This qualitative research study examines the relationship of Christian spirituality in the context of small groups as demonstrated in the pericope Acts 6. The paper seeks to address the exegetical gap in the research that answers the research question: Do the Scriptures provide exegetical support that Christian spirituality relates to diverse work team’s effectiveness in achieving the organization’s desired outcome? The research method uses Patton’s (2002) hermeneutical theoretical approach and Robbins’ (1996) socio-rhetorical criticism of the ideological texture of the sacred Christian text of Acts 6:1-7 NKJV. The discussion will include research analysis and implications for Christian spirituality in the context of small groups with recommendations for potential future qualitative research.

As many organizations across various industry sectors are utilizing teams and collaborative work, scholarly research is placing significant focus on specific strategies that explain complex group processes that are associated with more effective outcomes (Katz-Narvon & Eys, 2005; Katz-Narvon & Eys, 2005; Li, 2007; Staples & Webster, 2007). There has been a resurgence of interest in small group personality and social composition and their impact on group effectiveness (Li, 2007; Staples & Webster, 2007). In addition, as important organizational decisions need to be made, cross-functional work teams and project teams are being relied on to stimulate and enhance decision making processes, solve problems, and foster innovation. When the individuals comprising these groups differ in respect to knowledge, skill, expertise, and the information they bring to these processes they have the potential to significantly enhance performance outcomes (Greer, Jehn & Mannix; 2008; Homan et al., 2007; Martins et al., 2013).

Interest in spirituality in the workplace and impact on performance is growing as well, however, there is a significant lack of empirical data to support the construct and its impacts until the last few years (Pawar, 2009; Rego & e Cunha, 2008). The instability that characterizes the modern organization is often caused by downsizing, rightsizing, reorganization, and new technology creates a distrust of organizations in general (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Well & Kipnis, 2001). The distrust in organizations causes employees to see themselves as a commodity that may lead to fear, alienation, and the follower seeking a deeper meaning in life and the distrust can negatively impact performance outcomes (English, 2013; Gandolfi, 2009; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz,
Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson (2003) posit that workplace spirituality contributes to a sense of stability for the employee, a greater sense of personal growth, and service to others that can impact small group and organizational effectiveness. In addition, there is a reduced concern regarding followers finding material satisfaction and an increase in the number of people from Western cultures that value self-actualization, resulting in a quest for spirituality over material security (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Poole, 2009; Sirgy, Reilly, Wu & Efraty, 2008). The quest for spirituality is creating an increased acceptance and interest among Western cultures in Eastern religion and philosophy, as well as, a general cultural shift towards diversity and the acceptance of other cultures that has not resulted in a revival of Christian spirituality based on the Scriptures (Benefiel, 2013; Benefiel & Fry, 2014; Marques, 2010; Sheng & Chen, 2012).

Although there is empirical research to support the correlation between spirituality in general and small group effectiveness, there is a gap in qualitative exegetical research that relates Christian spirituality to small group effectiveness in achieving desired organizational outcomes (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Pawar, 2009; Poole, 2009). This study addresses that gap by answering the research question: Do the Scriptures provide exegetical support for the proposition that Christian spirituality relates to diverse work team’s effectiveness in achieving the organization’s desired outcome? The theories and concepts of workplace spirituality, small group theory, group leadership, and diversity theory are examined in the literature review to provide the quantitative background and support to connect Christian spirituality to small group effectiveness and achieving desired outcomes. By using appropriate exegetical research methods the study produce the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability that adds to the scholarly discourse on the link between small group theory, Christian spirituality and the impact on performance outcomes (Patton, 2002). The qualitative research design uses Robbins’ (1996) socio-rhetorical method. Although there are more general exegetical methods that can validate the credibility and dependability of the qualitative results of the research, for the purpose of this study the ideological texture method of socio-rhetorical criticism (data collection) will be utilized to examine the pericope of Acts 6:1-6 NKJV. The Scriptural analysis or data analysis of the pericope will substantiate the interaction with recognized and accepted small group constructs that are applicable in both religious and secular settings (transferability). The results will be discussed that provide exegetical support that can be re-produced into the current contexts that require a global perspective Christian perspective (confirmability). The discussion will include implications for Christian praxis (credibility) and recommendations for future qualitative research.
Overview

There is empirical research to validate the factors that impact group effectiveness and performance, focusing on the mediating effects of numerous variables that are able to differentiate between effective decision-making and ineffective decision making (de Wit et al., 2012; Joshi & Rohi, 2009; Katz-Navon & Erez, 2005; Li, 2007). As many organizations across various industry sectors are using teams and collaborative work, scholarly research is placing significant focus on specific strategies that explain complex group processes that are associated with more effective outcomes (Katz-Narvon & Eys, 2005; Li, 2007; Staples & Webster, 2007). In the last few years, organizations are increasingly utilizing self-managed teams for organizational problem solving and for decision-making processes fueling the need for empirical research to support practitioners (Haas, 2010; Martins, et al., 2013; Mathieu et al., 2008).

Homan et al. (2007) posit that diversity in work teams is extremely complex and that traditional assumptions, such as diversity of race and gender impact work team performance, are not supported by empirical research, except to the extent that there are mediating variables that can positively or negatively impact the work teams performance (Abdel-Monem et al., 2010; Ellis, Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 2006; Halfhill, et al., 2005; Martins et al., 2013). There are studies that proffer empirical research examining various aspects of expertise and expertness diversity with the focus on the mediated effects of performance or the utilization of dependent variables other than performance (de Wit, Greer & Jehn, 2012; Joshi & Roh, 2009; Martins et al., 2013). Research on these forms, without mediators, has produced inconsistent results, highlighting the need for further research in potential moderators and contingency factors (de Wit, Greer & Jehn, 2012; Joshi & Roh, 2009; Martins et al., 2013). Although the meta-analyses reviewed do not provide consensus regarding the small group diversity and resulting performance effects that make it difficult to support the research question addressed in this paper, there is empirical support that diversity has both positive and negative impacts on performance depending on the mediating variables (de Wit, Greer & Jehn, 2012; Joshi & Roh, 2009; Martins et al., 2013). The meta-analyses do provide empirical support and enable practitioners’ ability to understand the moderating variables that positively or negatively impact work team effectiveness. In addition to field research, there are laboratory studies regarding mediating variables and their affects (Katz-Navon & Erez, 2005; Greer et al., 2008; Laron, 2007). There is a need for further research in organizational settings analyzing the mediating variables that cross industries and address diversity and its impacts on work team performance in regional and global settings. Although there is quantitative research regarding workplace spirituality as it relates to leader/follower effectiveness in the performance outcomes, there is a gap in qualitative exegetical research to support the Biblical basis for the role of Christian spirituality and the relationship between spirituality and small group effectiveness (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Pawar, 2009; Poole, It should; and not, 2009).
Literature Review

In order to examine Christian spirituality in the context of effectiveness in small groups utilizing the ideological texture of the pericope, a literature review exploring the formative theories that are the foundational basis for this study, must come first and foremost, from an understanding that is Christian and scriptural, and will be applicable in both secular and religious spheres (Bekker, 2005; Fedler, 2006; Hanna, 2006; Rossouw, 1994; Tuppurainen, 2012). As mentioned, this qualitative analysis of the pericope addresses the exegetical gap that relates to Christian spirituality specifically to small group effectiveness in achieving desired organizational outcomes (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Pawar, 2009; & Poole, 2009). There is quantitative research, however, to support the link between workplace spirituality, diversity, small group and group leadership constructs and small group outcomes (Benefiel, 2013; Benefiel & Fry, 2014; Marques, 2010; Sheng & Chen, 2012). The following section is a review of these four theories that provide quantitative exegetical support for the relationship between spirituality and small group effectiveness that is foundational to a fuller understanding of the text and its importance to this study.

Spirituality in the Workplace

There has been a loss of Christian spirituality in the culture and in secular organizations (Bekker, 2005) that makes understanding the construct of workplace spirituality in the light of Biblical values critical to scholarly discourse and to this study (Fry & Cohen, 2009; Fry, Matherly & Ouimet, 2010; Rossouw, 1994). Interest in spirituality in the workplace and impact on performance is growing, however, there has not been significant empirical data among scholars to support the construct and its impacts until the last few years (Pawar, 2009; Rego & e Cunha, 2008). The rise in the interest in the phenomena is due to several changes in the organizational environment. First, even before the economic crises of 2008, employee downsizing caused increased concerns for employee workloads, real and self-imposed psychological pressures to work extended work weeks, ongoing fear of job loss in the next round of downsizing, concerns that it is difficult to find comparable jobs should employees be forced out of the organization, and the potential for future underemployment due to another downsizing (Dooley & Catalano, 2003; Gandolfi, 2009; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). The instability in many work environments caused by downsizing, rightsizing, reorganization, and new technology creates a distrust of organizations in general (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Wells & Kipnis, 2001). The distrust in organizations causes employees to see themselves as a commodity that may lead to fear, alienation, and the employee seeking a deeper meaning in life and the distrust can negatively impact performance outcomes (English, 2013; Gandolfi, 2009; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). Milliman, Czaplewski & Ferguson (2003) proffer that workplace spirituality contributes to sense of stability for
the employee, a greater sense of personal growth and service to others that can impact small group and organizational effectiveness.

Second, there is a global social consciousness in the business culture that is producing a sense of corporate social responsibility that will impact group effectiveness (Fry & Cohen, 2009; Pawar, 2009; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). There is a reduced concern regarding followers finding material satisfaction and the increasing number of people in Western cultures that value self-actualization that results in a quest for spirituality over material security (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Poole, 2009; Sirgy, Reilly, Wu & Efraty 2008). The quest for spirituality does not necessarily mean a revival of Christian spirituality based on the Scriptures, perhaps because there is an increase in acceptance and interest among Western cultures in Eastern religion and philosophy, as well as general cultural shift towards diversity and the acceptance of other cultures (Benefiel, 2013; Benefiel & Fry, 2014; Marques, 2010; Sheng & Chen, 2012). There are a wide range of spiritualities including New Age and Recovery programs that encompass diverse values, beliefs, perspectives, and attitudes, including Judeo-Christian values (Fry & Cohen, 2009; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Mitroff & Denton, 2013) that can impact small group effectiveness and performance outcomes.

Pawar (2009) examined the three aspects of workplace spirituality in relationship to: (a) meaning at work; (b) organizational sense of community; and, (c) positive purpose. These aspects are also examined in the interactive effects on individual spirituality on the three work attitudes of: (a) job satisfaction; (b) job involvement; and, (c) commitment to the group. The Pawar research utilized theory building to develop hypotheses using sample data from India with employees at the managerial level that validated the hypotheses. The research supports that there is a correlation between workplace spirituality and work attitudes, but, interestingly, not between individual spirituality and work attitudes. There is marginal support for interactive effective model of individual spirituality moderating the effect of workplace spirituality on work attitudes (Pawar, 2009). The Pawar study and similar research that has been conducted in relationship to workplace and organizational studies, provide empirical support that the inputs from these studies can be used to inform small group theory and enhance the understanding of spirituality, both Christian and non-Christian, as it correlates to group effectiveness (Benefiel & Fry, 2014; Benefiel, 2013; Sheng & Chen, 2012; Marques, 2010). These empirical studies, however, do not provide the Christian religious, spiritual, and linguistic context for spirituality and group performance outcomes that are needed in contemporary society (Jeanrond, 2003; Bekker, 2005; Browning, 1999) and are provided by the understandings gleaned from the pericope of Acts 6.

**Group Theory**

The birth of the Christian church began in Acts with a small group of disciples that encountered the risen Christ and were empowered with the Holy Spirit of God (Earle,
The beginning of the first small group of Christians grew into multiple groups of new disciples consisting of various cultural and ethnic groups that create the context of the pericope of Acts 6 (Pao, 2011; Strauss, 2012) and provides Scriptural insight for this study as it relates to the into small group theory. Group theory cannot be adequately understood in terms of being a collection of individuals acting independently, but groups are complex systems that are dynamic, adaptive, interactive among group members, and in a given context, in order to assemble and create a given identity (Arrow, McGrath & Berdahl, 2001). When various elements such as boundaries, group identity, norms, and collective memory begin to operate together within the group, new patterns will develop or emerge. People are often drawn together by emotion (affective integration) and shared identity (cognitive integration) that can be based on a Christian spirituality (Arrow et al., 2001; Fry & Cohen, 2009; Fry, Matherly, & Ouimet, 2010). A small group or team can be described as two or more individuals who work together toward a common goal or goals in order to be effective in achieving an organizational desired outcome (Katz-Narvon & Eys, 2005; Staples & Webster, 2007). The interaction among the group members is determined by various factors, such as task interdependence that can impact whether the group becomes integrated to the point it is more than the sum of its parts, or remains an aggregation of individuals loosely tied to a common organizational goal (Katz-Narvon & Eys, 2005).

As many organizations across various industry sectors are utilizing teams and collaborative work, scholarly research is placing significant focus on specific strategies that explain complex group processes that are associated with more effective outcomes (Katz-Narvon & Eys, 2005; Li, 2007; Staples & Webster, 2007). There has been a resurgence of interest in small group personality, social composition, and spirituality their impact on group effectiveness (Fry & Cohen, 2009; Fry et al., 2010; Li, 2007; Staples & Webster, 2007). In addition, as important organizational decisions need to be made cross-functional work teams and project teams are being relied on to stimulate and enhance decision making processes, solve problems, and foster innovation. When the individuals comprising these groups differ in respect to knowledge, skill, expertise, and information they bring to these processes they have the potential to significantly enhance performance outcomes (Greer et al., 2008; Homan et al., 2007; Martins et al., 2013).

There are variables that impact group effectiveness and performance that focus on the mediating effects of the quality of group communication and characteristics of group communication that are able to differentiate between effective decision-making and ineffective decision making (Katz-Navon & Erez, 2005; Li, 2007). Small group conflict has been addressed in various research as well. Hardin (1997) proffers that it would be rare for a group to operate in complete harmony because all groups find ways to deal with root causes of conflict, such as the ability to coordinate the competing interests,
goals, desire to maximize benefits of the group, personal preferences, and even religious backgrounds of the individual members (Arrow et al., 2001; Fry & Cohen, 2009; Fry et al., 2010). In addition, group identification, commitment, and interests can impact the degree of conflict in any group setting and impact the group’s effectiveness (Hardin, 1997; Arrow et al., 2001). It is important that members agree on a common framework for handling and resolving conflict. Norms should be established regarding how group members: (a) express their view to the group; (b) how those viewpoints will be evaluated and weighted in comparison to other members; (c) how conflicting views will the reconciled, discounted, and by whom; and, (d) how and by whom will group consensus be achieved and a group decision articulated (Arrow et al., 2001). Based on the supporting literature for group theory, this proposed exegetical research could begin to close the scriptural gap on the relationship of Christian spirituality and group theory.

**Group Leadership Theory**

There is a tendency in modern leadership theory to formulate professionalized leadership constructs that fall short of what is truly effective through Biblical leadership in both contemporary organizations and small groups (Bekker, 2005; Kinnison, 2010; Rossouw, 1994). As the text of Acts 6 demonstrates, Christian leadership is more than outward moral behavior which adheres to certain Christian values, but also includes moral actions which flow from inward moral transformation and the power of the Holy Spirit (Pao, 2011; Rossouw, 1994). Christian leadership values demand a personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ, which requires a “higher righteousness that involves a transformation of the entire person, not just their actions” (Fedler, 2006, p. 34). These values can and should impact effectiveness of small groups and the larger organization (Kinnison, 2010; Rossouw, 1994). The transformational nature of the Christian experience is driven by the love of God for those who are called to serve (John 3:16, NKJV). Because the Holy Spirit of Christ dwells within the heart of the believer (Colossians 1:27), the Christian virtue of love becomes the driving force of the inner man which demands leaders love their group members, employees, external business partners, stakeholders, shareholders and regulators (Winston, 2002). In addition, the spiritual qualifications in the early church centered around both leaders and followers that are full of faith and the Holy Spirit, who are focused on prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:3-4).

Through the investigation of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures Laniak (2006) demonstrates that much of the modern tendency to professionalized constructs regarding workplace spirituality, small groups, and leadership may fall short of what is truly effective from a Biblical perspective for praxis in both churches and contemporary organizations (Kinnison, 2010). The early church clearly advocated that leaders and followers are to be full of faith and the Holy Spirit, as well as, wholly devoted to prayer.
and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:3-4). In addition, they are to have good reputation with outsider and live a life that is above reproach (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

Diversity and Meta-Analyses

The text of Acts 6 examines the diverse social, cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds of the Hebrews, Jews, and Greeks of the first century church and how, despite their diversity, were effective in their work and service. (Spencer, 1994; Strauss, 2012). The empirical research in the area of contemporary group diversity theory has grown over the last few decades, although meta-analyses have not provided consensus regarding small group diversity and the resulting performance effects (de Wit, Greer & Jehn, 2012; Joshi & Roh, 2009; Martins et al., 2013). Joshi and Roh (2009) utilized a macro and micro theoretical framework to conduct a meta-analysis that identifies prior empirical research regarding work team diversity and performance. The methodology included: (a) computerized databases; (b) manual searches of major journals; and, (c) other highly cited, peer reviewed management journal literature. The data from 8,757 teams in 39 studies conducted in organizational settings, with moderating contextual factors at multiple levels that include occupation, industry, and team as impacted by the performance on relations and task diversity. Without the mediating variables there were few direct effects on relations-oriented variables, such as race/ethnicity, gender, and age, and all other attributes are essentially zero, whereas, when moderators are applied the effects on performance often double and triple in size (Joshi & Roh, 2009). Future research is expected to further consider task, knowledge share, industry and occupational moderators that impact small group and team effectiveness.

The de Wit et al. (2012) meta-analysis is one of the most comprehensive studies on intragroup conflict related to small group diversity to date. In a relatively short period of time between 2003 and 2005 there were over 80 empirical studies that examined the effects of intragroup conflict on group performance outcomes. De Wit et al. (2012) explored the plethora of literature encompassing 8,880 small groups in 80 recent empirical studies that investigated complex relationships between conflict and group outcomes, and newer constructs of intragroup conflict that focused on process conflict. Researchers conducting the meta-analysis investigated a number of moderating variables in order to address diversity within groups across the various studies. The de Wit et al. (2009) study finds that there are stable negative relationships that are consistent in process conflict and group outcomes. In contrast, the earlier meta-analysis by De Dreu and Weingart (2003) did not find a strong negative correlation between task conflict and group performance. The de Wit et al. (2012) analysis of main effects and moderator analysis created more complex relationships. For instance, task conflict and group performance are more positively related in the studies where the association between task and relationship conflict are weak, in teams that have members who are high in the hierarchical structure, compared to teams that have members who consist of those lower in the hierarchical structure. In addition, in the studies where the outcomes
are measured in terms of financial performance or decision quality, rather than overall performance, task conflict and group performance were more positively related (de Wit et al., 2012). Both the de Wit et al. (2012) and Joshi and Roh (2009) research indicate that diversity within work teams impact group effectiveness that can be further informed through the study of the pericope that provides Scriptural support for the relationship between Christian spirituality, Christian leadership, and Christian diversity as it relates to small group performance outcomes.

**Expert and Expertness Diversity**

Regardless of the diversity of the group or leader background, the spiritual requirement for any level of hierarchical leadership and expertise in the business of the early church was to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom (Hymes, 2010; Ma’, 1999; Pao, 2011; Tuppurainen, 2012). There are studies that proffer empirical research examining various aspects of expertise and expertness diversity with the focus on the mediated effects of performance or use dependent variables other than performance (de Wit et al., 2012; Joshi & Roh, 2009; Martins et al., 2013). Research on these forms, without mediators, has produced inconsistent results, highlighting the need for further research that includes potential moderators and contingency factors (de Wit et al., 2012; Joshi & Roh, 2009; Martins et al., 2013). The Martins et al. (2013) research examines cognitive diversity that exists in many forms, and is a characteristic of any small group by moderating the affective context on the relationships between cognitive diversity and team performance. In other words, the immediate context in which the interaction occurs between diverse team members is related to the comfort that diverse team members have in expressing diverse opinions, perspectives, and the ability to integrate the perspective into team task performance. The immediate affective context Martins et al. (2013) examined is relationship conflict and psychological safety in relationship to team cognitive diversity of expertise and expertness diversity and the impact on team performance. The research uses a sample of 736 students enrolled in and information management master’s program that are randomly organized into 196 teams of three to five people per team in a large French university. The study found that when there is low team psychological safety, expertise diversity negatively impacts team performance, while when there high psychological safety, expert diversity is positively impacts team performance. Low team relationship conflict expertness diversity positively relates to team performance (Martins et al., 2013). The contingency model developed by Martins et al. (2009) is based on the supposition that the immediate context of the team with influence the dynamics of cognitive diversity and that the contingency effects generate different outcomes based on the cognitive diversity examined. Although the research collected was used over over large number of teams over a period of time, it is an empirical laboratory study that does not account for organizational politics that could be common in field teams, indicting the need for further validation in this environment. Although there are opportunities for further
quantitative research, there appears to be a qualitative exegetical gap for the construct that addresses the need for the expert spiritual qualifications for leaders and group members, based on Scriptural principles that positively impact group effectiveness and performance as supported in the text under consideration (Hymes, 2010; Ma’, 1999; Pao, 2011; Tuppurainen, 2012).

Method

Although the various constructs outlined in this paper include numerous quantitative and qualitative research studies, there does not appear to be sufficient exegetical research from the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures that links the impact of Christian spirituality in small groups and the correlation to achieving desired outcomes. This paper addresses the gap in exegetical support for the role of Christian spirituality as it correlates to small group effectiveness. The study answers the research question: Do the Scriptures provide exegetical support that Christian spirituality correlates to diverse work team’s effectiveness in achieving the organization’s desired outcomes? The study is an exegetical research project designed to address the research gap that provides exegetical support from the Scriptures to link Christian spirituality and the impact on diverse small groups in achieving desired productivity and performance.

The socio-rhetorical critical method provides a sound exegetical framework for Biblical understandings, which were previously gleaned from literary critics, linguists, sociologists and anthropologists, in order to bring them to bear on the text, so the reader may fully experience and interpret the text (Robbins, 1996). The socio-rhetorical method uses critical analysis of the Scriptures in order to focus the belief, convictions, and values in the world we operate in and the text under consideration (Robbins, 1996). The interpretation or exegesis is the scholarly examination of the text to glean the author’s intended meaning and significance from various viewpoints and perspectives in order to understand the author’s originally intended meaning (deSilva, 2004; Fee & Stuart, 2003; Robbins, 1996). The socio-rhetorical analysis provides the research framework to examine pericope as a richly “textured tapestry” by fully entering the text through detailed analysis of: (a) the cultural and ideological world of the time it was written, (b) the text in relationship to other texts, and, (c) the investigation of how the pericope affects the world (deSilva, 2004; Fee & Stuart, 2003; Robbins, 1996). Robbins (1996) includes five approaches to explore the pericope that include the (a) texture, (b) intertexture, (c) social, and cultural texture, (d) sacred texture, and (e) ideological texture to ensure there is an understanding of the meaning below the surface of the text.

In some methods of interpretation, there is overemphasis on linguistics and word meaning, which could lead readers, in some cases, to the wrong conclusion regarding the intended message of the sacred text (Fee & Stuart, 2003; Robbins, 1996). Tuppurainen (2012) posits that scholars from the Pentecostal/Charismatic and Roman Catholic traditions have their cherished positions and theological perspectives, which
serve as filters, to arrive at what they believe, are correct or incorrect understandings of
the sacred text. The Socio-rhetorical method does not ignore these views, but goes
beneath surface of the text to secure a richer, fuller and more holistic understanding of
the meaning of the pericope. The ideological texture is one component of the model,
which enables the interpreter to reach a more holistic understanding of the text.
Tuppurainen (2012) posits that ideology is the manner that reader’s and writer’s
presumptions, values, and resulting beliefs relate to ideologies of other texts,
individuals, and groups at the time of their historical setting. In addition, ideology
examines the social and cultural location of the implied author as it relates to the power
structures and institutions of power (Eagleton, 1983). Social rhetorical criticism focuses
on how the cultural and social setting of the era interacts with the implied author, text
and reader. The ideological texture forces the interpreter to examine his/her own
ideological assumptions and examine and reflect on them in light of the text, as well as,
the perspectives of others and their presuppositions, which may have previously
interpreted the text (deSilva, 2004; Fee & Stuart, 2003; Robbins, 1996; Tuppurainen,
2012).

Data Collection

The intended meaning and appropriate application require the enabling power of the
Holy Spirit to guide the reader into all Truth (John 16:13). In addition the Scriptures do
not come from the creative work of the prophets’ own thoughts, will, intention or
understanding, but through the power of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 2:19-21), who
is the author of the text using the prophets as instruments to reveal the Word of God
(Johnson, 1998). The apostles and early church did not consider how a reader would
interact with the text, however, they considered how they interacted with and
experienced the risen Christ. As Johnson (1998) observes:

Serious engagement with earliest Christianity demands recognition that its
adherents... considered themselves caught up by, defined by, a power that
derived from the crucified and raised Messiah Jesus. Any effort to interpret the
writings of early Christianity...that does not proceed on this assumption is fated
to fall short of a satisfying interpretation (p. 184).

In addition to examining the ideological texture of the pericope, it should be
acknowledged that there is an absolute necessity for the exegete to have complete
reliance on the guidance of the Holy Spirit in order to use this tool to secure the
intended message and meaning of His sacred Word. The hope is that the interpreter can
understand the ideological texture of the text and experience the enabling power of the
Holy Spirit to understand the text as it was originally intended and in doing so, rightly
divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).
The Christian perspective based on the Scriptures for spirituality and group theory are necessary for scholarly research and the biblical text should be recognized as an acceptable research source because it is a text, and not just a collection of propositions, that open the way for the exegete to understand the historical perspective of religious, spiritual, and linguistic contexts (Bekker, 2005; Browning, 1999; Jeanrond, 2003;). There has been a loss of Christian spirituality within the culture and in organizations, creating a great need in the scholarly research to study, examine, and understand spirituality, leadership, organizations, and small groups constructs in the light of how the sacred texts of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures inform and shape these constructs (Bekker, 2005).

**Data Analysis**


The text in Luke 24:44-53 serves as a bridge to Acts 1:1-14, where the works of Jesus in His earthly ministry and His work on the cross are complete and the church is born. In Acts the church continues proclaiming the completed work of the cross and doing greater works than Jesus did (John 12:12-14). Before the resurrected Christ ascended to heaven (Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11), He instructed the small group of 11 future leaders of the church to wait in Jerusalem until they are endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). They had been given their commission (Matthew 28:18-20), but needed the Father’s promise of the Holy Spirit’s fullness to be realized before they were to begin their service (Acts 1:5). As members of this group they were expected to speak under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, teach (4:30-31), preach (26:18), heal the sick (4:30-31), and have faith for the performance of miracles (6:5, 8). The pericope clearly states the need for these members to have a personal experience and encounter with the Holy Spirit that saturates the believer’s life with the presence of Christ in order to be effective in the group or larger organizational context (Tuppurainen, 2012).

In Judaism, Jerusalem was the spiritual center of the world, and in Acts Jerusalem becomes the new ‘pivotal center’ for the spreading of the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Strauss, 2012). Luke continues his narrative with geographic references so the reader
will not miss the fulfillment of the promise of Acts 1:8. Luke’s emphasis on geography is critical because it outlines the ethnic ideology of the Gospel that is beginning with the Jews and expanding to the Samaritans, to occasional God-fearing Gentiles and finally to the larger Gentile world.

From the time of the ascension of Christ (Acts 1:9), the early church leaders were unified (2:1) and effective in the service of the church (2:42-47). Despite the continued effectiveness of the church (6:1) there was a dispute, which arose between two different groups, the Hellenists (Greek) and the Hebrew Christians, regarding the care of widows and the distribution of food (6:1). There is not a consensus among scholars as to the identities of the two groups, but some argue that the primary distinction between the two groups concerned language preference (Pao, 2011). Dunn (1996) argues, however, that it is more than a language issue, but was ideology that distinguished the two groups, linking their ideological conflict to a residue of suspicion between the two groups dating back to the Maccabean revolt where Hellenist Jews fought against the conservative Jews.

The redaction-historical method has dominated some thinking, asserting Luke understated the Hellenistic-Hebrew schism so as not to tarnish his idealized narrative of the early church (Spencer, 1994). Spencer (1994) posits that the conflict has become the setting for some to use the pericope as a model structure for a male dominated leadership structure. Some older commentators, however, see the conflict and resolution simply as the Holy Spirit’s example for the apostles to resolve conflict and reach agreement that it would not be right for them to neglect prayer and the ministry of the word, in order to provide the appropriate oversight for the care of the widows who are in true need (Earle, 1965; Henry, N.D.).

The Pentecostal ideological tradition reads the pericope as another confirmation that all those in the group of leaders in training must be baptized with the Holy Spirit, and the initial evidence of the baptism being the gift of tongues (Pao, 2011; Tuppurainen, 2012), although the text does not specifically mention the sign of tongues. Spencer (1994) proffers the Roman Catholic perspective that the pericope and the neglect of the widows is a clear call for the church to minister to the poor. Some scholars debate whether the ongoing roles and responsibilities of the seven appointed as deacons was for leadership or the service of the saints (Frost & Hirsch, 2003; Spencer, 1994). Frost and Hirsch (2003) assert, however, that the Holy Spirit equips all believers in some capacity for ministry for effective service to the group, larger church organization, and for the influence and advancement of the kingdom.

Pao (2011) proffers the resolution of the conflict between the Hellenists and Jews as culminating in the appointment of leaders who are known to be full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit, in order to offer effective service and achieve the desired outcomes for the kingdom. In doing so, it establishes the ongoing theme of Luke-Acts requiring...
members to operate in the power of the Holy Spirit in order to accomplish the desired outcomes of the church and command of the risen Christ (Hymnes, 2010; Johnson, 1999; Pao, 2011). The need for Spirit-filled and empowered members is not a new requirement in the pericope, but was an historically important requirement for the other groups in the Old Testament, such as Numbers 11, where the 70 leaders where appointed to lessen the workload and burden of Moses (Ma’, 2010). In order to fulfill the call of the Lord, each member was to be authenticated through being filled by the Holy Spirit in order to be empowered in effective service for others (Hymes, 2010).

Results

The exploration of the ideological texture of Acts 6:1-17 enables the exegete to reach a more holistic understanding of the text’s social, historical, and cultural context that gives insight into the meaning and intention of the author’s point of view (Self, 2009). In addition, the ideological texture analysis suggests that there are kernels, summary sentences, or themes that contribute to understanding the relationship of Christian spirituality to small group effectiveness (deSilva, 2004; Robbins, 1996; Self, 2009; Tuppurainen, 2012). The ideological texture of the pericope also examines the social and cultural perspectives of Hebrews, Greeks, and Jews as it relates to the power structures and institutions of power (Eagleton, 1983). The kernels or summary interpretive statements are listed:

Summary Statements of the Pericope:

1. The number of disciples was increasing
2. Grecian Jews complain against Hebraic Jews because of inequality in the distribution of food to Grecian widows
3. The leader’s first responsibility is prayer and the ministry of the Word
4. The requirement for the selection of additional leaders is to possess the Spirit’s fullness and wisdom
5. Apostles re-state their spiritual requirement/priority of prayer and the Word
6. The church (group) acknowledges the priority of spiritual qualifications for leaders, groups, and the church at large

Discussion

The research question that prompted this study asked how Christian spirituality relates to group effectiveness in achieving organizational outcomes. In the pericope the resolution of the conflict between two cultural groups from different ideological perspectives culminated in Acts 6:3 with the appointment of leaders who were “full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, who we may appoint over this business” (Tuppurainen, 2012; Pao, 2011; Hymes, 2010; Johnson, 1999). The apostle Paul argues that in Christ, there is neither Greek nor Jew, but all are to be used for the purposes of the kingdom...
Christian Spirituality and Small Group Effectiveness

(Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11). Christian spirituality is not defined by culture or ethnicity, but is defined by the “dynamic relational process in which people, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, partner to achieve a common goal . . . [which is] . . . serving others by leading and leading others by serving” (Hanna, 2006). Central to Christian spirituality is the need for the Holy Spirit (Hanna, 2006; Hymes, 2010; Ma’ 2010; Pao, 2011). As Hanna (2006) points out, what marks Christian spirituality as Christian, is that leaders and followers accomplish the desired outcomes of the kingdom under the influence and direction of the Holy Spirit. The central theme emerges from the Acts text that in order for a group to make a lasting impact for good and have long term effectiveness, the group and its leaders must operate in the power of the Holy Spirit. This theme is compatible with the Scriptural record and emerges as theme of this pericope and all of the sacred writings of Scripture (Hanna, 2006).

The focus of the pericope is in the context of the early church and Christian community of faith where Christian spirituality was the foundation for effectiveness of the apostles and the church. Although the text is in the context of the first century and addresses specific issues the small group of leaders faced, the principles discussed are transferable to other settings and contexts (Witherington, 1995; Doty, 1973; Patton, 2002). Spirituality and effectiveness in service are universal in value whether in secular or Christian settings and can have universal application in the United States and other cultures as well, indicating confirmability (Kriger & Seng, 2005; Fry & Cohen, 2009; Fry et al., 2010; Patton, 2002). The implication for Christian praxis (credibility) is that groups, organizations and leaders need more than a skillset that is acquired through learning, but must have a spirituality that is rooted and sourced in Jesus Christ and the Scriptures (Bekker, 2005; Johnson, 1999). Because textual criticism is not a science and deals with many variables, there are limitations to socio-rhetorical criticism and this study (Fee & Stuart, 2003; Robbins, 1996). The exegete who seeks to uncover the author’s intended meaning, may examine linguistics, and rely on shared assumptions that are contingent on the context within the context that can determine meanings (Mihaila, 2009). Christian spirituality however, is a gift from the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is the gift from the Father for leaders, small groups, and organizations. As Peter noted when discussing culture, ethnicity, and the ideological perspective of the context of the early church (Acts 10: 34), God is no respecter of persons when He imparts the Holy Spirit. The promised gift of the fullness of the Holy Spirit is for the Jews who received the promises and the Gentiles who are far from the original promises (Acts 2:39). It is for the Hellenists and the Jewish Christians, and it is the essence of Christian spirituality regardless of the culture or setting, and is critical for effectiveness of small groups in achieving organizational outcomes.

Future research should include a complete socio-rhetorical critical analysis using of Robbins (1996) method of examining the: (a) inner texture, (b) intertexture, (c) social and culture texture, (d) ideological, and (e) sacred texture of this pericope and other sacred
texts. The Christological basis of leadership with supporting exegesis, research, theological, philosophical and historical research rooted in the New Testament has been addressed in scholarly journals, but there is less research utilizing the Old Testament Scriptures (Tuppurainen, 2012). In the same way, further qualitative research is needed to examine Christian spirituality in the context of small groups using both Old and New Testaments.

About the Author

William Sawyer is a third-year Ph.D. student at Regent University, where he is studying organizational leadership. He is senior leader for a global big data and information company and a part-time pastor of multi-cultural church on the west coast.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to William Sawyer at willsaw@mail.regent.edu.

References


Christian Leadership Center, http://www.andrews.edu/clc/


Henry, M. Complete Bible Commentary. Online.


Winston, B. (2002). Be A Leader for God’s Sake -- From values to behaviors. School of Leadership Studies: Virginia Beach, VA.