

**Faith-Based Educator Support Program**

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**Assignment #2: p. 28**

Evaluate the intervention based on established criteria.

Begin reflecting on the research process, learning outcomes, and initial observations of the project's impact.

## **Introduction**

### **Objectives and Scope**

The goal of this action research is to equip, empower, and encourage Christian educators to thrive working in public schools, colleges, and universities. This support program will help Christian educators understand their rights under the US Constitution, 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 who can feel empowered to bring transformative 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). This provides an incredible opportunity for Christians to serve God in this profession.

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 teaching 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 "Teachers' motivation levels are 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, such as visiting and praying with them. 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**

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). There is a need for Christian educators working in public schools to have training in faith-learning integration to work within secular educational systems with policies contrary to their beliefs. Christian educators are often unprepared for the challenges due to a lack of training in this area (Marker, 2020). Christian educators could benefit from specific training on how to use biblical influence and principles to reflect God's

character in their work (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 need more information about their constitutionally protected rights to practice their religion (2020) By supporting Christian teachers, it can have a profound impact in supporting Christian students to make sure their religious freedoms and beliefs are protected. Educators must 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).

Jesus Christ being the only way to salvation is in direct conflict with the curriculum and policies in the public school system (Chancey, 2020). 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 (2020). In 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 (2020). In the educational realm, Educators of all faiths must comply with policies contrary to their beliefs and may fear losing their jobs and being forced into silence. Non-Christian religions are viewed as acceptable and are being celebrated and practiced in schools throughout the United States (Brown, 2019). This action research study centers around Christian public schools 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). 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 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 recent 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). The church can continue to find ways 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**

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 before compulsion using cross-county data (2019). Due 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 from school 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).

Today American schools highlight and celebrate other religions 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 (2019). 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 (2019). Instead, the promoters used science to gain public acceptance by highlighting the mental and physical benefits of reducing stress (2019). 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 (2019).

Brown's work discusses how Christianity, by certain measures, is losing its dominance in America, and more people are sympathizing with other religions (2019). 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 emphasize 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 (Pagis, 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 "neighbor"?" (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 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 Worldviews**

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 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, and even to contributions of people of color. In question is will we tell a true and accurate story of American history, or will we simply paint the picture of the powerful? James Davidson Hunter believed the cultural wars were not just sharply divided on race, class, or political party, but rather by competing systems of moral understanding (Zimmerman, 2022). The culture wars in schools are direct. The constant assaults and legislative attacks on the teaching profession have caused experienced teachers to abandon their classrooms, thus creating a teacher shortage (2022). There is a sharp drop in the number of applications for teacher preparation programs in colleges and universities (2022). Several political leaders blamed public school teachers as they tried to gain support to privatize education (2022). This has contributed 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, 2022).

The culture conflict includes religion. In school districts across America, Islamic holidays are now on school calendars, and Islamic showcases are uplifted in school cases or on school bulletin boards (Arnold, 2023). Muslims 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 parents led the protest against the LGBT curriculum (2023). While the Christian influence is still prevalent worldwide, local school districts answer to the State and not the federal government (2023). For this reason, it is easier to get around federal laws (2023). 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, we must 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 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 is no such thing as truth. Nietzsche further explains that there is no answer to the question of “why” beyond one’s self-interest. Nietzsche 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 society lies in an attack on its moral center, which makes the society legitimate to its citizens (2023). 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 Weber, 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 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 fiction" (Blackburn, 2018, p. 15). 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 (2018). Once we have it, truth radiates benefits such as knowledge and, most notably, success in coping with the world" (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 those 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 the 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 as 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 by assembling to build a 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's 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 noble pursuits (Pollack, 2020, p. 7; Pollack, 2017). Pollack discusses the importance of establishing trust in relationships and in understanding the 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 solve problems 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 a feeling of being a part of a 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 in activities that have one feeling stimulated or amused. Lastly, noble pursuits which are the extent that one is learning, growing, or making progress toward their endeavors (2020; 2017). With the rapid decline in college applications to education programs and the increase in the number of people leaving education, it 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 conflict. Symbolic Interactionism provides a framework to analyze and devise interventions from a sociological perspective (2020). While students choose to attend colleges and universities, K-12 education is mandatory and public schools belong to everyone in the community (2020). 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 system's policies and curriculum. This conflict of core values and belief systems propels the need for support for Christian educators. Even with support, the conflict is still present.

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 its members to identify the problems and see opportunities. Functional conflict can also increase learning, and 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 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 allow 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 and leads to underutilization of resources and reduced productivity. Therefore, Christian educators need 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 their origins to the works of G. H. Mead (especially, 1934). H. Blumer, one of his best-known students, 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, 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 psychotherapists. Clinical sociology, to put it simply, is a 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 the whole group, small group, and individual virtual and in-person meetings, texts, telephone calls, and 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 to equip, empower, and encourage 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.

### **Sociological & Psychological Framework with EFC Goals: Equip, Empower, Encourage**

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 determining 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 based on the meanings that 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, 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, 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. 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 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 a 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 a 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 circumstances. 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 faith-based Christian educators support groups 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.

Chiarelli asserts that Christian sociologists are 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. Chiarelli 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 light through what faith-learning integration can look like in their workplace.

### **Premise 3: Encouraged From Shared Interpretations**

Thirdly, Christian educator meanings can constructively be modified and managed through an interpretive process as everyone encourages others as they share. Having a space that allows 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. 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 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 to work 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 principal origins of Symbolic Interactionism trace their origins to the works of G. H. Mead (especially, 1934). Mead's ideas were expanded by sociologists throughout the years. H. Blumer, one of his best-known students, 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, 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, and November 4, 11 and 16. 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 groups, 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 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 every day we must die to ourselves, 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 cannot 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) Attendance, taken at all meetings
- 2) EFC Feedback Surveys.
- 3) Research Contributions and Recommendations.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Christian educators working in the public school system are also servants of God called to the great commission to bring others to Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus teaches that we should set a good example as law-abiding citizens and “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 educators must work within the perimeters of school policies and laws. For instance, while Christian educators cannot 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. I 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. I 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 are critical in building a ministry that is sustainable as others join in this work.

### **Respect for Persons**

This action research is 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 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**

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 to need 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 being negative. The Bible guides us.

My plan to avoid having an 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 permit ourselves to acknowledge our biases. The 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.

## **Steps for Implementing Intervention**

### **Brief Overview**

The purpose of this life group ministry is to provide support for Christian educators. Participants can request to join the life group through the church's website. I am a full partner at BCC and went through the life group training and interview to be approved before getting started. Site permission was granted through Bridgeway Community Church.

### **Site Permission**

I went through a year-long process to become a full partner of Bridgeway Community Church, where the Senior Pastor and OGS Chancellor and alumni is Dr. David Anderson. I also went through training and an interview to gain approval to start a life group and become its group leader.

This year for my action research, I will implement a ten-week interactive series for Christian educators studying from the Old Testament Book of Daniel. To begin the series, I designed the first interactive lesson as an outreach. I led the first in-person Educators Fall Kickoff Breakfast, where participants engaged in the first interactive lesson in this six-week series. Participants registered for the EFC Kickoff Breakfast and/or to join the EFC life group on the church's website. To further expand this ministry, Educators for Christ worked with the Outreach Ministry for the EFC Kickoff Breakfast. Dr. David Anderson is the Founder and Senior Pastor as well as an alumni and Chancellor of Omega Graduate School.

Key EFC Ministry Components to Use Success Measurements:

1. **Attendance is taken at all meetings**, and discussions and questions help to monitor understanding. Participants must remain active to stay in the life group.

2. **Participants have communication throughout the week** in addition to the weekly Zoom meeting during the school year if they go through a group chat for encouragement and prayer.
3. **Attendance is taken at all meetings**, and discussions and questions help to monitor understanding. Participants must remain active to stay in the life group.
4. **Participant testimonies and reflections help to monitor contextualization** and understanding.
5. **Application of knowledge will be shared at meetings**, which will help measure the relevance of the learning.

The chart below indicates the date, intervention, and informal assessment.

Date	Intervention - Daniel Study Chapters 1-6 Model for Integrating Faith Into Practice For Such A Time As This	Informal Assessment
<b>EFC Meeting 1: In-Person Saturday, 9/21/24</b> Daniel 1:1-Topics: Christian education history, Leading and teaching Biblical Principles. Begin Daniel study (Ch.1)	<b>In-Person Meeting - Daniel 1:1-21</b> EFC Kickoff Breakfast (Hot) - Food, interactive activities and discussions to build relationships while learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In-Person Attendance</li> <li>● Participation in whole and small groups</li> <li>● Work Samples</li> <li>● EFC Feedback Survey</li> </ul>
<b>EFC Meeting 2: Mon., 9/23/24</b> Topics: Daniel and his friends' character, integrity and unification through prayer and faith in God. Daniel 2:1-20	<b>Virtual EFC Meeting - Daniel 2:1-20.</b> Assign Memory Verse-Galatians 5:22-23. Prayer groups established at this meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Virtual Attendance</li> <li>● Participation in Weekly Meetings</li> <li>● Participation is Small Prayer Groups &amp; Group Chat (Outside of Weekly Meetings)</li> </ul>

<p><b>EFC Meeting 3: Mon., 9/30/24</b> Topics: Daniel advocates for others. How God equips us to bring glory to Himself. How God promotes us and how we are to promote other believers.</p> <p>Discussed how God allows us to be tested and go through trials. Preparation is key. Daniel 2:24-30; Daniel 2:46-49</p>	<p><b>Virtual EFC Meeting - Daniel 2:21-30; 46-49</b> While memorizing Galatians 5:22-23, participants were ask to meditate on the first part of our memory verse: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace” Galatians 5:22a</p> <p>In this third meeting, participants read the scriptures and discussed with their assigned prayer groups before discussing with the whole group. Participants discuss and plan next in-person event as a whole group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Virtual Attendance</li> <li>● Participation in Weekly Meetings</li> <li>● Participation in Small Prayer Groups &amp; Group Chat (Outside of Weekly Meetings)</li> </ul>
<p><b>EFC Meeting 4: Mon., 10/7/24</b> Topic: Daniel’s Friend accused. How God protects us in our assignments. How the Hebrew boys took a stand understanding the cost. How God delivers and protests us according to His Will.</p> <p>Discussed how the three Hebrew boys model standing up for their right to believe in the one true and living God. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego refused to bow down to the King’s golden god and worship it.</p>	<p><b>Virtual EFC Meeting - Daniel 3:1-30</b> While memorizing Galatians 5:22-23, participants were ask to meditate on the first part of our memory verse: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness” Galatians 5:22a</p> <p>In this fourth meeting, participants read the scriptures and discuss the scriptures with the whole group.</p> <p>Reviewing the circumstances around the fiery furnace and how God brings glory to Himself before the King.</p> <p>Examining how our actions will bring glory to God and how others will know God through our actions, and examining how God continually blessed His servants (Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego) for their faithfulness and obedience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Virtual Attendance</li> <li>● Participation in Weekly Meetings</li> <li>● Participation in Small Prayer Groups &amp; Group Chat (Outside of Weekly Meetings)</li> </ul>
<p><b>EFC Meeting 5: Mon., 10/14/24</b> Topics: The King tells the story of how Daniel revealed another dream. Daniel interprets King Nebuchadnezzar’s judgment and the lessons that God is teaching mankind (v25). The King himself tells of how God restored him (36-37).</p> <p>Discussed the implications of our character as educators and leaders given glory to God. Discuss how</p>	<p><b>Virtual EFC Meeting - Daniel 4: 1-37</b> While memorizing Galatians 5:22-23, participants were ask to meditate on the first part of our memory verse: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” Galatians 5:22a</p> <p>In this fifth meeting, participants read the scriptures and discuss the scriptures with the whole group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attendance</li> <li>● Participation in Weekly Meetings</li> <li>● Participation in Small Prayer Groups &amp; Group Chat (Outside of Weekly Meetings)</li> </ul>
<p><b>EFC Meeting 6: Mon., 10/21/24</b> Topics: Belshazzar (King Nebuchadnezzar’s son) rebels in wickedness drinking from the holy cups of the temple of Jerusalem. God shows his displeasure through another miracle of the hand writing on the wall. Daniel interprets the writing by God.</p> <p>Discussed the implications of how God uses us as His ambassadors to do a work in the midst of secularism. Discussed how a sovereign God set this up for Daniel to be promoted as God judged Belshazzar.</p> <p>Note how God removed Belshazzar.</p>	<p><b>Virtual EFC Meeting - Daniel 5:1-31</b> While memorizing and applying Galatians 5:22-23, participants were ask to meditate on the first part of our memory verse: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” Galatians 5:22a</p> <p>In this sixth meeting, participants read the scriptures and discuss the scriptures with the whole group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attendance</li> <li>● Participation in Weekly Meetings</li> <li>● Participation in Small Prayer Groups &amp; Group Chat (Outside of Weekly Meetings)</li> </ul>

<p><b>EFC Meeting 7: Mon., 10/28/24</b>  Topics: Daniel's enemy became jealous of his success in Babylon and plotted to destroy him. Due to Daniel's blameless character, they had to make up sometime. They used his faithfulness in prayer. Even though they were able to trick the king into making a law against Daniel's faith, God shows his faithfulness and support for Daniel when he is thrown into the lion's den as punishment for violating the law and praying to his God.</p> <p>Discussing the implications as believers today, in the schools, Christian can follow Daniel's integrity and trust God to protect them.</p>	<p><b>Virtual EFC Meeting - Daniel 6:1-30</b>  While memorizing and applying Galatians 5:22-23, participants were ask to meditate on the first part of our memory verse: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" Galatians 5:22b</p> <p>In this seventh meeting, participants read the scriptures and discuss the scriptures with the whole group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attendance</li> <li>● Participation in Weekly Meetings</li> <li>● Participation in Small Prayer Groups &amp; Group Chat (Outside of Weekly Meetings)</li> </ul>
<p><b>EFC Meeting 8: Mon., 11/04/24</b>  <b>Topic: Wrap up of Integrating Biblical Applications and Principles Learned from Daniel</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discussed faith practice applications in the workplace, James 2:14</li> </ul>	<p><b>Virtual EFC Meeting - Daniel 1-6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discussed faith practice applications in the workplace, James 2:14</li> <li>● In this study, I reviewed biblical applications from Daniel.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attendance</li> <li>● Participation in Weekly Meetings</li> <li>● Participation in Small Prayer Groups &amp; Group Chat Outside of Weekly Meetings)</li> </ul>
<p><b>EFC Meeting 9: Mon., 11/11/24</b>  <b>Topic: Conclusion of Integrating Biblical Applications and Principles Learned from Daniel</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discussed faith practice applications in the workplace, James 2:14</li> </ul>	<p><b>Virtual EFC Meeting - Daniel 1-6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discussed faith practice applications in the workplace, James 2:14</li> <li>● In this study, I reviewed biblical applications from Daniel.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attendance</li> <li>● Participation in Weekly Meetings</li> <li>● Participation in Small Prayer Groups &amp; Group Chat (Outside of Weekly Meetings)</li> </ul>
<p><b>EFC Meeting 10: Sat., 11/16/24</b>  In-Person EFC Meeting - Restaurant Celebration/Community/Fun</p>	<p>In-person EFC Meeting  EFC lunch at a local restaurant. Food, games and discussions to build relationships and community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attendance</li> <li>● Participation in games and discussions.</li> <li>● EFC Survey</li> </ul>

### Summary of Findings

Initially, this Daniel Study was going to be a six-week study that extended to eight and then ten weeks. Once our life group begins to interact with the Word and digest its meaning and

applications to our lives, the realization of this biblical study extended the weeks and the connection of the participants. The intervention encompassed the study of Daniel, chapters one through six, and overall contributions of the EFC life group ministry to equip, encourage, and empower Christian educators and believers working in secular settings, more specifically educational institutions. We will examine three areas in measuring success, 1) Attendance, taken at all meetings; 2) EFC Feedback Surveys; and 3) Research Contributions and Recommendations.

### **Contribution of Biblical Applications of N. T. Wright's Signpost of Truth**

N. T. Wright describes “the seven themes of justice, love, spirituality, beauty, freedom, truth, and power as ‘broken signposts’ (Wright, 2020). Wright meant two things, first, the universal longings for these things are all genuine signposts to the fact that we humans are made by a genuine and wise creator (2020). Secondly, given the way things currently are, we find that each one of them is broken” (2020). “We know that justice, freedom, truth, and the rest matter very much, but we conveniently ignore them when it suits us, and we seem to be very bad at setting up systems to make them happen” (2020). Wright surmises that, “it is vital that the followers of Jesus use those signpost to frame their vocations” (2020)

The theme of the EFC intervention is Integrating Faith Into Practice For Such A Time As This. The Daniel Study was about teaching and applying biblical principles to our vocation. For this to happen, participants need to be faithful. EFC members will not reap the full benefits of being a part of the Bible studies and the overall EFC life group ministry without good attendance. The Bible teaches us to study God's Word to show ourselves approved (2nd Timothy 2:15). It is crucial to study God's Word for biblical truth (John 14:6). Attendance and



participation is critical for the desired outcome.

This data analysis chart represents the attendance for the ten-week intervention of the twenty-five EFC participants accepted into the life group for the 2024-2025 School Year:

Number of Events	Percentage of Events	Number of Participants
0	0%	2
1	10%	5
2	20%	3
3	30%	0
4	40%	1
5	50%	0
6	60%	4
7	70%	2
8	80%	7
9	90%	0
10	100%	1

The first column represents the action number of intervention meetings. The second column represents the percentages. The third column represents the number of EFC participants. In analyzing the attendance data, 44% of life group members had participation rates of 40% or less, while 56% of life group members had participation rates of 60% or higher.

#### *Recommendations for Future Considerations and Research*

One aspect of the EFC life group ministry not captured is the percentage of life group members involved in the group chat. Out of the 25 members, 17 members (68%) are involved in the EFC group chat. Not everyone who attends the meetings is involved in the group chat, and not everyone in the group chat is attending the meeting. I established the group chat to have an ongoing connection. Participants have ongoing positive communications, prayer requests, and

encouragement. Future considerations and research are needed because people in the life group have different needs according to their schedules and responsibilities. With just over half of the members consistently attending the Bible study, the question arises as to whether membership should be conditional. If members are removed for not attending the Bible study then, they don't get any of the encouraging communications that go out, including in-person information. Trying to find the right balance of communication and involvement gets tricky with different situations and needs.

As more Christian educators leave the field and even fewer come into the field, educating the masses becomes even more challenging for those who stay. "How can a nation educate its young without well-qualified, experienced teachers?" (Ravitch, 2020, p. 4). Could asking for help from outside Christian leaders be the answer? Would full-time ministry leaders and clergy have more of a presence in schools by coming to encourage, having a brief devotion and/or prayer with parishioners before school, or even during a break time help to equip, empower, and encourage more Christian educators in the harvest? More research is needed in this specific area. More consideration and research are needed to equip full-time ministry leaders and clergy to work right within the borders and institutions in America, especially public schools, which are a vital part of communities across the country. As someone who has worked at all levels in public school education for thirty years, I have only been visited once by my pastor, and that was my brother. When he visited my school, even people who were not Christians were blessed and encouraged.

### **Contributions to the Application of Sociological & Psychological Frameworks**

Using symbolic interactionism provides a sociological framework that unites different viewpoints from a positive perspective (Deegan & Hill, 2024). Symbolic interaction provides a tool to show how to bring various customs and patterns together as we build community (2024). “Symbolic interaction takes our everyday experiences and shows their underlying patterns of meaning” (2024). Blumer’s work with this sociological theory provides a structural framework to build this ministry from a Christian perspective.

Christian educators collectively studying God’s Word together will meet all six of Pollack’s basic needs; affiliation (belonging), safety, engaging activities or stimulation, and noble pursuits or growth. In particular, the EFC will help educators have a positive self-regard of their 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 a 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.

Of the fourteen members whose attendance was sixty percent or higher, seven completed the survey. The survey consisted of five multiple-choice questions and two short answers. The chart below illustrates the impact and the two short answer questions will be summarized.

	Faith Integration Study: Daniel			Community and Encouragement		
	Beginning	End	Growth	Beginning	End	Growth
A	10	80	70	20	20	0
B	20	80	60	20	20	0
C	20	90	70	20	80	60
D	40	90	50	20	80	60
E	60	100	40	20	100	80
F	60	100	40	20	100	80
G	80	100	40	20	100	80

### **Blumer's Premise 1: Equipping Through Gaining Meaning From God's Word**

The participants in the survey were at different levels in their Christian walk. The survey demonstrated that regardless of their levels, the Daniel study helped equip them as a Christian educator. Studying God's Word, and giving specific attention to how it applies to work in education helped educators to develop a Christian worldview, which will help them teach godly principles infused with the curriculum and model Christ's love. Bible studies and memory verses are specifically tailored for application by persons who work in secular educational institutions. Blumer's first premise asserts that human beings act towards things based on the meanings that things have for them (Meltzer, et al., 2020, p. 1). This makes Bible studies essential in equipping educators for this difficult work.

Christian educators collectively finding meaning through God's Word together will meet all six of Pollack's basic needs; affiliation (belonging), safety, engaging activities or stimulation, and noble pursuits or growth (Pollack, 2020, p. 7; Pollack, 2017). In particular, educators learn from the Bible to feel safe (Proverbs 21:31), have a positive self-regard (Psalm 139:14),

understand their interdependence through the body of the church (Romans 12), and find meaning through engaging activities.

### **Blumer's Premise 2: Empowering Through Belonging To A Faith-Based Community**

The EFC survey revealed something alarming. Two of the participants in the survey did not feel a sense of belonging. This may have been because they were new and had not gotten a chance to build relationships. Coming together weekly and having occasional in-person events has built a community making the educators feel a part of a supportive community. This has been evident with the friendships that have blossomed for those who have been a part of the life group for a year or more. Bridgeway is a mega church, and it can be lonely for individuals attending alone. For the people in the life group, they can be seen talking, hugging and even praying together due to the bonds that have been established. Blumer's symbolic interactionism, Blumer states that humans interpret meanings to what is happening around them through social interactions (Meltzer, et al., 2020, p. 1). This can be seen through observing the joy of the life group members when they are together.

Pollack's psychological needs being met are evident with EFC's social interactions. The sense of that community being cultivated has helped members obtain affiliation with other Christian believers, have a safe space to exercise their faith participate in engaging activities, and be vulnerable in sharing. The objective and hope is that through all of the EFC support in place, participants will feel empowered to carry out their vocational assignments.

### **Premise 3: Encouraged From Shared Interpretations**

The survey revealed that two participants who took the survey did not feel that they belong, it demonstrates that more differentiation is needed with individual members.

Finding the right balance of not being overbearing and allowing people to naturally increase their involvement is difficult. Having a safe space for Christian educators through our virtual and in-person meetings allows opportunities to share. As Christian educators relish having prayer partners, they embrace the opportunity to pray with like-minded believers. Blumer's third sociological premise can be seen as educators bond over shared meanings and interpretations. The in-person and virtual meetings and events, group chat, and prayer partners allow members a safe space to share and support each other and help with solidarity and healing. (Suzanne & Reiss, 2023). These opportunities allowing for members to connect allow for many human psychological needs to be met. Out of Pollack's six, safety, affiliations, interdependence, and engaging activities.

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