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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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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EDITORIAL

Micro or Macro?

Peter Szto

BACK IN MY SOCIAL WORK STUDENT DAYS, I FOUND the terms micro and macro practice confusing. I thought it referred to camera lenses because of my fondness for photography (if you didn't know, macro lenses are for closeup photography and micro lenses are for magnification of extremely small objects). Little did I know then that the terms were a shortcut way to describe levels of practice, that is, smaller versus larger. The distinction I felt was trivial but significant to analyze how persons function in different social environments. I still wonder whether the distinctions are necessary.

More to the point, for Christians in social work, how necessary is it to have a holistic, or redemptive, view of social life? Isn't it better to avoid reducing reality into fragments? To see things as integrated and whole? Isn't fragmentation the antithesis of restoration? On this matter the Apostle Paul reminds us that, "But we have the mind of Christ" (*English Standard Version*, 2001, 1 Corinthians 2:16). A Christ-minded perspective views life redemptively, to be restorative and healing. What an awesome cognitive frame to have. Imagine: flawless engagement with clients, robust data gathering always, perfect course evaluations, right-sized caseloads, and impeccable practice skills. Yet we know from experience that error-free outcomes aren't the case. Proverbs 23:7 (KJV) is instructive on avoiding fragmentation and integrating how we think and do. It teaches that our emotions and thoughts are interrelated, "…as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." This holistic perspective affirms that God created us whole. How can social workers see this reality?

Separating reality into "micro" and "macro" levels seems appropriate for analytical purposes. It helps to distinguish between individuals, groups, and communities. The analysis is permissible and only beneficial if the separate levels are eventually put back together. Beware the Humpty Dumpty effect, that is, the struggle to function back to normal after the fall. For social

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work, assessing weakness yet also seeing persons as whole has clear practice advantages. We should be weary of not seeing the whole. Paul explains the perceptual gap leading to fragmentation as structural sin and describes the gap as the sound of creation groaning (Romans 8:22). The antidote to suffering and stress is faith in Christ. During Christ's earthly ministry, He healed the sick, made the blind see, tended to the lame, and reached out to those living on the margins. His response was compassionate. Jesus was ever mindful of their material and spiritual needs. Our call to social work is a career to follow Jesus into holistic practice. May this issue facilitate our seeking His Kingdom, on earth as it is in heaven.

Warmly,
Peter ❖

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Building on the Practice Wisdom of Alan Keith-Lucas

NACSW Alan Keith-Lucas Lecture

72nd NACSW Annual Convention at Oak Brook, Illinois

October 28, 2022

Leslie S. Gregory, MSW, LSW
Sandra Bauer, PhD, LSW

Many of the ideas and principles from the original text, So You Want to Be a Social Worker by Alan Keith-Lucas, have stood the test of time and enriched the social work practice and faith of students and practitioners. The authors, who revised the text, share their own grappling with what concepts and skills are particularly important to a social worker who is a Christian and encounters pain and suffering as well as hope and resilience in their practice. The concept of practice wisdom, from a Christian perspective is incorporated throughout.

***Keywords*:** Christianity and social work, Alan Keith-Lucas, social work practice, faith, hope, resilience, practice wisdom.

Building on the Practice Wisdom of Alan Keith-Lucas

THE FOCUS OF THIS PAPER IS ON THE INTERSECTION between faith and social work practice wisdom. We were honored to present many of these concepts during the 27th Annual Alan Keith-Lucas Lecture on Christianity and Social Work. Content for the lecture and paper are taken from the text *So You Want to Be a Social Worker,* which was written in 1985 and revised in 2021.

We decided it could be helpful to first set the stage by giving background information about Keith, as he liked to be called. He was a seminal thinker on the integration of Christianity and social work. We both had the privilege of meeting Keith, prior to his death in 1995, during our time teaching at

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Eastern University. We appreciated his stories and rich insights. His texts, published by NACSW, have been essential in helping our students and us explore the connections between faith and practice.

Introduction to Keith

Keith was born in 1910. His career began as a school teacher in England. His experience led him to seek more education in child welfare in the United States where he received his MSW and then spent eleven years working in children's services in Louisiana. In his forties until retirement, he was on the faculty at UNC Chapel Hill. He also founded the Group Child Care Consultant Services, which was dear to his heart. He tended to come alive in the presence of children. Of the agencies he worked with, many were Christian based and this became influential in his faith journey (Ressler, 2010).

After retirement was Keith's most prolific time of writing. Yet it was also a struggle because the concept of faith and practice was not accepted in the wider social work profession. He wrote the text, *Giving and Taking Help* in 1972. His publisher recommended that he not include the chapter on "Helping and Religious Belief" which he refused to do. Needless to say, it was published *with* the chapter on religious belief (Ressler, 2010). NACSW benefited from Keith being a vital part of our professional community where his integration of faith was accepted and encouraged.

In revisiting Keith's work, we were reminded of the term practice wisdom. In the 1990's Howard Goldstein (1994) explored the idea that in social work practice we do not just use reasonable scientific thinking, but also our curiosity and imagination. This expanded the idea that the helping process includes aspects such as creativity and intuition, in combination with values, morals, and beliefs. These are characteristics that were not often identified as aspects of social work at that time.

There is a long-standing debate as to whether social work is an art or science. A bridge between the two has been identified as practice wisdom. According to Goldstein, "practice wisdom is a process rather than a specific set of criteria: a process that captures values and motivation in supporting the development of practice skills for social work students" (1990, p. 124). We would contend that Keith further expanded and legitimized faith as a critical component of practice wisdom.

Introduction to the Book

We used the text, *So You Want to Be A Social Worker: A Primer for the Christian Student* (Keith-Lucas, 1985), for years in the classroom and mumbled about it needing to be updated. When Leslie asked the Executive Director at NACSW at the time, Rick Chamiec-Case, if there was a plan to update the text, he asked if she would consider taking on the project.

She agreed to update it, and since two heads are better than one, Sandy promised to join her in the revision. We appreciated the support and wisdom we received from Rick and others who helped with the revision process. When we began, it became clear that many of the principles and practice suggestions have stood the test of time, yet some of the examples and language were outdated and were not as relevant to students.

In the preface to the original book, Keith writes:

> Many Christians rather naturally choose social work as a profession. Being loved by God, they wish to share some of this love with those who are poor or troubled or are in need of help of some kind. What this book attempts to do is offer some guidelines on the matter. A Christian can become not only a good social worker, but one with a clearer vision of what social work can be and how it fits in with God's purposes in the world. (1985, p. 1)

This paper will include a dialogue between the two of us using case examples we added to Keith's original text, which we edited and revised, and is now entitled *So You Want to Be A Social Worker: Reflections for the Christian Student*. Integrated throughout our discussion are practice assumptions and principles from Keith's many writings (unless otherwise noted, all references refer to the 2021 revision).

We have included links to images, for each case presented, which were created for the Mural Arts Philadelphia (https://www.muralarts.org) program. We chose these images not *just* because we love Philadelphia and value the arts, but because the images help us enlarge our story through what the artists call the "transformative power of creativity." They reflect some of the themes and emotions accompanying the case examples we are sharing.

In the introduction, to the updated edition of *So You Want to Be a Social Worker*, we give this overview:

> This text is attempting to address key questions facing social workers who are Christians, such as: How can I incorporate faith into my social work practice? Can I share my faith with a client? How do I work competently with a client whose choices do not align with my Christian faith and values? How do I hold onto hope when facing obstacles? (p. 5)

We believe this is the lens through which Keith was writing. This book was written as a basic text for Christian students who are becoming social workers, yet we also found, as we rewrote this text, that it has practice wisdom and guidelines for seasoned social workers as well.

The Bible and Insights from the Christian Faith

Now we will dive into content from several of the chapters of the book. Some of the beginning chapters explore how the biblical story and insights from one's faith support and guide the helping relationship.

Seeking help can be scary. When we think about what it takes to receive help, we better understand people's resistance to the helping process. There are natural feelings of fear and uncertainty that can come with seeking help. These emotions can even lead people to deny a problem exists and avoid receiving help all together.

We chose the mural, Open Spaces and Underground Rivers, because the dove reflects finding peace amidst turmoil, which the client in the case, below, was seeking. You can view the mural by You can view the mural by clicking here *or typing the link listed in the references (Santoleri, 2004), into a browser).*

(Leslie) - Sal, an Italian American man I met in my counseling practice, had avoided receiving help until his marriage started to unravel. He had stuffed down his past and was struggling for decades in silence and shame.

> *I listened as Sal began describing the details of his history of exploitive acts against women. When he finished, he paused and said he had been watching me closely, as he disclosed actions that brought him tremendous guilt. He noted that my expression remained the same – one of openness and not judgment. He shared that those minutes of having someone listen to his deepest shame, while still accepting him as a person of worth, was a first step in healing from years of pain.*

(Sandy) - What were you wrestling with? I know I would be struggling with his actions.

(Leslie) - Especially as a woman, hearing what Sal shared made me feel many different ways. A lot was going on in my head. I knew from other experiences with hearing painful stories from clients, though, that this wasn't easy for Sal to share with me. I had to move past my own judgments and feelings. Even though I did not approve of what he did, I had to hold to my values and belief in the dignity and worth of all people. I sought to show care and compassion to Sal and drew on the words of Mother Teresa (2023) "If you judge people, you have no time to love them."

When thinking of how we can serve clients amidst these dynamics, Keith reminds us we can depend on the Christian story and the character and acts of God. The Bible is an account of God's relationship with humanity and can guide us in building a relationship with our clients.

God pursues us to pave a way to redemption. Throughout the Bible are examples of God's amazing grace and love for humanity. I *believe* every bit of this. The challenge can be putting it into practice when faced with a situation like Sal shared.

The Bible teaches that we are beloved by God and it addresses how we are to treat those we encounter. It teaches us to be loving, forgiving, and kind, and to follow Christ's example with people who are hurting, like Sal. The Bible also aligns with the social work values in our Code of Ethics, where we seek justice and treat our clients with dignity and worth as we develop a helping relationship.

(Sandy) - I agree, yet how does "seeking justice" play out in this case?

(Leslie) - Keith wrote consistently about taking a nonjudgmental stance with our clients. With Sal, it took a number of sessions to reach a point of safety so he could share the raw truth of his past. This laid a foundation and "helped him feel safe to describe details he had stuffed down for so long" (p. 24). He experienced acceptance. He was offered grace without judgment for his acts. I think that *is* a form of justice. Sal had punished himself for decades. He felt worthless. He didn't need further condemnation from me and thankfully, as Keith reminds us, judgments can be left to God. Keith further reflects on this kind of acceptance when he said,

> Social workers are not the "good" people, telling others what is right or wrong – even though sometimes we want to. We are not lowering the boom on people. That is what the Pharisees tried to do. What may seem to some like tolerance is, in fact, understanding of how deep the roots of sin are and how hard it is to eradicate them. (p. 31)

The way Keith spoke about the Bible helps us think about the people we help in a different way. He saw the world from the vantage point of the person who is hurting or who committed what may seem like one of the worst offenses. His beliefs reflect a different way of relating, where we lose our lives to gain them and where the poor in spirit are blessed.

As theologian, Barbara Brown Taylor states,

> You can do anything you want to with the Beatitudes; people always have…The simplest thing to do with them, perhaps, is to let them stand you on your head so that you cannot see the world in the same way again, so that you cannot be sure any more who the winners are and who are the losers. Upside-down, you begin to see God's blessed ones in places it would never have occurred to you to look. (Taylor, 1998, p. 162)

We have the freedom not to judge and to forgive others. "We have the opportunity to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8), which is life giving" (p. 26).

Lawrence Ressler, a Christian educator, tells the story of Keith, who after teaching social work for years, had an epiphany about, "the three-part model of social work (reality, empathy, support). It was parallel to the Trinity of…God, Son, and Holy Spirit. Suddenly Christianity made sense to Keith. He found that Christian faith and theology provided better answers to life's difficult questions" (Ressler, 2010, p. 247). In any helping situation, the helper can bring reality, empathy, and support.

Reality. "That is how things are, the likely result of various paths you have been on" (p. 19). The reality in this situation is that Sal made choices in his past that caused him, and especially others, harm. Those choices remained with him for decades, as they brought him paralyzing shame and guilt, making it hard for him to move forward in his life. Reality is very hard to face and yet it was the first step Sal had to take toward healing.

Empathy *comes next*. It is important for the social worker to understand the other person, and with Sal I had to empathize with his fears and hesitancy to share his story. This is not about sympathy or pity. It is about connecting to the other person, feeling with them, and expressing what the other person is going through. This occurs without losing sight of reality and the choices Sal made. It requires, as Keith called it, "an act of the loving imagination" (p. 21). Empathy called for feeling with Sal and identifying the emotions he was experiencing rather than focusing on his past actions.

Finally ***support***. One of the greatest gifts we can give to the client is our presence. Listening with compassion toward Sal was ultimately the way he experienced ***support***. Reality can be harsh on its own and yet it can be transformative when empathy and support are added. Support also helps us demonstrate we believe in a person's capacity to change. "These three qualities, or actions, are part of a single process. None of them is sufficient apart from the others" (p. 20).

In the conclusion to the original 1985 edition of Keith's text, there is a list of assumptions, which we kept intact in the 2021 revision. I drew upon one of these practice assumptions to guide my work with Sal, which says:

> …human beings, including myself, are fallible, limited creatures. We are not capable, and never will be, of solving all our problems or of creating the perfect society. Nevertheless, we are sometimes capable, with appropriate help, of transcending our nature in acts of courage and compassion. We do not see people as 'naturally good' or 'naturally bad,' but instead as fallible people who, by the grace of God, can

> transcend themselves. This is the hope we can hold onto as we serve people and work within society. (p. 50)

This is the hope I held onto in my work with Sal, so he would not be defined by his past. The biblical story of redemption and Christ's example helped me journey *with* Sal. As Author and Pastor Erwin McManus says, we need to focus on what people are becoming, rather than on what everyone shouldn't be doing. While humans are sinful and make mistakes they are also redeemable and "unique, distinct, beautiful gifts" (The Work of The People, n.d.).

Sal had been suffering for quite some time. While this is a universal human experience, part of our role and purpose is to care for people in the midst of their circumstances. Bearing witness to our clients' suffering is one of the most sacred moments social workers can encounter as we serve clients.

A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SUFFERING

(Sandy) - Keith included a chapter on a "Christian View of Suffering" that begins with the question, "How might a Christian, who is a social worker, approach suffering?" (2021, p. 32). It is the type of question that only takes a lifetime to answer.

We chose this mural, A Daughter Migrates Towards the Mother Earth, because it is a beautiful image of maternal care and relates to human suffering, augmenting women's voices, and family relationships, which were themes in the case, below. You can view this mural by clicking here *or typing the link listed in the references (Snow, 2017), into a browser.*

We included the following case example with *Maya, an African American and Latina*, that comes from my experience as a child advocate, to help wrestle with this question on how to approach suffering:

> *Maya sat in the crowded court waiting room. She was relinquishing her parental rights for her 7-year-old daughter because of her struggle with drug addiction. I sat beside her. She was in agony and kept asking me…am I doing the right thing? What if I did something different? What is she going to think of me as she grows up?*

(Leslie) - How did you respond to her questions?

(Sandy) - At first, I attempted to further explore the questions with her. Then I realized these were questions she was asking herself. It seemed to

be her way to deal with the horrible pain she was feeling. What I did have to offer was to be present with her.

Most of us would agree we are to alleviate the greater part of suffering. We are reminded that Jesus healed the sick, commended those who fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited those in prison, etc. (Matthew 25:35-36). Yet we sometimes struggle as helpers with the idea we need to do something more concrete than being present.

(Leslie) - What did you see as your role in alleviating Maya's pain?

(Sandy) - I had an internal struggle with the reality of a parent using drugs that caused her and her young daughter pain and loss of a homelife. Yet as a social worker it was not my role to judge nor negate the reality of what was happening. So I sat there in the courtroom with her trying to figure out what was most helpful when I realized that she needed someone to hear her agony and acknowledge it, rather than engage in a discussion at this time.

We need to be careful not to condone suffering or allow it to go on even when we think the person might deserve it given their behavior. Her drug addiction is an example. Being addicted can also be a form of suffering. A qualitative study of women in similar circumstances as Maya found, "As drug use continues, the connection with the drug can become the primary "relationship" that is more important than the bonds with family and friends" (Bauer, 2001, p. 152). There were no family or friends sitting in the waiting room with her.

Some suffering can be a part of growing up, making a wise decision, and becoming a responsible person. In some ways her ability to question herself came from her heart and reflected her agony. Yet, she also voluntarily relinquished her rights because she recognized she could not take care of her daughter given her addiction. As social workers it is important to not lose hope in others or ourselves because, "Even the most fallible person may behave in an utterly unexpected way, finding some courage, some unselfishness, even some capacity for self-sacrifice." (p. 15).

Another practice assumption Keith offers is that "No person is beyond help" (p. 50). He acknowledges that the social worker at times may struggle with the knowledge and skill to help and has no right to pass moral judgements on the people we work with. We added the following to the text, "It is important to recognize that healing in the face of suffering does not always occur. Suffering may break down more people than it builds up" (p. 33).

(Leslie) - Since we are called to bring healing into people's lives, it raises the question of how we can support people who are suffering.

(Sandy) - It can be hard not to wonder how some people manage to thrive, except through the grace of God. Yet people are more likely to heal if they are allowed to express both their anger and their grief. At times, to be a social worker is to bear witness to this pain and suffering…and try to "represent the God who dwells within us and hears us" (p. 34).

As Christians we also seek to bring hope, as we support client resilience in the face of suffering. Since practice knowledge about resilience continues to expand, we decided to add a new chapter to the text entitled, Hope and Resilience.

HOPE AND RESILIENCE

> Social work is a profession that is based on hope. It is the capacity to hope that enables social workers to work with people and communities that have experienced life events such as loss, abuse, or trauma. As social workers who are Christians, we are sustained by our hope and faith in Christ that tells us we can wade into seemingly hopeless situations because God is present in the midst of the suffering of us all (p. 35).

We began to think about the connections between hope and resilience. We discovered that there is a Hope Research Center at the University of Oklahoma in which researchers found that…"hope leads to resilience on the pathway to trauma-survivor well-being" (Hellman, 2021, p. 3). They also raise questions about focusing only on resilience which is important, yet see the need to foster hope as a beginning step.

In social work, there has been an increasing focus on resilience, which is the ability to grow and flourish in the midst of adversity. What is now being recognized and affirmed is that personal faith and communities of faith can be sources of strength and healing that help people to flourish (p. 7).

For example, there are studies related to the development of cultural and communal resilience in the case of Hurricane Katrina and other natural disasters. In the black community where there was the most damage, church became a source of healing and activism in restoring communities (Campbell & Bauer, 2021). Related to resilience is the concept of post-traumatic growth that individuals or groups can experience as a result of a struggle with a traumatic life event. As reflected in the research of Brene Brown (2010)…"without exception, spirituality–the belief in connection, a power greater than self, and interconnections grounded in love and compassion–emerged as a component of resilience" (p. 64).

(Leslie) - When, as social workers, we come face-to-face with human suffering, how can hope and resilience play a part?

We chose this mural, Hope Medallions, because it relates to community empowerment and finding hope when faced with loss, which are key concepts in the case, below. You can view this mural by clicking here or typing the link listed in the references (Hagopian Arts, 2020), into a browser.

(Sandy) - To try and wrestle with the role of hope and resilience in our work, we included a case example from my work in disaster relief after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. Several churches in Pennsylvania were matched with a church in New Orleans to provide resources and support. My church was a part of this and I traveled with another social worker to meet with the pastor and congregation. One of the issues the pastor was facing was meeting the needs of people who were grieving. He explained that there was a long history of church members, who were all African American, being reluctant to go to mental health agencies because of the racism they encountered. The church provided a safe space to process pain.

> We met with a group of members from the church who experienced the loss of a loved one in the flooding that happened with hurricane Katrina. One member, Mr. Thomas, said he walks by a nearby lake to feel close to his son who drowned. It is a place where he feels more at peace. He was hesitant to mention this to the rest of the group, because going near water might bring back bad memories for them. Yet, another member of the group, Ms. Smith, responded that she struggles when there is a hard rainstorm, but hearing him gives her hope that it won't always be like this.

(Leslie) - How did you support the members of the group given their deep grief?

(Sandy) - One of the ways to bring hope to such a devastating situation was to affirm that there are different ways of grieving and finding peace. Mr. Thomas found ways to connect with the memory of his son and to reframe his image of water. Ms. Smith saw God as a dependable source of strength and hope yet was honest about her lingering fear of rainstorms, which were traumatizing at times.

Exploring a client's faith practices, such as Bible reading and prayer, can help people reframe their experiences in a way that gives hope for the future. Building resilience is a relational process that can include the support of faith communities and healing rituals. These spiritual practices

are being increasingly recognized as a source of resilience in social work practice (Campbell & Bauer, 2021).

Understanding the meaning of faith for a person is an important part of the helping process. Sometimes faith is a resource for healing. At other times, faith is a source of distress, condemnation, or *feeling* worthless. A client may feel far from God or judged by their congregation. Someone else might be left with anger at why God let them suffer and a sense of hopelessness for the future.

To understand resilience, it can be helpful to consider what it is not. Resilience is not about bouncing back to where you were previously, which tends to be a popular definition that is not always helpful. It also is not one size fits all or about enduring painful life events. Ms. Smith is in a different place in her grief process than other group members in finding meaning in what happened to her and her family. The good news is that hope and resilience can be learned, which seemed to be unfolding for both of the group members. People who experience adversity are much more than their wounds and hurts.

(Leslie) - Resilience and hope are also important concepts for us as social workers. To effectively cope with challenging situations, it is important that we build resilience. Being intentional about holding boundaries, developing healthy support systems, seeking supervisory support, and investing in self-care practices are important ways to build resilience. According to Pharris et al. (2022) resilience is enhanced through developing "internal characteristics such as coping strategies for the demands of the job…one such characteristic may be a hopeful mindset" (p. 3). Another is to invest in self-care practices.

Prior to 2021, the NASW Code of Ethics made no explicit reference to self-care. Now the Code "encourages all social workers to engage in self-care, ongoing education, and other activities to ensure…commitment to" the mission, values, and ethics of the profession (Singer, 2021). This addition is meant to educate social workers, social work organizations, and others about self-care in social work. It is supportive and aspirational, rather than mandatory and yet something we all need to commit to in order to be the best we can be for our clients and ourselves.

This is why it can be helpful for us as social workers to create a self-care plan. According to Barskey (2021), "self-care is not an add-on to social work practice; it is integral to practice, enabling social workers to serve clients in a competent manner, promote social justice, and foster the other ideals of the profession" (para. 6).

Although Keith did not write about resilience or social worker wellness specifically, another of his practice assumptions states that, "professional education and training in self-discipline are indispensable

to good social work" (p. 51). Additionally, it is well-researched that prayer and faith practices are key to meaningful self-care (Collins, 2005). These "interconnections" of faith can be expanded to include the way faith is lived out with characteristics such as hope, forgiveness, and gratitude.

As social workers, we are going to have stressors, yet experiencing constant stress should not be a way of life. Christian social workers are not immune, however, from the realities of burnout. Burnout relates to how a social worker is functioning and can be described as emotional exhaustion from work stressors. It is important to be aware of the signs of burnout, which can be tied to being withdrawn, unproductive, or distracted at work. We are all susceptible to burnout due to poor self-care practices, lack of supervision, workload demands, limited resources, and unsupportive policies. Additionally, bearing witness to human need and suffering can take a significant toll on social workers. Yet, as Christians we also are called to lives of hope.

According to Pharris et al. (2022), "while hope shares similarities with other positive psychological characteristics such as resilience, optimism, self-efficacy, and grit, hope theory suggests that hope is a distinct psychological state" (p. 4). Hope is not about wishing for a positive outcome. It is based in reality and does not require rose-colored glasses. It is not false reassurance. Hope is goal-oriented, missional, and an antidote to burnout. Pharris et al. (2022) go on to say, "when faced with adversity, hopeful [social workers] find ways to set goals, adapt new pathways to the goal, and sustain the energy to accomplish those goals" (p. 5).

I (Leslie) spoke about self-care to social workers at a local children's hospital. Many of them had a difficult time sharing what they did to care for themselves - they had ideas of what they *could* do, but fewer examples of what they *were* doing. At the end of my presentation I gave them the opportunity to paint a picture on a canvas. One person painted a sunset and shared that when she looks at it, it brings her peace. That is one small way to foster wellness yet, the needs of these social workers were greater than this, given the realities they face on a daily basis.

> Self-care requires us to create a balanced life from which we do not feel the need to escape, but one in which we can stay fully present and invested. There can be challenges as we practice social work, both with our clients and in the organizations where we work. These realities are even more reason for radical self-care. This may mean we have to say "no" from time to time, walk away from opportunities, and make difficult decisions to protect and uphold our rest and well-being. (pp. 37-38)

Developing self-compassion can similarly help us maintain compassionate hearts of service to others as we steward our knowledge, skills, and gifts in meaningful ways (Collins, 2005). As Eleanor Brown reminds (2024) "rest and self-care are so important. When you take time to replenish your spirit, it allows you to serve from the overflow. You cannot serve from an empty vessel."

(Sandy) - Self-care practices were important for my colleague and myself when we worked with the church group impacted by hurricane Katrina as we were hearing painful stories of loss. We had the support of one another and the Pastor. We were not alone and had a sense of purpose and found meaning in the work even when it was hard.

If we were revising this text now, we would include some additional content. One example is the concept of moral injury and moral courage that have a direct connection to our faith. Moral injury was first identified in working with military veterans who were in combat when they perpetrated or experienced violence and had difficulty processing their actions.

> Moral injury emerges from memories of traumatizing experiences that we cannot integrate into our existing faith or meaning system…because we or others have failed our core moral expectations, and it results in self-isolation, and painful moral emotions such as outrage, guilt, shame, mistrust, and despair. (Brock, 2021, para. 21).

Other definitions of moral injury indicate that it is something that violates a person's moral compass, personal faith, or sense of social justice. Although in many ways this is not a new concept, when you are a social worker who is a Christian, it does give a name to what we and the people we help may be wrestling with.

(Leslie) - I think this was part of what was happening with Sal. He was processing actions from his past that did not align with who he was becoming as a follower of Christ. As a result, he was stuck in a place of despair and a shame cycle he could not find his way out of.

(Sandy) - This also may be a part of what members of the church were experiencing in New Orleans. The two members of the group were not only upset over not being able to save their child and grandchild, they also experienced the slow response of emergency crews to the needs of black communities.

To address these issues, it often takes moral courage for the client(s) and the helper. It can also require a deep commitment to social justice

and the ability to challenge authority when needed. Years ago Keith-Lucas wrote about what qualities are needed to become a successful helping person…he began with courage.

> It takes great courage to share with another the reality of their situation…It also takes courage to take risks both with oneself and others that helping inevitably demands. The personal risk involved may be that of failure, or being confronted with an emotional situation one has no idea how to handle or having one's own comfortable world upset, or being blamed or abused… (1994, pp. 101-102).

He uses the example of investigating child abuse…driving around the block several times before you have the courage to actually knock on the door. "It is only the person who can be afraid and not afraid of their fear who is in a position to help" (1994, pp. 104). He outlines the qualities of a Christian helper and starts with looking for grace, helping people face reality, and doing that with humility, and all of that takes courage.

Conclusion

We chose this final mural, Migrant Imaginary, as part of our conclusion, because it reflects the resilient spirit of the clients we have been privileged to serve. You can view the mural by clicking here or typing the link listed in the references (Yawar & Cabret, 2019), into a browser.

We began by discussing practice wisdom and how faith is an integral part of this. At the end of the revised text, we concluded:

> Our Christian faith is a resource that guides our actions to care for those in need by offering reality, empathy, and support (Keith-Lucas, 1972). Being present in the midst of suffering can also lead to the possibility of hope and the potential for resilience that is rooted in our faith. Regardless of the setting in which we practice, our task, as Keith states, is to provide clients with "the experience of being loved, forgiven, and cared for" in ways that enrich the lives of clients. It is a lifelong journey for social workers to explore the invaluable ways in which the interplay of Christian faith and social work shapes and contributes to practice with clients. ❖

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Growing In Faith Among Catholic Emerging Adults: A Grounded Theory Inquiry

Sister Miriam Maclean

Emerging young adults (ages 18-29) report a range of experiences in the formation of psychological, social, and physical identities. Religious identity acquisition is an important development process for many young adults. There are 12 million Catholic emerging adults in the United States, who vary widely in their beliefs and behaviors, such as Mass attendance. Professionals from a broad range of professions may help Catholic emerging adults navigate identity formation processes. This grounded theory study explored how 31 Catholic emerging adults described the process of their process of faith development. Participants described this process as gradual and ongoing, with various influences that made the process harder or easier. The main themes that emerged were the influences on this process: external influences, internal influences and choices/action. The findings could prove useful in helping social workers respond in more culturally competent ways to Catholic emerging adults and give insight to Church leaders about the needs of Catholic emerging adults and potential responses they could make to these needs. The implications are discussed in regard to theory development and clinical practice, policy and research.

***Keywords*:** Religious development, identity development, Catholic emerging adults, cultural competency, Grounded theory

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IS A PROCESS that is not greatly understood, especially among groups, such as particular religious or ethnic groups (NASW, 2017; Roehlkepartain et al., 2011). This study hopes to broaden the understanding of the developmental needs of Catholic emerging adults to aid professionals from a broad range of fields to better assist Catholic emerging adults. Focus is on the process of religious identity formation among Catholic emerging

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adults. This is especially important to assist social workers in providing culturally competent interventions with this group.

There are about 70 million registered Catholics in the United States. Of these, 17% are thought to be between the ages of 18 and 29, which is about 12 million. Catholic emerging adults vary widely in their adherence to the Catholic Church's beliefs and their behaviors, such as attending religious services regularly (Pearce & Denton, 2011; Smith et al., 2014). As of the early 2000s, only one-fifth of Catholic emerging adults attended Mass at least weekly (Smith et al., 2014). More knowledge about this population would benefit social workers to better assist with identity development challenges in ways that are culturally competent.

One way of coming to understand this population better is through understanding their identity development. This study is concerned with individual identity, although identity also refers to relational and collective identities. Individual identity development is considered here in relationship to the scholarship of Erikson and Marcia. Integrated religious identity has been defined as, "*answering the question of "who am I" to include a person's religious beliefs and practices in a way that is free from coercion and/or fear*" (MacLean & Riebschleger, 2021). Characteristics such as ethnic background, abilities, religion, etc., are then assessed as part of a person's identity, in as much as they are used to answer this question "who am I?" (Vignoles et al., 2011).

Social work has always had a strong commitment to working in culturally competent ways with diverse populations (Council of Social Work Education [CSWE], 2015; National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2015, 2017). Catholic emerging adults are among the groups social workers may encounter in various practice settings, such as in working with organizations or individuals. Catholic emerging adults may differ from other populations in ways that are important to understand. When comparing Catholic emerging adults to Evangelicals, Protestants, Jews, Mormons, and other religions, Catholics had the lowest rates of adherence to their beliefs (Trinitapoli, 2007). Moreover, having more Catholic friends did not increase their adherence to and participation in their faith in ways that it did in other religious denominations (Trinitapoli, 2007). Catholic emerging adults were also found to be less involved in their faith than their peers from other populations (Pearce & Denton, 2011). These differences between Catholic emerging adults and peers from other faiths seem to warrant further exploration and understanding. It is hoped that a better understanding of this population will aid in more culturally competent practices in social work. While the research does indicate differences between Catholics and Protestants in what impacts their adherence to their religious beliefs, etc., this research may also be helpful in working with some Protestant clients. For example, some

Protestants, may also struggle to integrate their faith as they strive to follow the teachings of Christ on helping/serving the poor, and adhere to the Christ's teachings in areas like charity.

It seems important that given the potentially unique needs and developmental processes of Catholic emerging adults, that more research is needed. This research aims to fill this gap by seeking to better understand the process of faith development in Catholic emerging adults. It was expected that the process of identity development would emerge as Catholic emerging adults describe their interaction and participation with faith in their lives. The overarching qualitative research question asked: *How do Catholic emerging adults describe their faith journey?* In the process of answering this question, it was hoped that several other themes might emerge: (1) How faith relates to how the person understands her or his religious identity, (2) The *process* of how the person has come to understand his or her religious identity, (3) Greater understanding of what factors facilitate or hinder a person's faith development and (4) What assistance Catholic emerging adults may benefit from in their faith development.

Methods

Research design overview. This study was a grounded theory study of the reported faith development process of Catholic emerging adults, with an aim to better understand religious identity development according to the voices of Catholic emerging adults. The methods of data collection and analysis leaned toward the methods of Corbin and Strauss (2008), beginning by considering theory, and using sensitizing concepts from the theory to inform data collection trustworthiness of the data (Padgett, 2017).

Researcher description. Qualitative theorists suggest that researchers write reflexivity statements to increase the trustworthiness of the data to avoid biased assumptions in data collection and analysis (Padgett, 2017). Qualitative research method authors strongly recommend that the researcher examine his or her own biases including his or her personal views (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2003; Padgett, 2017). It is important to note that this writer is a Roman Catholic religious sister who is a trained social worker. She has been living in religious life for about 15 years. She has been formed in the Roman Catholic intellectual tradition, which seeks to integrate objective truth with subjective experience, not putting these at odds with one another but acknowledging the complexity of our lived experience. As a social worker, she was trained to give voice to the participants in the research and to respect their self-determination.

She worked to maintain awareness of how these beliefs may impact data analysis. One way this was done was through writing *memos* that note

reactions to the data and how the data may stretch her thinking beyond these assumptions. Memos are an essential part of grounded theory both in combatting bias and in achieving fuller analysis (Lempert, 2011; Padgett, 2017). Memos were done both during the collection of data and during analysis (Padgett, 2017).

A co-coder was also used who was a Christian, with no affiliation with the Catholic faith. The co-coder was a doctoral student in social work. The dissertation director was also involved in data analysis and is Catholic and a social worker.

Sampling. The number of participants was not pre-determined in this study, since data is collected until saturation occurs (Charmaz, 2014; Oktay, 2012; Padgett, 2017; Urquhart, 2013). However, grounded theory studies typically conduct between 20-30 interviews (Stern, 2011). In grounded theory research, the researcher seeks to obtain not just theoretical saturation of the data (no new information), but also conceptual saturation (all the concepts of the theory being sufficiently defined) (Hood, 2011). Constant comparison was used (comparing what the data says each time a code is used) in on-going analysis to assess for saturation (Holton, 2011). Conducting analysis after each of the interviews allowed adjustments to be made to more fully develop concepts. For example, it was clear early on that there was not enough information from participants regarding the *process* of faith development or regarding why certain things helped people, so more probing questions around these issues were needed in subsequent interviews.

This study achieved saturation at 31 interviews. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours, with most interviews around 60 minutes.

Catholic parishes and young adult organizations were directly contacted throughout the United States (East Coast, West Coast, Midwest and South). Many responses came through this. To find negative case examples, of those not practicing the Catholic faith, participants were sought through Michigan State University's School of Social Work. The request was sent through three of their Listservs.

The sample, as reported in Table 1, was composed of Catholic emerging adults (18-29 years old, M = 24, SD = 3.5). Eighteen were from the Midwest, 4 from the West, 4 from the Northeast and 5 from the South. 19 participants were White/Caucasian, 3 Middle Eastern, 2 White/Hispanic, and 1 of each of the following groups: Asian, Biracial, Black, Hispanic, Mayan, White/Chinese and Other. All self-identified as Catholic.

Table 1.

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample (N = 31)

Mean (SD)
Age
24 (3.5)
Frequency (%)
Race/Ethnicity
White/Caucasian
19 (61.3)
Middle Eastern
3 (9.7)
White/Hispanic
2 (6.5)
Asian
1 (3.2)
Biracial
1 (3.2)
Black
1 (3.2)
Hispanic
1 (3.2)
Mayan
1 (3.2)
White/Chinese
1 (3.2)
Other
1 (3.2)
Geographic Region
Midwest
18 (58)
South
5 (16)
Northeast
4 (12.9)
West
4 (12.9)
Gender
Female
24 (77.4)
Male
7 (22.6)

Negative case examples were sought to further explore whatever major themes emerged to understand potential differences and to try to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. Negative cases help to ensure that what is being found in the data would not be contradicted by cases that are different (Creswell, 2003). Six negative cases were obtained. These negative cases were people who, despite having often experienced similar influences on those who were practicing their faith, had decided to stop practicing their faith. Negative cases are participants whose experience does not match the experience of many of the participants. This was done to try to ensure that the research would access a wider array of responses to potential influences on religious development and help to understand what hinders people from maintaining their faith.

Interviews with a semi-structured protocol. Padgett (2017) suggests that the semi-structured interview is most fitting for grounded theory studies. In a semi-structured interview, the main questions are constructed in advance, but other questions are permissible to be emphasized and probes used to depend upon how the participant responds. Additionally, if a particular construct comes up in one interview, additional questions may be added to subsequent interviews to further understand the meaning of the construct (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The interview protocol was developed through careful consideration of the research question in concert with the sensitizing concepts from the theories.

Qualitative research literature suggests that semi-structured interviews include only a few, very broad questions (Padgett, 2017). To capture the sensitizing concepts from the literature, ten broad, open-ended questions were developed to obtain a sense of the person's faith journey, the place of faith in a person's life, and the aids and barriers to faith in the person's life, possibly including other people, events, situations, and personal characteristics. The probes were developed to gather more information (if the participant struggled to expound on the broader question) or further information (if further information about what the participant shared was desired). If a participant began to discuss something in a later question, that information would be covered at the time the participant brought it up. As much as possible, the interviewer tried to follow the train of thought of the participant to encourage participant generated conversation (Padgett, 2017).

A semi-structured interview protocol was developed, based on the current state of the research, with the following topic questions: (1) How do young people in your town relate to the Church? (2) How would you describe your faith journey? (3) How does your faith relate to how you see yourself? (4) Can you tell me about things that help your faith journey? (5) What kinds of things get in the way of your faith journey? (6) Would you describe your

religious involvement? (7) What personal traits affect how you engage in faith activities and beliefs? (8) Imagine yourself in 10 years. Where do you see your faith in 10 years? (9) If you could advise someone else in how to move forward in their faith journey, what would you say? (10) Is there anything else that you feel like I should know? Anything I did not ask about, or things you would like to clarify? New things you just thought of?

The demographic questions were asked verbally at the end of the interview as suggested by Padgett (2017). The questions are about the person's age, gender, race and ethnicity.

After gathering the demographic information, the interviewer used member checking to help increase the trustworthiness of the data. *Member checking* included using the notes taken during the interview on main themes presented by the participant and summarizing what the interviewer heard the participant say during the interview. The participant was then asked to make clarifications or additions to their information. This technique is suggested by Creswell (2003) and Padgett (2017) to have the participant confirm that the interviewer has the correct understanding of the main themes of the interview. This is intended to try to increase the trustworthiness of the data. Padgett (2017) also suggests that this is a helpful way to close the interview.

Analyses

Procedures for the interview. Interviews were conducted via Skype or Zoom. Skype and Zoom are both video conferencing software that allow people to speak with and see each other using their computers. They were recorded via Zoom itself or the voice recorder on my iPhone. They were saved via electronic file and sent to a reputable transcribing company for transcription. The research was done either at the main researcher's home or work office. Full *transcription* provides another way of trying to ensure the trustworthiness of the data since the entire content of the interview is entered into the data base, making it more likely that the researcher is working with what really was said, versus what he or she remembers.

This was a voluntary study. This was explained both in the initial e-mails and in the informed consent. A $25 Amazon gift card was offered as an incentive. Once consent was obtained the interview proceeded as outlined in the interview protocol development section.

This consent form was submitted to the Institutional Review Board of Michigan State University for approval. The study received exempt status.

Analyses. Data analysis began as soon as the first interview was transcribed. This allowed for subsequent interviews to be modified by seeking more information regarding certain concepts, depending on how the data began to emerge. This is consistent with theoretical sampling techniques described by Corbin and Strauss (2008).

Dedoose is a secure online platform that helps to facilitate the storage and coding of qualitative data (Dedoose, 2019). Both coders used Dedoose. Any identifying information was taken out of the data. The initial consent and any small talk (not related to the content of the analysis) before or after the interview were not coded or transcribed. In addition to the interview transcriptions, memos and field notes were also inputted into Dedoose but were not analyzed or reported in the data findings.

Co-coding. The data were coded by two researchers, known as *co-coding*. The second coder was a Louisiana State University doctoral student in social work who served as a research assistant. The research assistant signed a confidentiality agreement stating that she will keep any identifying information of participants confidential. The research assistant took the Michigan State University initial Institutional Review Board training. The primary author provided training to the research assistant about open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The research assistant also had the coding process explained in detail through reading the sections of this proposal on data collection and analysis. This author provided the training for the research assistant, under the direction of her chairperson. The co-coder was not Catholic.

The co-coder began coding the interviews from the very beginning to help generate the initial 10 to 12 main themes. Each coder read the interviews independently, generated a list of main themes, discussed them and decided which ones were most helpful. Memos were written during this process to record the decision-making process. This team approach was used to grapple with the complexities of the data and to see multiple facets of the data through conversation (Wiener, 2011), as well as increase the trustworthiness of the data (Padgett, 2017). After several interviews were completed, the two coders began to make a codebook that, overtime defined the categories or subcategories.

Open coding. Open coding is the first stage, which consists of reading the data and attaching one or two words that best summarize the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Open coding used *in vivo* codes whenever possible. *In vivo* codes seek to use the participants' own words in the code. This helps to ensure that the voices of Catholic emerging adults are captured (Charmaz, 2014). Open coding continued until all the interviews were completed and initially analyzed, even while axial coding also began.

Axial Coding. During the process of open coding and axial coding we began to develop categories and subcategories and to understand the categories' unique components (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For example, the coders began to identify their 10 main categories and then subcategories. In vivo coding was preserved as much as possible during axial coding.

Both coders open coded the first 10 interviews and then compared the

main themes that were found in this first stage. From these first interviews, we both identified cultural impacts, aids to religious participation, prayer, challenges and doubts. The co-coder identified different influences (peer and family), participation in going to Church services, understanding faith, individualism (personal relationship, finding your own way), religious leaders, and faith origins. We identified relationships (positive influence, changes in relationship and family), thinking (reading, learning), making faith my own, faith's impact on actions and decisions, and the role of emotion. After this, we both continued (independently) with open coding and axial coding of the interviews.

The major work of axial coding occurred after the completion of the open coding of the 31 interviews. At this point we had over 90 codes and worked to reduce them through combining similar codes and identifying some major categories. There were still many codes, which did not point to a structure of the data. It was only after doing an initial chart that put together all the codes that were used that it became clear that there were overarching categories to the results (external influences, internal influences, and choices and actions). At this point, we were able to reduce the codes, as they fit into those categories.

Selective coding. Selective coding is the last step of the analysis, which seeks to understand the relationships between the categories and subcategories (Padgett, 2017). Padgett (2017) notes that this is a demanding form of analysis, but necessary for grounded theory research.

In this case, after all 31 interviews were open coded, an initial coding schema was developed and put into writing in a codebook. Both coders began using this codebook and independently coding and comparing interviews (one or two at a time). During this process, definitions were solidified, discrepancies noted, and some minor changes to the coding schema made. Once the codebook was finalized, an *interrater reliability* of .81 was achieved using a pooled Cohen's kappa (Padgett, 2017). The Cohen's kappa seeks at least a .80 agreement between the two coders when independently coding a text.

Table 2.

Themes and subthemes Explaining the Faith Development Process

Theme	Subtheme	Notes
External Influences		
	Culture	
	Faith encouragement from family	
	Family influence – away from faith	
	Peer influence – positive	
	Peer influence – away from faith	
	Religious Leaders	
	God's influence	
	External influences within the Church	Feeling welcomed, external attributes of the Church, Groups/Organizations
Internal Influences		
	Personal traits that aid in faith development	
	Doubts and questions	
	Personal traits	
	Attitudes or personal traits that hinder faith development	Fear, self-image, etc.
	Suffering	
Choices/Action		
	Choices to practice faith	
	Falling away from faith	
	Faith activities	Prayer, retreats, sacraments, Scripture and service
	Finding replacements for formal faith	
	Practical Challenges	
	Disagreement with the Church	
	Thinking/Learning	
Faith's Impact on the Person		
	Faith's impact on actions	
	Faith's impact on relationships	
	Ways faith helps the person	

The main themes that emerged were *internal influences, external influences and choices/actions*. Participants engaged with these main themes in a variety of ways. While there were many subthemes, the sections on the main themes will focus on subthemes that provide

substantially new information to the understanding of religious identity development. It did not appear that the ways that these influences were engaged with necessarily led toward or away from integrated religious identity. This paper explores how participants articulated the process of religious identity formation and the influences they reported on this process, particularly emphasizing those aspects not found in other literature.

Identity Formation Process. It is helpful to begin by considering the broad concept of the identity formation process as articulated by the participants. The data regarding religious identity formation does not necessarily revolve around dramatic events, specific milestones or transition times. Occasionally interview participants mention transitions as a time of growing in faith. For example, one person stated:

> I think for me it [college] was just a time where it was a big change to go from living at home to living on my own at college, um, and I think I just was- was open at that point to people that were gonna be put in my life to help me and to lead me (Interview 30).

One young man made a perceptive comment that, "'I'm not sure that I really like this idea of faith being a journey that you move forwards and backwards in some way. So, I don't- I don't think faith is linear at all" (Interview 19).

Another person described different "moments" in her faith journey in this way:

> Um, well, of course, I- I came from the um, not caring about God to uh, seeing God as like real, and helpful and everything from um, the really hard times that I went through. (Interview 23).

Another aspect of the process of identity formation seems to be that people reported their progressive integration of their faith was steady. There were no dramatic events reported, but rather simple decisions that either increased or decreased one's commitment to one's religious beliefs and practice, and internal and external influences that either increased or decreased one's commitment to one's religious beliefs and practices. People who indicated adhering to their Catholic faith, did not seem to indicate that difficult events led them backwards, but just that they were additional data points on the journey.

Most people described their faith development as gradual and continuous (not something that ever stopped). One participant said:

> It was gradual. I had to keep going and keep going and started getting understanding. I didn't know too much in the beginning, and what I did is I did a lot of research and all the readings, and I started to see change in myself. When you jot down what you're doing in life on paper and you start to see change during that paper that you have kept, documented it, you notice that there's something in your life that's happening special, and it isn't just you. If it was just you, then you wouldn't need to write it down, so once I started seeing the change, I knew that I was doing the right thing by going to Mass every Saturday (Interview 3).

Certain milestones or life-events emerged as significant to the identity formation process. For example, the transitions into college and out of college seemed to be important moments. Several people mentioned that while it is not the typical experience to go to college and become more religious, that it was their experience. Several young people out of college also mentioned the need to make their faith more their own when they were no longer surrounded by the community they had in college.

Some people also discussed the process of faith formation in terms of how they grew in various ways. For example, one person articulated how she has changed in this way:

> And I wouldn't be able to believe it. And I feel like now I'm able to sort of ... um embrace that. And I think too, I'm less afraid to ... um ... I guess to like be ... like to be proud of my faith. So if people ever ask me about it, I'm definitely more confident than I ... if you would've asked me three years ago, like "Would you openly talk about your faith to your friends that don't all go to church or that don't all agree with you?", and I feel like then I would be like absolutely not, I would just be like, "Oh yeah, like I go to church", and then like just say that (Interview 15).

Even times of going away from one's faith, were sometimes seen, in retrospect, as helping the person. One person experienced the ups and downs of this process of integration in this way:

> Having grown up going to Catholic school, um, you know, the faith just kind of seems like the default, for the first part of my life until I had to the opportunity to like make a choice of my own. I made the wrong choice when I was in high school and I made the right choice when I was in college. But nonetheless, I think making that bad decision, it's actually great learning

> opportunity and is, is, is what made my, uh, faith as strong as it is now. I don't think I could, I don't think I could have had that experience without the bad experience (Interview 10).

From these quotes it seems that many of the influences on the faith journey that will be discussed are important parts of its graduality. Others described their journey as "sporadic" (Interview 22).

Some, who disagreed about the Church in many matters, indicated they may someday return to the Church (Interview 31). Another person also emphasized a sense of exploration saying:

> But I expect to kind of with-in the next ten years to figure out what I actually believe, and cause there's a lot of development right now, I'm going to graduate college, um I plan to get my masters in social work right away and start a job and stuff like that so, I think I will figure out more so- I-I, my views change every couple months so I think I will have more concrete idea of what I do believe. So, we'll see (Interview 27).

External influences. Participants also described being influenced by external things on the process of growing in relationship to their faith. Things that participants reported were culture, family, peers, religious leaders, God's influence, and various aspects of the Church. From what the participants indicated, these factors seemed to take the form of particular moments of interaction that either influenced the person toward or away from their faith or had a neutral impact on the person. Culture, family and God's influence are particularly highlighted here.

Culture. The cultural impacts subtheme was used when the person described that the atmosphere or culture in which they were living or had lived in impacted them positively or negatively. Often, participants would refer to the secular environment of the Universities they attended, saying things like "I think just college campus culture in particular is, is difficult" (Interview 28). One person, when describing things that hinder his faith said:

> I think it's the temptations of the world … today we have this uh, I would say different morality, where, especially in movies and TV shows we see some things that are seen as normal and even, desirable. And that we know from our faith that it's the opposite. So I would say it is a main, um, yeah, hurdles is to overcome this new morality that is arising (Interview 12).

A couple of participants mentioned challenges reconciling their identity as Catholic with some other subculture in which they engaged.

For example, one participant mentioned being part of the pop punk culture and struggling to see how that fit with being Catholic (Interview 1). Another participant, mentioned integrating their work with a secular organization, asking the question "how do I integrate my values in the work that I am doing?" (Interview 28). Another participant mentioned that it can be difficult to hold counter cultural views saying "…the work community, um, that's predominately secular, holds a certain, certain standard that, 'Oh, if you believe this then you hate 'x' you know?' (Interview 14).

Among those interviewed, some described the faith-culture of their locality as being either helpful or negative. For example, some participants from the south, mentioned that faith was presupposed as part of life, and they found that culture helpful in leading toward a more integrated faith identity. One participant felt that the Protestant churches had a stronger culture of reaching out to young people (Interview 7), and another participant suggested that adults helping young people grow in their faith ought to ensure that they understand the culture young people are coming from (Interview 6). One participant, who grew up in Brazil, noted that the Catholic culture there gave a context to his faith in a helpful way. However, another participant who was of Middle Eastern descent, mentioned some of the negative aspects of a Chaldean Catholic culture, where people practiced their faith because it was a cultural norm, but not because they believed it themselves. He said: It's like being Chaldean like me, like it's our faith is so attached to it, and I guess that's kind of backfired because it's just cultural now for them … which I think is not a good thing because it's you just do it because okay, you know, you just have to go through the motions, and you tune out, and you're not really there to actually partake (Interview 5).

Family influence – away from the faith. Interestingly, many people reported either no faith encouragement from their family, or that their family discouraged their faith practices. One participant, who was raised without religion and whose parents did not expose him to any religion. Another participant, who was Baptized Catholic, but then raised without any religious involvement said that her parents are:

> [B]oth fallen away Catholics, uhm, and they don't get it. Uhm [coughs], my parents were part of the, like 60s sexual revolution. And, uhm, my mom, the first time she tried to put me on birth control, I was 14. So she just doesn't get it like from a very … like their experience of Mass growing up was go into like, they would be told by their parents to go to Mass" (Interview 1).

For participants who were raised non-Catholic, their families sometimes had difficulty with their new religious beliefs. One participant recalled that:

> [M]y whole life I'd been, I'd been told, you know, don't be Catholic. Catholics aren't Christian. Um, like when I was eight my father explained to me what transubstantiation was. I was like, "That's, that's whack." Don't ever trust anyone who talks about this crap" (Interview 24). One participant said that when she told her mother that she was becoming Catholic her mother said, "Well that's sad" (Interview 4).

Even for participants, whose families largely encouraged their faith, they sometimes reported other difficulties from familial influences. For example, one participant commented:

> Um I think some other things too and again all of these are kind of like outside influences but...in...especially when you're around family it's... they know that you're into your faith and they know that they're not... sort of like that fear of sharing too much but also that they're like... okay they already know what I'm trying to say. Do I want them to think that I'm even more far removed from what they see every single day. (Interview 8).

Other people also mentioned their family's negative reaction to their faith, "I don't know, my sister, my mom, like, she thinks like, she thinks I use it as a crutch I think. Even though she herself, as I told you, is like, you know, Catholic" (Interview 7). Another participant mentioned that although they were encouraged to practice their faith by their family, the way in which they were encouraged was unhelpful:

> I said, "Dad, you didn't love us into the church. You didn't love ..." I told this, I was like, "I'm just straight up, you did not love us into the church. You yelled at us into the church, you, you know, threw shoes at us to come to church like." (laughing) "This is not the environment, and this is not the, the, the type of things you do to impress upon your children that this is important, it makes them go away" (Interview 5).

Some reported the incongruity they saw in family members with belief. For example, one participant noted:

> … family but definitely more of ah, family that um, and, and I'm referring this time more to the family that live here in the US, that, you know, will- will post um, a Bible message in, on

> social media one day and then the next day post something so hateful, ah, towards, you know, a certain group of people, um, and it's completely contradicting that. Um, it ... being of- of- of Mexican descent, seeing the crisis at our border and just seeing so many people that are, ah, that are Christians just turn those back ... turn their back on, on all their, the people, ah, the immigrants that are trying to come in here, um, that, that definitely (Interview 25).

Finding replacements for formal faith. Related to faith activities is the subtheme finding replacements for formal faith. This subtheme was used when people reported finding replacements for more formal faith. This included, but was not limited to, service not connected with faith, feminism, activism, spirituality without religion, etc. One person aptly explained the process of replacing one's faith with other things in this way:

> Um, I feel like I have other ... like, it's not like I don't do those behaviors, but I have other things that aren't religious that have taken the place of those now. Um, maybe I- I research, like, uh, feminist theory the way that I used to, like, research the Bible. That makes it sound weird. It's not as weird as it sounds. Um (laughs), but it's ... like, I'm- I explore my values system in ways that maybe, um, are similar to how I explored Catholicism a long time ago (Interview 31).

Another person described this process in another way:

> As I've gotten older, um, it has kind of been replaced, right now. I still believe in God, um, and I still go to church but I don't go to church as often. Um, especially if I have to go by myself, I- I can't find that motivation anymore, to go. Um, yeah, right now, I'm struggling, ah, with my faith, a little bit (Interview 25).

Practical challenges. Many practical challenges emerged in people's faith process. This subtheme was used when the primary point of the excerpt was that there were practical challenges (transportation, not enough ministries to participate in, Mass Schedules, being too busy, too tired, etc.), and that these either led them away from the Church or served as an obstacle the person needed to overcome. While many people listed things like being too busy or too tired as obstacles to their faith development, one of the major recurring themes was difficulty finding community, especially for people after college. One person articulated it this way:

> And, um, there's often not a community and, but at the same time, I've also noticed at least at my parish that there are... I don't see a lot of other young adults. Um, and so in a way that could be discouraging, but I, like I know from- from college I- I also attended, um, the focus conferences a couple of years and so like there was thousands of people there (Interview 30).

Another practical challenge was the lack of proper education of Catholics. One person explained it this way:

> Um, but it feels like a lot of modern Catholics want to not see that picture and they want to [inaudible] elements because they don't understand the faith. Uh, the more I see what Catholic catechesis looks like, the more I am so glad I converted and wasn't raised in it, because I know like we, um, if I had been just, just with the level of education those people are getting. Uh, but it, it gets frustrating to see that. Uh, when there's so much beauty to be had and people aren't engaging with it and aren't understanding the reasons for it, the precepts of the church. (Interview 24)

Some participants also listed difficulties finding community. Others also mentioned this sense of busyness. One person said:

> Um, I think myself mostly because I always like to continuously keep myself busy with a lot of things, um, since I can remember, my mom has always said, "You put too much on your plate." But, that's how I like to be, I have very bad anxiety, and I get anxious about things if it's not organized so that's why I'm like, okay let's keep multiple things. But then it doesn't leave much time for leisure or time to practice my faith the way that I would want to because I know it may seem like, oh, it's super easy, just take up and hour or two out of your day to be able to go to mass but my head is spinning with these assignments and internships and two jobs and this and that, so (Interview 22).

Thinking/learning. This subtheme was used whenever the person described thinking or learning as a way of either growing in their faith or as an obstacle to faith. This subtheme was used when the primary point of the passage was how thinking or learning something about the faith helped them, or when their thinking and learning was an obstacle (if it is explicitly disagreement with the Church that led them away, then it would be coded in that way).

Many people reported the importance of reading, of coming to understand, of seeking answers to their questions. This seemed to be a primary way of people integrating their faith. One person, a convert to the Catholic faith, articulated well why thinking and learning about the faith was important to them:

> Really, I guess there was one thing in particular that made a pretty big impact. Um, in a class with this professor, um, near the beginning people were arguing about like faith and the fallibility of God's plan and all that. And he went like no, your faith is reasonable there, there is no conflict between faith and reason because our God is a God of wisdom 94 and truth and reason, and he can be known, at least to a greater extent than most people like to acknowledge. Um, and that really hit me because before I always had to check my brains at the door of the church (Interview 24).

Another person emphasized the importance of reason with faith in this way:

> I'd say, um, study is really helpful. I'd say reading and reasoning and questioning as much as you can is really nice. And I think that, you know, the writings of the doctors of the church and all those really great theology scholars are, uh, really wonderful ways to learn about the faith. I'd say personal, intimate conversations with people you admire in the faith are a really good way to grow and develop too (Interview 19).

It is important to note that for some knowledge itself did not seem to be enough. Another person was able to articulate how thinking and learning became integrated into their emotions and personality, and this integration was important to their journey:

> Sure, so I would describe my faith journey as um I learned a lot about my faith but I didn't really have my heart involved in my faith until later in high school and again even later in college. So um, I guess what I mean by that is, I understood like going to mass on Sunday and praying and all those basic things about the Catholic faith. Um, but when it came to my personal prayer life, um and even just um wanting like a relationship with Jesus, that I think didn't come along until like later in high school and then, you know, college started and I didn't want to come back again until later in college. And even then though I think I struggled a lot with wanting

> to know a lot of things instead of wanting to know Jesus. And what He wanted to say to me and what He what I should be saying to Him not that I should be saying like specific things but that having that relationship with Him (Interview 8).

Another person encouraged religious leaders to clearly articulate Church teaching, saying:

> Like, don't water down church teachings. People are curious about like different aspects of how like Christian morality like affects like, aspects of their life. And like, the way the church teaches, we should, so like, don't water this down (Interview 6).

For example, for others thinking and learning did not lead to more clarity about their beliefs:

> Yeah, see I did... That's kind of tough because I always go back to my old ways of thinking and how things should be based on the way I was taught in school, but then I also teeter-totter with, okay well I know the church says this about a certain issue but I also can think this. So I do believe in those things because it was what I was taught for so many years, but now I'm trying to find like my happy medium where, it's like, okay I know I was taught this, and then I think this so where is this. So, that... Cause it really confuses me, (laughs) (Interview 22).

Another person articulated these conflicting thoughts in this way:

> Um, it was just kinda part of me, it was what I knew, and going to University, I saw, like um, I made so many friends and acquaintances and people I-I've met who are in so many different religions and ways of life and before college I never experienced that. So like se- like freshman year I, one of my suit mates was um really Jewish and I-I never really met anyone that was Jewish before college. So my town's very typical same kind of life style, so I think maybe seeing that in all the different people in my classes and taking social work classes, learning about all the like differences is really what made me think about how it doesn't need to just be that one way and how we can have different thoughts and ideas of what religion is to us (Interview 27).

Disagreement with the Church. Related to the subtheme thinking/learning is disagreement with the Church. For those were not currently

practicing their Catholic faith, disagreement with Church teaching was a primary reason. One person articulated disagreement with the Church being their greatest difficulty this way:

> So, I think my biggest thing is, like, heaven and hell. Like, I think it's, like, kinda horrible that hell even exists. I think that's just, like, a pathetic thing. Um, and then obviously, like, Christian Republicans, like, that's kind of the image that people get. Um, and especially, like, with the Catholic church and all, like, the sexual, um, assault allegations. And um, being against homosexuals or, like, transgender, the LGBTQ community as a whole. Um, and then the pro-life versus pro-choice debate within, like, the Christian community. Um, so I think, like, politically definitely is one of, like, my biggest thing that I just don't agree with (Interview 21).

Another person similarly stated that certain issues made them less inclined to the Church saying:

> Uh huh (affirmative). Um, well, like, I've become, uh, very, uh, like, strong and educated on feminist issues more recently. Um, so things like access to abortion, access to birth control, um ... uh ... and like, LGBT rights, um, and so I don't ... even like, uh, you know, female priests, things like that. Like, these things seem very antiquated to me, um, and tho- those definitely weren't the primary reasons for- for pulling away from everything, but they kind of like, um ... uh, strengthened that- that resolution (Interview 31).

Overall, it seemed that issues of abortion, LGBT rights, and women's issues were the main areas of disagreement. One person mentioned many areas of disagreement (similar to those above), but said that he stayed practicing his faith because:

> I don't know. Also, just like, uh, yeah, defiance. Like, you know, like... I don't... and I think defiance has defined a lot of my faith to be honest. This idea that, you know, it's just as much my church as it is the set of [inaudible 00:13:23] church. And, you know, I think that by abandoning faith institutions, as many young liberal Catholics have, you conceded to the reactionaries. And I don't want to do that (Interview 19).

Another recent convert, also expressed difficulty with the Catholic Church's teaching on abortion, but expressed it as more of a struggle of figuring out how to reconcile her beliefs:

> The sticking point... there were other sticking points for me too, just even social ones. So something that got brought up in the class were things about sexual relationships between couples and abortion, and I have views on that based on my experience with another religion and also social context that I grew up in outside of religion that I thought, "Oh I don't know if I can be fully on board with this (laughing), this doesn't..." And there's still points, there's still points within that, that I ca- that I struggle to reconcile with myself. Okay I have this faith that I really love now but there are also parts of it that I don't, I don't like so what do I...? (laughing) What do I say? (Interview 4)

Internal Influences. Participants described being influenced by things within themselves either toward, away from, or neutrally in regard to their participation in the faith. Internal influences included: attitudes, doubts, suffering, searching, and personal traits. From the participant's reports, these influences seem to impact what the person's journey looks like, what sorts of questions they ask, what their engagement with belief is, etc.

Doubts and questions. There were very many aspects of faith or responses to faith that caused doubts. Many people described wrestling with the doctrine of the Catholic Church, and that it took time to come to believe it. Others wondered why bad things happen. For example, one person described his response to his Godmother dying saying:

> So when that happened I became really angry at God, and, uh, sometime later, um, you know, I, I decided that I no longer believed in God. I was, I was kinda bitter and angry at the world and you know, the usual teenage angst and, and doubt" (Interview 10).

Some expressed questioning attending Mass. One person expressed doubting because her teachers did not seem convinced of the Church's teachings, and she wondered why she should believe, if her teachers did not. These doubts did not necessarily hinder faith practices. One young woman stated, "So there's been a few moments in my life that I can hold onto and feel like, um ... I don't know if I can call it atheism because I go to church every Sunday, but I'll question whether God exists" (Interview 9). Others expressed this same idea, that although they doubted, they continued to be involved in the Church.

Others seemed to struggle with their own response to God. For example, one young woman described a struggle and questioning within herself this way:

> Especially like end of college and stuff, you can kind of catch yourself being like, defining yourself by maybe your job or like what you're doing, like that becomes a sort of identity. So that, I know, I've always known that was something that I struggled with in terms of like success and pride as like an identity versus, um, but I think that ends with most people, they're like I really feel like I need to earn God's grace and something that I have been rest- like I've been wrestling with something like very personal in my relationship with Christ this past year. So last few months really, and I think that is a big thing I've learned that, is I realized I like didn't want to go to confession over it, I didn't feel like worthy being in a church over it. All these barriers that I put up to receiving, um, and I'm not, I think this is a big like calling out of that, like if I actually, you know … (Interview 14).

For some, doubts and questions were not able to be adequately answered by the person. One person stated:

> Uh, so I started to, like, view, um, this ... how do I say this? Like a [inaudible] a conflict between, like, my- my career of, like, a- a belief in science and like, my faith and a belief- belief in the- in God and the Bible and e- everything like that" (Interview 31).

Some people expressed ambivalence about their current situation. A couple of people expressed the possibility of one day being more involved in faith. One person stated:

> I hope that my faith would be a lot stronger, back to what it used to be, originally. Um, I hope I find just something that, um, that brings me back where it used to be. I would love to- to um, I would love to just go back to that relationship that I used to have with God (Interview 25).

Doubts and questions seemed to be a part of most participants faith journey in one way or another.

God's influence. This subtheme was used any time the person described a sense of God working in his or her life in terms of perceiving God's plan, God's help, God's presence, or a relationship with Jesus that is helpful or if they perceive His intervention in some way. This subtheme also seemed to capture the sense of relationship people have with God. One person described her relationship this way:

> Uhm, and through that, I was able to just like put my intentions before God, uhm, and, and allow him to like work through those things and look at them. And I'm not going to say that there weren't times where, where, uhm, where it didn't feel like He was present, because there definitely were (Interview 1).

Many others talked about God's plan and influence in their lives, in ways such as this:

> That's why he created us, and he wanted to share that love with us, which is why he gave us free will and free choice and all that, so, um, I think the faith is what I would associate with Christianity and with who Christ is and all that but yes, I, there have been times where I've slipped, um, as a Christian, but at the same time he's always got my back (Interview 17).

Choices/Actions. Participants reported choices in a variety of ways. They indicated ways of participation in the Church (frequenting Sacraments, concrete choices and decisions to engage in a faith related activity or belief, retreats, prayer, Scripture and service). Thinking and learning about the faith also emerged as a concrete action that tended to increase identity integration. Things participants tended to report as difficulties in their faith journey were: practical challenges (such as being too busy, too tired, Mass schedules, transportation, etc.), disagreement with the Church, finding replacements for formal faith, and either active or passive choices away from practicing one's faith.

Changes in relationships, thinking and actions. Additionally, some people reported that their faith impacted their relationships, thinking and actions. Some of the changes mentioned were changes in relationships, such as more tensions with non-religious family members.

Overall, these emerged as pieces of the journey, helping the observer to look not so much at stages, but rather, the influences that a person is experiencing. Since integrated religious identity achievement could not be clearly pinpointed, participant's adherence to the Catholic Church's beliefs and their engagement in Catholic religious practices were seen as their religious identity. People did not give the impression that they had "arrived" at what it meant to be an integrated Catholic, but rather simply that they were on the journey, and continuing to grow.

Discussion

It seems that people were able to answer the question of "*who am I*"? in relationship to their faith, by allowing his or her relationship with the Lord to impact his or her choices and relationships. While the participants

did not consistently explain why their understanding of being a child of God helped with identity integration, some indicated that knowing one's dignity as a child of God changed their actions and engagement with faith. It also seemed that, in this sample, the more one made choices and performed actions in relationship to their faith, the more their faith seemed to be an important part of how they identified themselves.

The *process* of faith development was probably the least evident piece to emerge from the research, however, several things about the process did become evident. Participants noted that the faith journey is not linear, nor are there concrete steps to go through. It tended to be a gradual process, in which things, positive and negative, were seen as contributing to an increased understanding of their own relationship with God. Different life events did not emerge as major turning points but were used to mark periods of intensifying or lessening faith or increasing or decreasing in struggles. This will also be further explored when considering the findings in light of the literature.

In terms of coming to understand the *factors that contribute* to religious identity development, it seemed that participants noted many influences (external, internal and choices/behaviors). These influences, listed in Figure 1, such peer influence, family influence, thinking/learning, etc. often led the participants to engage with faith behaviors and beliefs in ways that led to concrete choices and behaviors around faith. The person him or herself seemed to emerge as the primary determinant of how this journey progresses, because despite what influences the person does or does not have, choices and actions seemed to emerge as the most important pieces. For example, some people had similar influences, but varying current beliefs and practices, seemingly indicating that it is the person's own engagement with these factors that is most important.

While most Catholic emerging adults did not explicitly state what assistance they would find helpful, several of them did indicate that their faith sometimes caused tensions in relationships. Several participants also indicated that clear and consistent teaching from the Church was important to them. These seem to be areas where Catholic emerging adults may benefit from additional help.

It seems that this study moderately met it aims. While greater understanding of process would have been hoped for, these findings seem to give voice to the experience of Catholic emerging adults in ways that were perhaps not previously considered. However, it is also true that in considering the *process* of faith development, the influences on this developmental process did become very clear (external, internal and choices/behaviors). One may also speculate that the subject matter may not lend itself entirely to empirical or data/evidence-based study. To "measure" the workings and effects of grace in a life qualitatively or

quantitatively exceeds any natural categories and even self-articulated identity.

Factors that influenced religious identity development. This study seemed to confirm some of the areas that the professional literature reported may have helped young adults move toward religious development. For example, the young adults in this study reported family, peers, religious leaders, doubts and questioning, and personal traits were important to increasing faith development. These constructs were suggested in previous literature to potentially aid in religious development (doubts and questioning: Fisherman, 2016; Hunsberger et al., 2001; family: Kimball et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2006; Leonard, Boyatzis, Cook, Kimball, & Flanagan, 2013; internal traits: Watson & Morris, 2005; Pedersen, Williams, & Kristensen, 2000; Ramirez, Ashley, & Cort, 2014; relationships with others: Cohen-Malayev et al., 2014; Hardy et al., 2010; Russo-Netzer, 2017;). This study did provide evidence that seems to confirm these areas of potential growth, with some additional nuances, which will be discussed below.

Culture. Previous research suggested that society might be one reason that people struggle to form an integrated religious identity (Hadad & Schachter, 2011). This study did suggest that society is an influence in religious development, but more from the perspective of the challenges faced by Catholic emerging adults who were practicing their faith. Some Catholic emerging adults said they found that society's "different values" posed a challenge in learning how to express themselves in these environments. For example, one participant mentioned the different morals that are portrayed on television and in the media being difficult to respond to. Another participant mentioned struggling to incorporate her values into her work. Other participants did not mention the role society had in this choice, although they did mention disagreement with Church teaching. Further exploration of ways that people experience tension between their beliefs and the beliefs of the dominant culture would be helpful in coming to better understand people's experiences.

Family. The role of family in faith development was one of the greatest surprises in this research. It would have been expected that the family would have had an entirely or mostly positive influence on faith development, but this is not what the participants of this study revealed. For example, much of the previous literature emphasized the role of the family in contributing to religious development (Brambilla et al., 2015 & Negru et al., 2014). These studies provided the strongest empirical evidence for SDT and suggested that parental influence was a major contributing factor. This research seemed to indicate that parents may have a smaller role than would be expected. While some of the participants did report that having faith encouragement from

their family was a very important part of their faith development, several participants reported that their families were unsupportive of the prominent role that faith was taking in their lives. Also, there were a surprising number of people who had converted from other faiths in this study (especially seeing that we did not try to recruit converts). Both Brambilla et al. (2015) and Negru et al. (2014) conducted their studies in other countries, so perhaps the role of the family in those cultures differ. Also, it is possible that there are cohort effects on the role of the family in religious development, and the current cohort of Catholic emerging adults could differ from past cohorts.

Relationships with others. Previous research also seemed to indicate that relationships with teachers or mentors (here coded as religious leaders), relationships with peers, and participation in organizations and groups all seemed to lead to potentially stronger integrated religious identity development. This study seems to confirm these results. For example, Cohen-Malayev, et al. (2014), in a quantitative study, found that students who found their teachers to be role models in their faith, found their religious studies more meaningful. This data, while not directly confirming that, adds to this understanding by participants mentioning the importance of good role models, and finding hypocrisy in their role models to be a stumbling block to faith.

Groups and organizations also were found in previous literature to have a potentially positive impact on religious development (Bailey et al., 2016; Hardy et al., 2010; Russo-Netzer, 2017). This study seemed to confirm these past studies. Groups and organizations were mentioned by many participants as helpful in their faith development. Having a sense of community was an important part of people learning more about their faith and making decisions congruent with their beliefs. Also, for those who had recently graduated from college, the adjustment to not having as strong of a community, was almost always mentioned.as a difficulty. Others mentioned that when they had a Catholic community, they were active, but when it was not there, they stopped.

Religious doubts and questions. Religious doubts and questioning were also found in previous literature to perhaps contribute (or detract) from religious identity development. Fisherman (2016) suggested that, in the long-term, religious doubts and questioning may contribute to a more stable sense of religious identity. This research seemed to confirm that religious doubts are not necessarily factors that lead away from religious identity development. Religious doubts and questioning, for the most part, were seen by participants as things that helped them to seek out more information and find answers. However, a few of the participants said they did not attend Mass due to disagreement with the church; they also said that this disagreement was part of their doubts and questioning.

Adding to the Catholic literature. It seems that the additional knowledge gained from the various aspects of the Church code and disagreement with the Church are both codes that gave helpful information about how Catholic emerging adults relate to the Church. These codes seemed to surface ideas particularly related to Catholicism, like the beauty of the Church or the Tradition of the Church, or Church teaching as it relates to issues like sexuality. Previous research did not focus on Catholic emerging adults, or Catholics at all, and so it makes sense that issues which may be particular to Catholics would not have surfaced in previous literature. It was helpful to learn that things like the tradition of the Church and the beauty in the Church were things that contributed to Catholic emerging adults' adherence to the faith circumscribed within the Church. It was also helpful to hear articulated why some Catholic emerging adults disagreed with the Church teaching, which may help Catholic leaders to better respond to the questions of young people today.

God's influence. God's influence was another aspect of faith development that was not considered in the literature. This code is helpful because it suggests that the person does not see themselves acting alone regarding faith development, but rather cooperating with God in some ways. It also suggests that the person often experiences God as helping him or her on the journey. This is consistent with

Choices to practice one's faith. This code was another surprise in the emerging data, as choice was not seen in the literature as something that would impact identity development. Even when revisiting the literature on religious development and identity development, choice did not appear as an aspect of development. Perhaps this is because the literature tends to view identity as informing choices, rather than choices shaping identity. Further research that comes to understand how choice interacts with identity would be beneficial.

Practical challenges, disagreement with the Church, and replacements for formal faith. Practical challenges, disagreement with the Church, and replacements for formal faith, were also not themes that surfaced in the literature review. Many of the elements of these codes may also be specific to Catholics. For example, the practical challenge of having difficulty finding community, may be something specific to Catholics. In terms of finding replacements for formal faith, this would likely apply to people leaving many religions. When consulting the literature, it does appear that feminism is used for some as a type of spirituality or religion (Aune, 2015). However, the literature did not specifically explore how views like feminism may relate to Catholicism. Despite helpful information in these subthemes, they were not as beneficial to answering the research question of how the religious journey unfolds.

Thinking/learning. This code was one of the biggest findings in this research. In seeing what an important part thinking and learning was for most (nearly all) Catholic emerging adults and their faith journey, it seemed surprising that it had not surfaced in other literature. Upon returning to the literature, I did find evidence in the developmental research that thinking can be an important aspect of psychosocial identity development (Njus & Johnson, 2008). This study of 400 randomly selected college students, found in a quantitative longitudinal study that the need for cognition (NFC), defined as "the desire to engage in effortful thinking" (Njus & Johnson, 2008, p. 645), was associated with achieved identity. More specifically, they found that higher NFCs scores were correlated with higher identity scores at the $p < .05$ level. This suggests that the findings in this study are consistent with developmental literature, but should be further explored considering religious development, especially in the development of cultural minority religious beliefs such as the Catholic faith inasmuch as thinking and learning would surpass common prejudices in order to obtain greater understanding of a long and intellectually rich tradition

Summary

Overall, previous research is, for the most part confirmed, with additional nuances of understanding. This qualitative research seemed to articulate a broader understanding of the impact of some of the factors can be explored such as the impact of society or the impact of the family. Additionally, particularly unique factors in religious development emerged, which may also add to the breadth to the understanding of religious development, e.g., not limiting it only to internal and external factors - but also choices/actions, with thinking and learning standing out as particularly important.

While the data cannot be generalized to all Catholic emerging adults, this section will explore some specific suggestions. These suggestions are especially useful results if the findings of this study are supported with future studies.

One need of Catholic emerging adults that emerged was the tensions they said they experience regarding "being different" from the dominant culture. Some Catholic emerging adults in this study, noted that they sometimes experience difficulties in relationships with their peers and families because of their beliefs. Those working with Catholic emerging adults could address these difficulties by being prepared to engage with Catholic emerging adults around faith-based relationship difficulties in individual, couple and family psychotherapy.

Although there are many Catholics in the U.S., they still comprise a minority culture that appears to sometimes expose emerging Catholic

emerging adults to what may be negative remarks from others about their faith affiliation. In this study, Catholic emerging adults clearly reported tensions stemming from belonging to a minority culture that they seemed to view as "different" from the mainstream culture. Therapists need to listen and affirm client feelings about these negative statements.

Also, while it only came up in one interview, it is noteworthy that one person did express that they had an encounter with a therapist where they felt misunderstood regarding their beliefs (Interview 1) They noted that having someone who was more supportive of their beliefs and its requirements for their behavior would be more helpful. This is also helpful information in helping therapists to know some of the needs and expectations of some Catholic emerging adults.

Implications

While the data cannot be generalized to all Catholic emerging adults, this research does have significant practice implications. Social work values cultural competence as a part of ethical social work practice (NASW, 2015, 2017, 2018). It is thought that when social work's knowledge of cultural competency with specific groups is limited, the help offered to them may be limited (Hodge & Nadir, 2008). For example, social workers may feel less professionally prepared to work with certain groups, not knowing about their specific needs (Hage et al., 2006; Magaldi, Dopman, & Park-Taylor, 2013). The results of this study did indicate some of the potentially unique needs of Catholics.

Practice Implications. One unique need of Catholic emerging adults that emerged was the tensions they said they experience regarding "being different" from the dominant culture. Some Catholic emerging adults in this study, noted that they sometimes experience difficulties in relationships with their peers and families because of their beliefs. Social work could address these difficulties by being prepared to engage with Catholic emerging adults around faith-based relationship difficulties in individual, couple and family psychotherapy.

Social workers can participate in Catholic centered cultural competency training. They can learn how these faith considerations in relationships can cause tension and, as desired by clientele, help them to work through faith-based tensions within relationships. At the very least, social work can try to be more culturally competent with Catholics so as to try to ensure that the therapeutic relationship between the worker and the client is not an area of faith culture misunderstandings. Cultural competence activities like those suggested in social work literature on cultural competency may prove helpful. For example, it is recommended that social work students engage in activities that increase their own self-awareness regarding religion, i.e., what their own beliefs are, and

how these may impact interactions of people who are different from them (Rahill, Joshi, Lucio, Bristol, Dionne, & Hamilton, 2016).

In this study, Catholic emerging adults clearly reported tensions stemming from belonging to a minority culture that they seemed to view as "different" from the mainstream culture. Social workers need to listen and affirm client feelings about these negative statements. Social work educators need to address religious minority statuses within social work curricula that include a range of religious affiliations in human development and behaviors, including having a Catholic identity. Specifically aiding social workers in learning more about how religious groups may experience stigmatization could prove helpful.

Research implications. This research was especially helpful because it suggests that stage theories of development may not be sufficient to understanding the lived experience of development of Catholic emerging adults. Especially if these findings were replicated in future studies, many more ideas could be explored. Some questions to be explored may include the following. Can people tell if they are in a stage? Do people's understanding of where they were on the journey at particular points of time change over time? Were previous theories more external or expert driven, or drawn from the internal views of the people they studied? What does it mean for studying human development if the journey for religious identity is more of a steady state of growth and integration versus a set benchmark to attain? In later life, do these factors that were identified as impacting the journey remain the same or change? How does the journey change across the lifespan? These questions help to stage the stage for future research.While participants did not emphasize the idea of stages, further research seeking to understand how a stage model may fit with participants experiences, may be helpful. This research could serve as a starting point for ongoing research on faith identity development, especially among Catholic emerging adults. It leads to several research recommendations. First, researchers could further explore the findings of this study. This could be done in several ways. Further qualitative research that explores any of the main aspects of the findings could be undertaken. For example, a qualitative study that looks only at the place of thinking and learning in religious development may be helpful, or that looked solely at the role of relationships. Also, an understanding of the role of families in faith development could be further explored, with special attention to possible cohort effects.

Also, greater understanding of the process of religious development in Catholic emerging adults could still be further explored through taking what was learned in these interviews and expounding upon them. Each influence could probably be a sole source of consideration for extensive interviews, in order to better understand the process. Looking

in a more in-depth way at any of these areas may lead to growing in the depth of understanding of the process of faith development. Also, more longitudinal studies that consider faith development through the lifespan could be undertaken. This may help to test the idea of whether or not an on-going journey of development is more helpful to understand faith development or whether a stage model does indeed make more sense. If these ideas were developed through quantitative research, perhaps some of the factors that impact religious development could be measured with scales and greater understanding could develop, potentially indicating what variables statistically predict smoother spiritual identity journeys for emerging Catholic adults or Catholic throughout the lifespan.

A quantitative study may also be helpful in which the various influences on a person's faith journey are rated in terms of the extent of their influence. Quantitative studies that measure participants need for cognition, as done in studies like Njus and Johnson (2008), levels of autonomy in their faith journey, and the degree of relatedness they experience regarding their faith, may also help to confirm some of the results of this study and help researchers better understand the potential relationships of these variables. Future research, quantitative or qualitative, should aim to confirm or add depth and nuance to the current study. Larger studies with more rigorous designs, would be especially helpful, and would become more and more possible, if some of the still exploratory research suggested above occurs. This would be beneficial in continuing to explore the role that social work may have in assisting Catholic emerging adults and Catholics throughout the lifespan. It would also help to add to the developmental research in terms of understanding the developmental process of religious development.

Policy Implications. As an understanding of religious identity development grows, policies can be expanded to ensure that healthy development is being supported. Specific references to spirituality or religion may be helpful to include in more social work policies. Religion and spirituality perhaps merit its own policy in Social Work Speaks. Even if religion and spirituality were not given its own section, it may be helpful to add sensitivity to spiritual or religious concerns to some of the policies that currently do not mention religion or spirituality. This could be done in ways like the policies that do include religion and spirituality. For example, the adolescent and young adult health policy could add a statement like the one in the aging and wellness section which states support for the "optimal physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, and functional well-being of all people as they age" (NASW, 2018, p. 23).

This research does suggest the importance of religion and spirituality in some people's lives, with many participants noting that their beliefs are central to how they see themselves and the world. Social work

policies that reflect that this component of people's lives needs to be cultivated in certain situations is important. Another potential area of growth is mentioned in some of the literature, which suggests adding a competency specifically for teaching spirituality and religion. Depending on the context of social work education, Seitz (2014) suggests one way to increase spiritual competence is through a competency that helps students to "apply Christian faith development principles to inform and guide professional and ethical practice" (p. 342). While this approach would likely be too narrow for most contexts, it gives an example of one approach, which may be helpful if a social worker were going to work primarily or solely with people from a Christian background.

This research did point to the idea that for Catholics emerging adults, a specific approach may be able to be developed and practiced, but the research did not give a full picture of what that might look like. What the research does seem to suggest is that Catholic emerging adults may need help navigating the tensions between societal norms and their religious beliefs. They may also need help coming to understand their beliefs and be given forums where thinking and understanding are encouraged. Catholic emerging adults may also benefit from relationships with others who share their faith. Social workers knowing these potential needs and being attentive to their presence in clients is one way that social workers can increase in cultural sensitivity.

Additionally, church policy may be impacted by this research. Specifically, this research seemed to point to the important role of thinking and understanding in people's faith development, and the importance of Catholic teaching being taught without compromise. Some participants also mentioned the difficulties in not being taught well the reasons for the Church's teachings. These findings could give a context for exploring education practices and policies in the Catholic Church. For example, perhaps Catholic school teachers could be presented this research, and someone could explore with them how they present the Church's teaching, and how they might do this more effectively and clearly. Religious education programs could also be more intentional about requiring education of parents about how they can support their children's faith development. Classes for parents could include the importance of encouraging children to make choices around their faith, (for example, being sure to bring their children to Mass when they ask to attend or finding a time for the Sacrament of Reconciliation when asked). Parents could also be informed that difficulties along the faith journey are a normal part of life, and resources should be made available to children to have their questions answered, whether setting up a meeting with a religious leader or being given more educational material. Normalizing difficulties may help young people to perceive themselves still on the journey, rather

than seeing difficulties as a removal from the journey.

Another possible policy change could include developing memorandums of understandings and inter-personnel relationships for mutual referrals between social work agencies and Church organizations. These referrals could be helpful to both sides in articulating clearly what services may be able to be provided by each party. For example, the Priest understanding that social workers may refer Catholics to them who are struggling to understand certain aspects of their faith may be helpful. Or the social worker may be useful for the work of the Priest in that the social worker may be a resource for Catholics who may be struggling to navigate the tensions that they are experiencing due to their faith. Memorandums of understanding could aid in assuring each party is respecting the boundaries and expertise of the other, to promote the flourishing of the individual.

Study Limitations

Bias. Padgett (2017) gives several ways that bias can present itself in research: reactivity, researcher bias and respondent bias. Reactivity is the bias that may occur from the presence of the researcher and his or her impact or influence on the responder. Because the main researcher is a religious sister wearing religious garb, it is possible that respondents had some response to the habit, either positive and/or negative. For example, some participants could be more likely to share some things, and less likely to share other things, depending upon their own past and how they view religious leaders. The researcher's own background and beliefs may also impact researcher bias (Padgett, 2017). As noted in the reflexivity statement, the researcher has potential biases which could influence the lens with which the data is viewed.

The researcher worked to reduce bias with the following measures. The interview protocol uses normalizing statements about the ups and downs of a person's faith journey. The interview protocol also verbalizes that the researcher is not making a judgment about the person. The researcher has also allowed for small talk in the beginning, as well as a more neutral first question to build rapport. The trustworthiness of the data was also increased through precautions such as reflexivity, memorandums, member checking, field notes, negative case analysis, a codebook, and inter-rater coding (Padgett, 2017).

Time Limitedness. Another limitation of this study is its time limitedness, and that the data is drawn from the self-report of participants and is not verified. Although these are limitations, the aspect of self-report will allow the researcher to allow the voices of participants to be heard. This was done especially through the analytic techniques of using in vivo coding, especially in open coding, and having a second coder to ensure

objectivity. It is hoped that the impact of the research being time limited will be mitigated through having participants reflect on their whole experience of their faith journey.

Sample. Although the sample of 31 would be small for a quantitative study, this is actually a good size sample for a qualitative study (Padgett, 2017). One limitation is that the study uses only one interview per participant, so it does not have a long-range view or multiple measurement points of the interview participants. However, many participants reported facilitators and barriers to their faith journey over time. In addition, the sample is purposive, meaning it targets the exact target group – emerging Catholic adults. In addition, qualitative studies offer the possibility of *generating rich, thick* data, which is appropriate for exploratory topics, about which little is known, such as Catholic emerging adults (Patton, 2015). Rich, thick data is also a method of increasing trustworthiness of the data (Padgett, 2017). While this research does not generalize to all Catholic emerging adults, it does represent this sample, which may have important features in common with some groups of Catholic emerging adults.

Despite some limitations, this study contributes to the knowledge base of religious identity development. It shows the central role that religion plays in some people's lives and suggests ways it can serve as a strength. It also suggests the importance of thinking and learning, as well as choice, in terms of development which could be explored with further studies. It shows a promising, though preliminary, path forward for social workers to engage the needs of Catholic emerging adults in increasingly culturally competent ways along their developmental paths.

Future research, quantitative or qualitative, should aim to confirm or add depth and nuance to the current study. Larger studies with more rigorous designs, would be especially helpful, and would become more and more possible, if some of the still exploratory research suggested above occurs. This would be beneficial in continuing to explore the role that social work may have in assisting Catholic emerging adults and Catholics throughout the lifespan. It would also help to add to the developmental research in terms of understanding the developmental process of religious development. ❖

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From Victim to Victor: A Qualitative Investigation of Religion/Spirituality in Women after Interpersonal Violence

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Roughly one in three women will experience interpersonal violence (IpV) at some point in their life. It is unclear in the literature whether one's religion and spirituality (RS) might aid in healing from interpersonal violence. The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of IpV-exposed women and to understand how RS played a role in their healing process. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews (n=9) and a subsequent national survey (n=538). A four-phase analysis of interviews revealed three themes (Connection to God, Connection to People, and Connection to Self) and a phenomenological essence termed Relationally Reflective. The national survey revealed findings that supported the themes and filled gaps in interview data. Women exposed to IpV use their RS to aid in reflection across connections with God, other people, and themselves. Knowing the importance of RS in the lives of IpV exposed women can stimulate social workers to reflect on their own integration of faith and practice. It may also lead to more intentionally guiding clients' reflection on their relationships with God, other people, and themselves.

***Keywords*:** Religion and spirituality, interpersonal violence, women, trauma, qualitative

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INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE (IPV) IS A WIDESPREAD form of trauma that has ripple effects in all aspects of a person. While men can experience IpV, it predominantly affects women, with staggering reports that one in three women will experience IpV at some point in their life (Americas, 34%; Globally, 31%; World Health Organization, 2021). IpV is a trauma inflicted on an individual, by a person or group who may or may not know one another (Krug et al., 2002). Broadly, to name a few, IpV can include intimate partner violence, rape, date rape, and physical assault or abuse (Kilpatrick et al., 2013). Certainly, there are immediate physical injuries resulting from IpV. However, the insidious and long-lasting psychological effects are just as, if not more, devastating.

A body of literature exists explaining the heavy impact that trauma can place on a person's physical health (Benedict et al., 2020; Reed et al., 2022; Ryder et al., 2018) and mental health (Ades et al., 2019; Charak et al., 2020). However, equivocal findings show that one's religion and spirituality (RS) might improve or diminish following trauma (Abu-Raiya et al., 2016; Kucharska, 2020; H. E. Walker et al., 2022). Fortunately, research is clear on protective factors that mitigate negative trauma outcomes and which may enhance resiliency.

Notably, social support has been identified as a protective factor for IpV (Iacoviello & Charney, 2014; Leifker & Marshall, 2019; S. Wang et al., 2021). Social support is a person's ability to access tangible support by increasing a person's ability to feel as though they belong and by creating emotional connections (Ware & Sherbourne, 1992). Conversely, IpV can lead to feelings of isolation from community or abandonment of God (Rudolfsson & Tidefors, 2014), and higher levels of distrust with interpersonal relationships (Nöthling et al., 2022).

Faith communities have been identified as places vital in offering support for those who have experienced trauma (Hill & Yancey, 2022) and that congregations could do more work to ensure clergy and staff are more knowledgeable around IpV exposure (Williams & Jenkins, 2019). By developing healthy social support, a person may be more likely to experience positive coping and growth (Prati & Pietrantoni, 2009; X. Wang et al., 2022). Churches are open to working with social workers who work in IpV-related fields (Knight et al., 2022), which becomes an open door for collaboration across professions. Though many people will seek out clergy for help with life's challenges, unfortunately, survivors of IpV are less likely to do so (Yuvarajan & Stanford, 2016).

Trauma focused treatments have been proven to reduce symptoms associated with posttraumatic stress disorder (Bont et al., 2016; Dawson et al., 2021). Specifically, consensus is that Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and cognitive therapies are most effective when working with IpV-exposed populations (Molero-Zafra et al., 2022).

It has been suggested that RS beliefs play a role in schema development that can influence the processing of trauma (Leo et al., 2021; ter Kuile & Ehring, 2014) that often occurs in trauma focused treatments. While research on how RS either hinders or promotes processing following trauma is conflicting (Bryant-Davis et al., 2015; de la Rosa et al., 2016), research is unequivocally clear that clients report a desire to include their RS into treatment (Oxhandler et al., 2018; Oxhandler & Parrish, 2018).

Research on RS constructs is vast, mainly focusing on religious service attendance, religious practices, and meaning making (Hall et al., 2018; Strawbridge et al., 2001; Yaden et al., 2022). Beyond these, two valuable RS constructs that warrant attention are God image and religious coping. God image, or how a person perceived the sacred (Froese & Bader, 2010) can be particularly meaningful in understanding the framework of an individual's ability and style of managing stressors through the sacred (i.e. religious coping) (Mesquita et al., 2022; Pargament, 1997). Religious coping is multidimensional and can be portrayed through positive or negative styles (Pargament, 1997, p. 19). Recent trauma research has suggested that religious coping style and God image can ultimately influence psychological outcomes following trauma (Stanford et al., 2021), though not specifically IpV.

The Current Study

Ultimately, RS beliefs and practices influence a person's ability to access support and utilize treatment in a productive way. This study attempts to further understand the experience of women with a history of IpV and their use of RS with the hope that the results shed light on variables that may guide quantitative research to identifying statistically significant relationships and ultimately guide direct practice.

Methodology

Mixed – Method Design

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board for Research (IRB) at the lead researcher's university in the summer of 2020. This was an exploratory sequential mixed methods study that began with qualitative personal interviews followed by a quantitative national survey. Qualitative interviews provide data that offer a rich understanding of a phenomenon. The inherent nature of phenomenological research is an attempt to understand and describe an experience/phenomenon through individuslas who have lived that experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

After analyzing the interviews, the researcher developed and administered a national quantitative survey to further explore womens'

experience with IpV. The survey was constructed around themes identified in the interviews and included new questions as well as some that were derived from contrasting statements across the interviews. This article focuses primarily on the qualitative portion of the research but also includes findings from interview-derived questions that were included in the national quantitative survey.

Interview Sampling

The qualitative portion of this study employed a qualitative phenomenological methodology (Moustakas, 1994) to explore how women who report at least one IpV exposure experience religion or spirituality in relation to the traumatic event. Based on the sensitive nature of the study's subject and the limited visibility of the sample, nonprobability, snowball sampling was used. The researcher compiled a list of agencies from across Central and South Texas. These agencies were included if it was determined they may have encountered our intended sample of IpV-exposed women. First wave recruitment efforts began in August 2020, with a second wave that began in June 2021. Eligibility criteria dictated that participants be female, 18 years or older, speak English, experienced an IpV at some point in their lives, and the time from experience of the traumatic event was at minimum 12 months. IpV was operationalized to include sexual assault, physical assault, or assault with a weapon. Respondents who did not meet the criteria were excluded from participating. No compensation was given for participation.

Survey Sampling

Following interviews with participants, a national survey was conducted which included nine questions that were developed following analysis of the interviews. The survey sample was collected through an online crowdsourcing service, Qualtrics, and was sent to the Principal Investigators (PIs) after being de-identified. Throughout the transcription and coding process of the interviews, areas of missing information were identified. This was done by identifying questions that were not, but could have been, included in the interview protocol or by discerning questions that did not elicit the information intended. Furthermore, additional items were created to explore themes resulting from the interview analysis.

Data Collection & Analysis

Interview

Respondents were prescreened to ensure inclusion criteria was met. The prescreening protocol was developed by the PIs and conducted by a trained Research Assistant (RA). Following initial contact and

prescreening, respondents were sent a questionnaire that included additional information on the study, an informed consent form, and a short survey that included the DASS-21, God Image Questionnaire, and some demographic information questions. A crowd sourcing service, Qualtrics, was used to administer the questionnaire. To mitigate interviewer (PI) bias during the interview, the prescreening and subsequent questionnaire responses were not reviewed by the interviewer prior to the completion of the interview.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and with participants' consent, the qualitative interviews were conducted in a secure online platform through the institution that approved this study. Interviews ranged from thirty-six minutes to one hour and fourteen minutes. Given the sensitivity of the study's subject, a protocol was established for prescreening and interviewing in case participants requested referrals for mental health or medical care, and all subjects were provided a list of resources to aid in locating further assistance.

To address researcher bias, a semi-structured interview protocol was established. The interview was comprised of 31 questions that explored three topics: 1) Religious or spiritual beliefs and history (9 questions), Trauma experienced (9 questions), and RS integration into trauma treatment (14 questions). A final item asked, "*Is there anything else about what we discussed today that you would like to add?*" Questions asked were mainly open-ended questions and follow-up questions were added if needed. Interviews were transcribed and de-identified. The first wave of interviews consisted of six participants. While the PI's felt that saturation had been reached, a second wave of recruitment and interviews was performed to enhance rigor. The second wave of recruitment resulted in three additional interviews, totaling nine participants (n=9). Analysis following the second-wave interviews confirmed that saturation had been met.

A thematic analysis was carried out by inductive coding, following an adapted approach outlined by Moustakas (1994) suggested for phenomenological research and supported in the literature (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011; Thomas, 2006). Moustakas (1994) outlines several steps for raw data analysis, of which we combined several, resulting in four phases. Phase one of analysis centered around horizontalization, a process of identifying every *statement* from the transcribed interviews that is valuable and relevant to the experience. Phase two involved reviewing the identified interview statements and organizing them into *codes* based on overlapping ideas or concepts within the statements that were essential for understanding the phenomena of the study. Phase three involved *thematizing* the codes or concepts related to our study and removing overlapping or repetitive codes. Phase four involved outlining

a textual description from the participants' experiences and developing a synthesis of the *essence* of the traumatic experience. To enhance rigor, phases one and two used a secondary coder. This approach allowed for flexibility in reviewing the content of the interview transcriptions while utilizing well-established guidelines.

The epoch process of bracketing was used to set aside interviewer prejudice and open the research interview to an unbiased experience. Bracketing (Fischer, 2009) is an honest examination of biases or prejudices that researchers might impose upon the interview process. In an attempt to engage in an open interview process, the bracketing process involved verbal or written discussion of the PI's own thoughts, perceptions, and biases before each interview. This occurred days prior to the interviews.

Survey

Furthermore, themes from phase two of the analysis were used in the creation of nine questions that were included in the quantitative national survey. Participants were asked to identify how much they agreed with each statement (Table 1), with response options of *strongly disagree, disagree, unsure, agree, strongly agree*. Using Qualtrics, a crowdsourcing service, a convenience sample of women (n=538) from the US population was obtained. Each participant provided consent prior to completing the survey. Upon consent, participants were asked to identify their age, gender, which traumatic event they had experienced (sexual assault, physical assault, or assault with a weapon), and whether the event(s) occurred within the past 12 months. Women who were 18 years of age, identified experiencing one or more traumatic event(s), and reported that their experience occurred more than 12 months ago were offered participation. Participants received $1 compensation.

Results

Sample Description

Interviews

Participants (n=9) who were engaged in the interview process ranged from 27 to 70 years of age. The group identified as White (3; 33.3%), Hispanic (3; 33.3%), African American (2; 22.2%), and Asian and Pacific Islander (1; 11.1%). Of the nine, eight identified as Christian and one denoted no religious preference, but remarked she grew up Jewish. Interview transcripts were deidentified and aliases assigned for reporting.

Survey

The survey sample (*n*=538) consisted of women who reported having experienced one or more IpV event. Survey participants had an average age of 47.3 years (SD 16.4), were predominately White (79.9%), married (41.4%), had completed some college (25.1%), and identified as Christian (64.7%).

Interview Findings

The interviews explored how women with a history of IpV experience religion or spirituality in relation to the traumatic event. In the interviews, participants revealed unique and meaningful descriptions of RS in the context of their trauma. Horizontalization in phase one of the analysis resulted in the identification of 1,826 statements across the nine interviews. During phase two, the 1,826 statements were categorized into (12) codes (*Bad Things, Changes, Definitions, God, Helpful, Identity, Mental Health, Questioning, Shame, Therapy, Trauma Experience, Unhelpful*). During the third phase, three themes were identified: 1) connection to God, 2) connection to people, and 3) changes in self. Finally, the essence, termed Relationally Reflective was identified (Figure 1).

Connection to God

All these women identified, in one way or another, their relationship with God in the context of their trauma. Many identified how they engaged in their relationship with God and what practices they used to foster the relationship (talking with God, prayer, reading scripture). Judith described her relationship experience as such:

> I specifically remember praying about it because I thought it was my fault. And being flooded with really positive feelings that it wasn't my fault… that there wasn't anything to forgive and that I was fine. And then I was good with God.

Other women elaborated on how they felt God in their lives. At points, many identified feeling further from God at points in their lives, while also identifying that they were able to rebuild the relationship. For example, Celia explained her views on God and their relationship as such:

> [B]ecause of everything that was happening to me I thought God didn't like me and maybe I was being punished for something that I did. I did not have a very good relationship with God when I was younger, at all…Now as I get older, … I pray multiple times a day. I talked to God all the time even if it's just like a thought that pops in my head… I'll be driving and I'm like, oh yeah, thanks God, I forgot to tell you…Thanks for letting me wake up this morning.

The process of putting their trust in God helped create connections, even in times of turmoil or silence. Lydia recalled how her trust in God never wavered: "I never felt once that God had abandoned me, never ever. I know he was always there for me; I just couldn't hear Him." Another participant, Kasandra, discussed her faith and trust in God as "monumental in the way you live your life and see things...and it gives you hope." Ultimately, most of the women discussed how God was involved in their lives, described beautifully here by Judith, "He is very interested in our lives, and he wants to be a part of them and that He's always there. We just need to reach out and access Him and… I draw comfort in that."

Connection to People

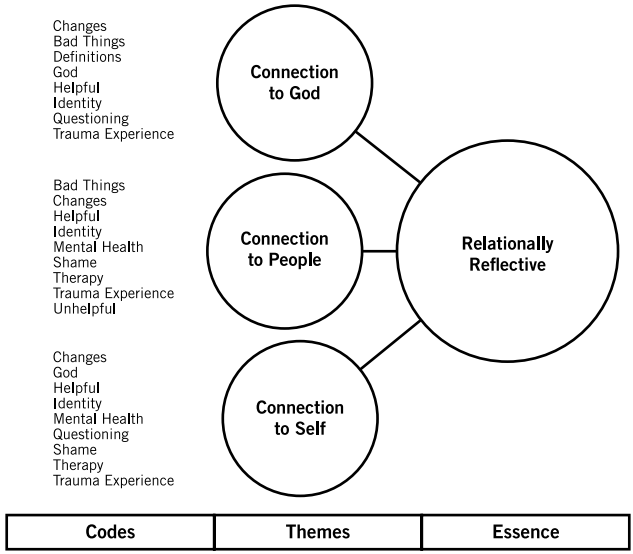
When considering what was helpful in their RS beliefs following the trauma, participants discussed the importance of having the support of people, as articulated by Celia, "I have people who support me, and I think that is all His doing." Through relationship and community, Lydia discovered, "You get to share, you get to listen, and that's when I learned it's not just about me. It's never about me, it's about God." Isabelle commented that it was "very helpful hearing them say it wasn't your fault." Judith described her experience as such:

> I've learned to reach out and to connect with people to try to work through my thoughts and feelings on things, so that I could better process it…Because sometimes I just, I get caught up in life and I forget to access [support] that is available.

While for these women, connecting with people emerged as an instrumental point of their trauma healing, their relationship with their abuser was also emphasized. Many discussed how the traumatic experience initially led to questioning God and his connection to their abusers, as Celia questioned "why weren't they punished?" Similarly, Martina expressed confusion when discussing her abuser and how he presented as a Christian, how he was "going to church" and telling people "he got saved" but was still "treating [her] really terribly."

Figure 1.

Summary of Codes, Themes, and Essence



Note. Codes are listed to the right of associated theme(s).

Many of them found themselves isolating from relationships "out of self-preservation and being able to survive," as explained by Kasandra. Others reported experiencing difficulties in creating and maintaining healthy relationships by "not having good boundaries with people and not requiring people to have good boundaries" with them (Judith). However, connecting with counselors aided in their ability to connect relationally with people. In turn, these healthy relationships aided in their ability to connect in a constructive way with others through their shared faiths. Judith, who recalled struggling with boundaries, found that therapy was "definitely beneficial" and that she isn't sure she "would have been able to work through a lot of things without it." Another woman, Isabelle, reported that finding the right therapist who was trained in trauma was "a game changer" for her.

Ultimately, while the personal nature of IpV was disruptive to many of the women and thier ability to hold healthy relationships following the trauma, intentionally working to find community and create healthy relationships was a keystone in their experience following the trauma. While some identified having support already in their lives, through further identifying supportive people (therapists, church members, support group members), others reported that developing a community of safety was vital.

Connection to Self

Another theme that emerged through the interviews was that of *connection to self*, or self-reflection. Participants recalled that analyzing how their RS beliefs and their trauma compelled them to reflect inward and understand how they viewed themselves leading to realizations about how their responses to the trauma were either helping or hindering their progress towards healing. For example, Lydia outlined her insight as such:

> A lot of it is I blamed myself…I didn't forgive myself for eighteen years, because I said I should've had more faith, I should've had more faith, I should've put God first. Because during those times you don't put God first. You believe in God, you pray, but he's not first. Now he's number one; he's my first.

Celia described her connection to self as initially "being angry and resentful" of herself, but eventually finding she preferred being "welcome to having Him in my life." She described her process of getting this realization as such, "I can either take this route or I can take this route. So I'm choosing to take this route, and then more positive things will happen because I take the positive route."

Many reflected on the harm they experienced by taking blame for the trauma. This is the case with Isabelle, who felt that she "wasn't walking with God" and recalled that she "really beat myself up," but learned that by giving herself "grace in the suffering" she was able to realize that her internal struggle didn't mean "I have less faith or it doesn't mean I am bad." Kasandra reported that she "felt so insecure and [she] felt [she] wasn't good enough because of the first trauma."

Once this deeper connection to self occurred, these women were able to seemingly disconnect the trauma from themselves. For Kasandra, her self-reflection in the aftermath of the experience led her to see herself in a different light: "I always think about the difference in [my] life… you want to look at yourself as a victim. But I am a victor, I was never a victim, I was never a victim." Likewise, Judith discovered,

> [B]ecause my religion is such an ingrained part of who I am and the fact that I experienced that trauma was such an ingrained part of me too, I don't think I could separate them, and I needed to be able to.

This allowed Judith to be "more at peace…having a better connection with me through the Holy Ghost." This genuine and intentional connection to the self supported these women in their ability to process the events in a way which could prove helpful in light of the negative impacts that the trauma had on their self-identity.

Essence – Relationally Reflective

Ultimately, many of the women found some semblance of resolve and identified the need to process through the events with God, themselves, and other people, in order to "give yourself permission to laugh and to enjoy" (Lydia). The synthesis of these themes can be narrowed into a singular essence of these women's experience: Relational Reflection (Figure 1). Isabelle speaks to this essence in her statement:

> Especially when you go through sexual trauma, it's all linked together: yourself, your spiritual self, your emotional self, your physical self. It impacts every part of you, especially rape, sexual abuse of any kind. So, you have to work through healing and all those areas to find that freedom and healing.

Through discussions with a therapist, Kasandra reported that while some people might turn to God or faith, "I certainly needed God and [to be] reminded of my faith and the strength within me that I had always counted on; but then again I was in shell shock for a long time, long time."

Trauma shatters a person's worldview and along with it their religious and spiritual beliefs, self-identity, and interpersonal relationships too (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Each woman who shared their story emphasized their connection with God, other people, and themselves as important areas of investigation and reflection. For many of these women, their comments suggested that they still work to process through these three areas in their lives, but that without this awareness or reflection, they might be struggling more today than they are:

> It definitely took me a long time to get to this place I'm at right now because I questioned [if] was He there for a long time. Because how could a God who's good be in the same room as that? But if I fully believe that God's all present and is angry and He has wrath [about what happened],…I believe He was there and He was angry the whole time, and that brought me a lot of comfort and peace…It was tough to figure out, and think through, but in the end, brought me comfort (Isabelle).

Survey Findings

Items one through six were developed to further explore themes which resulted from the interview analysis (Table 1). The survey items generally supported the themes identified in the interviews. Responses to questions focused on the theme *connection to God* (Items 1, Item 2, Item 5, & Item 6). Respondents reported that they thought about God's character (53.1%; agreed or strongly agreed; Item 2). A majority disagreed or strongly disagreed (53.9%; Item 1) when asked if they questioned God's

character. Most respondents (60.3%; disagreed or strongly disagreed; Item 5) did not feel their understanding of God was negatively impacted. The largest subset (42%; disagreed or strongly disagreed; Item 6) although there was a portion (25.8%) who were unsure.

Responses to questions focused on the theme *connection to self* (Item 3, Item 4, & Item 7) supported interview findings. Most respondents (51.6%; agreed or strongly agreed; Item 3) believed their RS helped in coping with the trauma and were not agreeable to the item asking if their RS hurt them in their healing process (68.9%; disagreed or strongly disagreed; Item 4). When asked if their RS beliefs helped them to understand their emotions (Item 7), many either agreed or strongly agreed (46.7%).

Responses to questions related to the theme *connection to people* (Item 8 & Item 9) were intended to address information that was unclear or not obtained through interviews. When asked if guidance from people in a faith community was damaging (Item 8), 61% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Additionally, many people were unsure (28.6%), or either disagreed or strongly disagreed (44.2%) when asked if it would have been important for a therapist to have similar RS beliefs as them following the trauma (Item 9).

Discussion

This study sought to explore how women who report a history of IpV experience religion or spirituality in relation to the traumatic event. All of our participants (n=9) viewed their connections or relationships to God, to others, and with themselves as an important part of how they experienced this. Well-defined in the literature, religion and spirituality (RS) is known to be a source of coping for dealing with stressors (Pargament, 1997; Upenieks, 2021) that can promote psychological health (Fernández & Rosell, 2022; Garssen et al., 2021). Furthermore, interpersonal connection and social support (Bakaitytė et al., 2022; S. Wang et al., 2021) and trauma therapy (Dawson et al., 2021) have been shown to mitigate negative outcomes of trauma.

Connection to God

Religious coping and God image concepts were both alluded to throughout the interviews as it relates to *Connection to God*. Both concepts have become more prevalent in literature in recent years as it related to IpV (Kucharska, 2020). Religious coping is a multidimensional construct that includes positive and negative coping styles that, respectively, support one's ability to seek comfort from God or question their relationship with God (Pargament, 1997). God image is a person's perception of the Sacred, typically explained through human qualities (Froese & Bader, 2010).

Both religious coping (positive and negative) and the various God

image types have been linked with an increase or decrease in mental health outcomes following trauma (Kucharska, 2020). Our interviewees discussed their relationship with God and how their perceptions of God's level of engagement in their lives following the trauma fluctuated. This might provide reason as to why literature on RS and psychological outcomes in this population is inconsistent (Kucharska, 2020). Further review may find that the type of religious coping or God image may moderate the effectiveness of RS in supporting trauma healing.

Many of the respondents in the national survey reported similar findings. A majority (53.1%) thought about the character of God and some (28.8%) questioned God's character. Furthermore, many (60.3%) did not feel their perception of God was negatively impacted. Though further exploration is needed, this could be reflecting that women are using their perception of God to process through the event(s). If this were the case, it would reinforce literature stating that RS promotes trauma healing (Eames & O'Connor, 2022).

Connection to People

Commonly, people who struggle with posttraumatic symptoms experience impaired perception of social interactions, leading to negative attributions of the self or other (Leifker & Marshall, 2019). This can deter people from cognitively processing the trauma in a way that is beneficial to their interpersonal growth following the event. Social support, identified as a protective factor for IpV (S. Wang et al., 2021), can help a person increase feelings of belonging (Ware & Sherbourne, 1992). Through creating meaningful relationships, our interviewees reported that they were able to create healthy boundaries, better process through interpersonal struggles, and develop a *connection to people*. Developing these interpersonal skills through therapy may aid in finding, and feeling welcomed into a faith community.

Survey responses to items focused on *connection to people* were intended to collect information on why this connection was important and how RS might play into this theme. The survey revealed that guidance from people in a faith community was not seen as damaging (61%). This supports past findings that women who experience IpV reach out to faith leaders for posttraumatic support (Zust et al., 2021). Furthermore, while people desire the inclusion of RS in therapy (Harris et al., 2016; Oxhandler et al., 2018), our respondents were unsure (28.6%) or disagreed (44.2%) with the importance of having a therapist with similar RS beliefs.

Table 1.

Survey Items

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Strongly Agree	
Item	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
1. I questioned the character of the Divine/God after the event.	142	26.4%	148	27.5%	93	17.3%	97	18.0%	58	10.8%
2. I thought about the character of the Divine/God after the event.	110	20.4%	97	18.0%	99	18.4%	168	31.2%	64	11.9%
3. I thought my RS beliefs helped me cope with the event.	88	16.4%	76	14.1%	96	17.8%	153	28.4%	125	23.2%
4. I thought my RS beliefs hurt me as I coped with the event.	204	37.9%	167	31.0%	87	16.2%	43	8.0%	37	6.9%
6. My understanding of the Divine/God was positively impacted after the event.	97	18.0%	129	24.0%	139	25.8%	105	19.5%	68	12.6%
7. My RS beliefs helped me to understand my emotions after the event.	75	13.9%	94	17.5%	118	21.9%	164	30.5%	87	16.2%
8. The guidance that people in my faith community gave me was damaging to me after the event.	169	31.4%	164	30.5%	111	20.6%	51	9.5%	43	8.0%
9. It would have been important that my therapist have the same RS beliefs as me when coping with the event.	119	22.1%	119	22.1%	154	28.6%	103	19.1%	43	8.0%

Note. N = 538

Connection to Self

Therapeutic trauma treatment has been shown to reduce symptoms and lead to resilience in oneself and is thought to be one of the most prominent protective factors against posttraumatic symptoms (Labra-Valerdi et al., 2022; Reyes et al., 2019). With the women in our study, through therapy, the work to understand their *connection to self* following the event appeared to help them heal. Though aided by a therapist, this inner reflection allowed them to understand the damaging view of self that is so prevalent following IpV. In line with literature (Leo et al., 2021; ter Kuile & Ehring, 2014), these women reported using their RS as a way to process through their negative self-perception, or schema, and ultimately find healing.

Survey responses supported the idea that RS aids in one's connection to self. They felt their RS helped them to cope (51.6%), helped them to understand their emotions (46.7%), and did not harm their healing process (68.9%). This adds to the limited literature that RS promotes internal processing in IpV exposed women (de la Rosa et al., 2016).

Essence

While many of these themes can be looked at as two-way interactions, the essence of the study found reflection in these themes to be at the crux of this experience. The concept of being *relationally reflective* is broad and based in the intentionality of analyzing the relationships in one's life following a trauma. Trauma shatters a person's worldview (Janoff-Bulman, 1992), including their relationship with God, people, and the self. Relational reflection can be done by intentionally looking at these relationships in the context of the trauma and evaluating how these three areas change. Social work practitioners might use the concept of relsationships as a framework to begin conversations around how trauma has impacted a person's experience with God, other people, and themselves. Furthermore, exploring how these areas interact with one another through this change is important in relation reflection. Social work practitioners can walk with clients in making connections between the relationships their clients hold with themselves, other people, and God, and how these may or may not be similarly impacted following the traumatic event. This further supports research that illustrates benefits of intentional cognitive processing following a trauma (Ades et al., 2019; Dawson et al., 2021; Eames & O'Connor, 2022). As opposed to remaining stagnant by internalizing and adopting blame for the event, the women in these interviews used their RS beliefs to guide their reflection of the event, God's role in their life, other people, and themselves to promote a wellbeing and peace in their lives across the three themes, a practice which social work practitioners are inherently qualified to help clients

do. Ultimately, through the connection to God, self, and people, these women were able to relationally reflect in a way that aided their post trauma experience in a predominantly positive manner.

Implications

This study revealed two implications for practice: the necessity to incorporate RS into treatment for those who wish to do so and to use treatment modalities that incorporate cognitive processing. It is well documented that people report a desire to include their RS beliefs in treatment (Harris et al., 2016; Oxhandler et al., 2018) and that RS can mitigate negative psychological outcomes of trauma (Kucharska, 2020). These data support that consensus.

In addition, the findings reveal that IpV survivors identify their relationship with God as being as important as support from people in their social communities and mental health professionals. Social workers who share their clients' faith and belief in God can use this perspective to strengthen their rapport, which may enhance the benefits of their services. Furthermore, Knight et al., (2022) have documented that faith communities are open to supporting their members who have experienced IpV but may not have the tools to do this effectively. Social workers who ethically integrate their faith and practice are well-positioned to collaborate with these faith communties to equip them for this mission. This could include providing faith communities with training to better understand how trauma impacts a person's mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual self and how to provide referrals for those in need; or, it could include training clergy and lay people on how to begin support groups offered at a peer level. More efficient, however, would be to connect faith communities to organizations who are already providing these trainings for reducing stigma and integrating paraprofessional support in faith communities (Scribner et al., 2020; Stanford et al., 2023).

Furthermore, utilizing evidence-based trauma treatments with proven effectiveness in IpV populations, such as EMDR or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT; Molero-Zafra et al., 2022), through an RS lens may help further enhance the efficacy of these treatments, though additional research is needed. Social work practitioners are uniquely primed to aid women in processing the resulting devastations that can occur in relationships (God, others, self) by using these evidence-based treatment modalities while also addressing the clients' RS desires. Understanding the relational impact that might present following IpV, social workers can aid these women in being reflective of these various relational categories in a way that might bring them closer to resolution or posttraumatic growth. Furthermore, concerted efforts must be made to expand research related to IpV and RS integration, specifically as it relates to the various types of

traumas that are categorized under IpV. A deeper understanding of these associations might be important for therapeutic RS intervention for IpV exposed women.

Strengths & Limitations

Given the small sample and qualitative nature of the first phase of this mixed methods study, these findings are limited with regard to generalizability. Participant and researcher biases during the prescreening and interview process is always a possibility with the qualitative studies. The use of open-ended questions and the epoch process was intended to mitigate these potential biases. Additionally, survey items developed from interview themes were not from a demonstrated reliable or validated measure. However, the purpose of this mixed methods study was to better understand the experience of women exposed to IpV and their use of RS in their healing process, for which existing research is lacking. Furthermore, the sensitive subject matter is not to be overlooked. While authors were confident that saturation of data has been met, the possibility of sampling bias is evident. This study is not without its strengths. As of this writing, this study supports the call to add to the IpV literature as it relates to RS beliefs (D. F. Walker et al., 2009).. ❖

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Nature is Nurture: Counseling and the Natural World
Megan E. Delaney. (2020). Oxford University Press.

In *Nature is Nurture: Counseling and the Natural World* Megan E. Delaney sets the stage for understanding ecotherapy by sharing her personal connection to it from the earliest moments of her professional career. Trained in outdoor education through the National Outdoor Leadership School, she spent many years leading youth for weeks at a time with Outward Bound and teaching for the National Wildlife Federation. She went on to earn her PhD in Counselor Education from Montclair State and, in addition to utilizing ecotherapy in her private practice, she is an Assistant Professor at Monmouth University in the Department of Professional Counseling.

From the very beginning of the book, the reader is compelled to see the relationship between getting out of one's comfort zone in the world's hustle and bustle and setting aside the pressing demands of life to grow in understanding of self through nature. While this book has many contributors, the author writes the first three chapters, which are convincing in their evidence of significant change in clients by incorporating ecotherapy.

Each contributor clearly articulates a connection between their own transformational experiences with the natural world and its impact on their mental and emotional health. The reader is provided with plenty of examples and research to support ecotherapy in various settings and with varying population groups. The text is laid out into two sections covering an overview of ecotherapy, and specific interventions for counselors in practice. Within the specific interventions, contributors and the author cover working with children, adults, veterans, school-based settings, private practice settings, military and veteran groups, and working with animals as well.

The book is very practical, providing tangible and simple examples of ways to use nature in work with clients, especially for those who do not live somewhere that seems naturally beautiful. The reader can see that one does not need to be in the mountains or by the beach to allow clients to experience how nature can heal them. While reading, one is compelled to notice how the traditional indoor environment can be dark and constrictive, which often mirrors many other environments clients interact with. Moving clinical work to the outdoors opens new possibilities as clients are able to utilize all five senses in a new way while engaging in the therapeutic process. The results often speak for themselves.

While the text does clearly explain and provide research and personal evidence of the impact of ecotherapy, it does not relate it back to Christianity specifically. The book contains a chapter on ecospirituality, which examines humans' search for meaning within the natural world. And while it does briefly point to some Biblical references for Christianity's connection to the natural world, it does miss many other ways that creation can help individuals experience God. When one experiences a deep connection to creation it can help them reconnect with their creator and lead to a more holistic healing.

Because the book is not written from a Christian perspective or a social work lens, it is important for Christian social workers to see how they can utilize the spiritual aspects outlined in the book for work with their clients. Since social workers look at the whole person, there is an understanding that one's spirituality is a piece of that wholeness. Social workers can glean what clients might be searching for spiritually and emotionally and better understand how ecotherapy can lead to therapeutic interventions that allow clients to discover those answers for themselves.

From an educational standpoint, this book could be used in conjunction with a special topics course that takes students outside of the classroom to experience ecotherapy techniques and utilize them in their practicum experiences and later professional practice. Its strong emphasis on person-in-environment theory and relational-cultural theory could also make it an excellent resource for a theory-based course. For practitioners, it offers a strong framework for understanding ecotherapy and solid examples and techniques to begin trying with clients. Something as simple as taking a session outside and walking instead of sitting in a traditional office could bring down barriers the client previously had put up.

The book truly challenges practitioners to think outside of the box when it comes to clinical work with clients. All too often, clinical work can follow a specific formula in a traditional office setting. Ecotherapy brings in fresh air to breathe for both the clinician and the client which can lead to significant change and progress towards therapeutic goals. ❖

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Social Work with Families: A Resiliency-Based Approach, 3rd Eda
Mary Patricia Van Hook. (2019). Oxford University Press.

Teaching a class on families in both undergraduate and graduate social work courses has always been somewhat of a challenge. How do you cover such a broad and important topic in just one semester? How do you possibly cover all of the various theories around social work practice with families? How do you prepare students well to work with all types of families and keep a strengths-based perspective?

Van Hook's book *I* provides an important tool for the toolbox of social work instructors and practitioners looking for a comprehensive overview of the concept of resiliency, how it applies to families, and how it can be integrated into the wide range of family therapy models in existence. Offering a strengths-based approach, this book presents a positive framework for thinking about families. Van Hook's book gives practical ideas for social workers while also providing theoretical models from which one can practice.

The book is divided into three parts—the first focuses on the resiliency practice model; the second provides a thorough overview of a variety of approaches to social work practice with families and family therapy models; and the third presents practice applications for families with specific presenting problems. Van Hook gives the reader an introduction to resiliency including a survey of the nature, sources, and different types of resiliency, as well as a focus on both individual and family resiliency. She then moves into specific practice strategies for how the social worker can create a therapeutic alliance with the family right from the beginning. Families require a unique and somewhat more complex method of assessment, and the book gives an in-depth method of assessment that covers a wide range of discussion points to consider with each client.

In Part II, the book moves into the range of theoretical approaches a clinician can take with a family in practice. This includes social learning/cognitive models, psychoeducational family counseling, structural family therapy, solution-focused therapy, narrative family therapy, multisystem family therapy, Bowen family therapy, and object relations. This section ends with a discussion on the role of spirituality in family therapy work. The concept of resiliency is integrated within each of these chapters giving a fresh perspective on each of the approaches.

The book provides various in-depth case study examples in each of the chapters, which give the reader an opportunity to understand with case specificity the ways each model or theory can be applied to the family presented. Each chapter in Part II is organized in the same way, providing clear direction to the student or practitioner on the major tenets of each model, the role of the family counselor, the treatment process, and how

resiliency is demonstrated. This clear organizational structure and pattern allows readers to easily reference or return to specific parts of each model. Van Hook also provides specific practice applications for each of the models in Part II. The emphasis on resiliency in each of the models presented helps highlight the strengths-based resiliency model on which the book is founded.

The breadth of the book could be challenging to some who are looking for a more in-depth dive into one specific model of family therapy, but this is not the intent of this book. This book was written to introduce the models, so those looking to become more skilled in one or two specific models would likely have to receive additional training or go to original source material. This book would be a great text for an introduction to family social work practice or family therapy as it gives students an opportunity to consider which of the models might fit best with their own personality and preferences.

While the book is not written from an explicitly Christian perspective, the way that Van Hook uncovers the complexities of the family system and highlights the norms that guide families is useful for Christian students and social work practitioners who want to learn more about how God created the family to function as a social institution. The resiliency and strengths-based approach does not negate the obvious fact that families, too, are affected by the fall of creation and yet, social workers can help in doing the redemptive work of God within this important God-ordained social institution. ❖

Reviewed by ***Erin Olson, MSW, PhD, LISW****, Professor of Social Work and Social Work Program Chair, Dordt University. Email: erin.oloson@dordt.edu.*

Not Just Play: Summer Camp and the Profession of Social Work
Meryl Nadal & Susan Scher (2019). Oxford University Press.

In *Not Just Play*, Nadal and Scher take the reader on a journey exploring the intersection of history, social movements, and the development of camping as a field of practice. This journey occurs alongside the simultaneous emergence and professionalization of social group work as part of the social work profession. This thorough and thoughtful work includes contextual settings and surprises that are often omitted in many accounts of the development of social work, and more specifically in the development of group work. Many readers will find themselves wondering why this aspect of social work history seems undiscovered, until now. The reader quickly discovers the rich and documented history of social work as camp intervention and camping as social work intervention.

The book is organized into four key sections. First, the authors explore the early emergence of the pursuit of the natural environment and the beginnings of camping as part of American culture. Nadal and Scher trace the development of camping from the early 1800s as a response to health consequences of urbanization and industrialization. The authors highlight the involvement of various movements including the settlement houses, the playground movement, and the fresh air movement. Each of these movements led to efforts to give people who were impoverished and marginalized opportunities to get out to the country and experience "recreation."

In the second section, the authors explore the historical movements that influenced the shift from camping as pure recreation, to camping as social intervention. Throughout their historical review, the authors demonstrate that social workers have been present and influential in the development of camping for more than a century. They demonstrate a shift in focus leading up to and through WWI and WWII when camping became an avenue to instill democratic and civic ideals, as well as a place for informal education and skill building. At this time, the reader notices the professionalization of the setting, as well as the professionalization of the field of social work. Group work emerged and began to influence camping activities while educators and social workers became more engaged in camping as group intervention. Activities became intentional and were viewed as a means to an end rather than simply recreation.

Section three presents a more focused review of the emergence of social workers and social work interventions within camp settings. While most camps do not specifically have "social worker" identified as staff, many professional social workers have served and are serving as program developers, directors, consultants, counselors, clinicians, and

in various other roles. In addition, the camp setting has served and can continue to serve as an ideal recruiting location for people interested in the profession. In the camp setting, would-be social workers often get their first experiences being part of a therapeutic group, as well as facilitating groups. The authors conclude the section reviewing the development of social group work, including the therapeutic use of group work, in the field of camping.

Finally, section four presents more current involvement of social workers and social work interns in camp settings. While this section is not an exhaustive review of the types of camp settings, programmatic foci, or populations served by social workers in camps, it allows the reader to envision the breadth of this ever-expanding field. The book ends with current challenges and opportunities for the pairing of social work and camping as intervention.

There were few weaknesses in this book, other than repetition and leaving the reader with more questions. The four sections overlap considerably and can seem redundant at times. Yet with so many expert contributors with first-hand accounts and historical knowledge, there is bound to be overlap. In addition, many questions emerge about supervision of social workers in such settings, licensure challenges when working or volunteering out of state, and what social work researchers are doing to strengthen the evidence for the need of social workers in camp settings, just to list a few.

While the book does not explicitly focus on Christian social workers in camp settings, many camps throughout history have been sponsored by religious and Christian organizations that have social workers as paid staff and volunteers. As Christian social workers, our values often lead us to work and volunteer in settings like summer camp, specialty camps, specialized camps, and general population camps. Each one of the core social work values are evident in this book and in camping as an intervention, including the pursuit of social justice, valuing the dignity and worth of the person, service, the importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. Many of the earliest camping interventions were spear-headed by clergy, in efforts to improve the living circumstances of children and families residing in cities. Today, Christian social workers continue to advance the core values of the profession in numerous camp settings. ❖

Reviewed by ***Shannon Trecartin, PhD, LMSW,*** *Associate Professor of Social Work, Andrews University. Email: trecarts@andrews.edu.*

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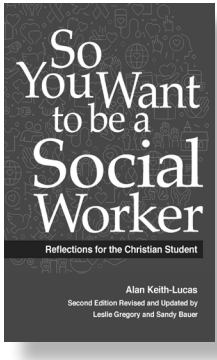
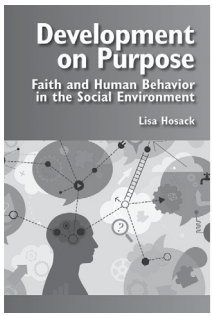


SO YOU WANT TO BE A SOCIAL WORKER: REFLECTIONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN STUDENT (2ND EDITION)

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

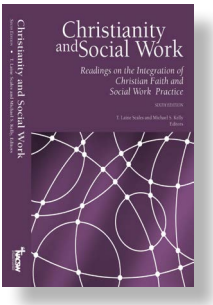
(2019) BY LISA HOSACK , MSW, PH.D.

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.



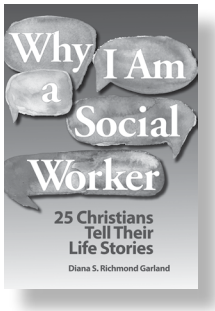
Christianity and Social Work: Readings on the Integration of Christian Faith & Social Work Practice (Sixth Edition)

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.



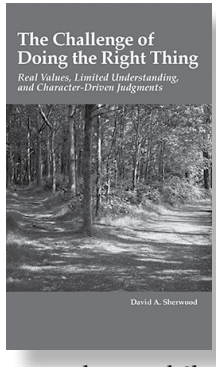
Why I Am a Social Worker: 25 Christians Tell Their Life Stories

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.

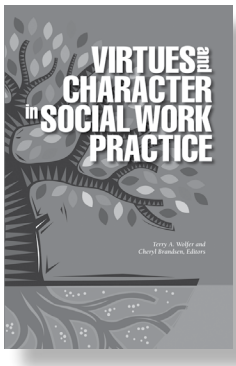


The Challenge of Doing the Right Thing: Real Values, Limited Understanding, and Character-Driven Judgments

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

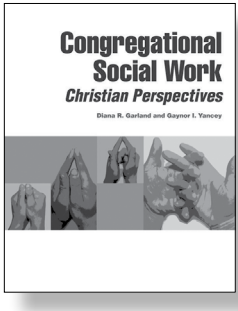
professional social work practice. In this book. Dr. Sherwood argues that in ethical decision-making, decisions frequently involve making judgments that functionally prioritize legitimate values that are in tension with each other. He contends that the mission of NACSW and *Social Work & Christianity* 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.

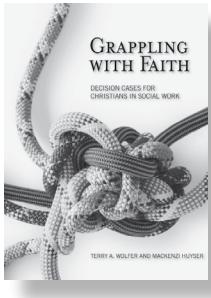
Virtues and Character in Social Work Practice offers a fresh contribution to the Christian social work literature with its emphasis on the key role of character traits and virtues in equipping Christians in social work to engage with and serve their clients and communities well.

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.

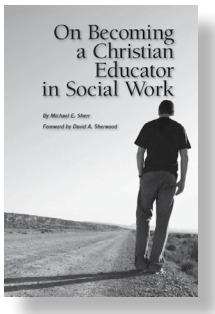
Congregational Social Work offers a compelling account of the many ways social workers serve the church as leaders of congregational life, of ministry to neighborhoods locally and globally, and of advocacy for social justice. Based on the most comprehensive study to date on social work with congregations, *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.

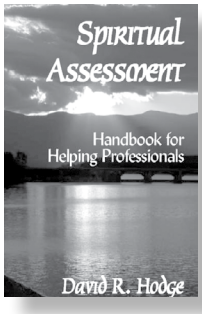
Grappling with Faith: Decision Cases for Christians in Social Work presents fifteen cases specifically designed to challenge and stretch Christian social work students and practitioners. Using the case method of teaching and learning, *Grappling with Faith* highlights the ambiguities and dilemmas found 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.

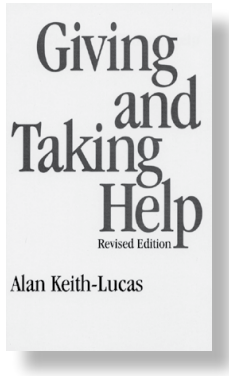
On Becoming a Christian Educator is a compelling invitation for social workers of faith in higher education to explore what it means to be a Christian in social work education. By highlighting seven core commitments of Christian social work educators, it offers strategies for social work educators to 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.

NACSW

North American Association of Christians in Social Work

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NACSW's mission is to equip its members to integrate Christian faith and professional social work practice.

Its goals include:

- Supporting and encouraging members in the integration of Christian faith and professional practice through fellowship, education, and service opportunities.
- Articulating an informed Christian voice on social welfare practice and policies to the social work profession.
- Providing professional understanding and help for the social ministry of the church.
- Promoting social welfare services and policies in society which bring about greater justice and meet basic human needs.

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