personally distressing as opposed to contributing factors to marital instability. This finding does not necessarily contradict previous research focused on Black-White couples but rather expands our understanding of the heterogeneity of these couples who identify as Christian.

This study also suggests that theological beliefs and spiritual practices are distinct strategies used to mitigate the race-based stressors

experienced by Christian Black-White couples. Despite parental and societal disapproval, their theology provided a confident assurance God approved of their marriage. Theology was relied upon to understand why racism and discrimination exists within humanity and how they should respond accordingly as spouses and parents. Also, theological beliefs were the determining factor for how and why couples utilized their spiritual practices. A possible explanation for the prominence of theology was nine of the twelve participants identified as ministers or pastors. Individuals who achieve the status of minister often matriculate through theology courses in preparation for the role of clergy. These respondents may be well versed in Christian theology thereby shaping their worldview and spiritual practices. Additionally, theological beliefs could explain why they identified as a Christian couple who are also an interracial couple. Their identity centered on their shared Christianity providing a relational foundation to strengthen their marriage and a framework to address stressors individually and collectively.

The spiritual practices of prayer, applying love, and confrontation to address stressors stemmed from theological beliefs mandating that Christians implement these methods. Previous studies with monoracial Christian, Jewish, and Muslim couples that incorporated prayer and forgiveness did so to maintain or strengthen their marital fidelity (Ellison et al., 2010; Olson et al., 2015). The findings of this study suggest these spiritual practices can also be used to address the race-based stressors of parental disapproval, racism, discrimination, and raising biracial children that are germane to Christian Black-White unions.

Critical race theory may explain the identified stressors of these respondents while the relational spirituality framework may provide insight into the use of theology and spiritual practices. Although several concepts are espoused within critical race theory regarding race and racism (Ross & Woodley, 2019), the concept of endemic racism is particularly useful for this study. Critical race theory suggests that racism is endemic in the United States (Abrams & Moio, 2009), in that a racist hierarchy exists with whiteness privileged in society (Kolivoski et al., 2014), while people of color are considered deficient, inferior, and disadvantaged (Bell, 1995). It is this racist hierarchy that legislated for centuries the anti-miscegenation laws prohibiting Whites and Blacks from marriage (Cashin, 2017). Critical race theory would suggest that since endemic racism permeates American society, Christian Black-Couples are not spared the experiences of disapproval, marginalization, and rejection.

The model of relational spirituality attempts to describe how religious or spiritual beliefs impact one's relationship with others (Sandage & Shults, 2007). Mahoney (2010) suggests that relational spirituality directly impacts family relations by the formation of their beliefs,

maintenance of relationships based on beliefs, and transformation of positive family dynamics due to beliefs. These mechanisms of relational spirituality influence how couples perceive the formation of their union, marital satisfaction, parenting, and coping with distress (Mahoney, 2010). According to the relational spirituality framework, the greater the spirituality of the couple, the better they can address the stressors that impact their marriage. The theological beliefs that centered and determined the spiritual practices of respondents of this study matches the precepts of relational spirituality. However, this framework of relational spirituality has been formulated mostly with Christian White couples prompting scholars to advocate for additional research to determine if the framework can be applied to nontraditional families (Mahoney, 2010; Sandage & Shults, 2007). Christian Black-White couples could be considered nontraditional families and as such the results of this study could contribute to the gaps within the framework of relational spirituality.

Practice Implications

One of the initial tasks of marital therapy is to establish rapport by acknowledging and validating couples' strengths. These Christian Black-White couples found strength in their theological beliefs and spiritual practices; hence rapport may be garnered as clinicians and clergy validate that strength by making space for it within therapy. Informing clients in the initial sessions that theology and spiritual practices can be discussed and utilized to address or solve marital concerns opens that space.

Couples in this study also primarily identified as a Christian couple who happen to be in an interracial relationship. Although Black-White marriages are often referred to as interracial, clinicians and clergy can enter the therapeutic relationship with the knowledge that Christian Black-White couples may not identify primarily along racial lines. These couples theologically believed that Christianity superseded racial differences and as such their worldview was Biblically based. This Biblical worldview provided the framework for concepts such as grace, forgiveness, and mercy and the corresponding spiritual practices. Clinicians, perhaps more so than clergy, may need to participate in continuing education courses in Christian theology to enhance their knowledge of these religious beliefs.

The findings of this study also suggest that parental disapproval, experiencing racism and discrimination, and raising biracial children did not cause marital distress but rather personal pain. Clinicians and clergy can use this information to assess if and how these areas create personal or perhaps marital distress with their clients. Additionally, when clients are members of a faith community, clinicians and clergy will often ask about the spiritual practices utilized to achieve marital harmony but may not inquire about theological beliefs. This study suggests that by

focusing only on spiritual practices, clinicians and clergy may be missing an opportunity to explore the theological beliefs of clients to stabilize or heal their relational conflicts. Concepts from Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) can explain the importance of assessing theological beliefs as well as spiritual practices. CBT suggests that an individual's core beliefs shape attitudes and produces behavior indictive of those core beliefs (Beck, 2011). In a similar fashion, theological beliefs can shape attitudes and dictate which spiritual practices are or are not implemented. Clinicians and clergy may discover that clients share the same theological beliefs and spiritual practices, which could be used as an intervention to increase intimacy and decrease marital strife. However, clients may not share the same theological beliefs and subsequent spiritual practices which may be a source of marital distress. This information can guide both clinicians and clergy as they implement their therapeutic interventions.

Clinicians may be hesitant to inquire about theological beliefs due to the concern that they are providing services beyond their expertise or proselytizing. However, asking clients to describe how their theological beliefs assists them individually and as a couple would not cross any ethical boundaries according to the NASW Code of Ethics Section 1.05 Cultural Competence and Social Diversity. Challenging the theological views of clients or preaching a theology that is more aligned with the therapist beliefs would violate ethical boundaries and undermine the work with Christian Black-White Couples. Both clergy and clinicians can assist clients in deepening their theological understanding so that the client's practices are Biblically aligned.

Limitations

There are several limitations that need to be addressed. This study had a small sample of six couples therefore the results are not generalizable to all Christian Black-White couples. Nine of the twelve respondents were clergy within their church community. Religious leaders may have a more refined theological perspective and subsequent spiritual practice than a regular church member. Another limitation is that the focus of the study was specifically Christian Black-White couples comprised of Black women and White men who also identified as American. Additional research needs to investigate how spirituality may mitigate or exacerbate race-based stressors identified by couples of other interracial combinations who practice Christianity and other faiths such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Research also needs to address the influence of spirituality for interracial couples comprised of individuals from America and other countries. An additional limitation is that five of the six couples attended non-denominational churches. Future research targeting Christian Black-White couples who identify as Catholic, Methodist, Southern Baptist, or

Presbyterian for example, may find respondents with different theological beliefs and spiritual practices. Another limitation is that the couples were married for an average of 25 years placing them in middle adulthood. Studies need to be conducted with couples who are in a younger demographic to discover if they experience similar race-based stressors. Also, spouses were interviewed individually and couples conjointly by only one researcher who is a White male and pastor. Future qualitative research exploring the lived experience of couples comprised of Black women and White men may uncover data not disclosed in this study by incorporating an interview team of a Black female and White male.

Conclusion

Christian Black-White couples are an understudied population by qualitative researchers. This study is the first to employ semi-structured individual and conjoint interviews to ascertain how Christian Black-White couples incorporate spirituality to cope with identified race-based stressors. The findings suggest that theological beliefs and spiritual practices are strategies implemented by Christian Black-White couples to mitigate the stressors created by racism and discrimination. These results refine and advance the concepts addressed by the framework of relational spirituality. Additionally, the data provided in this study can also benefit clinicians and clergy who offer marital services to Christian Black-White couples.   ❖

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An Exploration of Christian Social Work Practitioners' Personal Spirituality and Use of Spirituality in Practice

Chris Stewart

There is significant literature generally supporting the importance of social worker spirituality. While there is some research exploring the various characteristics of practitioner spirituality, there is little empirical evidence that adopts a multidimensional operationalization of social workers' spirituality and their perceptions of the use of spirituality in professional practice. Further, there appears to also be a lack of research specifically focused on Christian social workers. This study explored the relationship of multidimensional practitioner spirituality and their perspectives on the use of spirituality in practice. Linear regression was used with a sample (n=173) from two geographic locations. The results demonstrated significant differences in individual spirituality between religiously non-affiliated and Christian social workers. There was also a significant difference in Christian social workers' comfortability with spirituality in practice. These results suggest that Christian social workers may feel more comfortable including spirituality in practice because of their own religious experiences.

Keywords: spirituality, religiosity, social work practice, spirituality in practice

T HE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION HAS RECOGNIZED the importance of spirituality by including it in both the NASW Code of Ethics (2021) and the Council on Social Work Education's

Educational Standards (EPAS) statements (2015). Concomitantly, there has been a growing body of literature that supports the importance of spirituality for the human experience. Research has found that positive spirituality can be important for both health and mental health (Garssen et al., 2021; Kao et al., 2020; Koenig, 2015; Koenig et al., 2012; Koenig et al., 2001; Miller & Thoresen, 2003).

Similarly, there is significant evidence linking various dimensions of spirituality, particularly intrinsic religiosity, to behavior such as altruism, sympathy, volunteerism, empathy, and forgiveness (Baston et al., 2005; Francis et al., 2012; Furrow et al., 2004; Giordano et al., 2014; Huber & MacDonald, 2012; Markstrom et al., 2010; Ozorak, 2003; Paek, 2006; Saroglou et al., 2004; Silke et al., 2018; Smith & Denton, 2009). Interestingly, research suggests that these connections appear to be invariant across religious denominations, church attendance, nationality or culture (Purzycki et al., 2018; Saroglou, 2006; Saroglou & Cohen, 2013). Very little of this evidence, however, has been explored in the social work community.

Social Work Practitioners and Spirituality

Spirituality as a topic in practice discussions has existed in social work for many years (Canda, 1988; Derezotes, 1995; Spencer, 1957; Stroup, 1962). Historically, little empirical evidence existed within the professional literature to inform the debate. Much of the knowledge base was comprised of philosophical and theological works that, while clearly illuminating key issues, offered little empirical information to support any theoretical suppositions (Joseph, 1987; Spencer, 1957; Stroup, 1962).

Over the years, however, there have been studies that have empirically examined the issue. An early study surveyed 61 practitioners in the Washington, D.C. area and found that 82% of social work clients considered religion and spirituality to be important aspects of social work (Joseph, 1988). Despite this finding, only 19% of the practitioners addressed these matters on a regular basis.

These results were generally replicated in a larger study of 328 professional counselors, including social workers, licensed counselors, and psychologists (Sheridan et al., 1992). They found that practitioners were generally positive toward including spiritual and religious issues and reported that one third of their clients presented with issues that were religious or spiritual in nature. Another, similar study of a different geographical region replicated these findings (Derezotes, 1995). One later study found that practitioners, despite not having received formal training, fully supported, and often included spiritual aspects to group work (Gilbert, 2000).

In general, studies of practitioner use of spirituality have found that many practitioners utilize some form of spiritual intervention. This may

include praying with a client or recommending a meeting with a spiritual advisor (Drew et al., 2022; Sheridan, 2004).

Additional research has identified some possible factors that may be important in determination of whether a practitioner might utilize spirituality in practice. Some of these characteristics include intrinsic religiosity, positive views towards spirituality, age, and prior training (Larsen, 2011; Oxhandler et al., 2004; Torres, & Achenbaum, 2015). These results, however, are not ubiquitous. One potential issue is the complicated nature of spirituality. In general, the research exploring the impact of spirituality on human behavior has identified measurement problems as one of the greatest concerns (Ammerman, 2013; Bauer & Johnson, 2019; Hill & Pargament, 2003). One rare study utilizing a sample of social workers indicated that they found the term "spirituality" extremely complicated and difficult to conceptualize (Barker & Floersch, 2010).

Spirituality

Without a clear understanding of the nature of spirituality, a study of any relationship with other factors or behaviors will not likely produce fruitful results. The study of spirituality has a long inter-disciplinary history, and its development has utilized a significant number of empirical perspectives. Currently there are numerous definitions of spirituality in the literature and the use of these various conceptualizations and subsequent operationalizations significantly influence not only the interpretation of individual research studies but also the comparison of effects across studies.

In reviewing spirituality conceptualizations, there are several factors to consider: First is the relationship between spirituality and religiosity. The current understanding is to conceptually differentiate between religiosity and spirituality, although there is strong evidence to suggest there is an interaction between spiritual and religious dimensions (Bauer & Johnson, 2019; Lopez et al., 2017; MacDonald et al., 2015; Miller, 2012; Saroglou, 2012). Secondly, although there is general agreement that spirituality should be conceptualized as multidimensional, the exact nature and number of dimensions is still debated (Bauer & Johnson, 2019; Hill & Pargament, 2003; MacDonald, 2000). In a comprehensive search of spiritual conceptualizations, MacDonald (2009) has identified numerous multidimensional models utilizing as few as two dimensions and as many as nine.

The third factor concerns the possibility that spirituality may be more accurately conceptualized as a feature or result of other individual characteristics or personality however, current research provides some evidence that spirituality is distinct from personality traits (Ashton &

Lee, 2013; MacDonald, 2009; Piedmont, 1999). A fourth consideration is the cultural universality of spirituality. It has been suggested that the cultural uniqueness of spirituality prevents an accurate general or universal conceptualization (Belzen & Lewis, 2010; Moberg, 2002; Rich & Cinamon, 2007). Recent investigation, however, suggests that while spirituality, as currently understood is not universal, it might be considered a comparable construct cross-culturally (Lopez et al., 2017; MacDonald et al., 2015; Silva et al., 2017). Further, continuing study indicates that the effects of spirituality may even be similar across cultures (Saroglou, 2011; Saroglou, & Cohen, 2013; Saroglou et al., 2020).

The purpose of this study is to further explore the relationship of social work practitioners' spirituality to their use of spirituality in practice. While most research has studied either spirituality or religiosity as a single dimension, we could find no research utilizing a multidimensional conceptualization. Also, this approach follows the current trend in the spirituality literature and might allow for closer results comparisons, such as the apparent importance of a more "internalized" form of spirituality.

Further, we could find no study that had specifically explored this topic with specifically Christian practitioners. While it is common and important to explore an inclusive and universal exploration of spirituality, it might be beneficial for Christian practitioners to understand the use of spirituality from their unique worldview. Therefore, we addressed the following research questions:

1. Are there differences in spirituality between Christian practitioners and those with no religious affiliation?
2. Which dimensions of spirituality are predictive of a Christian practitioner's use of spirituality in practice?

Method

Procedure

Data collection was conducted from two different geographic locations. The first location: a large university in the southeastern United States (SE). This publicly funded University services a student body of approximately 40,000 students and is in a suburban geographic area of a medium-sized city. This University was part of a larger Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) training grant. This grant provides health professions' training for dealing with substance abuse clients with SAMHSA's model of screening and brief intervention utilizing motivational interviewing techniques. This training was provided at one large southeast university and one large urban hospital. The project methodology and consent protocol were approved through the

Primary Investigator's Institutional Review Board (IRB). All participants were provided a link, through Qualtrics, to the study measures prior to the day of training. Participants who did not complete the survey online were given another opportunity to complete the measures as a hard copy before the training session.

The data from the second location were collected during the same period as the first location but at a small, rural Midwest University (MW). This University is a publicly funded university with a student population of approximately 13,000. The Qualtrics link was sent to Licensed Social Workers through an alumni list serve.

In an effort to address both research questions, the Qualtrics links included items to measure the participants' individual spirituality. These links also included items to survey the practitioners' feelings about the use of spirituality in practice.

Participants

A total of 194 social work practitioners were surveyed for the complete project. Those practitioners that identified as *Christian* (e.g., Catholic, Baptist, or Christian) or those that identified as *No Religious Affiliation* were included in this study. Excluded from the analyses were those who identified as Muslim (N = 13), Buddhist (N = 5), Hindu (N = 3). The final sample for this study included social work practitioners from both locations (N = 173), including social workers at both the LCSW (N = 150), and LMSW (N = 23) levels. These practitioners reported a mean of 6.8 years' experience in their profession, with the largest ethnicity category being White (51%) followed by Hispanic (30%) and African American (19%). The sample was primarily female (88%). The age for the entire sample ranged from 24 to 69 years of age. The complete sample descriptive statistics can be seen in Table 1. The study variables used in the research question analyses are available in Table 2.

Measures

Spirituality

Spirituality was measured with the Expressions of Spirituality Inventory-Revised (ESI-R) (MacDonald, 2000). This 32-item measure was developed through a factor analysis of several spirituality measures to produce a five-dimensional model representative of spirituality. The domains include: Cognitive Orientation Toward Spirituality (COS): the importance of spirituality in daily life (e.g. "Spirituality gives life focus and direction."); Existential Well-Being (EWB): meaning and purpose in facing the existential adversities in life (e.g. "I seldom feel tense about things."); Paranormal Beliefs (PAR): belief in the existence of paranormal

phenomena and activities (e.g. "It is possible to communicate with the dead."); Experiential/Phenomenological Dimension (EPD): spiritual or mystical experiences, including perceptions of the divine (e.g. "I have had an experience in which I seemed to transcend space and time."); Religiousness (REL): an intrinsic belief in religious values and practice (e.g., "I believe that G_d or a Higher Power is responsible for my existence," "I practice some form of prayer," "Religious services are of no value.").

Each dimension utilizes six items and a five-point metric ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). There are also two items intended to serve as a face validity item ("This test appears to be measuring spirituality") and a check of response honesty ("I have responded to all items honestly").

We sought to add to the current knowledge through a measure that accounted for the most comprehensive operationalization of spirituality. MacDonald (2000; 2009) has created a measure that carefully addresses well-known spirituality measurement issues. This approach allows for a distinctiveness of both religiosity and spirituality while acknowledging an interrelatedness. The measure was created through a comprehensive factor analytic study to ensure no significant domain of spirituality was omitted. Finally, the ESI-R has been rigorously tested in many cultures, although it has not been previously validated with social work practitioners (Lopez et al., 2017; MacDonald et al., 2015; Silva et al., 2017).

The measure has undergone extensive testing and demonstrates good psychometric characteristics (MacDonald, 2000, 2009). Reliability scores range from .80 (EWB) to .89 (REL). The measure also has demonstrated satisfactory convergent, divergent, and factorial validity (MacDonald, 2000, 2009).

Inclusion of Spirituality in Practice
Inclusion of spirituality in practice was addressed with consultation of two existing measures, The Religious/Spirituality Integrated Practice Scale (RSIPAS) and the Role of Religion and Spirituality (RRSP; Oxhandler & Parrish, 2016; Sheridan, 2004). Each of these measures addresses similar concepts but did not appear to be comprehensive. By utilizing items from both measures, an attempt was made to capture the strengths of each measure. For this study, items were chosen from each of these measures to create two scales, one that measured the strength of importance for including spirituality in practice (Spiritual Intervention-Importance; SI-I)) and the practitioner's feeling of competence or "comfortability" with spiritual inclusion in practice (Spiritual Intervention-Efficacy; SI-E). The resulting sub-scales, while not tested psychometrically, appear to have evidence to support psychometric soundness.

The *Spiritual Intervention-Importance (SI-I)* dimension consisted of six items and a five-point metric ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Example items include "Including a spiritual component in practice increases the chance for success," and "It is important to include spiritual beliefs in an assessment." The reliability for this sample was acceptable (Cronbach's Alpha = .81).

The *Spiritual Intervention-Efficacy (SI-E)* dimension consisted of seven items and a five-point metric ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Example items include, "I have been trained in integrating spirituality into social work practice," and "Spiritual language is too complicated to include in practice." The reliability for this sample was acceptable (Cronbach's Alpha = .86).

Results

Study variables and demographic characteristics.
The descriptive statistics for the study variables are presented in Table 2. First, tests were conducted to determine possible differences between study locations. Analyses (T-tests) demonstrated no significant differences for any of the demographic variables, e.g., ethnicity, gender, age, or amount of spirituality training between the two study locations. There was, however, a significant difference on one spirituality dimension. The Midwest University (MW) (M = 4.21) demonstrated significantly higher scores than the Southeast University (SE) (M = 3.71), [t (171) = 5.63, p = .001], on the Cognitive Orientation dimension (COS).

Next, testing was conducted to determine if there were differences on the demographic variables between those that identified as Christian and those that reported no religious affiliation. Analyses (T-tests) demonstrated no significant differences for age, ethnicity, amount of spirituality training or gender between the groups.

Further tests also demonstrated differences on three Expressions of Spirituality Inventory-Revised (ESI-R) dimensions. The Cognitive Orientation (COS) dimension was significantly higher for Christian practitioners (m = 4.01) than practitioners not affiliated (m = 3.01), [t (171) = 8.82, p = .000]. Similarly, the Christian practitioners scored significantly higher (m = 3.99) on the Experiential/Phenomenological (EPD) dimension [t (171) = 7.59, p = .000], than practitioners with no religious affiliation (m = 2.69). Finally, The Religiousness (REL) dimension significantly differentiated [t (171) = 9.78, p = .000] Christian practitioners (m = 4.18) from those religiously non-affiliated (m = 2.61).

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics for Complete Sample

Characteristic	N (%)
Gender	
Female	142 (82.0%)
Ethnicity	
White	88 (50.8%)
Latinx	52 (30.0%)
African-American	33 (19.1%)
Christian Religious Affiliation	
Catholic	24 (13.8%)
Baptist	23 (13.3%)
Christian	15 (8.7%)
Presbyterian	13 (7.5%)
Methodist	12 (6.9%)
Lutheran	10 (5.8%)
Anglican (Episcopalian)	3 (1.7%)
Other Protestant	1 (0.6%)
No Religious Affiliation	72 (41.2%)
None	
Spirituality-Practice Training	
Formal Courses	64 (36.9%)
Field/Supervisor	29 (16.8%)

N = 173.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Analyzed Variables

Characteristic	Non-Affiliated Practitioners[a] m (SD)	Christian Practitioners[b] m (SD)	Complete Sample[c] m (SD)
Age	34.02 (10.3)	40.1 (12.7)	37.2 (12.2)
Spiritual Intervention			
Importance	3.20 (1.70)	4.25 (1.01)	3.69 (1.06)
Efficacy	1.93 (2.03)	3.66 (1.46)	2.65 (1.55)
ESI-R Dimension			
Cognitive Orientation	3.01 (1.62)	4.01 (0.98)***	3.50 (1.26)
Existential Well-Being	4.17 (1.59)	3.92 (1.00)	4.02 (0.93)
Paranormal Beliefs	139 (2.16)	2.09 (1.82)	2.45 (1.77)
Experiential/Phenomenological	2.69 (1.44)	3.99 (1.66)***	3.25 (1.21)
Religiousness	2.61 (1.73)	4.18 (1.25)***	3.01 (1.55)

Note: ESI-R (Expressions of Spirituality Inventory-Revised). [a]n = 72, [b]n = 101, [c]n = 173; *** $p < 0.000$.

Relationship of personal spirituality with spirituality interventions in practice

The primary study objective was to test the various dimensions of spirituality for both the perceived importance of spiritual interventions as well as the efficacy in utilizing spirituality in practice. We also sought to possibly determine which specific dimensions of spirituality might be important in predicting whether practitioners are comfortable in these types of decisions. Based on the preliminary ESI-R results, and considering the research questions, the sample was divided into two groups (practitioners who reported no denominational affiliation and practitioners who identified as part of a "Christian" faith tradition).

Non- Affiliated Practitioner analyses

Correlation Results

Bivariate correlations were first used to establish correlated relationships for non-affiliated practitioners (Table 2). The Spiritual Intervention-Importance (SI-I) was positively correlated with the COS ($r = .39$, $p < .05$), and EWB ($r = .62$, $p < .05$). Similarly, the Spiritual Intervention-Efficacy (SI-E) was also significantly correlated with the COS ($r = .28$, $p < .01$), and EWB ($r = .45$, $p < .01$).

Table 3
Bivariate Correlations for Non-affiliated Practitioners

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Spiritual Intervention-I (1)	--						
Spiritual Intervention-E (2)	0.79**	--					
Spirituality (ESI) - COS (3)	0.39*	0.28**	--				
Spirituality (ESI) - EWB (4)	0.62*	0.45**	0.28*	--			
Spirituality (ESI) - PAR (5)	0.21	0.19	0.18	0.19	--		
Spirituality (ESI) - EPD (6)	0.21	0.27	0.13	0.02	0.21	--	
Spirituality (ESI) - REL (7)	0.19	0.24	0.40	0.42*	0.12	0.11	--

N = 72; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Note: 1) Spiritual Intervention-Importance; 2) Spiritual Intervention-Efficacy; 3) Cognitive Orientation; 4) Existential Well-Being; 5) Paranormal Beliefs; 6) Experiential/Phenomenological; 7) Religiosity

Regression Results

Linear Regression analyses were then conducted to determine a possible predictive relationship of the spirituality dimensions to the Intervention variables. Significantly correlated spirituality dimensions were regressed on a single intervention scale. Age was included in the models as it has been found to be a possible confounding variable with spirituality.

Spiritual Intervention-Importance (SI-I)

The model (Table 3), which included the Spiritual Intervention-Importance (SI-I) dimension as the dependent variable along with the spirituality predictors COS, and EWB, was significant, [F (5, 69) = 11.04, p = .001] and both COS and EWB demonstrated significance as predictors. This model explained 57% of the variance for this Spiritual Intervention dependent variable suggesting that both spiritual dimensions were important for non-religiously affiliated practitioner's belief of the importance of including spirituality in practice.

Table 4
Regression Results for Importance (Spiritual Intervention-Importance) from Spirituality for Non-affiliated Practitioners

Variable	B	t	p
Spirituality (ESI) - COS	.273	2.71	.044
Spirituality (ESI) - EWB	.346	3.54	.001
Age	.008	.178	.767
R²	.286		
F	11.04**		

N = 72; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$. Note: (COS) Cognitive Orientation; (EWB) Existential Well-Being.

Spiritual Intervention-Efficacy (SI-E)

The model that included the COS and EWB predictors did not demonstrate significance. This result supports the idea that the spirituality of non-affiliated practitioners did not impact their inclusion of spirituality in practice.

Practitioners identifying as Christian analyses.

Correlation Results

First bivariate correlations were used to establish any relationships between the spirituality dimensions (ESI-R), and Spiritual Intervention (Importance, Efficacy) variables (Table 4). The Spiritual Intervention-Importance (SI-I) dimension was positively correlated with the COS (r = .41, p < .01), and EWB (r = .48, p < .01), EPD (r = .28, p < .05) and REL (r = .51, p < .01) spirituality dimensions.

The Spiritual Intervention-Efficacy (SI-E) dimension was also positively correlated with the COS (r = .38, p < .01), and EWB (r = .39, p < .01), EPD (r = .21, p < .05) and REL (r = .57, p < .01) spirituality dimensions.

Table 5
Bivariate Correlations for Practitioners Identifying as Christian

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Spiritual Intervention-I (1)	--						
Spiritual Intervention-E (2)	0.74**	--					
Spirituality (ESI) - COS (3)	0.41**	0.38**	--				
Spirituality (ESI) - EWB (4)	0.48**	0.39**	0.18**	--			
Spirituality (ESI) - PAR (5)	0.18	0.23	0.12	0.10	--		
Spirituality (ESI) - EPD (6)	0.28*	0.21*	0.12	0.09	0.45**	--	
Spirituality (ESI) - REL (7)	0.51**	0.57**	0.16**	0.07	0.74**	0.49**	--

N = 101; * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

Note: 1) Spiritual Intervention-Importance; 2) Spiritual Intervention-Efficacy; 3) Cognitive Orientation; 4) Existential Well-Being; 5) Paranormal Beliefs; 6) Experiential/Phenomenological; 7) Religiosity

Regression Results

To explore any additional influence of Christian Religiosity with Christian practitioners, these analyses utilized hierarchical regressions (basically adding the REL variable as a second step). First, all significantly correlated spirituality variables, except REL were regressed on a single Spiritual Intervention scale. Then, the REL dimension was added to the model. Age was also included in the models as it has been found to be a possible confounding variable with spirituality.

Spiritual Intervention-Importance (SI-I)

The first analysis (Table 5), which included Spiritual Intervention-Efficacy (SI-I) as the dependent variable, along with the spirituality predictors COS, EWB, EPD (Table 5, Model 1), was significant, explaining 62% of the variance. The addition of the REL spiritual dimension (Table 5, Model 2), also produced a significant model [F (4, 98) = 11.12, p = .008] with COS, EWB and REL demonstrating significance as predictors. Further the addition of the REL dimension explained a further 14% of the variance for Importance of Spiritual Interventions. These results suggest that not only are the internal spiritual dimensions (COS, EWB) important for Christian practitioners' belief of the importance of including in practice, but also that there is an added positive impact of their religiosity (REL) on that feeling of spiritual importance.

Table 6

Hierarchical Regression Results for Importance (Spiritual Intervention-Importance) from Spirituality for Practitioners Identifying as Christian

Variable	B	T	R^2	ΔR^2	F for ΔR^2
Model 1			.31		10.04*
Spirituality (ESI) - COS	.372	3.66***			
Spirituality (ESI) - EWB	.239	2.61***			
Spirituality (ESI) - EPD	.112	1.44			
Age	.019	.362			
Model 2			.38	.07	11.12**
Spirituality (ESI) - COS	.322	3.51**			
Spirituality (ESI) - EWB	.201	2.40***			
Spirituality (ESI) - REL	.224	3.56**			
Age	.002	.568			

N = 101; * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Note: (COS) Cognitive Orientation; (EWB) Existential Well-Being; (EPD) Experiential/Phenomenological; (REL) Religiosity.

Spiritual Intervention-Appropriateness (SI-E)

The Spiritual Intervention-Efficacy (SI-E) variable was then tested as the dependent variable through hierarchical regression. The model with spirituality predictors COS, EWB, EPD (Table 6, Model 1), was significant, explaining 42% of the variance. Model 2 (Table 6) included the addition of the REL dimension. It was significant, [F (4, 98) = 10.55, p = .005] with COS, EWB, and REL demonstrating significance as predictors. This model explained 58% of the variance for the Spiritual Intervention-Appropriateness (SI-A) variable, that includes an additional 16% of explained variance due to the REL dimension. This analysis supports

the importance of Christian social workers' more internal spirituality for their confidence in using spirituality in practice. Also, the practitioner's internal religiosity adds further (16% of the variance) to this efficacy.

Table 7

Hierarchical Regression Results for Efficacy (Spiritual Intervention- Efficacy) from Spirituality for Practitioners Identifying as Christian

Variable	B	T	R^2	ΔR^2	F for ΔR^2
Model 1			.21		9.58*
Spirituality (ESI) - COS	.304	3.66***			
Spirituality (ESI) - EWB	.239	2.11***			
Spirituality (ESI) - EPD	.128	1.74			
Age	.028	.388			
Model 2			.29	.08	10.55**
Spirituality (ESI) - COS	.311	4.11***			
Spirituality (ESI) - EWB	.183	1.70**			
Spirituality (ESI) - REL	.296	3.66***			
Age	.013	.438			

N = 101; * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Note: (COS) Cognitive Orientation; (EWB) Existential Well-Being; (EPD) Experiential/Phenomenological; (REL) Religiosity.

Discussion

The results generally supported the extant literature on the use of spirituality in social work practice. The ESI-R Cognitive Orientation Toward Spirituality (COS), measuring the importance of spirituality in daily life, and Existential Well-Being (EWB), measuring meaning and purpose in facing the existential adversities in life were important for both groups of practitioners. Previous research has identified intrinsic spirituality, or religiosity, as an important factor in determining the likelihood of using spirituality in practice (Larsen, 2011; Oxhandler et al., 2015).

It is important to note that some research uses the terms spirituality, while others discuss religiosity. There has even been an interesting trend of using religion/spirituality as "RS," (Bauer, & Johnson, 2019; Lopez et al., 2017; Oxhandler et al., 2015; Oxhandler, & Parrish, 2016). It is incumbent upon the reader to understand the nature of what is being measured rather than rely on instrument titles.

The measures in other studies (e.g., Spiritual Well-Being Scale; Pauloutzian & Ellison, 1982), while not always utilizing a multidimensional approach, tend to focus on "personal" spiritual beliefs and practices. The COS and EWB scales are very similar in focus, which suggests that

personal spiritual beliefs and the recognition and use of those beliefs in everyday life are important in how valued spirituality is in practice by quite a few practitioners, regardless of the strength or religious beliefs or practices.

In exploring the first research question, the study findings highlight the prominence of religiosity (REL) for Christian practitioners. In fact, the regression results demonstrate that personal religiosity adds significantly (adding 14% of explained variance in this study) in the perceived importance of spirituality for overall practice. While both non-affiliated and Christian practitioners scored relatively high on more personal spirituality, Christian practitioners reported a much higher importance of a religious dimension.

This result delineates the major difference between these sample groups of practitioners. It is likely not surprising that religiosity, while not significant for non-affiliated practitioners, proved quite important for Christian practitioners. The result suggests that some practitioners may identify as "spiritual," but not "religious." Conversely, practitioners who are more familiar with religious language and practices are more likely to relate to religiously based questions. This can also be seen in other research that asks more global R/S questions such as "How spiritual are you?" or "How religious are you?" (Ammerman, 2013; Oxhandler et al., Sheridan, 2004).

A major finding of the study involves the second research question. The study results support the idea that not only is religiosity important for Christian practitioners in determining the importance of spirituality for practice, but also the confidence to use spirituality in practice. In other words, while the fact that individual spirituality is important in the personal lives of Christian practitioners, it also may positively influence their inclusion of spirituality in their practice. In this study, Christian practitioners' personal religiosity was also an important dimension (16% explained variance) in being confident, or in their self-efficacy, in using spirituality in practice. Interestingly, non-affiliated practitioner results were not significant for their efficacy in utilizing spirituality in practice.

It is possible that, by participating in regular religious practices, whether private or communal, religiously affiliated practitioners may be more comfortable discussing spiritual matters or be more familiar with spiritual practices. Similarly, non-affiliated practitioners may either not have such experience with more social religious practices or may not believe it is within their purview to initiate such discussions with clients. Certainly, more study would be required before any such conclusions might be drawn. Regardless of these answers, it is apparent that, for these Christian practitioners, their faith, both personal and social, is very important for their practice as well as their personal lives.

Limitations

Several limitations of the study methodology suggest that the results must be interpreted with caution. Firstly, the cross-sectional design limits both time-order and causality interpretations of the data. It may be, for example, that the attitudes toward spirituality in practice may occur concomitantly with spirituality. The design also does not allow for confounding variables which may have a much stronger influence on the development or expression of spiritual attitudes in practice. Continued exploration would, therefore, benefit from more rigorous longitudinal designs.

Similarly, while the study utilized a sample from two distinct locations within the United States, it is likely that the sample may not be completely representative of social work practitioners.

It should be noted that, while the focus of the study was on the broad community of Christian social workers, the choices for Religious Affiliation may not accurately identify the numerous categories with which Christians may self-identify. Every attempt was made to discuss the results in terms of a general Christian faith, rather than any specific religious doctrine.

It is also likely that spiritual dimensions interact in some fashion which may allow for some influence of insignificantly predictive spirituality dimensions, such as non-affiliated practitioner religiosity (REL). The findings continue to highlight the likely complicated relationship of not only spirituality-to-practitioner practice attitudes but also to the interrelationships of each factor's various dimensions. Despite difficulties in a precise interpretation, these results also continue to add further support for the influence of spirituality.

These results reveal that a large percentage of the variance remains unexplained, suggesting that several important factors would need to be considered before any final conclusions on the role of spirituality might be reached. Increasing the scope and rigor of future research will continue to elucidate the complex mechanisms that exist between these important concepts.

Implications for Social Work Practice

Essentially these results provide empirical evidence supporting the importance of religiosity for Christian social workers in their practice. The existence of the North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW) suggests that such a proposition is already known, at least among these religiously-affiliated practitioners. Continued support and reasonable integration of the Christian religion within the social work world would appear to be important for a holistic approach to practice.

Another implication concerns social work education. Whether a social worker identifies as religious, spiritual, agnostic, or atheist, it is likely that they will encounter clients with differing spiritual worldviews. The current position of the national social work bodies suggests that a foundational principle of social work education includes religious diversity and different spiritual perspectives (CSWE, 2015; NASW, 2021). Further, diverse spiritual beliefs comprise a key aspect of the human experience and strength of the social work profession (Ai, 2002; Amato-Von Hemert, 1994; Canda, 1989; Canda & Furman, 1999; Dudley & Helfgott, 1990; Sanzenbach, 1989). Current research suggests, however, that there may not be sufficient education in dealing with such issues (Moffatt et al., 2021; Oxhandler et al., 2015; Sheridan, 2004; Sheridan & Amato-Von Hemert, 1999). If the profession expects practitioners to be both competent and comfortable with spirituality in practice, it may be important to increase such content with social work education. ❖

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Lost and Found: Young Fathers in the Age of Unwed Parenthood
Paul Florsheim & David Moore. (2020). Oxford University Press.

This book is based on a study of teenage or young fathers and their experiences as an unwed parent. Interviewers followed the fathers and their girlfriends through pregnancy, child birth, and the ongoing struggle of fatherhood. Interviews provided insight into the participant's own family and parent-child relationships. Findings noted the differences in their hopes, dreams, expectations of themselves, and the impact of teenage unwed parenthood on fathers. The young mothers provided their observations and the quality of the father/child relationship.

This qualitative research provides insight into the complex struggles facing unwed teenage fathers who have not reached the developmental threshold of adulthood. The authors document the challenges of parenting during adolescence for fathers and their thoughts about their situation, future, and relationship with their children.

The researchers interviewed more than 500 young couples. Twenty-three of the couples were selected for discussion in the book. This is a longitudinal research study that followed participant couples from pregnancy until two years after the birth of the child.

The research sample included the recruitment of young women between the ages of 14 and 19, pregnant with their first child, and the father. The couple provided demographic information, and information that would identify risk factors such as psychological problems, school dropout, economic disadvantage, and protective factors such as strong relationships and interpersonal skills. The couples were interviewed together and separately. Researchers used a semi-structured interview schedule to gather demographic information and risk-factors, followed by an interview a year after the birth of the child, and a third interview a year after the second.

The researchers had multiple grants and hired 12 graduate students to assist them in the interview process. Interviews were digitally recorded. The interviews document the father's reflections on their relationship with their own fathers and childhood experiences that led them to develop an intimate relationship leading to parenthood. The participants discuss their experiences and emotions as the relationship changed from a couple to co-parenting, and the complexity of parenting as an adolescent. Participant fathers discussed the changes in their relationship with their girlfriends over time, the relationship with their children, and their perception of what fatherhood should be. They discussed how they navigated the responsibility to provide for their children and help to support their girlfriends who were

the primary caregivers for the children.

The interviewers describe the commitment of young men struggling with life and fatherhood. They discuss the dearth of supportive services available for young men struggling with life and fatherhood, the shortage of resources to support a family, and the lack of skills and maturity to find and maintain employment that would provide for a home.

The research provides insight for practitioners working with young, unwed fathers who are overwhelmed with the responsibility of fatherhood. The data identified characteristics and circumstances that allowed the researchers to predict those who would be able to establish a good life for themselves and those who would not. Interestingly, they also examined two groups of outliers – those who they thought had the potential for success and those who demonstrated resiliency against all odds.

A limitation of this research is that it includes only young fathers willing to admit to paternity, and resilient enough to be willing to participate in a research study on their thoughts and practices as unwed fathers.

The book is engaging. Practitioners would benefit from this book when working with young unwed couples, and when developing programs to help young parents become more resilient and strengthen the relationship with the child's mother, the parent-child relationship, and learn successful parenting skills.

For educators, the book would be a good additional resource for a graduate class, or for students in a class on children and families, fatherhood, and human development. As research it is evidence-based, providing for critical thought into the development of programs for young men and fathers who need support and encouragement through the final developmental stages into adulthood and into the responsibilities of being a parent.

This would also be an excellent book for graduate students taking a qualitative research course, as it demonstrates the power in qualitative studies. The introduction provides insight into the development of the research methodology, a discussion of expected and unexpected findings, and justification for an examination of outliers in the analysis.

Finally, church leaders and youth pastors would benefit from this book as they provide counsel to adolescents, and those who find themselves trapped into parenthood before they have the skills needed for such an endeavor. ❖

*Reviewed by **Elizabeth Peffer Talbot, Ph.D., MSW, MS**, Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, Wright State University, Dayton, OH. Email: elizabeth. talbot@wright.edu.*

Restoring the Shattered Self: A Christian Counselor's Guide to Complex Trauma
Heather Davediuk Gingrich. (2020). IVP Academic.

Author Heather Davediuk Gingrich's book begins with a real-life story that draws the reader in and gives the reader hope. The author's many years of experience as a licensed counselor enabled her to share stories from the lives of individuals who faced complex trauma while protecting her clients' confidentiality. In *Restoring the Shattered Self*, the reader learns specific ways to help individuals who have experienced complex trauma and the difference between PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and C-PTSD (complex post-traumatic stress disorder). The author presents the material in a way that helps her readers understand mental health diagnoses and the hope one can find in treatment. The author presents information from the DSM and then provides a story which brings the diagnosis to life. She also points out changes in the DSM 5 from the DSM 4. Gingrich's writing style allows the reader to come on a journey with her as she shares stories about transformed lives and provides evidence that healing is possible. The author's focus on resilience in both clients and counselors is evident throughout her book.

In this second edition of *Restoring the Shattered Self*, the reader will learn about early literature on complex trauma and the author's view on the absence of the diagnosis of C-PTSD in the DSM-5. Also included is information that came out of brain research regarding our body's response to trauma. Chapter two is dedicated to teaching the reader about the effects of trauma on children as they are developing. All parents can benefit from reading this book as they strive to protect their children from traumatic experiences.

This book provides invaluable resources for counselors and pastors. Woven throughout the book is the author's Christian faith and her desire to help Christian counselors become more equipped to help those who have experienced complex trauma. The three-phase approach to treatment, spelled out clearly in the book, will help Christian counselors create excellent treatment plans that are rooted in current trauma research. The author includes fifteen tables that provide a visual representation of the information conveyed in *Restoring the Shattered Self*.

Gingrich concludes her book with a chapter devoted to teaching church leaders how to help individuals heal. Her information is practical, useful, and greatly needed in our world today. The author's prior chapter is devoted to counselors who need to guard themselves from vicarious traumatization. As a licensed counselor I found the book relevant and useful. I am recommending it to my bachelor and master's level students who are studying to become social workers. This second edition of *Restoring*

the Shattered Self also includes a resource for counselors to prepares them specifically for work with individuals who have experienced complex trauma.

This book should be a required reading for students studying to be mental health counselors and master's level social workers. It is also recommended for practicing Christian counselors and those outside the faith who are open to a Christian worldview. It is also recommended reading for school social workers and guidance counselors. This book would be a valuable resource for college students studying ministry and biblical studies. Social workers in practice and academia will love this book. All individuals who strive to help others can benefit from the insights depicted in this book.

Heather Davediuk Gingrich's book is one I highly recommend. The author is to be commended for her work which brings hope to those who have experienced trauma and to those who work to assist them. ❖

Reviewed by **Lori Goss-Reaves, MSW, DSW, LCSW**, *Associate Professor of Social Work, Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion, IN. Email: lori.reaves@ indwes.edu.*

Understanding Complex Trauma and Post-Traumatic Growth in Survivors of Sex Trafficking: Foregrounding Women's Voices for Effective Care and Prevention
Heather Evans. (2022). Routledge.

Human trafficking is a global concern, and forced sexual acts are often a component of this crime. However, many in the United States are unaware that sex trafficking occurs here due in part to unfounded beliefs of safety within national borders and lack of insight into what trafficking entails. Dr. Heather Evans adopts an expert approach to converting dissertation research into a readable format by publishing this book. As a therapist, she has spent over a decade with survivors of sex trafficking and brings a deep understanding of the underlying dynamics to her research. Since there is not one standardized approach to supporting survivors and limited awareness of the scope of problems faced by these individuals, Evans' research provides a significant contribution not only to the field of social work but to myriad professions focused on human rights.

Through a combination of qualitative interviews and photovoice analysis – a methodology in which participants document their realities and perspectives through photographs – this study tackles issues of power and oppression, complex trauma, post-traumatic growth, and more. This book is insightful from the beginning, when the reader is introduced to a glossary of terms to orient to the terminology used throughout the narrative. With each chapter, the reader is walked through the lived experiences of 15 survivors from the pre-exploitation phase to the process of building new lives after separating from the abuser. It is impossible to read this book and not have a changed perspective about the world we inhabit and a respect for the strength these women have displayed under impossible circumstances.

An excellent reminder to those in helping professions is that many of the supports in place can be re-traumatizing for survivors. There is guidance on how to create trauma-informed care practices and a reminder that survivors need someone to walk with them instead of making decisions for them. Throughout the text, participants share glimpses of their hopes and dreams in ways that remind the reader of their humanity – an aspect often lost as sex trafficking is surrounded by judgment, blame, and misconceptions. A novel inclusion is the impact on survivors' sexuality and intimate relationships. This is an aspect often avoided - especially in Christian conversations - as it may be seen as taboo but is addressed here as a matter of social justice. Bringing the clients' voices to the forefront of the research is a wonderful way to demonstrate the impact of bias in ways that often go unrecognized.

One surprising aspect was the discussion around ways pro-sex-work attitudes can worsen outcomes for those being sex trafficked. Dr. Evans cites evidence that decriminalization of sex work can increase demand for trafficked humans because it normalizes purchasing bodies. This defies statements made by advocates who state that removing penalties for sex work improves the lives of thousands working in the sex trade industry while reducing the marginalization of already vulnerable groups therein. An aspect to consider is the differential of power and choice between someone who voluntarily chooses to work in this industry versus someone who is forced to. As with any competing claims of best practices for at-risk populations, extreme caution must be utilized when interpreting data and making decisions. Dr. Evans provides an overview of a model developed by survivors for reducing harm, and research should continue on the safest and most supportive measures for all involved in challenging scenarios such as these.

At the end of each chapter is a Points for Reflection section which encourages the reader to explore thoughts and perceptions about the content in a way that builds critical self-reflection while reducing bias. It also allows for consideration of specific actions to take which integrate the knowledge into practice. The questions clearly expect the reader to make changes in advocacy and engagement of survivors as a result of reading this. Rightfully so. However, a few aspects of this book could have been strengthened. First, the faith experiences of the survivors could have been discussed in more depth. This is particularly true for the survivor who identified as Muslim to mitigate some of the biases against that community and improve understanding of Islam as a resource for strength. While faith was presented as both a strength and a source of additional trauma depending on the individual participant's circumstances, the reader is left to interpret much of this on their own. It would have been beneficial to understand more about how the author's Christian identify influenced her work also.

This book is an excellent read for social workers, but it is easily accessible to anyone who wants to understand the devastating effects of sex trafficking. Health care workers, human rights advocates, legislators, teachers, and those who work with the public in any capacity should read this book to gain insight into this industry often hidden in plain sight. This area of practice is a blind spot in most therapists' knowledge which can cause significant harm when interacting with survivors of sex trafficking. Therefore, this book should be suggested reading for clinically focused programs nationwide as an effort to reduce bias against and improve competency towards this population. It is a remarkable translation of doctoral research into a tangible way to effect practice and bring positive change to a frequently overlooked problem in society. ❖

*Reviewed by **Kayte Thomas, PhD, LCSW, CCTP, CIMHP**, Assistant Professor, Carroll College; Lecturer, Baylor University. Email: kathomas@carroll.edu; kayte_thomas1@baylor.edu.*
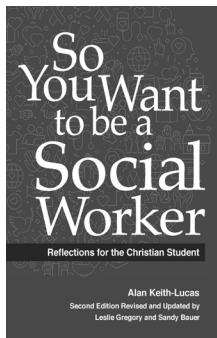
SO YOU WANT TO BE A SOCIAL WORKER: REFLECTIONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN STUDENT (2ND EDITION)

Alan Keith-Lucas, Leslie Gregory, and Sandy Bauer. (2021). Palos Heights, IL: NACSW. $14.95 U.S. ($11.95 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

So You Want to Be a Social Worker is an invaluable resource for both students and practitioners who are concerned about the responsible integration of their Christian faith and competent, ethical professional practice. It is a thoughtful, clear, and brief distillation of practice wisdom and responsible guidelines regarding perennial questions that arise, such as the nature of our roles, our ethical and spiritual responsibilities, the fallacy of "imposition of values," the problem of sin, and the need for both courage and humility.
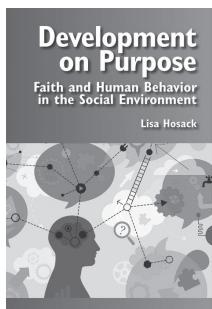
DEVELOPMENT ON PURPOSE: FAITH AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

(2019) by LISA HOSACK , MSW, PH.D.

NACSW. $25.50 U.S., $22.95 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies. For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

Development on Purpose provides both students and seasoned professionals with a coherent framework for considering human behavior in the social environment from a Christian perspective. It was developed to be a companion text for HBSE and related courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

Courses in human behavior andthe social environment raise important questions about the nature of persons and our multi-layered social world. The Christian faith offers compelling answers to these deep questions about human nature and our relationships with one another and the world by providing a defining purpose for human development. Steeped within the Reformed tradition, Development on Purpose describes how this grand purpose informs our understanding of the trajectory of our lived experience and sustains our work on behalf of those at risk in the world.

To support the use of this book in the classroom and training environments, NACSW has developed a collection of online teaching resources for your use, which can be found at: www.nacsw.org/teaching_resources/ hosack_developmentonpurpose.
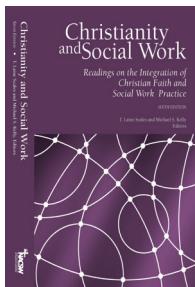
CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL WORK: READINGS ON THE INTEGRATION OF CHRISTIAN FAITH & SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE (SIXTH EDITION)

T. LAINE SCALES AND MICHAEL S. KELLY (EDITORS). (2020). BOTSFORD, CT:
NACSW. $64.95 U.S., $51.96 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies. For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

The 6th Edition of Christianity and Social Work (CSW6), edited by T. Laine Scales and Michael Kelly, and is written for social workers whose motivations to enter the profession as well as their approaches to helping have been inspired and informed by their Christian faith.

The 19 chapters and over 400 pages of CSW6 address social welfare history, human behavior and the social environment, social policy, and social work practice from a faith perspective at micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Four decision cases and an accompanying online instructor's manual provide rich teaching tools for the use of this material in a variety of social work and related classes. Especially useful in the classroom or social work trainings, CSW6 supports several major curriculum areas outlined by the Council on Social Work Education's Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards.

NACSW has also developed an extensive electronic resource tool, Instructor's Resources for Christianity and Social Work: Sixth Edition (2020) by Tammy Patton to support the use of the Christianity and Social Work in classroom and trainings environments, which can be found at: www.nacsw.org/Publications/CSW6/CSW6thInstructorsResourcesFinal.pdf.
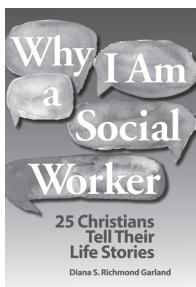
WHY I AM A SOCIAL WORKER: 25 CHRISTIANS TELL THEIR LIFE STORIES
Diana R. Garland. (2015). Botsford, CT: NACSW. $29.95 U.S., $23.95 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies. For price in Canadian dolloars, use current exchange rate.

Why I Am a Social Worker describes the rich diversity and nature of the profession of social work
through the 25 stories of daily lives and professional journeys chosen to represent the different people, groups and human situations where social workers serve. Why I Am a Social Worker serves as a resource
for Christians in social work as they reflect on their sense of calling, and provides direction to guide them
in this process. It addresses a range of critical questions such as:

- How do social workers describe the relationship of their faith and their work?

- What was their path into social work, and more particularly, the kind of social work they chose?

- What roles do their religious beliefs and spiritual practices have in sustaining them for the work, and how has their work, in turn, shaped their religious and spiritual life?

The stories in Why I Am a Social Worker have strong themes of integration of faith and practice that will
both challenge and encourage students and seasoned practitioners alike.
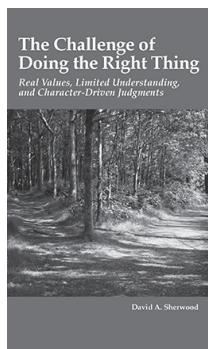
THE CHALLENGE OF DOING THE RIGHT THING: REAL VALUES, LIMITED UNDERSTANDING, AND CHARACTER-DRIVEN JUDGMENTS
David A. Sherwood. (2018). Botsford CT: NACSW. $21.95 U.S., $17.55 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies. Available as an eBook only. For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

The Challenge of Doing the Right Thing: Real Values, Limited Understanding, and Character-Driven Judgments is a 450-page collection of 44 editorials and articles written by David Sherwood for *Social Work & Christianity* and for the North American Association of Christians in Social Work between 1981 and 2017 focused on integrating Christian faith, values, and ethics with competent

professional social work practice. In this book. Dr. Sherwood argues that in ethical decision-making, decisions frequently involve making judgments that functionally prioritize legitimate values that are in tension with each other. He contends that the mission of NACSW and *Social Work & Christianity* has been to walk the difficult middle road—clearly committed to both Christian faith and competent social work practice, not presuming to have the final answers in either, and helping members and readers to come as close to faithfulness and competence as possible.
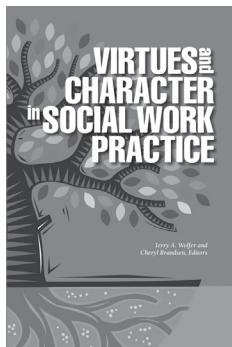
VIRTUE AND CHARACTER IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE
Edited by Terry A. Wolfer and Cheryl Brandsen. (2015). Botsford, CT: NACSW. $23.75 U.S., $19.00 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

Virtues and Character in Social Work Practice offers a fresh contribution to the Christian social work literature with its emphasis on the key role of character traits and virtues in equipping Christians in social work to engage with and serve their clients and communities well.

This book is for social work practitioners who, as social change agents, spend much of their time examining social structures and advocating for policies and programs to advance justice and increase opportunity.
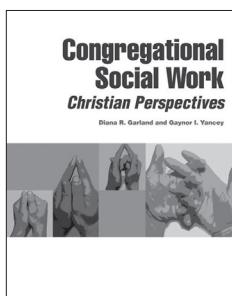
CONGREGATIONAL SOCIAL WORK: CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES
Diana Garland and Gaynor Yancey. (2014). Botsford, CT: NACSW. $39.95 U.S., $31.95 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

*Congregational Social Work* offers a compelling account of the many ways social workers serve the church as leaders of congregational life, of ministry to neighborhoods locally and globally, and of advocacy for social justice. Based on the most comprehensive study to date on social work with congregations, *Congregational Social Work* shares illuminating stories and experiences from social workers engaged in powerful and effective work within and in support of congregations throughout the US.
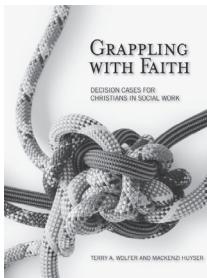
GRAPPLING WITH FAITH: DECISION CASES FOR CHRISTIANS IN SOCIAL WORK
Terry A. Wolfer and Mackenzi Huyser. (2010). $23.75 ($18.99 for NACSW members or for orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

Grappling with Faith: Decision Cases for Christians in Social Work presents fifteen cases specifically designed to challenge and stretch Christian social work students and practitioners. Using the case method of teaching and learning, *Grappling with Faith* highlights the ambiguities and dilemmas found in a wide variety of areas of social work practice, provoking active decision making and helping develop readers' critical thinking skills. Each case provides a clear focal point for initiating stimulating, in-depth discussions for use in social work classroom or training settings. These discussions require that students use their knowledge of social work theory and research, their skills of analysis and problem solving, and their common sense and collective wisdom to identify and analyze problems, evaluate possible solutions, and decide what to do in these complex and difficult situations.
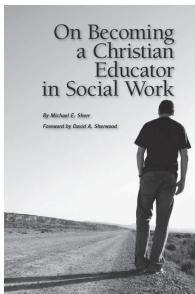
ON BECOMING A CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR IN SOCIAL WORK
Michael Sherr. (2010). $21.75 ($17.50 for NACSW members or for orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

On Becoming a Christian Educator is a compelling invitation for social workers of faith in higher education to explore what it means to be a Christian in social work education. By highlighting seven core commitments of Christian social work educators, it offers strategies for social work educators to connect their personal faith journeys to effective teaching practices with their students. Frank B. Raymond, Dean Emeritus at the College of Social Work at the University of South Carolina suggests that "Professor Sherr's book should be on the bookshelf of every social work educator who wants to integrate the Christian faith with classroom teaching. Christian social work educators can learn much from Professor Sherr's spiritual and vocational journey as they continue their own journeys and seek to integrate faith, learning and practice in their classrooms."
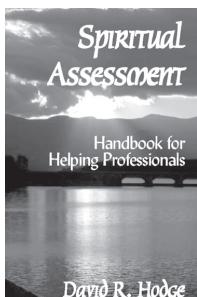
Spiritual Assessment: Helping Handbook for Helping Professionals

David Hodge. (2003). Botsford CT: NACSW. $20.00 U.S. ($16.00 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

A growing consensus exists among helping professionals, accrediting organizations and clients regarding the importance of spiritual assessment. David Hodge's *Spiritual Assessment: Helping Handbook for Helping Professionals*, describes five complementary spiritual assessment instruments, along with an analysis of their strengths and limitations. The aim of this book is to familiarize readers with a repertoire of spiritual assessment tools to enable practitioners to select the most appropriate assessment instrument in given client/practitioner settings. By developing an assessment "toolbox" containing a variety of spiritual assessment tools, practitioners will become better equipped to provide services that address the individual needs of each of their clients.
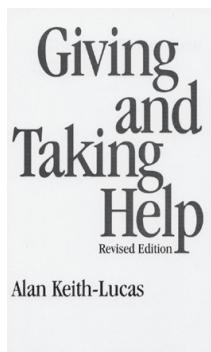
Giving and Taking Help (Revised Edition)

Alan Keith-Lucas. (1994). Botsford CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work. $20.75 U.S. ($16.50 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

Alan Keith-Lucas' Giving and Taking Help, first published in 1972, has become a classic in the social work literature on the helping relationship. Giving and taking help is a uniquely clear, straightforward, sensible, and wise examination of what is involved in the helping process—the giving and taking of help. It reflects on perennial issues and themes yet is grounded in highly practice-based and pragmatic realities. It respects both the potential and limitations of social science in understanding the nature of persons and the helping process. It does not shy away from confronting issues of values, ethics, and world views. It is at the same time profoundly personal yet reaching the theoretical and generalizable. It has a point of view.

To order a copy of any of the above publications, please send a check for the price plus 10% shipping and handling. (A 20% discount for members or for purchases of at least 10 copies is available.) Checks should be made payable to NACSW; P.O. Box 121, Botsford, CT 06404-0121. Email: info@nacsw.org or call 203.270.8780.

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