

Faith Based Educator Support Program

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Assignment 4: Compile the Prospectus

Compile all four sections together in the DSL Project Template as a Prospectus.

Introduction

Objectives and Scope

The objective of this action research is to support and train Christian public school educators in faith-learning integration. The goal is to equip, empower, and encourage them as believers. This support program will help Christians educators understand their rights in accordance with the US Constitution, more specifically what is and is not allowed, and how they can still utilize and depend on their faith despite policies against biblical principles. The sociological theory used throughout this research project will be Symbolic Interactionism. This sociological theory will be integrated with Pollack's six psychological needs to help provide support to Christian educators to serve as leaders that can feel empowered to bring positive change through faith-learning integration (Ward, 2014). There is a link between teachers leaving the profession and decreasing student achievement (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Christians in education need to understand how to activate their faith and know their rights to live out their faith without discrimination (Kennedy v. Bremerton, 2022). The number of young people going into education has dwindled (Ravitch, 2020).

Faith is an integral part of a Christian teacher's makeup and is intertwined in their teaching (Sikkink, D. (2010). "An example of how deeply intertwined an educator's moral compass is with teach can be seen in how the Holocaust is taught in the classroom. When teaching about the Holocaust, a Christian teacher may teach from a lens of compassion, pointing out the dangers of prejudice. From this lens, teachers appeal to the class as a moral community and attempt to use the moral consensus of the class to "transform individuals' views of prejudice, including building commitment to overcoming forms of prejudice" (2010, p. 161). Sikkink's study revealed that "Teachers' motivation levels appear to be higher in religious schools, and

their job satisfaction levels tend to be higher, despite the significantly lower pay in religious schools. Religious schools are also more effective in providing mentoring programs for teachers” (2010). This finding demonstrates that providing faith-based support for public school Christian educators will help them to thrive in their calling and may even prevent some from walking out of the schoolhouse permanently (2010).

Churches can support Christian educators in public and secular schools as missionaries in the same light as foreign missions. Pastors and ministers can visit their parishioners and pray with them during their breaks, and do kind deeds for their colleagues, like sponsoring a staff lunch. Imagine fellow Christians ministering to their public school missionaries in the same way as for foreigners missions, i.e. even providing gift cards. This would also impact others working in the school as they watch Christians coming in and loving Christian colleagues in their school. These gestures from the church would provide a covering for Christian educators and students.

Statement of the Problem (1-2 pages)

America is at a crossroads. There is a substantial culture war happening in our country, and our public and secular schools are a major battleground. “While there is no standard for how much polarization is “enough” to label the public polarized, at a minimum, we can say that a substantial minority of the population holds polarized attitudes on transgender rights and religious liberty” (Castle, 2019). Christian educators working in public schools typically do not have training in faith-learning integration to work within a secular educational system with policies contrary to their beliefs, and most are unprepared for the challenges they face. Because most Christian educators are not trained on how to use their biblical influence, they are unaware of the impact that implementing biblical principles and reflecting God's character in their work may have on the Kingdom (Marker, 2020). Christians working in the public school system are

often overwhelmed with the anti-Christian beliefs that are a part of the curriculum and culture. Most Christians in public schools are uninformed of their constitutionally protected rights to practice their religion. In addition, a lot of Christians feel alone in their schools and are unprepared for a hostile environment or policies in direct contradiction to their faith. Christian educators often feel ostracized and abandoned (2020). By supporting Christian teachers, it can have a profound impact in supporting Christian students to make sure their religious freedoms and beliefs are not discriminated against. It is important that educators show respect to all students, regardless of their faith, to avoid any student feeling marginalized, isolated and discriminated against by other staff or peers (Mackie, 2017, p. 80).

Everything Christians believe about biblical truth and Jesus Christ being the only way to salvation is in direct conflict with some of the curriculum and policies in the public school system. Educators face a dilemma in teaching about the Bible. The knowledge of the Bible is important for cultural literacy, but the different views and legal considerations have made it controversial. Since the mid-twentieth century, the Supreme Court interpreted The First Amendment to forbid public schools and other government agencies from promoting religious viewpoints to establish a state religion and from forbidding the free exercise of religion (Chancey, 2020). Religious and moral freedom is jeopardized with the policies and laws that are created. In the education realm, Christians are coerced to comply with policies contrary to their beliefs, and many fear losing their jobs and are being forced into silence. Educators of all faiths, particularly Christians, are forced to comply with teaching and uplifting state ideologies and religions. Non-Christian religions are deemed acceptable and are being celebrated and practiced in schools throughout the United States (Brown, 2019). This action research study centers around

Christian public school and secular educators, which include teachers, principals, professors, administrators and other roles in the field of education.

Many experienced educators, including Christians, have left the profession due to the constant assaults and legislative attacks on the teaching profession, thus creating a teacher shortage. Colleges and universities have seen a sharp drop in the number of applications to teacher preparation institutions (Ravitch, 2020, p. 4). Several political leaders blamed public school teachers as they tried to gain support to privatize education. This has contributed greatly to decreasing the number of students entering into education programs to be a teacher (2020) “How can a nation educate its young without well-qualified, experienced teachers?” (p. 4).

Political polarization is posing new problems for the American democratic system (Treon, 2021; Ravitch, 2020). Despite the alleged separation of church and state, religion continues to play a significant role in American politics, particularly in the Republican Party (2020; Treon, 2021). Even though the proportion of Americans identifying as Christians is declining, Christian value systems still influence political decisions (2021). For this reason, it is imperative that Christian educators are supported through faith-based support groups, and that the church is educated on how to come alongside Christian educators in public schools in carrying out the Great Commission. The Lewis Center for Church Leadership provides guidance to churches (Lewis Center for Church Leadership, 2019).

Background of the Problem

A Brief History of American Public Schools

In order to instill civic values in the culturally diverse migrants coming from Europe during the "Age of Mass Migration" between 1850 and 1914, states used compulsory schooling laws as a nation-building instrument (Bandiera et al., 2019). States that welcomed European

immigrants with less exposure to civic norms at home adopted laws requiring attendance at school far earlier. We demonstrate that these immigrants had a lower demand for American schooling prior to compulsion using cross-county data (2019). To significant financial investments in education and elevated levels of volunteer attendance, Americans had the highest level of education in the world by the middle of the nineteenth century. From 1830 to 1890, rates for pupils aged 5 to 15 were high in the United States and other developed countries (2019). Starting in 1850, the United States enrollment rates were above fifty percent and began to increase and diverge from other developed nations. American states started enacting legislation requiring students to attend school at the same hour. However, these laws did not apply to all children. Black and other marginalized children were excluded out of schools even after compulsory attendance (2019).

By the early 1930s, most children were receiving some schooling, but a small group of humanists made it their mission to eradicate the Christian influences in America's public schools and replace them with a new religion—humanism. Additionally, humanistic tenets like the Humanist Manifesto I, II, and III are now evident in many areas of public education, including instructional content, policies, and culture. More humanistic headway was gained when nonprofit organizations made it their mission to cleanse public schools of Christian influences as a means of upholding the First Amendment (e.g., American Civil Liberties Union [ACLU], Americans United [AU] for Separation of Church and State, and Freedom From Religion Foundation [FFRF]) (Marker, 2020, p. 2-3).

Apart from humanism, other religions are introduced and celebrated to annihilate the Christian influence in the nation's schools (Brown, 2019). Until the late twentieth century, Christians often viewed yoga and meditation as Hindu and Buddhist practices that were ungodly.

As these practices entered the United States, Asian and European promoters downplayed the religious background affiliated with Hinduism, Buddhism, and even the New Age movement. Instead, the promoters used science to gain public acceptance by highlighting the mental and physical benefits of reducing stress. The promoters strategically used tactics to move yoga and meditation more systematically into institutions and schools by secularizing them and downplaying them as Hindu and Buddhist practices (Brown, 2019). Brown's work discusses how Christianity, by certain measures, is losing its dominance in America, and more people are sympathizing with other religions. Today, there is an increasing trend to classify oneself as spiritual. People from all persuasions are bringing these mindsets into our schools. The perceived problems in our schools have opened the door for yoga and mindfulness to come in as acceptable practices. Brown's work explains that while eradicating Christianity remains incomplete, other varieties of religious practices are being established, and public schools are crucibles to this change (Brown, 2019). Yoga, meditation, healing, and alternative medicine are a few examples of practices that put an emphasis on the body to encourage self-knowledge, self-mastery, and self-healing. This study includes a section that tracks the global adoption of body-based therapy methods. The study demonstrates how these behaviors moved from primarily religious settings into secular ones (Pegis, 2020).

This plurality of truth is encouraged and respected (Boys, 2022). Mary Boys discusses the importance of Christians forming friendships with people from other religions. Boys believe that since the United States is no longer a Christian nation, but rather, a religiously plural nation, it is important for Christians to have relationships with people from other faiths so they can see that their faith is not the only truth. Boys' article gives recommendations for re-educating Christians after asking, "What, then, might we do to educate Christians in such a way that the

religious “stranger” becomes “neighbour”?” (Boys, 2022, p. 188). According to Boys, people should embrace religious pluralism, recognize the limitations of having only one religious theory, and go beyond the particular of their religious tradition. The author thinks that instead of clinging to absolute truths, individuals should embrace religious diversity. The author says that because God loves others and communicates with them through many religions, individuals have a competitive impulse that leads them to believe that this undermines their relationship with God. “Acknowledging the finitude of one’s own tradition requires a degree of maturity” (2022).

I believe that God has called me and many other Christ-Followers into the public and secular schools, colleges and universities for such a time as this. We may not win the overall war, but we can surely win the battle and are effective by snatching both fellow educators and students straight from the enemy’s grip. To defeat the enemy, you must first understand what it is you are fighting against, and when you go to war, you need to have an army. God has His warriors already in position. God just needs us to be equipped for the battle and allow His Holy Spirit to do work in the mind and hearts of those He has set before us. The Bible tells us three things in John 1:1-4, first, that Jesus made us all, second, that nothing happens apart from Him, and third, that Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness (NASB, 2020).

Analysis through Sociological Theory

Understanding the Conflict Between Christian and Secular Principles and Worldview

In analyzing the complexity of working in a system that is disrespecting and infringing on its employees and stakeholders core beliefs, the sociological theory that may bring the best diagnosis is the Conflict Theory. According to CEO Jeff Bezos, “harmony is overrated” (Contu, 2019). Rather, Amazonians are trained to be adamantly disagreeable and dedicated, to sharply criticize the opinions of their peers before uniting around a conclusion. Managers learn "to

diplomatically throw people under the bus as part of normal managerial prerogative" during the yearly "rank and yank" exercise (2019). Contu further connotes that the interactionist perspective suggests that there can be too little or too much conflict, and there needs to be the right amount (2019).

Schools are under attack as cultural wars rage on from religious perspectives, curriculum, even to contributions of people of color. In question is will we tell a true and accurate story of America history, or will we simply paint the picture of the powerful? James Davidson Hunter believed the cultural wars were not most sharply divided on race, class, or political party, but rather by competing systems of moral understanding-worldview (Zimmerman, 2022). The culture wars in schools are direct. The constant assaults and legislative attacks on the teaching profession have caused many experienced teachers to abandon their classrooms, thus creating a teacher shortage. Colleges and universities have seen a sharp drop in the number of applications to teacher preparation institutions. Several political leaders blamed public school teachers as they tried to gain support to privatize education. This has contributed greatly to decreasing the number of students entering into education programs to become teachers. "How can a nation educate its young without well-qualified, experienced teachers?" (Ravitch, p. 4).

Today in public and secular education, distinction between those who are followers of Jesus and those who are upholding practices contrary to those beliefs is unclear due to coercion to comply and fear of retributions. This pressure leads to early retirements and resignations. More respect is given to non-Christians. For example, when women who are Muslim, through wearing hijabs, niqab or burqa, they are making a clear distinction of their beliefs through this practice which is in direct conflict with western culture. Yet, we see the Muslim community making strides in western culture through effective strategies. It is not that these Muslims have

embraced western Christian orthodoxy, but rather have learned how to negotiate and gain influence by sitting on school boards, school districts committees and other policy making structures. As a result, in many school districts across America, Islamic holidays are now on school calendars, and Islamic showcases uplifted in school cases or on school bulletin boards. Muslim are also effectively working within the American system and American laws to openly protest becoming moral leaders in a country once dominated by Christian beliefs. In Montgomery County, Maryland, Muslim parent's led the protest against the LGBT curriculum (Arnold, T., 2023). While the Christian influence is still prevalent worldwide, local school districts answer to the State and not the federal government. For this reason, it is easier to get around federal laws. For example, promoting and blatantly uplifting non-Christian religions is in direct violation of The Establishment Clause (amend. 1).

As believers and practitioners in education and all other sectors, it is imperative that we come together on one accord (John 17). The Bible warns believers in 2 Timothy 2:3-5, "(3) You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (4) No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please Him who enlisted him as a soldier" (NASB, 2020). In other words, to please the Lord, it is important to understand the conflict. To strategically work to have more influence with colleagues and students and to effectively minister in the midst of it.

Christians need to clearly understand the Christian morality vs. secular morality and the Christian worldview and stance according to the Bible. Not having biblical knowledge as a believer lends itself to confusion and hopelessness. In the nineteenth century, Nietzsche wrote that "Nihilism stood at the door" (Scimecca, 2023). Nietzsche defined nihilism as there being no such thing as truth. Nietzsche further explains that there is no answer to the question of "why" beyond

one's own self-interest. Neitzche connotes that the door has an opening, and nihilism has its foot in the doorway. Should nihilism enter the house and become accepted, it brings with it nihilism's main tenet, meaningless, because meaninglessness is all nihilism has to offer (2023). Christian or otherwise, the gravest threat to a society lies in an attack on its moral center-that which makes the society legitimate to its citizens. Without a moral core, we are at the mercy of those in power. "This is the insight of the great classical sociologists, Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weer, who were most responsible for the institutionalization of sociology in academia" (2023).

Faith-Based Analysis

Faith-Based Considerations

Truth

At the center of the entire project, I will focus on N.T. Wright's Universal Longing, truth. With the diversity of religions in our country, truth is relative to many different beliefs, but for the Christ-follower, truth is absolute (John 14:6). According to Simon Blackburn truth can be subjective. "Sometimes, more often than we think, truth hides itself, and we have to put up with simplifications, models, idealisations, analogies, metaphors and even myths and fictions. These may be useful, but we think of them as only at best paving the way to the altar of truth. Sometimes we must settle for mere opinion or guesswork, but the god of truth is better served by attendant deities, such as reason, justification, and objectivity. Once we have it, truth radiates benefits such as knowledge and, most notably, success in coping with the world" (Blackburn, 2018, p. 15). In addition to truth having a broad and interpretive meaning is the belief in no type of deity at all. Richard Dawkins' represents many who have as their primary purpose in life to

convert people from being a theist to an atheist believing that religion has caused violence and several types of oppression (Kristiatmo, 2022).

Syncretism is one of the most effective tools being used in modern culture to sway Christians away from the Bible as the absolute authority. Scholars are even endorsing it as a mature and positive way to promote harmony and understanding (Boys, 2022; Frankfurter, 2021). Culture wars that are playing out daily in our public and secular schools, and other religions are gaining the same acceptance as Christianity. Non-Christians and Christians alike are embracing spiritual plurality. Jesus answered the question of truth. “In answering a question about death, Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life; the one who believes in Me will live, even if he dies (John 11:25). Again, in answering a question about life after death, Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

How are Christians to respond to the blatant and distinct anti-Christian policies? I believe that answer is in the scriptures. “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him” (John 3:17). Jesus modeled for us how to interact with the world and live a purpose driven life. The Word teaches us that, “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, He will testify about Me, **27** and you are testifying as well, because you have been with Me from the beginning.” The Holy Spirit will guide us.

The strength of Christian educators coming together to build a community is where equipping, empowering and encouraging educators is going to be maximized as they work in secular schools and universities. We can learn from the alliances for the advancement in struggles for equality. In recent decades, if we were to analyze the struggles for justice and

equality, the importance of alliances in struggles for justice has led to some victories opposed to total annihilation. Scholars refer to this as the 'justice cascade', bringing about justice via prosecutions (Sikkink, 201; Trimikliniotis, 2020). Jesus tells us in John 17 that we as believers are to come together as one blood, and that the world will get a glimpse of the Kingdom by the love that we show one another (NASB, 2020).

Sociological Theory

I will use the Symbolic Interactionism Theory. The Symbolic Interactionist Theory aligns well with Christian approaches to sociological intervention. The principal origins of Symbolic Interactionism trace its origins to the works of G. H. Mead (especially, 1934). H. Blumer was one of Mead's best-known students, who advanced interactionism through his teaching and writing. Blumer interpreted interactionism with three basic premises. First, human beings act towards things based on the meanings that the things have for them. Secondly, these meanings are a product of social interaction in human society. Thirdly, individuals modified these meanings through an interpretive process used in dealing with the signs they encountered (Meltzer, et al., 2020, p. 1).

Blumer's Three Symbolic Interactionism Premises

As I develop a faith-based support group, understanding Herbert Blumer's three premises can be helpful. First, Christian educators equip themselves as they study the Word of God (John 5:39), which will help them to gain meaning from a Christian and not secular worldview. Secondly, Christian educators empower each other through assembling together to build community to strengthen one another as they follow Christ (Hebrews 10:25). Thirdly, Christian educators encourage each other as they share their individual experiences and interpretations of

those experiences. I would like to expand on these three premises with Jeremy Pollack's Six Core Psychological Needs.

Pollack Six Psychological Needs

To monitor the overall well-being and growth of the participants, I will use Pollack's six psychological needs, which are safety, affiliation, positive self-regard, interdependence, engaging activities, and engaging activities (Pollack, 2020, p. 7; Pollack, 2017). Pollack discusses the importance of establishing trust in relationships and in understanding six core psychological needs of all human beings (2020, 2017). Understanding these core needs at the foundations of our relationships helps us to maintain and problem solve in both personal and professional relationships.

The six core psychological needs are safety, affiliation, positive self-regard, independence, engaging activities and noble pursuits (2020; 2017). Safety involves the belief that one is psychologically and physically safe now and in the future. Affiliation is feeling a part of the family, community or organization. Positive self-regard is one's identity and how they are feeling. Independence is the extent to which one feels they have autonomy to make their own decisions. Engaging activities that have one feeling stimulated or amused. Lastly, noble pursuits which is the extent that one is learning, growing or making progress towards their endeavors (2020; 2017). The rapid decline in college applications into education programs and the increase in the number of people leaving education is evident that there is a problem (Ravitch, 2020). Faith-based support groups for Christian educators need to address Pollack's basic core psychological needs if we are to reverse the trend.

Intervention Challenges

The constant challenge for Christian educators is to stay God-centered in a system that is creating policies against Biblical beliefs (Ravitch, 2020). Our task as we serve in public schools is to practice our faith and thrive in the conflict. Symbolic Interactionism provides a framework to analyze and devise interventions from a sociological perspective. While students choose to attend colleges and universities, K-12 education is mandatory and public schools belong to everyone in the community. Coming to a consensus will take all stakeholders to understand what is and what is not permissible under the First Amendment (Haynes, 2012). The greatest challenge is that Christian beliefs are in direct conflict with the school systems policies and curriculum. This conflict of core values and belief systems propels the need for support for Christian educators. Even with their support the conflict is still present. These are fundamental core beliefs that are in direct conflict, and Christians are sometimes targeted for having different values.

The interactionist view does not suppose that all conflicts are bad. Organizations can benefit from conflict that may improve performance and support the goals of organizations. This type of functional conflict can enhance the performance of a group by encouraging healthy competition within groups resulting in better performance of work and higher productivity. One of the main advantages of this type of conflict is that it enables their members to identify the problems and see opportunities. Functional conflict can also increase learning, growth and inspire the creation of innovative ideas. Thus, it is pertinent to understand that a functional conflict can support the goals of the organization and improve performance, and bring about innovation (Mills & Mene, 2020).

Dysfunctional or destructive conflicts can do just the opposite and are capable of destroying the goals of an organization. Using the Conflict Theory to provide interventions may put employees at odds with organizational goals and objectives; thus, making the performance of a group, individuals or parties destructive or dysfunctional. “This conflict type is reflected in situations such as (a) when individuals who are competing allows their interests to override the goals of the business, (b) when managers withhold information from one another (c) employees sabotaging others’ work, either intentionally or subtly” (Mills & Mene, 2020). For Christians trying to thrive in the workplace, causing conflict may interfere with ideas exchanged and even ruin relationships. Dysfunctional conflict does not allow organizational goals to be achieved, leads to underutilization of resources and reduced productivity. Therefore, it is important for Christian educators to allow the Holy Spirit to lead them to carry out their assignments as peacemakers (Romans 12:18).

Symbolic interactionism aligns well with Christian approaches to sociological intervention. William Swatos' "Clinical Pastoral Sociology" is a seminal collection of essays that pioneered the convergence of clinical sociology and pastoral care. It emphasizes the web of social interaction and religion as a system of interaction (Reichard, 2024, p. 374). The principle origins of Symbolic Interactionism trace its origins to the works of G. H. Mead (especially, 1934). H. Blumer, one of his best-known students, advanced interactionism through his teaching and writings. Blumer interpreted interactionism with three basic premises. First, human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. Secondly, these meanings are a product of social interaction in human society. Thirdly, these meanings are modified and handled through an interpretive process that is used by each individual in dealing with the signs he/she encounters (Meltzer, et al., 2020, p. 1). The historical underpinnings of

these three premises are found not only in the works of Mead, but also in C. H. Cooley's theory of society, J. Dewey's formulation of the concept of habit, and W. I. Thomas' notion of 'the definition of the situation' (2020).

Through a combination of analysis and intervention, clinical sociologists engage with systems to evaluate circumstances and prevent, lessen, or eliminate problems. In addition to being mediators, organizational consultants, community consultants, teachers, trainers, and group facilitators, clinical sociologists can also be sociotherapists. Clinical sociology, to put it simply, is sociological intervention. It is the process of analyzing and creating interventions for constructive social change via the lens of sociology (Reichard, 2024).

Communication To Carry Out Plan

Through whole group, small group and individual virtual and in-person meetings, texts and telephone calls and through communication with leaders that I am developing, I will monitor the six core psychological needs of the participants.

Intervention Design

Through a Christian Educator faith-based support group ministry, I will begin the 2024-2025 school year with an in-person Fall Kickoff Breakfast with a specific purpose of equipping, empowering and encouraging educators. The Fall Kickoff will be followed up with weekly meetings for six weeks. This faith-based support will involve prayer, scripture reading, fellowship, prayer partners, and a group chat to encourage and uplift one another.

Overall Sociological & Psychological Framework

Through the faith-based support group, I plan to empower, equip and encourage educators. The sociological framework I have chosen is Herbert Blumer's three main premises of symbolic interactionism sociological theory, and Jeremy Pollack's Six Core Psychological Needs

to meet the spiritual and socio-emotional needs of the educators in the support group building a sense of belonging and community and to determine the program's effectiveness.

Integrated Frameworks

Premise 1: Equipped Through Gaining Meaning From God's Word

Blumer's first premise asserts that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. With Blumer's first premise, Christian educators can be equipped by studying and gaining meaning from the Word of God. This will transform their thinking from a secular worldview to a Christian worldview. Educators not versed in scripture are prey to post-modern values. One author, David Frankfurter, asserts that syncretism seems to propose two (or more) discrete religious systems, like Christianity and Heathenism, or Judaism and Hellenism, or Persia and Greece. Frankfurter asserts, "This is problematic because none of these systems or traditions was ever discrete and pure. Syncretism thus relies on a romantic fantasy of the pure culture: apostolic Christianity, biblical or rabbinic Judaism, Pharaonic Egypt" (Frankfurter, D., 2021). Boys asserted that it is even immature to think that one's faith is the only truth (Boys, 2022). The Bible warns Christians about syncretism in Deuteronomy 4:2 and Revelation 22:18-19 (NASB, 2020). The Bible upholds the scriptures as the ultimate truth.

Through studying God's Word and understanding that being a Christ-follower starts with repentance and accepting Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. In order for this transformation to occur in a person's life they must first have a clear understanding of the Gospel message through God's word. Once this occurs, they are a part of the body of Christ, and the scripture teaches believers to fellowship and build each other up (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Once Christian educators collectively study of God's Word to gain wisdom and allow the Holy Spirit to use that Word in their lives within their careers, it will meet all six of Pollack's basic needs;

affiliation (belonging), safety, engaging activities or stimulation, and noble pursuits or growth as an individual matures both intellectually and spiritually. Studying the Word of God will also help meet the need for a positive self-regard of one's identity. The Bible teaches that we are a part of the body of Christ and should study to become autonomous and mature believers (2 Timothy 2:15; Romans 12). The Bible teaches in Genesis that we are all made in the image of God (NASB, 2020). Studying the Bible in community with other Christian educators builds interdependence through God's Word and prayer and will strengthen believers to exercise autonomy in their schools. Studying God's Word will also help maintain a biblical outlook for what educators are experiencing, and it will also deepen their faith in trusting God's purpose and protection over their lives.

Premise 2: Empowered Through Belonging To A Faith-Based Community

Secondly, Christian educators can be empowered by coming together to build community to strengthen one another as they follow Christ. In explaining symbolic interactionism, Blumer states that humans interpret meanings to what is happening around them through social interactions (Meltzer, et al., 2020, p. 1). This makes it critical to be mindful of our surroundings. Our surroundings and environment may be predetermined for us depending on our birthplace or circumstance. Within the Christian community, the Bible tells us how to manage our surroundings regardless of our birthplace or circumstances by seeking out and fellowshiping with other believers (Hebrews 10:25). Building community through the fellowship of like-minded believers will meet all six of Pollack's basic needs. In his book, *Community: The Structure of Belonging*, Block connotes, "The need to create a structure of belonging grows out of the isolated nature of our lives, our institutions, and our communities. The absence of belonging is so widespread that we might say we are living in an age of isolation, imitating the

lament from early in the last century, when life was referred to as the age of anxiety” (2018, p. 1). All humans long to belong and the feeling of isolation deteriorates when you find a group that accepts you for being you. Having a faith-based Christian educators support group centered around shared biblical support and principles brings meaning to their shared experiences. It also provides a safe space to share, engage in activities together, grow as a believer and grow as a Christian; thus, building community and belonging.

Chiareli asserts that Christian sociologist is in a unique position to discern God's truth from every mainstream perspective and to create a fresh meta-narrative and analytical framework for interpreting social phenomena, solving social issues, and comprehending, communicating, and realizing God's truth about social reality (Chiareli, 2019). This same idea can be true for Christian educators. This type of thinking will help them to feel more empowered within the Christian community as they work and minister in an environment contrary to their core values. Chiareli further states that Christian sociology can advance toward the prophetic and liberating goal of interacting with the discipline and its students in a biblical and transformative manner, aiming to be salt and light through the integration of this discipline and our Christian faith (2019). Building a community with Christian educators with the sole purpose of equipping, empowering and encouraging them for ministry in public and secular schools will create transformation aiming to be salt and a light through what faith-learning integration can look like into their workplace.

Premise 3: Encouraged From Shared Interpretations

Thirdly, Christian educator meanings can constructively be modified and managed through an interpretive process as each individual encourages others as they share. Having a space that allows for shared testimonies will help educators bond over shared meanings and

interpretations. Sharing and finding support helped with solidarity and healing. (Suzanne & Reiss, 2023). From a faith-based perspective, it allows participants to seek guidance from scripture and depend on God for help. In John 15:5, Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing” (NASB, 2020).

This time of sharing and vulnerability will be especially helpful in meeting the participant’s psychological needs. Through providing a safe space for participants to share how they are interpreting their experiences, and in sharing where they need prayer, it allows for vulnerability and empathy. “Lifesaving medicines and psychological interventions are important parts of rescue and recovery; however, they are not enough. Religion and religious participation can address the many issues that lead people to alcohol and/or drug dependency that medical interventions alone can fail to address (Grim & Grim, 2019). There is no denying the importance of people needing their faith to help them through life. As participants experience God working in their lives and being able to share praise reports of how God has helped them will be a great encouragement. Participants become more confident in the authenticity of their shared experiences which will solidify a sense of belonging.

Purpose

The purpose of this intervention is to establish a faith-based support group for Christian educators to equip, empower and encourage them in working in public and secular schools.

Objective

The objectives are for Christian educators to feel supported using six psychological areas: safety, affiliation, positive self-regard, interdependence, engaging activities, and noble pursuits (Pollack, 2020, p. 7; Pollack, 2017)..

Sociological Theory

I will use the Symbolic Interactionism Theory. Symbolic interactionism and systems theory align well with Christian approaches to sociological intervention. The principle origins of Symbolic Interactionism trace its origins to the works of G. H. Mead (especially, 1934). Mead's ideas have been expanded by several sociologists throughout the years. H. Blumer, one of his best known students, advanced interactionism through his teaching and writings. Blumer interpreted interactionism with three basic premises. First, human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. Secondly, these meanings are a product of social interaction in human society. Thirdly, these meanings are modified and handled through an interpretive process that is used by each individual in dealing with the signs he/she encounters (Meltzer, et al., 2020, p. 1).

Resources

All participants will need time to attend in-person meetings with Bibles, and virtual meetings with laptops, Bibles, notebooks or pads for notes.

Timeline

The timeframe for this intervention will occur over six weeks beginning with an in-person kickoff event on Saturday, September 30 and followed up with virtual meetings on Mondays at 7:00 p.m. on October 2, 9, 16, 23, 30. The Bible teachings and discussions in these will center around the Book of Daniel and the fruits of the Holy Spirit in Galatians.

Target Group or Issue

Christian Educators serving in public and secular schools, colleges and universities.

Plan Strategy

The six-week intervention will begin with an in-person kickoff followed up with virtual weekly meetings. Participants during this time will interact through whole groups, small group and individual virtual and in-person meetings, texts, and telephone calls. I will monitor using the six core psychological needs of the participants.

Anticipated Challenges

Jesus warned believers of the challenges they would face. The first challenge will be that as Christians become more confident, it may cause resentment and ill-feelings of non-Christians. Jesus told believers to remember that the world hated Him first before they hated them in John 15:18. Another challenge to openly integrating your faith into this profession is that it will make the enemy even mad (Luke 22:31-34; John 10:10; Luke 22:31; 1 Peter 5:8). Internally there will be a spiritual warfare within the believer and even with other believers. The enemy tempted Jesus and tried hard to discourage Him. Why would it be any different with Christ's followers? First Corinthians 15:31 teaches that everyday we have to die to self, but Jesus promises the believer in John 14 that He will not leave us as orphans (NASB, 2020). Jesus promises to never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5; Deuteronomy 31:6). It will be important that believers understand legally what they can and can not do in public schools to avoid any violations of the First Amendment (U.S. Const., amendment 1). Part of the training will be to encourage participants to make sure their actions do not violate the Establishment Clause.

Measuring Success

To measure success:

- 1) Use of informal oral assessments.
- 2) Participation and leadership among participants
- 3) My reflections and observation notes.

Ethical Considerations

Christian educators may work in the public school system, but they are also servants of God called to the great commission to bring others to Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus teaches that we show to be good citizens setting a good example as law abiding citizens and employees. God's Word teaches that we should "pay to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). In other words, we are under the authority of the school system and need to represent Jesus accordingly. God has not forsaken His creation, even if His creation has forsaken Him. Christian educators can share their faith with colleagues and talk and pray with them. With students, Christian must work within the perimeters of school policies and laws. For instance, while Christian can not evangelize students, they can sponsor Bible clubs before and after school due to The Equal Act (H.R.5345, 1984).

Jesus teaches His followers to live peacefully with people as much as humanly possible (Romans 12:18). As I explore ethical considerations, the Word of God does give us guidance in His Word, which teaches us to walk with faithfulness and integrity, and He will protect us (Proverbs 2:7; 10:9; 28:19; Psalm 14:1-3). In Galatians, the Word teaches us about the fruits of the Holy Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23). There is no greater ethical manual than the Word of God, which is the manual for this faith-based support ministry for Christian educators.

Adherence to Professional Ethics

It is important to follow ethical guidelines in sociological research because the goal is to bring about an authentic diagnosis and intervention to correct a problem. As I embark on this project, the goal is to support Christian practitioners serving in secular educational institutions,

and to intentionally develop them to thrive as faith-learning-integration practitioners. It is my hope that God will continue to help me have a voice in leading in this area. I am praying that the Holy Spirit will continue to raise consciousness and build on this very needed work. It is my hope to see young Christians choose to be missionaries called to serve in public schools, and that Christians currently serving build a community supported by the church. The professional ethics involved in the research is critical in building a ministry that is sustainable as others join in this work.

Respect for Persons

This action research is built from a place of love and the utmost respect for my fellow educators. I have served in education in various roles since the late 1980s. I have worked in Christian schools and in public schools. It takes a special calling to work in schools. Even in understanding this, I must continually be mindful to provide a safe space of belonging and support without harm.

Confidentiality and Privacy

No personal or individual data will be shared or given for this action research.

Avoiding Harm

Clearly setting a research agenda with specific actions to avoid iatrogenic effects is essential in planning (Teachman, et al., 2021). The intervention with Christian educators evolved out of a need for these educators needing support due to the level of intensity of eradicating Christian morality (Castle, 2019; Chancey, 2020). In providing a safe faith-based community for Christian educators, it will be important to avoid condemnation and ridicule. It will also be

important to avoid complaining and negativity. The Bible gives us guidance. My plan to avoid having a iatrogenic intervention is to do the following:

- 1) Share the norms and expectations so that participants know what to expect from me as their leader and each other (Proverbs 29:18).
- 2) Keep the study centered around the Holy Bible (Psalm 119:105, Joshua 1:8).
- 3) Center actions around the fruits of the Holy Spirit because against such there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23).

Cultural Sensitivity

Jesus crossed all boundaries and modeled cultural sensitivity and respect. Making a deliberate effort to respect and welcome a diversity of people is not only an example of what Heaven looks like, but it is a Biblical principle modeled by Jesus (The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). Crossing cultural boundaries in positive ways leads to understanding.

Addressing and Disclosing Bias

Dr. Anderson calls it Gracism (Anderson, 2023). When we can nail our biases and racist views to the cross and see people as God sees them, racism erodes (Anderson, 2023; 1 John 4:20). It is so important that we stay humble before the Lord so that the Holy Spirit can reveal and correct cultural insensitivities that may surface (1 Samuel 16:7). We need to give ourselves permission to acknowledge our biases. Then, through this honesty, we can ask God to forgive us and to help us. As a believer, my goal is to love like Jesus loved and see people as Jesus sees them. When we do that biases erode and love takes its place (Matthew 22:37-39).

Transparency and Accountability

My goal is simple, to equip, empower and encourage Christian educators. The training

will be set up for the participants to take part in teaching as they learn new ways to integrate their faith into their professional practice. The Book of Daniel gives us a model of how to be in the world and maintain the integrity of the Christian Faith (Ward, D. C., 2014). The goal is to build capacity and confidence. This will be shared adult learning where participants will learn from God's Word and each other.

Site Permissions

This program will be done as follows:

- 1) Participants can sign up online through our church.
- 2) Participants have communication throughout the week in addition to the weekly Zoom meeting during the school year, with schedule breaks.
- 3) Attendance is taken at all meetings, and discussions and questions help to monitor understanding.
- 4) Participant testimonies and reflections help to monitor contextualization and understanding.
- 5) Application of knowledge will be shared which will help measure the relevance of the learning.

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