

THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY IN RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT: A REVIEW

James Alvin West
James West Ministries, Inc.
jwestministries@aol.com

Streszczenie

W artykule przedstawiono przegląd literatury dotyczącej metod badawczych i edukacyjnych z efektami poznawczymi i afektywnymi, ze szczególnym naciskiem na relacje międzyosobowe. Zwrócono uwagę również na źródła dynamiki rodziny i relacje rówieśnicze w kontekście światopoglądu chrześcijańskiego. W przeglądzie literatury uwzględniono takie obszary, jak znaczenie wzajemnych relacji, natura ludzkich relacji i wiary, problemy nastolatków, poradnictwo oraz podejście pastoralne do formacji duchowej. Odniesiono się do braków nauczania interpersonalnego, które ukształtowałyby życie nastolatków przez słowo Boże. Przegląd literatury będzie wykorzystany do tworzenia programu formacji duchowej w Centrum Chrześcijańskim „Łaska zupełna”. Projekt ten bada dostępne metody wprowadzania nastolatków w relacje z Panem i motywowania ich do życia zgodnie z planem Boga.

Słowa kluczowe: chrześcijański światopogląd, relacje, motywacja, poradnictwo, młodzież

Key words: Christian worldview, relationships, motivation, counseling, youth

1. Introduction

Since the 1970s the increasing presence of gangs, violence, poverty, poor home life, broken families, drugs, and teenage pregnancy in American society has impacted the lives and livelihood of teenagers (ALA, 2005). The quality of education in the public school system provides little positive effective change in teenagers (Moore et al., 2005). Amidst these cultural issues, Total Grace Christian Center (TGCC) in Atlanta faces the challenge of effectively reaching increasingly troubled teens for Christ. The author of this paper believes that in this cultural climate, many local churches similarly struggle to effectively reach teenagers.

With this difficulty in mind, many churches and youth organizations assume a conciliatory approach in working with young people (Smith and Denton, 2005). Many organizations meet teens where they are and work to keep them happy and

occupied rather than equip them for a higher level of being. This paper addresses the lack of interpersonal teaching available to affect the lives of teenagers with the word of God. The author believes that it is possible to bring youth to God and to help in nurturing the spiritual formation of teenagers through a teaching model that emphasizes a Trinitarian interpersonal construct.

Below is presented a review of related literature explores the available research in educational methods with cognitive and affective outcomes that emphasize interpersonal relationships. It also examines sources on family dynamics and peer relationships within a Christian context. The areas addressed in this literature review emphasize the importance of relationships, the nature of human relationships, faith and wholeness, the teenager, counseling, and the pastoral approach to facilitate spiritual formation.

2. Community and counseling

Each community's particular structure impacts an individual's growth. Leaders must understand a community's construct in order to positively influence the individuals within that community. The book *The Gospel According to Generation X: The Culture of Adolescent Faith*, for example, identifies and examines the relations within that particular generational community. The authors suggest that parents and responsible adults must "make sure the nutrients and conditions essential for spiritual growth are available to them. We plant and water, let us say, but God gives the increase." (Lewis et al., 1995, p. ix). The authors asked adolescents to describe the type of adult that they most respected. The top twenty characteristics teenagers most admire included (Lewis et al., 1995, p. 80):

1. Accepts the teen and offers support.
2. Makes the teen feel special and valuable.
3. Can be a friend without being too much of a "buddy."
4. Demonstrates patience even when the teen is difficult.
5. Is sensitive to the teen's emotions and never devalues his or her feelings.
6. Is willing to listen before giving advice.
7. Demonstrates understanding towards the teen.
8. Bright; seems to have thought through the tough questions about God and can answer the teen's questions.
9. Not afraid to touch the teen and tell the teen that he/she cares.
10. Treats the teen with dignity.
11. Makes the teen feel that his or her ideas are valuable.
12. Is not embarrassed to talk about his/her own relationship with God.
13. Is noticeably confident without being arrogant.
14. Is willing to share how God has been in his/her life.
15. Is consistent; makes the teen feel he/she will always be there.
16. Really seems to care about what the teen thinks and encourages the teen to make up his or her own mind.

17. Talks to the teen at his or her level without talking down or belittling the teen.

18. Is willing to put the teen first; is generous and giving.

19. Is honest and able to share his/her own struggles with the teen.

20. Makes the teen think that there is no such thing as a stupid question.

In the context of community, Les Christlie helps readers cope with present issues and prevent future problems from occurring. He writes: “using the ‘D’ word with your students doesn’t mean you have to come down hard on them all the time. It’s not an excuse to take out your frustrations on disruptive class members.” (1994, p. 7). “Discipline is a tool to keep your group situations from disintegrating into chaos and creating confusion that is just as upsetting to students as it is to leaders. Positive discipline provides for a secure learning environment – one that group members will want to return to.”¹ Christlie’s work places the teenager’s experience within the community context.

Even in a non-discriminatory community, “Youth ministry has been predominantly a masculine profession.” (Elliot and Olson, 1995, p. 15-16). This statement of fact concerning men indicates a need to get not only a female perspective but balanced input. In their book, Elliot and Olson examine the issues regarding women ministering to teenagers. These editors explore the value of the presence and ministry of women within God’s community. Scripture states:

And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my spirit, and they shall prophesy (Acts 2:17-18).

God empowers individuals to support and benefit the community. Professional counseling, administered with the greatest care, can help individuals achieve wholeness and achieve their God-given potential. Howard Clinebell’s *Counseling for Spiritually Empowered Wholeness* illustrates seven methods of self-renewal and encouraging others’ potential on the journey called “growing.” “Dr. Clinebell does not minimize nor trivialize individual pathology or social evil. Still, he is less concerned with naming and blaming the origins of the vast growth-limiting structures, or even heralding one cause over another, than he is in pointing out the directions where healing, growth, and revitalization can take place.” (Clinebell, 1979). This includes working to challenge and change the institutions and organizations within the community that diminish personhood and stifle community growth as a whole. Clinebell calls on the growth-oriented counselor or therapist to understand the seven interdependent dimensions within which growth can occur. The seven interdependent dimensions include (Clinebell, 1979, p. 3-18):

¹ Christlie is quick to remind adults, youth leaders, and ministers alike that while one experiences the dynamics of groups, discipline is yet the key to keeping those dynamics in focus. Without proper structure and or guidelines the growth and strength of the relationship(s) is not there.

1. Inner Growth, Enlivening One's Mind: The first dimension of human growth involves developing the many-faceted personality resources including an individual's intellectual capacities.

2. Inner Growth, Revitalizing One's Body: The second dimension of growth involves revitalizing one's body by increasing awareness and learning to enjoy mind-body wholeness.

3. Renewing Relationships: The third major dimension of growth involves strengthening and enriching intimate relationships. "Two persons who are growing in mind-body aliveness are able to relate in ways that nurture their mutual growth as well as their love."

4. Growth in Relating to the Biosphere: The fourth dimension of growth is in ecological awareness and caring. This involves deepening and enriching relationships with the biosphere, the total natural environment upon which human beings depend for their quality of life and survival. Personal potentializing is deeply constricted by the alienation from nature.

5. Growth in Work and Play Life: The fifth dimension of growth focuses on the interrelated aspects of work and play.

6. Growth in Relation to Organizations and Institutions: The fifth dimension of growth involves enhancing relations with and helping to improve those organizations and institutions that can sustain growth. Growing individuals and relationships can only flourish in a community and society whose groups and institutions support growth.

7. Spiritual Growth: The seventh dimension of personal growth intersects the other six dimensions. Spiritual growth is at the heart of all human growth because it has to do with those things that most clearly define an individual as distinctively human. Spiritual growth aims at the enhancement of realistic hope, meanings, values, inner freedom, faith systems, peak experiences, and a relationship with God.

3. Important Views of Ethics in Relationships

William Schweiker (1995) argues that an approach towards ethics based upon responsibility contributes to contemporary debates on the subject. He also believes that Christian ethics has a distinctive and valuable ontological contribution to make to this approach. He writes:

For Christians genuine moral integrity is an indirect consequence of seeking to respect and enhance the integrity of all life before God... for Christians ultimate power is God's alone and faith in this God provides a confidence to live and act amid the fragmentations of life and beyond a culture of personal fulfillment and authenticity. Christian faith offers a vision of "goodness shining through the fragmentariness and travail of existence, the awareness that being as being is good." (Schweiker, 1995, p. 106).

Schweiker's work explores the area of "Moral values and the imperative of responsibility" in community formation. Basic to the formulation of moral meaning of Christian faith in terms of the theory of value and the principle of choice of an integrated ethics of responsibility "is the idea of moral integrity."²

James W. Fowler concludes that faith is a fundamental interpersonal category:

Faith, rather than belief or religion, is the most fundamental category in the human quest for relation to transcendence. Faith, it appears, is generic, a universal feature of human living, recognizably similar everywhere despite the remarkable variety of forms and contents of religious practice and belief.

Each of the major religious traditions studied speaks about faith in ways that make the same phenomenon visible. In each and all, faith involves an alignment of the will, a resting of the heart, in accordance with a vision of transcendent value and power, one's ultimate concern.

Faith, classically understood, is not a separate dimension of life, a compartmentalized specialty. Faith is an orientation of the total person, giving purpose and goal to one's hopes and strivings, thoughts and actions. The unity and recognizability of faith support the struggle to maintain and develop a theory of religious relativity in which the religions, and the faith they evoke and shape, are seen as relative apprehensions of humanity's relationship to the universal. This represents a rejection of faith in "relativism," and serves a commitment to press the question of truth in the living and in the study of faith (Fowler, 1981, p. 69).

Fowler argues for reflective personal engagement as a developmental factor in identity-formation:

I suspect that this discussion of adolescence from our several points of view may prove particularly valuable, in that it will show how significant a part cognitive development plays in the crises of adolescence and their resolutions. Earlier in this century authorities on adolescence wrote to the point of trivialization about the emotional upsets of puberty. They ran the risk of overemphasizing the impact of adolescent sexuality and its accompanying affective disequilibrium. It is important to recognize that while the transition from the patterns of thought that ripen in late childhood to those of adolescence does bring disequilibrium and disruption, the emerging new cognitive structures provide markedly increased capacity, flexibility and stability. I shall try to show, the formation of personality, as

² The difference that distinguishes individuals from one another is the nature of their moral value. It is definitely the drawing line between persons of value and integrating living distinguishes individuals from one another. It is of grave importance for one to live with the highest of moral value.

a matter of reflective personal engagement, only emerges with the development of formal operational thinking (Ibidem).

Francis Frellick discusses counseling teenagers toward interdependence within an interpersonal context. Frellick raises questions and concern about the church's involvement in reaching the "hard-to-reach" and concludes: "[W]e have reminded ourselves that considerable language study is a must for meaningful communication with hard-to-reach young people. We've been cautioned not to look for early 'results,' and not to be too surprised if our first rewards are sore toes and barked shins." (Frellick, 1965, p. 129-136). He then asserts that working with individual teens takes time and that spiritual growth is "caught" rather than "taught." He writes:

If we launch our efforts with great anticipations of self improvement we are bound to begin looking almost from the first for "results" or at least side benefits in ourselves. ... When a pastor encourages people to undertake ministries with hard-to-reach persons he ought to be aware of the great promise in that pursuit for the spiritual growth of those "reachers."... [Y]ou who are a pastor will be the key to these discoveries and the enlarged ministries toward which they point. Yours will be the privilege of leading people into the laboratories of your church (Ibidem).

Frellick uses a catchy phrase in his teaching but the message is very clear. That which one seeks to accomplish in working with youth is experienced over time and is not something that can be realized as a result of simply sharing information. One could say that if it's worthwhile having, it's worthwhile working for or toward. If one thinks about the time it took to grow into maturity then one would see the importance of giving the teen the same span of time to grow.

4. The Role of Pastoral and Church Concerns

In *Pastoral Care with Adolescents in Crisis*, G. Wade Rowatt Jr. suggests that the interpersonal dimension is a critical factor in teens' pastoral care. Rowatt uses Paul's encounter with Eutychus (Acts 20:7-12) to demonstrate a model for religious care of an adolescent in crisis. Eutychus nonverbally communicates a lack of appreciation for traditional methods of adult education by falling asleep during the lecture. The bystanders do little to encourage Eutychus; in fact, they pronounce him dead, and presumably return to Paul. So Paul turns from his preaching, attends to the young man, and embraces him. Then, Paul turns to the community to comfort them about the young man's condition. Paul stopped preaching, began a meal, and the community talked until the sun rose. Thus, the community celebrates the new life in Eutychus (Rowatt, 1989, p. 46).

Rowatt argues that within an interpersonal context of care giving, "principles provide a sense of direction in the maze of multifaceted problems that surround

troubled adolescents. Furthermore, sound pastoral care principles help maintain the unique identity and role of the pastoral caregiver as he or she interacts with other members of the therapeutic team.”³ These unique principles can help maintain an overview and focus the long-range goals on the ongoing care of an adolescent. In order to be effectively involved in the ministry of intervention and care of teens, Rowatt makes it very clear that “you who reach out to them must have an extra capacity to love them.” (Ibidem, p. 58). Because the youth that one seeks to reach in ministry are so special, unique, and so sensitive that youth leaders, pastors, parents must be able to love them through their growth pain and offer the type of patience that strengthens them.

Ernest Marvin (1967) provides an account of a church group attempting to provide a meeting place for a diverse group of young people and to give them a contact with the church community. The book details the group’s frustrations in reaching alienated youth. Although the book focuses a single church’s experience, the author believes many contemporary churches face the same issues.

John Gooch highlights the Wesleyan approach to the spiritual formation of teenagers through an interpersonal context. The United Methodist Church is deeply rooted in the traditions and teachings of John Wesley and therefore this work depends heavily on “Wesley’s insistence on sanctification as a key element in salvation” (Gooch, 2005, p. 99) which emphasizes that continued growth in God’s love and a love for one another enables effective ministry, especially towards the teenager. “This book is based on the premise that maturing in faith is the desired result you want from your youth ministry.” (Ibidem, p. 7). He therefore suggests: “A results-oriented approach helps us set priorities. If we aim to help youth mature in faith, we begin thinking about values, knowledge, and experiences that will help us achieve that result. This approach helps us think clearly about other issues.” (Ibidem, p. 8). Gooch suggests a ministerial approach in a Bible study format that enhances youth ministry. Gooch’s method reflects the efforts of the United Methodist Church, but it is too general for serious bible study. Gooch’s “Ten Commandments for in-Depth Bible Study” include (Ibidem, p. 70-72):

1. Thou shalt learn something.
2. Thou shalt know the Bible stories.
3. Thou shalt have challenging requirements and spiritual discipline.
4. Thou shalt deal with the broad framework of the Scripture.
5. Thou shalt not dodge the tough issues.
6. Thou shalt engage thy youth in critical thinking.
7. Thou shalt create an atmosphere of Christian community.
8. Thou shalt create an atmosphere in which Bible study can change lives.
9. Thou shalt develop experiential and fun learning activities.
10. Thou shalt bear in mind that youth learn in different ways.

Gooch offers an alternative to traditional Sunday school and presents digestible means by teenagers can be reached.

³ Those principles represent Relationship, Understanding, Flexibility, Confidentiality, Sexual Transference, Developmental Stages, Faith Development, and Environmental Control.

Dewey M. Bertolini's *Back to the Heart of Youth Work* includes the author's research of written material, interviews, surveys, travel, and personal observations. He expresses a strong desire to get back to the "heart of the matter" in dealing with youth ministry. He suggests leaders of youth should maintain a heart for "knowing God," "pleasing God," "Communicating Truth," "Creative Communication," "Understanding the Flock," "Cultural Penetration," "Personal Touch," "Parents," "Volunteer Staff," "the Senior Pastor," "Excellence in Activity Planning," "the Critic," and "Personal Priorities." (Bertolini, 1994, p. 13-15). After all is said and done what matters the most are the key issues of dealing with youth. Putting order, direction, and focus back into the life of those who have been led astray by "every wind and doctrine." It seems as though "youth" have been targeted for destruction through all kinds of measures but those things that matter the most should be the bases of focus and concentration.

Bertolini in detail discusses the various subject matter in which those working with youth should be well versed. It is imperative that the adult influence and or Youth Workers be properly prepared to perform ministry among the youth. Bertolini emphasizes the importance of knowing God in the heart, and that a staff will be very effective in youth ministry when they have and maintain a "central heart" for God. He identifies three qualities one must possess to know God in one's heart including: the constant nourishment of the Words of God (1 Tim. 4:6); relentlessly avoiding error (1 Tim. 4:7a), and discipline for the purpose of Godliness (1 Tim. 4:7b-9) (Ibidem, p. 19-22).

Tony Campolo (1993) points out that from a sociological perspective, teaching and training Youth Workers in the church is interconnective and interpersonal. His methodology includes three parts. First, Campolo uses sociological theories and discoveries to explain teenagers' behavior and suggests methods to help them become good Christians. Second, Campolo suggests sociological insights that can help youth workers understand their own role within the ecclesiastical system. Third, he believes that sociology can assist youth workers in understanding their world and enable them to cope with the realities of contemporary life and culture (Campolo, 1993, p. 11-12).

Donald Capps proposes an inter-connective method by which one "looks at the same story from a different book binding." (Capps, 1990, p. 1-6). Capps compares reframing to relabeling. He writes: "The reframing method is more effective than any of the more traditional methods that are already available to the parish pastor." (Ibidem, p. 5). Capps applies three images identified by Austin V. Campbell: the shepherd, the wounded healer, and the wise fool, as "legitimate ways of being a pastoral care giver." All three represent legitimate ways of effecting pastoral care as a reframer. Capps identifies Jesus' care giving style as an example of reframing. He writes:

[O]ften, the ministry of Jesus is misused in pastoral care to simplify, to misdirect, or to effect the wrong-order change. Our bad experiences with efforts to apply Jesus' ministry to contemporary situations makes one cautious about proposing still another such application. Yet, I would

argue that Jesus' ministry focused on second-order change, especially in situations where first-order change techniques had already been applied, but to no avail (Ibidem, p. 55).

Paul Tripp (2002) examines community and suggests that for a community to function properly, it must function as "instruments in God's hands." Ministry workers are encouraged to guide those who receive ministry in the same like manner in which they are held in the hands of God. The book demonstrates how "God uses people, who are themselves in need of change, as instruments of the same kind of change in others." (Tripp, 2002, p. xi). Tripp takes an approach that is learning by example. He suggests that the teacher/leader adopt the attitude that they are merely tools in the hand of God. Those things that the Lord purposes in one's heart to mold and shape are the very elements that one must employ to shape and mold the youth to whom they minister. Tripp writes:

God's plan is that through the faithful ministry of every part, the whole body will grow to full maturity in Christ. The leaders of his church have been gifted, positioned, and appointed to train and mobilize the people of God. ... [W]hen God calls you to himself, he also calls you to be a servant, an instrument in his redeeming hands. All of his children are called into ministry, and each of them needs the daily intervention this ministry provides... [I]f you followed the Lord for a thousand years, you would still need the ministry of the body of Christ as much as you did the day you first believed (Ibidem, p. xi).

Edward Wimberly (2003) describes God's community from an African-American perspective. Through his writing Wimberly seeks to reclaim the lost dignity of that community by addressing issues of "sacred identity formation." Wimberly writes: "from an African American faith perspective, sacred identity formation forms its inceptions is something that God does partnering with us... sacred identity formation is a process of internalizing God conversation, and our faith communities play vital roles in this process." (Wimberly, 2003, p. 53-64). Wimberly looks to God's grace at work in human lives for restoration of spiritual, emotional, and relational health.

Thomas Hart (1980) explores the importance of active listening in ministry. He writes, "there is probably no service we can render other persons quite as great or important as to be listener and receiver to them in those moments when they need to open their hearts and tell someone their story." (Hart, 1980, p. 1). As one concentrates and focuses on all of the various tactics that one uses to 'get them into shape,' one must not forget the importance of 'listening to them.' "They won't care about what one says, unless they know and believe that one cares about them". A sense of caring is the key.

Listening is a vital interpersonal skill set within a community. Hart writes:

God is not present to us only when we pray, nor is spiritual growth confined to such times. He is present always, the relationship to him is constant, and growth is possible anytime. There is no area of human life in which God is uninterested, no corner of it to which he is not present, and therefore no aspect of life which would be foreign or inappropriate matter in a conversation with a spiritual director (Ibidem, p. 27-28).

The author encourages leaders to listen as part of their ministry, and suggests that a concerned person does not have to be a “mystic, a theologian, or a professional counselor” to minister the love of God in a counseling capacity, but “have a basic grasp of the shape of the Christian life and the principles of human interaction.” (Ibidem, p. 3). Although Hart does not directly address the subject of relationships, he suggests ways to minister to hurting people more effectively in relationship.

5. Developing the Community

James Fowler addresses the topic of relationships and becoming an adult in *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian* (Fowler, 2000). He contends that becoming an adult is growing up or into a Christian. This book offers perspectives on stages of faith and selfhood and proposes ways communities of shared faith can support and nurture individuals as they form in spirit and faith. Fowler explores what it means to find and claim vocation larger than one’s job or occupation and deeper than a profession or life’s work. Fowler defines vocation as finding a purpose for one’s life that is part of the purposes of God. One’s vocation should be one seemingly far out of reach yet attainable with some consertive effort. What one does with their lives should be of grave importance so that once obtained, it will be of meaningful value.

Fowler (2000, p. 37-60) suggests ways to comprehend the “seasons of your life and the shaping and reshaping of your beliefs and values” and addresses five central paradoxes of faith:

1. How individuals can be deeply committed in faith and thus radically free.
2. How believers can be grounded in a faith tradition and its practices and thus open to in-depth relationships with other paths or ways.
3. How finding a centering commitment to God deepens, rather than narrows, the believer’s appreciation and love for the mysteries of creation.
4. How faith grounds and guides an individual’s service of justice.
5. How faith deepens one’s love for the infinite variety of patterns of human and natural life.

In their work, Todd Hall and Mark McMinn (2003) assert that the Christian approach to life takes precedence over matters of psychology. They write: “Integrating psychology and theology comes with various intellectual challenges, including the challenge of valuing various ways of knowing... Christian theology is bounded by central doctrines, forged over centuries of dialog and based on the

authority of a sacred text.” The authors question the validity of traditional psychology and suggest:

[N]o longer can we presume that the only common ground for integration is logic, propositions, and rationality. Now we must grapple with the human narrative, the experiential content of life... [A] spirituality that is bounded by historic Christian theology defies a postmodern pluralism and asserts truth claims about the nature of God, normative notions of human development and maturity, and the methods involved in the search for God and spiritual growth (Hall and McMinn, 2003).

One must not get so modern, technical, or logical in the approach to working with others, particularly the youth. What seems to really matter the most are the true heart to heart experiences of being with and knowing people. If one would take a survey of a humanities walk with the Lord one will have an awesome picture of what can really best work. It seems that all of the findings from research and experimentation are not as practically effective as the experience of simply walking with the Lord.

Hall and McMinn believe that Christian spirituality can contribute to both the evangelical integration dialogue and to the broader discussion of spirituality and religion because of its insight into the nature of God, human development and maturity, and the means for spiritual change.

Donald Chinula (1997) explores concepts of identity formation within an oppressive society. He writes:

Nobody is a nobody. Everybody is a somebody. Somebodiness is never earned or conferred. It is innate. It is a right. It is divine. It is ontological. My somebodiness derives from God and thrives on your somebodiness. The two are interdependent and mutually inclusive. My nobodiness disparages and degrades your somebodiness. You cannot rightfully claim to be somebody when you cause or tolerate my nobodiness (Chinula, 1997, p. xiv).

Chinula’s work reflects the fact that “King’s witness sought to heal the conflicts of an age that felt discomfited by centuries of wrongs against the disinherited but that felt powerless to change what it deplored. King’s witness sought to heal the anguish of those individuals who truly love justice and peace but felt trapped in a ravenous system and were unable to oppose it from within.” (Ibidem, p. xx). The aim of Chinula’s work is “to broaden and inform the paradigm for pastoral caregiving as that movement seeks to respond to the needs of the oppressed in any context, especially where Christianity is practiced. In this sense, it is a cross-cultural, intercultural, and transcultural proposal.” (Ibidem, p. xxi).

In *Building Up Zion’s Walls* Perkins and Elster explore the family unit. “The Lord values family so much that He created that institution before all others.” (Perkins, 1999, p. 47). While the book focuses on the African American family, its

ideas can also be applied to non-black families. In the foreword to the book Jawanza Kunjufu writes:

We need to put on the full armor of God—His word. That means the African American family and any ministry addressing its needs must have in hand the only weapon that can battle the schemes of Satan to destroy both family and ministry. The Word of God is both the best offense and the best defense for the black family (Perkins, 1999).

In terms of the parent-teen relationship, Perkins writes:

[R]aising a teenager is the only point in our cycle as parents when the changes in our lives correspond to the changes in the lives of our children... [Parents] of teenagers [are encouraged] to admit that we do not have all of the answers and all of the skills and to call upon the services of ministers and counselors. Doing so will also encourage our teens to recognize that there are other people they can talk to who might help them through a difficult period in their development (Perkins, 1999).

A note to parents concerning the adage that “it takes a village to raise a child” is worth addressing. As Scripture would have it, the Lord has gifted the Church with people of purpose and talent. The holy community is equipped to add to and enhance the life of children. Parents are asked to consider the value of what can be added through interface with those like the preacher/pastor/youth worker. As the community is so powerful and presence by the Lord more people interactively can and will enhance the lives of our youth.

Interestingly, J. Durlack’s landmark work examined forty-six studies that compared the effectiveness of paraprofessionals, helpers (lay helpers, spiritual friends) to professionals and concluded that lay helpers equaled or surpassed the effectiveness of the professional therapists due to the interpersonal domain (Durlack, 1979, p. 80-92). Hattie, Sharpley, and Rogers (1984) tried to refute those findings by combining the results of the forty-six studies, but their data ended up supporting Durlack’s conclusions. Lay helper’s clients consistently achieved more positive outcomes than those of professional educated and experienced counselors.

The Hattie study was re-analyzed by Berman and Norton (1985) and the results indicated that lay counselors were equally as effective as the professionals in promoting positive change. They claimed that no research currently supports the notion that professional knowledge, training, and experience improved therapist effectiveness. Although Herman (1993) reviewed these studies and, likewise, concluded that professional training was not the primary means of developing competence in people helping, he insisted that the interpersonal domain was the key effectiveness factor. Maturity, love, genuine concern, empathy, humility, and vulnerability were the greatest factors leading to counseling competence.

The bottom line always is determined by what is the primary objective of any counselor, professional or lay person. Regardless of training and the

understanding that one is to do no harm and value the client, invariably one is subjective in discerning the objectives through one's biases as much as through their training and experience. None are sinless, and it is sin that produces counter transference and provides blinders and weakness to truly valuing a client and empathetically walking in his or her shoes. That may be why soul care is not objectively taught, it is relationally lived in community. Both the pastor/counselor has as much to learn and grow in the area of soul care as the client/congregant.

The scientific community offers a perspective that is worth noting. Acton's research consistently supports the interpersonal domain as critical for person formation (Acton and Revelle, 2007). In his opinion, its empirical relationships with broader personality taxonomies, and with more specific personality variables complement the interpersonal circle. His conclusions are a result of the study of the mind and the verification provided by the study. He suggests that the "facts speak for themselves". Based on the data and testing procedures demonstrating consistency in the findings, he concludes that the interpersonal dimension is essential for successfully defining and living out life.

6. Conclusions

Up to this point the author has described the problem, the setting, and the background that enables to facilitate the understanding of teenagers at Total Grace Christian Center and applying a perichoretic model of being in community. Based on the literature it was emphasized that a community's construct has a potential of positively influence the individuals within that community. Within an interpersonal context of care giving, pastoral care principles help maintain an overview and focus the long-range goals on the ongoing care of an adolescent. In order to be effectively involved in the ministry of intervention and care of teens, one who reach out to them must have an extra capacity to love them. Important researches indicate that skills and knowledge don't play key role in counseling. What seems to really matter the most are the true heart to heart experiences of being with and knowing people.

The review of literature will be applied to the design of a spirit-formation curriculum for youth at Total Grace Christian Center. This project examines the available methods that guide teenagers into relationships with the Lord and motivate them to live ordered lives designed by God.

The Christian community appears to struggle as it strives to adequately prepare teenagers to lead Christ-like lives. Christian education, though filled with sound doctrine and modern relevance, seems to lack the interpersonal dimension that can help teenagers grow in healthy and supportive Christian communities. Locating material that strengthens the spiritual formation of teenagers is the primary focus of this project.

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Abstract

This paper presents a review of the literature aimed on exploration of the available research in educational methods with cognitive and affective outcomes that emphasize interpersonal relationships. It also examines sources on family dynamics and peer relationships within a Christian context. The areas addressed in this literature review emphasize the importance of relationships, the nature of human relationships, faith and wholeness, the teenager, counseling, and the pastoral approach to facilitate spiritual formation. It addresses the lack of interpersonal teaching available to affect the lives of teenagers with the word of God. The review of literature will be applied to the design of a spirit-formation curriculum for youth at Total Grace Christian Center. This project examines the available methods that guide teenagers into relationships with the Lord and motivate them to live ordered lives designed by God.

Nota o autorze:

Dr. James West is a member of Total Grace Christian Center (TGCC) and the co-director/founder of West Ministries International (<http://www.westministries.org>). Minister of the gospel, educator, armor bearer professional, counselor & advisor,

security consultant, personal security and protection personnel, corporate security
crime prevention officer, leadership developer.