

Consent

Title of the Project: Experiences of Religious Residents in Counseling Working with Clients Who Have Experienced Religious Trauma

Principal Investigator: Nicole Taylor, Doctoral Student, Counselor Education & Supervision, Liberty University

Co-Investigator: Dr. Stacey Lilly, Core Faculty, School of Behavioral Sciences, Liberty University

Key Information about the Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a graduate of a clinical mental health counseling program within the past five [5] years, be a resident in counseling, and identify as a Christian.

Things you should know:

- The purpose of this study is to better understand the experience of Christian counselors working with cases of religious trauma. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a 5-minute demographic survey and virtual video-recorded focus group that will last about 90 minutes.
- Risks or discomforts from this research include emotional distress due to talking about complex cases and clinical needs as a counselor.
- Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from participation.
- Taking part in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate, and you can stop at any time.

Please read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this research is to better understand the challenges, emotional impact, and professional considerations that religious counseling residents face when working with individuals who have experienced religious trauma. The goal is to better understand these experiences in order to learn how to best support counselors in training.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Take a 5-minute demographic survey.
2. Engage in a virtual, video-recorded, 90-minute focus group.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit as a result of their participation in this research.

Benefits to the counseling field include improving supervision and training for counseling residents working with religious trauma survivors. Your insights may help inform future counseling education and practice.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. Potential risks include the following:

- Emotional distress related to clinical case discussion.
- Limitations for confidentiality due to participation in a focus group.

To minimize these risks, I will monitor participants for emotional or psychological distress and will be provided resources as appropriate. Participants will also be encouraged to discuss any needs or concerns with their clinical supervisor.

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researchers will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Researchers will conduct the focus group in a location where others will not easily hear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other focus group members may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. The researchers will have access to the data. After three [3] years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer. The researchers will have access to the recordings. After three [3] years, the recordings will be deleted.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

All participants who complete the demographic survey and focus group will be entered into a drawing for one \$15 gift card to Amazon, to be delivered via the email provided in the screening survey.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to

participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researchers at the email addresses/phone numbers included in the next paragraph. Should you withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and not included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researchers conducting this study are Nicole Taylor and Dr. Stacey Lilley. You may ask any questions you have now by contacting. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact Nicole at ntaylor7@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Stacey Lilley, at slilley@liberty.edu.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and want to talk to someone other than the researchers, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) ensures that human subjects research will be conducted ethically as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

You agree to participate in this study by signing this document. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researchers will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Recruitment Email

Dear potential research participant,

As a doctoral student in the Counselor Education & Supervision program at Liberty University, I am conducting research exploring the experiences of religious residents in counseling as they work with clients who have experienced religious trauma. The purpose of this research is to better understand the challenges, emotional impact, and professional considerations that religious counseling residents face when working with individuals who have experienced religious trauma. I am writing to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be graduates of a clinical mental health counseling program within the past five [5] years, be a resident in counseling, and identify as a Christian. Participants will be asked to complete a 5-minute demographic survey and take part in a virtual video-recorded 90-minute focus group. Names and other identifying information may be requested as a part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

To participate in this study, please [[click here](#)] to complete the screening survey. If you meet my participant criteria, you will be prompted to complete the demographic survey, and I will contact you to provide details on the focus group.

A consent document is provided after the screening survey and contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent form as a part of the online survey before completing any study procedures.

All participants who complete the demographic survey and focus group will be entered into a drawing for one \$15 gift card to Amazon, to be delivered via the email provided in the screening survey.

Sincerely,

Nicole Taylor
Doctoral Student
Liberty University
ntaylor7@liberty.edu

Survey Link:

https://qualtricsxmgyxc95hdx.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cO8Ph0rv1GB5en4

Screening Question:

Thank you for your interest in this study.

This research explores the perspectives of Christian residents in counseling regarding their experiences working with individuals who have encountered religious trauma. Your participation will provide valuable insights into how religious beliefs and professional training intersect in counseling practice.

To qualify for this study, you must meet the following criteria:

1. Identify as a Christian - evangelical or non-denominational.
2. Be a resident in counseling - meaning you have completed a master's degree in counseling but have not yet obtained full licensure.
3. Have worked with at least one case of religious trauma.

Religious trauma can be defined as the psychological, emotional, and spiritual distress that results from harmful religious experiences, doctrines, or communities. This can include religious abuse, high-control religious environments, fear-based teachings, or experiences of exclusion, shame, or identity suppression.

By selecting "I meet the qualifications for this study and am interested in more information", you are agreeing to move forward with the consent form and a short survey requesting additional information about your professional experience.

You may discontinue this survey at any time.

- a) I meet the qualifications for this study and am interested in more information
- b) I do not meet the qualifications for this study or am no longer interested in participating.

Demographic Survey Questions

1. Please share your email address so you can be notified if you have been selected and to receive information regarding the focus group.
2. What college or university did you attend?
3. How long have you been working as a mental health professional? (any work, not just outpatient counselor).
4. What is your current work setting?
 - a. Outpatient counselor
 - b. School-based counselor
 - c. Community Mental Health
 - d. Inpatient Hospital
 - e. Emergency Care
5. How long have you been a counseling resident?
 - a. Less than 1 year
 - b. 1-2 years
 - c. 2-3 years
 - d. 3-4 years
 - e. 4-5 years
 - f. 5 or more years
6. Please select at least two [2] preferred time(s) to participate in the focus group:
 - a. Weekday Mornings
 - b. Weekday Afternoons
 - c. Weekday Evenings
 - d. Weekend Mornings
 - e. Weekend Afternoons
 - f. Weekend Evenings

Focus Group Questions:

1. How does your religious identity influence your work as a counselor?
2. What do you know about religious trauma?
3. Think of a recent client case that stands out to you – without revealing any details can you briefly describe it?
4. How has working with religious trauma affected you emotionally?
5. What are your thoughts or feelings about working with someone who has experienced religious trauma?
6. What resources or support would you want or feel you need to help you navigate a case with religious trauma more effectively?
7. Have you ever experienced a situation where your religious beliefs conflict with the experiences of a client? Please describe the situation.
 - a. What was hard about that experience and why?
 - b. What do you think went well and why?
 - c. What kind of support did you receive to work with this case?
8. After working with a case that involves religious trauma, what did you learn about yourself as a counselor?
9. How has your clinical training helped you prepare for this type of case?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Questions:

1. How does your religious identity influence your work as a counselor?
2. How has working with religious trauma affected you emotionally?
3. Have you experienced a situation where your religious beliefs conflict with the behaviors or values of a client?
4. What resources or support have been helpful as you've worked with these cases?
5. How has your clinical training helped you prepare for this type of case?