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### Transformational Relationships: Re-framing Impact in Faith-Based Social Service Organizations

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UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CHANGE THE WORLD FROM HERE

**Transformational Relationships:  
Re-framing Impact in Faith-Based Social Service Organizations**

by

Sonja E. Schappert

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Capstone Research Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the  
Master of Nonprofit Administration Degree  
in the School of Management  
directed by Dr. Marco Tavanti

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## **Abstract**

Theories of change and logic models are the industry standard foundation for impact evaluation. However, half of all nonprofits do not use these models due to resource constraints or the perception that their work does not fit into a model. This is especially true in relationship-based programs, such as those in faith-based social services. This Capstone examines the influence of relationship theory on a faith-based organization's impact. The research methodology included deductive, action-based research with a foundational literature review focused on nonprofit planning and evaluation theory and social science theory. Then a total of 6 expert interviews were conducted, 3 with faith-based program directors and 3 with evaluation professionals. Finally, a hermeneutic approach was used to cycle between synthesis and analysis, comparing data from literature and expert interviews, and conceptualizing new models. While the context of the research is faith-based, the models are general enough to be applied to a diverse number of organizations. The findings demonstrate that relationship theory does have implications for how their theory of change and logic models are formed and how impact is subsequently evaluated. Relational Cultural Theory is identified in the literature and supported in the expert interviews as the theoretical foundation for the Transformational Relationship theory of change. Traditional linear logic models are challenged with the presentation of a cyclical model that is more reflective of the iterative process of Transformational Relationships. The resulting levels of impact are described as a spiral of impact with implications for individual, group and societal impact. Evaluation is re-framed with suggestions that include blending qualitative and quantitative methodology, integrating the evaluation process into the relationship, and reframing donor expectations around what relationship-based impact evaluation looks like. This Capstone lays the foundation for additional research in surveying a larger sample of faith-based social service organizations to inform the Transformational Relationship model, develop relationship-based evaluation tools (proxies, tests, surveys) for use in programs, and an examination of how Transformational Relationships contribute to collective impact.

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## Section 1. Introduction

Theories of change and logic models are an established, foundational tool for organizations to measure impact and communicate with donors. However, not all organizations have these models. According to the State of the Nonprofit Sector Survey only 47% of nonprofit organizations have a theory of change (Nonprofit Finance Fund, 2018). While specific data is not available, by experience, most faith-based organizations do not operate with a theory of change or logic model. Aside from resources and logistics, some organizations are not sure how to translate the relational, qualitative value of their work into linear processes and quantitative data that are so often associated with theories of change and logic models. In this sector, there are broad visions for transformation in lives and communities through relationships but not an emphasis on counting that change or defining what transformation looks like. Leaders can rely on intuition and anecdotes and are concerned that formalizing a process will result in compromising their mission and values. This Capstone questions if relationship-based theory influences the impact of faith-based organizations, with a hypothesis that there will be implications for how an organization builds its theory of change, program logic model and evaluates impact.

I first learned about theories of change and logic models while attending the USF MNA Capstone presentations before enrolling in the program. I was fascinated by the concept and instantly saw it as a useful tool to frame programs and evaluate impact. As I began exploring the concept with colleagues in the faith-based sector there were a lot of questions about how logic models fit in with relationship models. Is there a way to translate the soft skill of relationships into evaluative numbers? Can this be done without compromising the integrity of the program or relationship? How can we anchor the abstractness of our work for donors and potential funders? How can we know we are moving the impact needle in individuals and in our community? Are there implications for building collective impact?

This Capstone offers a model for answering these questions: Transformational Relationships theory of change with a circular program logic model and a spiralized impact model. The research field is non-profit administration, strategic planning and evaluation, program planning, social work and faith-based organizations. The context of the research is based on the primary expert interviews which are with faith-based program directors in the Tenderloin neighborhood of San Francisco. This is an area with a high concentration of homelessness, poverty, drug use, trauma, and trafficking so relationships and transformation are set against this backdrop. And although their context is faith-based social service organizations, the resulting models are applicable in a variety of contexts.

This Capstone starts with an extensive literature with the themes of relationship-based practice, the faith-based sector, and nonprofit planning and evaluation. Then the research methodology will be discussed. Next, the Data and Analysis section will detail themes from six expert interviews are described, along with a comparison with the literature. The resulting models will be presented in the Implications and Recommendations section along with a discussion on reframing impact evaluation. Finally, the conclusion will offer a summary and note areas for additional research. The appendices include a collection of suggested resources as well as the expert interview questions, information sheet and permission release.

## **Section 2: Literature Review**

The literature review draws from two primary bodies of literature in social sciences and nonprofit administration. First, the context of faith-based social services organizations and the challenges of evidenced-base practice are discussed. Then the principles of relationship-based practice and the theoretical framework of Relational Cultural Theory are examined for their implications on a theory of change, program logic model, and impact evaluation. Then nonprofit administration literature is examined for characteristics of theories of change, logic models, and impact evaluation. This literature review will set the foundation for the expert interviews presented in the data and analysis section, and even includes some of the materials referenced in the interviews. The expert interview data will be compared with this section.

### **Faith – Based Social Work**

First, the context of faith-based social work is explored. This is relevant to the research because all three program expert interviews are tied to the faith-based, social work sector. Literature in faith-based social services focused on three themes: historical ties, characteristics and motivations, and finally areas for concern. First, multiple authors demonstrated that social work has deep historical ties to the religious sector having emerged from Judeo-Christian communities (Hare, 2010); (Harris, Yancey, Meyers, Deiler, & Walden, 2017). The Jesuits, for example, have a long commitment to helping the poor and the vulnerable and being “people for people” (Loyola Press, n.d.).

Secondly, faith-based social work is characterized and motivated out of specific aspects of faith. In this context, faith is defined as Christian faith. Smith referred to the relationship with Christ that has changed their (Jesuits’) lives and drives them toward others (2002). Hare (2010) cited Christ’s commitment to “the least, the last, and the lost.” Jesuits specifically identify personal transformation as they work the poor, internalize their suffering, and learn from them (Smith, 2002). Smith also identified a “divine spark in all of us to that invites us to love and be loved” (2002). Hare named

other characteristics such as empathy, being non-judgmental, hope and compassion as being rooted in spiritual motivations (2010). Part of that hope, she wrote is the belief in God or a higher power to produce change (Hare, 2010). Hare also believed faith-based social work is holistic recognizing the spiritual nature of clients which is also evidenced in other transpersonal theories (2010). Harris, et al., illustrated faith as a 3-legged stool with aspects relating the client, the social worker and the organizational context (2017). They argued that integration of faith in social work allows the client religious freedom (Harris, et al., 2017). Hare also identified forgiveness, a central tenet in Christian faith, to also be a principle of healing (Hare, 2010).

The third theme specifically around faith-based social services was the identification of concerns over proselytization (Hare, 2010); (Harris, et al., 2017). Hare identified self-awareness as a preventative measure (2010). Harris, et al., identified the need for boundaries and supervision as a prevention (2017). They also described the social work education process, the main theme of his research, which requires student to be taught how to practice with non-discrimination and inclusion of religion (Harris, et al., 2017). This is relevant to this research because faith-based social work understands healthy boundaries in the therapeutic relationships and that the goal is not conversions.

Additionally, the three program interviews referenced authors who have been influential in the work so their contribution to the sector is worth noting here. Their works were examined for themes related to community development, theology of poverty and impact accountability.

First, Dr. John Perkins founded the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) which networks together a number of faith-based social service organizations. The central principles of CCDA are reconciliation, redistribution and relocation (Perkins, 1995). The principle of reconciliation is relevant to this research because it addresses the various types of relationships that need to be restored to one another to be an effective practitioner.

Secondly, the work of Corbett and Fikkert examines a theological framework for understanding poverty. A general description of poverty based on the research of Myers was quoted as:

Poverty is the result of relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious or enjoyable. Poverty is the absence of shalom in all its meanings (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012).

Specifically, Corbett & Fikkert identified four types of poverty: spiritual intimacy, being (material), community, and stewardship (2012). This is relevant to their premise that most faith-based poverty alleviation efforts focus only on material poverty, develop God

complexes in alleviation efforts, and can ultimately do more harm than good for all involved (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). This work is important to this research because it describes poverty in terms of various relationships and calls out the need for organizations to examine their theoretical framework and evaluate their true impact in the sector.

The third author referenced by the program interviewees is Robert D. Lupton who has expanded the discussion on faith-based theoretical frameworks and impact evaluation. He is the only author found that writes about impact evaluation from a faith-based perspective. He called for a need for results-based modeling in faith-based organizations, with works such as *Toxic Charity* and *Charity Detox*. Lupton (2015) wrote, "Unexamined charity, charity that fails to ask the hard questions about outcomes, only perpetuates poverty, despite its best intentions." Lupton went on to describe the difference between heart-responses that are characterized by crisis intervention, saving, and perpetual handouts, to heart-changes that is focused on development, learning, reciprocity, accountability, and authentic relationships (2015). These relationships are also characterized by genuine friendship but are admittedly difficult to measure (Lupton, 2015). Lupton also asserted that such relationships play an important role in the due diligence of program accountability (2015).

### **Evidence – Based Social Work Practice**

A review of literature revealed a tension within the social work field over evidence-based practice which is similar to the one identified in nonprofit administrative field. First reviewed is a description of evidence-based practice and a discussion of the challenges and criticisms.

Trevithick (2003) described evidence-based practice as an attempt to "enhance the quality of the relationship" between services, providers and clients. Hare described evidence-based practice as a new generation looking beyond the effect to "causal considerations" or why a particular technique has an effect (2010). This is also known as Results Based Accountability (RBA) and starts with the outcomes a program intends and works backwards to identify resources and processes needed to achievement and the indicators needed to measure success (Bloch, 2012). Results Based Accountability seeks to distinguish outcomes from other influences and distinguishes between organizational performance and "population accountability" (Bloch, 2012). Authors ranged from questioning the emphasis on evidenced based practice or Results Based Accountability to outright criticism.

When compared to a relationship-based approach, some authors raised questions about evidence-based practices. Hare observed that the organic nature of relationships is not easily measured in evidence-based practice (2010). She questioned how evidence-

based practices can capture knowledge that can describe the depth and variance in a therapeutic relationship (Hare, 2010). Ruch observed that government funding does not always endorse a qualitative approach to research (2016). Trevithick questioned if targets and outcomes in evidence-based practice have been properly vetted in research to stand the test of time (2003). Bloch identified criticism of Results Based Accountability as being limited and using indicators that were too broad, especially when looking at the impact of community development (2012).

The literature also revealed more pronounced criticisms of evidence-based practice. Ruch asserted that social work research has been compromised by top down policies instead of being driven by practice (2016). They also believed that the nature of randomized trial controls “nullify” the types of research important to social work such as research that connects quantitative data to qualitative data, validation and discovery, comparison and in-depth understanding (Ruch, 2016). Trevithick summarized the criticism of evidenced based practice writing, “Absence of evidence does not mean the absence of benefit” (2003).

While evidence-based practice or Results Based Accountability seek to better articulate accountability and impact, its prominence and methodology cause concern in the sector when they appear to be the highest priority or work against the established practice.

### **Relationship – Based Social Work Practice**

Relationship-based practice is another social work methodology. The literature reviewed for this research focused on three themes: historical perspectives, goals of relationship-based approaches and characteristics or techniques of a relationship-based approach. More detail is paid to the latter category for a more in-depth description of the relationship and its variations.

Multiple authors point to relationships being the very heart and cornerstone of social work (Trevithick, 2003) (Alexander & Charles, 2009). Alexander and Charles labeled relationship as essential, not incidental (2009). Folgheraiter and Raineri defined social work as problem solving in relationship (2012). They observed that social work affects change in two directions: the community through families and individuals and change in institutions and systems (Folgheraiter & Raineri, 2012). Ruch reflected that social work is predominantly qualitative, which reflects the “people orientated nature” of the work (2016). Interestingly, Trevithick noted that relationships are central not only to social work but to multiple schools of thought including organizational change and management (2003).

Trevithick charted important historical trends in the relationship-based approach. At one time some practitioners believed relationship was the end in itself and not a

practice approach to build on (Trevithick, 2003). Trevithick then described a shift in the field that saw relationship-based approaches less popular (2003). This shift was attributed to moving away from client led practice to needs or resource led, as in the needs and resources of the funder who is often the government (2003). She argued that when the social worker relationship was viewed only as procedural, legal or administrative it lost its measure of effectiveness (Trevithick, 2003). Similarly, it was noted that the relational paradigm of social work goes against mainstream evidence-based practice (Folgheraiter & Raineri, 2012). Trevithick also observed a shift in social work education from theory to values under the notion that if one means well, they will do well (2003).

The goal of relationship-based practice was characterized in general as a working relationship to achieve more goals (Trevithick, 2003); (Alexander & Charles, 2009); (Hare, 2010). Trevithick also expanded the goal relationships to seven different applications in social work summed up as:

1. Assessment
2. Foundation to build on
3. Help those who have difficulty relating to self and/or social environment
4. Help and support the vulnerable
5. Advocate and mediate for others
6. Manage anxiety
7. Foundation for capacity building
8. Report to others on social ills

(Trevithick, 2003)

The description of the characteristics of the relationship-based approach or techniques used ranged from specific qualities to general themes of methodology, characteristics, reciprocity, and dynamism. There are also challenges to relationship-based practice which are also described.

### **Methodology and Characteristics of Relationship-Based Practice**

Two overarching methodologies were identified in the literature. Therapeutic use of self and utilizing a strengths-based approach was described as foundational to relationship-based practice. Hare described therapeutic use of self as clinical knowledge and practice skills influenced by one's own self (2010). She noted that it is hard to quantify the use of one's self and that it must also be an authentic use (Hare, 2010). Trevithick questioned if the professional use of self, along with empathy can even be taught (2003). Strength-based approach is also often paired with a relationship-based

approach to social work (Trevithick, 2003); (Hare, 2010). Trevithick described the process of using relationship to “mobilize strengths of personality” alongside community resources at a strategic point (2003). Folgheraiter and Raineri questioned if social work is the great power that liberates people or if they are free by their own human essence (2012). They noted that empowerment is a broad concept with implications for micro and macro practice (Folgheraiter & Raineri, 2012). Trevithick added that a strengths-based approach is about capacity: what is and what can be done for the client (2003).

The foundational methods of therapeutic use of self and a strengths-based approach define the characteristics of relationship and how it operates which is important to the effectiveness of the relationship (Trevithick, 2003). Hare cited a study that said personal characteristics of a therapist, such as empathy, warmth and acceptance accounted for 30% of effected change (2010). Trevithick (2003) described qualities of effective relationships as:

- Sensitivity
- Patience
- Understanding
- Friendliness
- Respect
- Concern
- Hope
- Optimism
- Trust
- Competence
- Reliability
- Having regular contact
- Paying attention to detail
- Open and Honest Exchange

Since the methodology and characteristics of the relationship are important to its effectiveness, it’s important to identify those components as indicators to be measured for effectiveness or impact.

### **Reciprocal and Dynamic Process**

Alexander and Charles described in detail the dual or reciprocal nature of relationship-based practice which goes against social work education and professional standards but is reflected in real world scenarios (2009). They assert that relationships are a two-way process no matter what label is put on it (Alexander & Charles, 2009). Likewise, the relationship is described as “authentically and radically reciprocal” (Folgheraiter & Raineri, 2012).

Alexander and Charles distinguished between boundary violations (such as a sexual relationship) and using intentional boundary crossings as a tool, which may be beneficial to client in areas of connectedness, increased self-awareness and normalization of relationship (2009). Such reciprocity, they argued, contributes to a social worker’s

personal and professional identity which is constantly being formed in an ongoing process (Alexander & Charles, 2009).

Alexander and Charles also noted that reciprocal relationships require negotiation like any other relationship and are dynamic, changing over time (2009). The changes are not limited to the client, but change is also a two-way process where each person is affected by the other (Trevithick, 2003). Folgheraiter & Raineri asserted that reciprocity of help is necessary to the relationship because without it, help “withers and dies” (2012). Additionally, not every relationship will look alike, but each will have their own variation in levels of intimacy and mutuality (Alexander & Charles, 2009). This is partly due to the client’s subjective experience which will vary from person to person (Alexander & Charles, 2009). Folgheraiter & Raineri asserted that the level of reciprocity with the client must match that of the worker, as in accepting help from the party as if they were the helper themselves (2012).

However, reciprocal relationships in the world of social work are thought to be “subversive,” counter to formal education and culture of practice (Alexander & Charles, 2009).

### **Challenges in Relationship-Based Practice**

Some of the challenges identified by authors focused on inauthentic relationships. Alexander and Charles identified a culture of over professionalization that dehumanizes the client, is restrictive and creates artificial barriers (2009). They wrote, “rigid standardized and non-personal approach...belies a message of inequality and is ultimately patronizing and disrespectful (Alexander & Charles, 2009). Likewise, Trevithick described technique driven relationships that are detached, mechanistic and fail to respond to real needs of clients (2003). She argued that this creates more doubt, fear, mistrust, anxiety and defensiveness (Trevithick, 2003).

Multiple authors recognized the need for boundaries within relationship-based practice. Transference and counter transference were identified as potential areas of concern in therapeutic relationships, as it can be confused with empathy (Trevithick, 2003); (Alexander & Charles, 2009). Boundaries are needed to prevent transference or to identify when it has happened and needs to be addressed. Banks recognized the potential for the therapist to experience vicarious traumatization (2006). This was echoed in the writings on trauma-informed social work (Knight, 2015). Boundaries are needed to prevent further traumatization. And lastly, boundaries are needed to understand the limits of the therapeutic relationship. Trevithick admitted that the client’s environment does not always make up for with relationships, meaning that some contexts need additional interventions (2003). Knowing when a relationship is the

most effective strategy versus when another strategy is needed is an important boundary negotiation.

### **Relational Cultural Theory**

Trevithick wrote at great length about the merits of effective relationship from a social work perspective. In her work she referenced, in a case study, a framework for “growth fostering relationship” (2003). Researching this term led to a body of work on Relational-cultural therapy which is rooted in feminism and psychodynamic theories (Kress, Haiyasoco, Zoldan, Headley, & Trepal, 2018). This section of the literature review will focus on relational cultural theory, its linkage to relationship-based practice, relationship characteristics, and implications for clients, especially those experiencing trauma.

Relational-Cultural Theory was developed by Jean Miller at the Stone Center at Wellesley College in 1976 and expanded in further research in 1991. Kress, et al. wrote that it was developed in response to a lack of recognition in women’s experiences in psychosocial theories (2018). Banks stated the primary goal of Relational-Cultural theory is to develop mutual growth fostering relationship under the premise that all growth happens within and towards relationship (2006). Kress, et al., expanded this definition writing “forming and maintaining healthy relationships is fundamental to all evidenced based approaches to counseling (2018). In contrast, is the concept of isolation or disconnection which Banks defined as the “core of human suffering” and the largest obstacle to healing (2006).<sup>1</sup> Kress, et al. described disconnection as being with other and with oneself, which can lead to destructive behaviors such as substance abuse (2018). If isolation is the central problem, then connection is the primary mode of healing, described Banks (2006). This leads to the central relationship paradox where “intense longing for safe connection coexists with equally intense fear of being hurt again” (Banks, 2006).

Kress, et al., (2018) described more principles of Relational Cultural Theory, listing seven basic ideas:

1. People grow through and toward relationship
2. Mutuality in relationship is a mature function
3. Differentiation and elaboration in relationship signifies growth
4. Mutual empathy
5. Authenticity
6. Growth Fostering Relationships

---

<sup>1</sup> Folgheraiter & Raineri viewed relationship as leverage points and not the source of all problems. (2012)

7. Relationship competencies is an important developmental goal over a lifetime

Kress, et al. further asserted that Relational-Cultural Theory is central to good mental health and addresses self-blame, self-empathy, and self-awareness (2018). Kress, et al., also contended that the focus on client's developmental and cultural background makes it an appropriate strategy for diverse populations (2018). Relational-Cultural theory was foundational to the work of Brown's Shame Resilience Theory (2006). The themes of connection, empathy, and isolation are central to both works (Brown, 2006). Brown expands on relational cultural theory by adding a focus on education and awareness of the effects of shame (2006). Brown stated, "recognizing the universality of our most private struggles often leads to the second important benefit of reaching out to others" (2006).

#### **Linkage to Relationship-Based Practice in Social Work**

As mentioned above, Relational-Cultural theory was interwoven throughout Trevithick's work describing effective social work relationships. Alexander and Charles wrote that social work has some cross-over with psychoanalytic theory, so using it as a social work methodology is appropriate. Trevithick referenced the authors of Relational-Cultural Theory and expanded on many of its themes (2003). She also observed the need for "corrective" and "reparative" emotional experiences (Trevithick, 2003). Trevithick noted that the poorer quality of people's relationship history and social environment will result in diminished ability to relate with other people, social situations and emotional demand (2003). Likewise, Folgheraiter & Raineri observed that vulnerable people isolate themselves out of embarrassment and suspicion which is a common theme in relational-cultural theory (2012). Trevithick also identified that the breakdown of healthy constructive relationship affect many key areas of life:

1. Interpersonal conflict
  2. Social relationships
  3. Formal organizations
  4. Social transition
  5. Role performance
  6. Emotional distress
  7. Inadequate resources
- (Trevithick, 2003)

This list is important because it identified relationships in a broader context than just interpersonal ones.

#### **Relationship Characteristics**

Careful attention was paid to highlight the characteristics of relationship for future comparison, as was done with relationship-based practice. Banks noted that with

Relational-Cultural Theory the relationship is both experiential with the client experiencing a new healthy relationship, as well as psychoeducational in coming to a cognitive understanding of relational violations and the implications of shame, terror and chronic disconnection (2006). The therapeutic relationship is rooted in mutuality or mutual empathy (Banks, 2006). This quality is defined not as an exchange of life stories or an equal distribution of power (Banks, 2006). Rather, mutuality is described as the client seeing that their story has had an impact on the practitioner (Banks, 2006). Banks noted that this process is opposite of how many therapists are trained to not show clients that they have been impacted (2006). This process of mutuality required negotiation and authenticity (Banks, 2006). Banks also noted that healing is not a linear process (Banks, 2006).

Growth Fostering Relationships are five indicators of healthy relationships developed at The Stone Center by and reference in both social work and psychotherapy literature (Trevithick, 2003) (Banks, 2006). The benchmarks are identified as:

1. Increase in zest and vitality
  2. Increase in empowerment to act
  3. Enlarged picture of ourselves and others
  4. Increase in self-worth
  5. A growing desire for more rather than less connection and contact with others
- (Banks, 2006) (Trevithick, 2003)

### **Relational Cultural Theory and Trauma Survivors**

Relational-Cultural theory has broad application in therapeutic contexts and has been explored for use with clients who have experienced trauma. This is relevant because of the underlying trauma in the research context of the Tenderloin. Trauma is pandemic in the context of homelessness, abuse, poverty, and trafficking especially. Banks identified Relational Cultural theory as the best therapeutic method for trauma as well as the most difficult (2006). Kress, et al. defined trauma as a common human experience that overwhelms one's ordinary systems of care that give them a sense of control, connection and meaning (2018). Banks identified trauma as being highly subjective (2006). Kress, et al., asserted that trauma happens in a socio-cultural context, so all trauma has a relational context (Kress, et al., 2018). Banks described the process of chronic trauma as being "locked in condemned isolation" (2006). Banks continued the description of trauma to include the relationship paradox and the search for other ways to cope including substance abuse (2006). Banks argued that connection is powerful

treatment for trauma survivors because it teaches basic relationship skills and is healing from the symptoms of trauma (2006).

When relational cultural theory is used for treatment in trauma survivors it has three goals:

1. Address connections and disconnections
2. Explore and rebuild relational images
3. Foster mutuality, empathy and shared power in counseling relationship (Kress, et al., 2018)

To achieve these goals, there are 3 general approaches to counseling:

1. Safety (stabilization and strengthening of relationship skill)
2. Recovery and Mourning (review and analyze trauma)
3. Reconnect into larger community (Banks, 2006; Kress et al., 2018)

Banks described the significance of the second step by writing, “A person must be present in her own experience in order to move into healthy mutual relationship” (2006). Banks also identified a potential fourth step, where the client moves into global healing, choosing to empower others and bring other survivors into the world of more respectful relationships (2006).

Trauma is not just a part of psychological practice, but also informs social work. Trauma informed practice recognizes that one’s current difficulties can be understood in the context of past trauma (Knight, 2015). Knight observed that practitioners work with trauma survivors in the context of addiction, mental health, child welfare, and corrections (2015). Therefore, in social work, the focus is on the impact of trauma in the current context and not dwelling in the past (Knight, 2015). Knight explained that relationship goal in trauma informed practice is a working alliance which also produces a corrective emotional experience (2015). Empathy and empowerment as well as professional boundaries are important components of the relationship (Knight, 2015). She further explained:

Assisting a survivor in...staying clean, finding employment, or remaining emotionally stable by taking necessary medication is an essential step in addressing the long-term effects of trauma (Knight, 2015, p. 28)

Now that the theoretical foundation for relationship-based social work has been examined, nonprofit administration literature is examined for an application of this theory.

## Theories of Change and Impact Evaluation

Transitioning to nonprofit administration literature, strategic planning and evaluation works were reviewed specifically for principles related to impact. Theory of Change is an established tool of nonprofit strategic planning, program evaluation and impact assessment. This research review is focused on the elements that relate directly to impact assessment.

Theories of change originated in the social and government sector (Meehan & Jonker, 2018) and gained early traction with further development from the United Way and the Kellogg Foundation (Lynch-Cerullo & Cooney, 2011). Their development was linked to evidenced-based or Results Based Accountability. Primarily theories of change refer to changes in human beings and the question is asked of nonprofits are you “creatures of value or user of resources” (Lynch-Cerullo & Cooney, 2011). Knowlton and Phillips (2013) asserted that “better thinking always yields to better results.” However, they also wrote that “logic models are no guarantee of logic” and that “graphic design does not equal truth” (Knowlton & Phillips, 2013). To that end, theories of change are considered characteristics of data driven organizations (Boyce, 2017) and are linked toward the trend in evaluating impact.

Theories of change are associated with three key purposes related to impact: strategic planning, effectiveness, and accountability. Boyce noted that theories of change are often overlooked even though they are a critical step in assessment and evaluation (2017). Boyce linked a functional theory of change strategic planning and decision making (2017). Likewise, Meehan and Jonker (2018) also link a theory of change to the strategic planning process. Knowlton and Phillips emphasized the need for strategic planning to be rooted in truth instead of brainstorming (2013).

Kapucu, Healy, and Arslan, 2011, linked theories of change with effectiveness, defined as the ability to achieve stated mission (2011). Lynch-Cerullo and Cooney, who wrote from a social work perspective, charted the trend of demonstrated effectiveness in the social services field with an emphasis on results-orientated strategies and proven evidence-based practice (2011). Secondly, theories of change are linked to a trend in accountability, primarily to funders (Lynch-Cerullo & Cooney, 2011); (Zimmerman & Bell, 2014); (Boyce, 2017).

Although the concept of a theory of change is an established practice in some nonprofits, there is still a tension identified in the literature. Meehan and Jonker (2018) referenced a quote from Bruce Sievers that said:

Unlike businesses, philanthropic and nonprofit organizations operate in two worlds. One of these is defined by instrumental objectives such as financial

stability [or] number of people served. The other world, however, is defined by different end goals of human action: education, artistic expression, freedom of thought and action, concern for future generations, and preservation of cultural and environmental legacies. . . . These ends are the goals and aspirations of the human experience and are not reducible to the same kinds of categories that define profit margins and make for the most efficient production of widget. (Meehan & Jonker, 2018, p. 35)

Although Meehan and Jonker did not agree with Stievers, they identified that nonprofit leaders experienced these tensions. This echoes the tension that faith-based social service providers have with theories of change. They specifically addressed the challenges of quantifying qualitative data and said that much progress has been made and many resources are now available, so that this should not be a hindrance for nonprofits anymore (Meehan & Jonker, 2018).

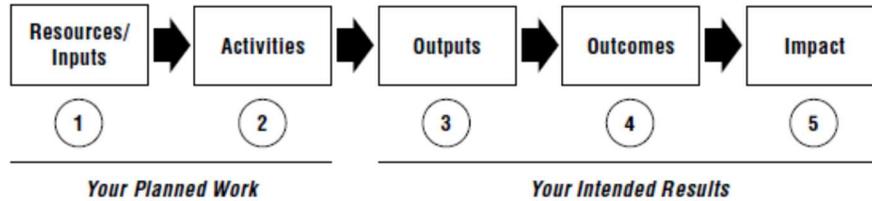
### **Model Types and Structure**

Theory of change and logic model are terms often used interchangeably. This arises from the various types that are identified in literature. At least two types of models are commonly identified and in some instances three types are identified. The two most common types identified are organization theory of change and program logic model (Knowlton & Phillips, 2013) (Boyce, 2017); (Hunter, 2006). Similarly, the Kellogg Foundation identified three separate logic model emphases: theory, outcomes, and activities, the latter two being focused on programs, with linkage to goals and specific operations (2004). Hunter also specified three different types of theories of change, or sub theories: organization, programs and finance (2006) and wrote that program design has “organizational ramifications.” For the purposes of this research, theory of change will be used to define the theoretical model that organizations adopt to guide their work. Logic model will be used to describe the specific program strategy based on the theory of change.

Theory of change can be conceptualized in many ways. It is often referenced by its causal nature referring to linkage or chain (United Way of America, 1996), (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004), (Zimmerman & Bell, 2014), (Meehan & Jonker, 2018). Often, it is diagrammed in linear progression as shown in figure 1.

However, theories of change do not need to be linear. In fact, sometimes there is concern because the linear causation implies a predictable pattern that does not account for influencing factors (Bloch, 2012). They can be cyclical especially when including multiple streams (Klugman, 2011). They are also described as cyclical when linked to systems change (Knowlton & Phillips, 2013). The cyclical depiction of a theory

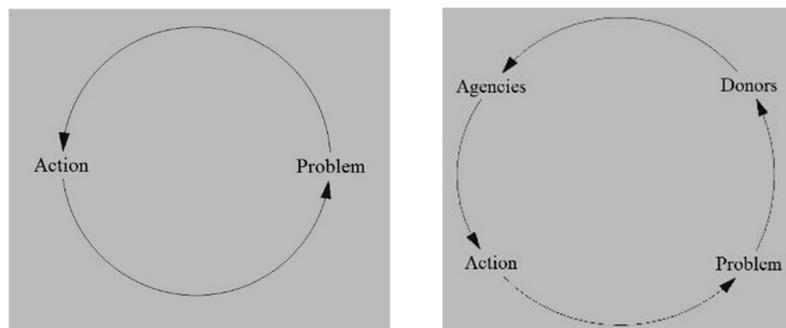
**Figure 1: Linear Logic Model Example**



Source: (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004)

of change is a visualization of their key characteristic. Cyclical models are also called causal loops and are used to illustrate complex systems by showing influential forces and cause and effect relationships (Knowlton & Phillips, 2013). Causal loops are also called feedback loops referring to the need for feedback to accomplish goals in systems change (Hendricks, n.d.). Simplified examples of a causal loop are shown in figure 2. Causal loops are observed to be better models for social change because they are non-linear, iterative, adaptive, and learning (Alford, 2017). The models presented later as recommendations in this Capstone will follow nonlinear models because these four characteristics mirror the non-linear, iterative, adaptive, and learning nature of relationships.

**Figure 2: Causal Loop Examples**

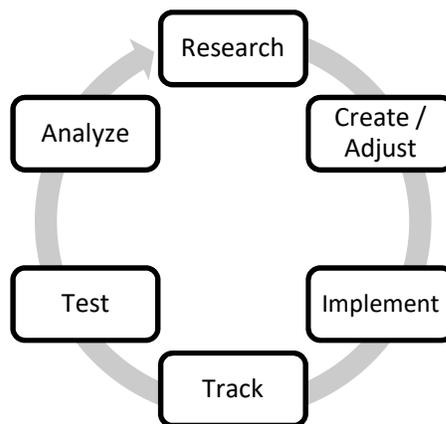


Source: (Hendricks, n.d.)

Developing a theory of change or logic model is also a cyclical process in and of itself. Multiple authors illustrated the cyclical nature of theories of change as they relate to the evaluation process. The Kellogg Foundation described the process as ongoing with adjustment, a “snapshot” and a “working draft” (2004). Hunter outlined the process as adoption, implementation, tracking, managing (2006). Knowlton and Phillips described

the theory of change as an iterative process between doing and learning (2013). Boyce also described the process as ongoing (2017) and Meehan and Jonker used the term “dynamic feedback loop” (2018). Not only can the theory of change or logic model be circular, but the process of research, creating a model or adjusting an existing model, tracking indicators, testing the model, and analyzing results is also a cycle. Developing a model is not a static linear process which is illustrated in figure 3.

**Figure 3: Developing a Theory of Change / Logic Model**



Source: Author’s own creation

Again, much has been written about the characteristics and components of a theory of change. The focus here will be those characteristics that speak primarily to impact. The Kellogg Foundation identified a key question, “How do you demonstrate your program contributed to the change you intended? (2004). With theories of change, the starting point is the end point. Organizations need to define their intended impact before creating a model for change. Once the vision of transformation is established, organizations work backwards to fill in the processes that led to that change. The Kellogg Foundation instructed readers to decide on outcomes first or intended results first, then build in ways to gather data (2004). Similarly, Knowlton and Phillips wrote to start with intended results instead of “prematurely” setting strategy (2013).

### **Theoretical Grounding**

Just as Knowlton and Phillips stated that “logic models are no guarantee of logic” (2013), the second common characteristic is how a theory of change is grounded. Wilson-Ahlstrom called for outcomes that are “psychometrically strong” and “conceptually grounded” and instructed readers to look for common constructs in multiple frameworks (2014). The proceeding review from social sciences was important in

anchoring the resulting models in a theoretical framework that has already been researched and established. The Kellogg Foundation noted that:

Grantees fail to make specific connections between program, related best practices, literature and practitioner wisdom that could and should support their approach and work (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004, p. 21).

The United Way observed that intangible outcomes and indicators can be built in combination with expert judgement and qualitative observation (1996). Knowlton and Phillips expanded this definition and called for theories of change to be grounded in literature, experience or other plausible evidence (2013). They also noted that a theory of change that is grounded in an established claim or proof is a replication, whereas one that is rooted in hypothesis is innovative (Knowlton & Phillips, 2013). Both Boyce (2017) and Knowlton and Phillips (2013) described the process of “why does this work” and the need to link the how and the what to the why. Getting to an understanding of the why is the combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis that should not be overlooked in strategic planning.

There was one notable difference in the level of grounding required of a theory of change. Zimmerman and Bell asserted that a theory of change should be a logical linkage but also stated that no one organization can take credit for outcomes (2014). Their description is similar to that of contributive models where organization are collaborating towards a common outcome of collected impact (Spark Policy Institute, ORS Impact, 2018). Zimmerman and Bell’s assertion is contrasted by Meehan and Jonker who stated that a theory of change is only as good as it’s empirical validity (2018). They wrote that fact-based, objective analysis is primary with an admonishment that a SWOT analysis is not a substitute for facts (2018). While both authors referred to evidenced based practices, the Meehan and Jonker attached more weight to proving impact through quantitative studies, while Zimmerman and Bell believed that causal linkage was sufficient.

### **Levels of Outcomes and Impact**

The outcome and impact components of theories of change and logic models are the foundation evaluation. The central role is defined as showing the relationship between the planned work, the intended results and the actual work (Knowlton & Phillips, 2013) These models are like a road map that show you when, where and how to look for effectiveness (Knowlton & Phillips, 2013). These models lead to better conversations within the organization and lead to organizational learning with time-sensitive and appropriate levels of feedback (Knowlton & Phillips, 2013)

Outcomes and impact are also two terms that are used interchangeably in the literature even though there are differences. This is due in part to the progression of their definition throughout the years. The United Way originally differentiated between initial, intermediate and long-term outcomes (1996). They stated that long term outcomes were difficult to track and advised looking at intermediate outcomes (United Way of America, 1996). The Kellogg Foundation later classified short term outcomes at 1-3 years and intermediate outcomes at 4-6 years and named impact at 7-10 years (2004). The Kellogg Foundation also referred to the testing of “if/then” statements not on an individual level, as it is with outcomes, but on an organizational, community or systems level (2004). Hunter stated that outcomes are enduring change and is more abstract (2006) while Lynch-Cerullo and Cooney noted that social change happens slowly (2011). Boyce charted the progression in a theory of change and observed social impact occurs after outcomes (2017). This timeline points to a shift in understanding the difference between outcome and impact.

**Table 1: Three Levels of Impact**

	3 Levels of Impact		
Social Work Research	micro - individual	meso - group	macro - institutions/policies
United Way	initial	intermediate	long-term
Kellogg Foundation	short-term outcomes (1-3 years)	intermediate outcomes (4-6 years)	impact (7 - 10 years)
Kellogg Foundation	individual	organizational	community/systems
Wilson-Ahlstrom	positioning	performance	proof
Meehan & Jonker	direct service (outputs)	pattern (outcomes)	systems (impact)

Source: Author’s own creation based on sources

Different levels appear in relation to evaluation and stages. Lynch-Cerullo and Cooney, differentiated between three stages of effectiveness: apparent, demonstrated and proven (2011). Meehan and Jonker (2018) also identified three similar areas of impact: direct service (outputs), pattern change (outcomes) and framework change (impact). Meehan and Jonker (2018) assert that impact measure must be quantifiable even if a nonprofit feels that their qualitative work can’t be reduced to mere numbers. Wilson-Ahlstrom, et al. outlined the purpose of measurement as: positioning, performance, and proof (2014). Social work also has three lenses for research: micro, meso and macro which examine individuals, groups, and institutions and policies (DeCarlo, 2018). Bloch described those levels as the impact of an individual program (micro), individual organizations (meso), and contributions or impact of the social economy or...nonprofit sector (2012).

## Evaluation and Measurement

Measuring outcomes and impact is part of the evaluative process. Just as theories of change and logic models begin with the concept of outcomes and impact and work backwards, evaluation is a part of beginning conversations. Evaluative thinking is important from the very beginning of organization or program (Knowlton & Phillips, 2013). Meehan and Jonker noted that impact measure should start early to be effective and part of organizational culture (2018).

Outcome and impact evaluation first starts with the question of motivation. Lall highlighted two different motivations of “prove versus improve” (2017). Proving referred to external motivations such as those from funders, whereas improving was identified as an internally motivated process (Lall, 2017). While the stated goal of performance measurement may be to improve, it is largely symbolic when motivated by external stakeholders (Lall, 2017). Bloch identified a difference between program evaluation which is more concrete and social impact evaluation which is more abstract and may even be an “amalgamation” of multiple factors (2012). Similarly, Knowlton and Phillips identified the two types of evaluations as summative and formative (2013). Summative evaluation is retrospective and asks what difference did we make whereas formative evaluation looks at what is working about a program in progress (Knowlton & Phillips, 2013). Differentiating between prove, improve, summative or formative will determine the type of evaluation and measurement needed.

Authors offered various frames for describing and assessing outcomes. The United Way described outcomes through sensory questions: “what does it look like when it has occurred?” and “what do you see?” (1996). Knowlton and Phillips asked, “What did we do?” and “What did we get?” (2013). The Kellogg Foundation determined that both outcomes and impact should follow the SMART framework and be: specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic and timed (2004). Furthermore, measurements must be mapped directly to outcomes (Wilson-Alhstrom, 2014). Meehan and Jonker (2018) quoted Bill Gates as saying, “Measure what will drive progress.” Hunter specified that client outcomes are separate from organizational outcomes and should focus on a change in: status, attitudes, skills, behavior, achievement and attainment (2006). Likewise, the Kellogg Foundation described some of the key indicators for outcomes and impact as changes in participant attitudes, knowledge, skills, intentions and or behavior. These changes are depicted in table 2 with attitude, skills and behavior changes as common indicators.

**Table 2: Outcomes in Participants**

<b>Outcome as changes in participant:</b>	
<b>Kellogg Foundation (2004)</b>	<b>Hunter (2006)</b>
Attitudes	Attitude
Knowledge	-
Skills	Skills
Intentions	-
Behavior	Behavior
-	Status
-	Achievement
-	Attainment

Source: Author’s own creation, based on references

Evaluating impact asks nonprofits to question their core function of methods and their results. Were the results intended and predicted or were they an unintended, “spillover effect?” (Bloch, 2012). Zimmerman and Bell outlined creating an impact statement as part of the Sustainability Matrix Map (2014). Zimmerman and Bell (2014) noted that impact is differentiating between core results of work versus a positive by-product. They clarified the distinction as being data-driven or having a significant contribution (Zimmerman & Bell, 2014). They asserted that impact is now what drives organizations instead of mission while recognizing that organizations have a “dual bottom line” of impact and financial viability” (Zimmerman & Bell, 2014). Stannard-Stockton linked impact to the degree of effectiveness of the activities (2010). Impact measurement is important when organizations think about scalability. Meehan and Jonker referred to the generation of resources when impact is established (2018). They also described the process of learning and sharing with others transparently that can lead to scaling (Meehan & Jonker, 2018). Zimmerman and Bell wrote that impact benefits not only the organization but also the beneficiaries (2014). Impact is also linked to interventions that change the larger human context (Bloch, 2012). Finally, Meehan and Jonker (2018) described “courageous nonprofit leaders to make unpopular decisions to maximize long term impact. An example of such courage is asking the question “If we went away today who would it matter to and why?” (Zimmerman & Bell, 2014).

Choosing measurement criteria is also an important aspect of impact. Zimmerman and Bell recommended that impact criteria needed to challenge staff to accurately assess the current state of affairs (2014). They also mandated two specific criteria when evaluating program: contribution to intended impact and excellence in execution

(Zimmerman & Bell, 2014). The most rigorous and reliable evaluation to engage in is randomized, third party evaluation (Meehan and Jonker, 2018). Evaluative questions from a community builder organization using a Results Based Accountability approach were identified as:

1. How much did we do?
2. How well did we do it?
3. Is anyone better off?

(Bloch, 2012)

Knowlton and Phillips also described evaluation as a loop which is consistent with the cyclical nature of theories of change and logic models (2013). The identified single loop evaluation as focusing on current program improvement and double loop evaluation asks if the original program design was sound (Knowlton & Phillips, 2013). These loops can apply different portions of the logic model. For example, evaluation questions were linked to the following components:

1. Output → Are we doing the right things?
2. Outcomes → What is the difference in the participants?
3. Impact → What is different in the community

(Knowlton & Phillips, 2013)

### **Challenges in Measuring Impact**

There are also significant challenges to measuring impact. Meehan and Jonker wrote that there are no unified field theories, common language, metrics or systems to aid in impact assessment, especially as it related to comparing organizations (2018). Lall identified the key challenges with “measuring to prove” are non-standardized indicators, indicators that are not aligned to goals of the mission, lack of resources, competing donor demands, and the challenge of quantifying the organization’s operations (2017). Bloch, among others, identified a need for funder to provide financial and capacity building resources to fund impact evaluation (2012). Again, the question of what is being counted is important. Bloch noted that tracking impact with individuals does not mean there has been social change (2012) which points to a need for different evaluations measures for each level of impact.

While outcomes are difficult enough to measure, impact is even more so because of the gold standard of empirical results that limit the effects of other influences (Stannard-Stockton, 2010). Not only are such studies difficult to do but they may not be the right thing to do. Ford Foundation president Darren Walker described the “tremendous harm” that is happening in the philanthropy sector as a result of reliance on concrete

metrics to measure impact (Paynter, 2018). Simply put, Walker stated, “Some of the most important things in life cannot be measured” (Paynter, 2018).

Another challenge refers back to the motivation of evaluation. When organizations are measuring to prove impact, they are trying to justify their activities rather than improve them (Bloch, 2012). No one wants to look bad and wants to show they are doing a good job (Bloch, 2012).

### **Collective Impact**

An entire literature review could be conducted in the area of collective impact, but this did not fit within the limits of this research. However, it is worth noting that these themes did arise in the literature around impact and how to evaluate it. Bloch noted that collective impact recognizes that no single organization or program is responsible for changes in an entire population, so a community is required in collaboration with one another toward a shared goal (2012). Collective impact has five characteristics:

1. Common Agenda
  2. Shared Measurement
  3. Mutually Reinforcing Activities
  4. Continuous Communication
  5. Backbone Support Organization
- (Bloch, 2012) (Kania & Kramer, 2011)

The implications for this research are characteristics of common agenda and shared measurement. What is a common framework for transformational relationships that can develop a shared measurement system?

### **Literature Review Summary**

This literature review has laid the foundation for research by establishing historical and relational framework of faith-based social work, challenges with evidenced-based practice, theoretical and methodological frameworks for relationship-based practice, and principles of nonprofit evaluation that utilized a theory of change and logic model to define outputs, outcomes and impact. What then, is the influence of relationship theory in a faith-based social service organizations’ impact? Relationship theory has implications for how organizations develop a theory of change, program logic model and evaluates impact.

## **Section 3: Methods and Approaches**

### **Research Methodology**

The research for this Capstone project followed a deductive, action-based model. A hermeneutical approach was used in analysis to cycle between synthesis and analysis in comparing the expert interview qualitative data to the theoretical foundation in the literature review. This synthesis was used to build a unique framework drawing on multiple disciplines and points of view.

### **Literature Review**

The literature review focused on two primary bodies of work: nonprofit planning and evaluation and social science literature which broadly included literature encompassing social work, psychology, and faith-based practice. Later in the analysis phase, primary data from the expert interviews was mapped back to the literature review. Comparisons were made for similar conclusions. Additionally, the data was analyzed for gaps in the literature review revealing areas for additional research.

### **Expert Interviews**

Expert interviews comprised the primary data for this project and fell into two categories: program professionals and evaluation professionals. Interviewees were given a research information sheet, consent to interview, publish and record, as well as a set of question in advance of the interview (Appendix 2, 3, and 4). Interview questions were semi structured and focused on the nature of relationships, theories of change, logic models and evaluation.

Directors from three faith-based social service organizations in the Tenderloin were contacted for expert program interviews: Because Justice Matters, City Hope, and YWAM. These organizations were selected because they are faith-based organizations in the Tenderloin that provided access to an interview:

1. Steve Binnquist – Program Director YWAM’s Restoration Initiatives; interview conducted in person on March 4, 2019
2. Julia Pferdehirt, MA LPC – Women’s Director at Because Justice Matters; interview conducted in person on March 4, 2019
3. Rev. Paul Trudeau, MA BS – Executive Director of City Hope; interview conducted in person on March 9, 2019

Additionally, a set of interviews were conducted with evaluation professionals. This set of interview questions was based on the themes in the program questions but tailored for their expertise in planning and evaluation.

1. Nancy Chan, MPP – Nonprofit Consultant, Former Director of Consulting for Arabella Advisors for Evaluation Engagement  
Interview conducted in person on March 28, 2019
2. Paula Fleisher, MA Ed. – Assistant Director at the Center for Community Engagement at UCSF  
Interview conducted in person on April 3, 2019
3. Barry Kibel, Ph.D. – Director of Innovation and Research at SEED Impact,  
Interview conducted over the phone on April 29, 2019

Interviews were recorded with the Android App Easy Voice Recorder (with the exception of Dr. Kibel's interview). Notes were taken during the interview and a summary was also transcribed on subsequent review. Key themes were coded in the interviews and compared with the foundation in the literature review.

### **Participant Analysis**

On some level each of the expert interviewees was a stakeholder in this research project. The program interviewees identified the challenges in evaluating relationship-based programs and were very much interested in this research topic and its possible application for their program operations. Chan also was a stakeholder in the sense that she has a perspective on re-framing evaluation for faith-based nonprofits. Fleisher is also considered a stakeholder for the work that she does in the Tenderloin in helping nonprofits evaluate their impact. She admitted she does not have a faith-based perspective, but her insight was still sought for its evaluation implications.

### **Secondary Data**

Secondary data was not reviewed for this Capstone project due to time constraints and research restraints. This is one opportunity for additional research.

## **Section 4. Data Analysis**

### **Transformational Relationship Model**

Program expert interviews were conducted exploring themes around relationships, connections to theories of change and logic models and how outcomes and impact are measured. In short, how does each practitioner view relationships in an impact framework. What emerged were descriptions that fit into a five-part framework for Transformational Relationships (Figure 1):

1. Connection
2. Nature of the Relationships
3. Qualities of the Relationship
4. Transformation
5. Mutuality and Reciprocity

Those themes are discussed in greater detail below with an emphasis on themes generated in the expert interviews as other characteristics were described in the literature review. However, when appropriate, comparisons will be made to the foundation laid in the literature review. A summary of the data supporting Transformational Relationships is found in Figure 3 at the end of the Transformational Relationship Model Section.

Once the model for Transformational Relationships has been established, the discussion will shift into how theories of change, logic models and impact evaluation is framed with themes from the evaluation expert interviews.

**Figure 4: Transformational Relationship Framework**



Source: Author's Creation; graphic design by Katherine Au  
(Discussed in greater detail in Section 5: Recommendations)

### **Connection is Combating Isolation**

Relationships are central to the work of all three program interviewees. Pferdehirt described relationships as the context for change to “root and grow” (Pferdehirt, personal communication, March 4, 2019). Trudeau identified relationships as the primary path to accomplish their impact goals (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019). The reason for the centrality is the shared belief that poverty is not just economic but is also described in relational terms. Relational poverty, despair, loneliness, lack of community, is the biggest contributor to issues common in the Tenderloin: homelessness, poverty, and substance abuse (Binquist, personal communication, March 4, 2019). Shame, mental illness and addiction are relational issues Binquist, personal communication, March 4, 2019). This corresponds with the seven relationships that Trevithick identified in the literature review. (2003). These are central tenets of Lupton’s approach to community development discussed in the literature review. Similarly, Trudeau describes relationships as resources that are lacking in a scarce neighborhood (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019). Pferdehirt summed it up by stating “we are wounded in relationship; we are healed in relationship” (Pferdehirt, personal communication, March 4, 2019). This echoed the assertions in Relational Cultural Theory that isolation is a central conflict best addressed in relationship.

### ***Friendships and Funnels***

Connection is a process that is different for every relationship. Binquist spoke about connection as a friendship and navigating the duality of people being both a friend and a client (Binquist, personal communication, March 4, 2019). Trudeau and Pferdehirt, described connection happening in both one-on-one personal encounters as well as broader social contexts (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019) (Pferdehirt, personal communication, March 4, 2019). Pferdehirt describes this as a funnel (personal communication, March 4, 2019). She also describes her work as hanging out with women, drinking coffee and talking about stuff; which is an individualized process (Pferdehirt, personal communication, March 4, 2019). Trudeau spoke about meeting unmet social needs by providing a “living room” space at the community center (personal communication, March 9, 2019). He identified a strategy of broader engagement for all and events that require an RSVP as a form of commitment and accountability (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019). Meeting basic relief needs in a neighborhood like the Tenderloin is part of this connection strategy. Trudeau observed, “If you don’t do basic relief work in the Tenderloin, people won’t trust or open up to you” (personal communication, March 9, 2019). Both individual and broad strategies are important for cultivating connection with people.

### ***Network of Support***

Building on the centrality of relationships is the concept of a support network or a “relationship resource bank” as Trudeau described it (personal communication, March 8, 2019). Binnquist identified that key relationships have helped people not end up on the street (personal communication, March 4, 2019). The community safety net is how people are caught when they have a bad day or make a harmful decision (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019). Without this safety net, the same decision can be disastrous in scarce community, causing someone to fall harder and faster (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019). Trudeau described support networks as specifically addressing shame by believing in the person (personal communication, March 9, 2019). Pferdehirt asserted that a network of support is the difference between someone simply surviving or truly thriving (personal communication, March 4, 2019). She observed that networks of support even develop on the street by engaging in certain behaviors and relationships for protection (Pferdehirt, personal communication, March 4, 2019). Trudeau asserted that the Church should be a relationship resource bank, helping build community for people in need (personal communication, March 9, 2019). The theme of relationships as a support network relates both to the poverty of community referenced by Corbett and Fikkert and the goal of relational cultural theory which is to reconnect an individual to the larger community.

### ***Connection and Impact***

In this model, it is noted that for individuals experiencing extreme isolation, due to poverty, homelessness, addiction, or trafficking, for instance, impact can begin by simply connecting with another person in an authentic way. Connection may be incremental at first such as eye contact, a brief conversation, or by simply showing up in a social space. But this is the starting point for impact. Relationship based practice identified relationship as a foundation. Relational Cultural Theory tells us that isolation is the “core of human suffering” (Banks, 2006) so connection is the first step in reversing that process. Understanding the nature of the relationship and key relationship qualities are also important to establishing a connection and are discussed further below.

### ***Structure of Relationship***

Understanding the structure of transformational relationships helps understand how connection happens and how the relationship can be sustained for impact. Five structural traits of Transformational Relationships were identified in the expert interviews and will be discussed in greater detail

1. Long Term

2. Nonlinear
3. Client-Centered
4. Boundaries
5. Qualitative vs Quantitative

### ***Long Term***

Binnquist identified relationships as a long-term strategy for affecting change in the community (personal communication, March 4, 2019). Pferdehirt observed that the women she works with have an increased willingness to engage in the relationships with authenticity and vulnerability because they have been together for the long haul (personal communication, March 4, 2019). Pferdehirt referred to incremental changes, inferring that the relationships involved in that change process are not quick (personal communication, March 4, 2019). Trudeau shared that part of their strategy in their meals program is to build-in a longer process to give more time for process and conversation (personal communication, March 9, 2019). They do not provide fast food or take out because it is contrary to their relationship goals, even around a meal (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019). Transformational relationships are built with a long-term view of the relationship and a realistic expectation of the amount of time it takes to see transformation.

### ***Non-Linear***

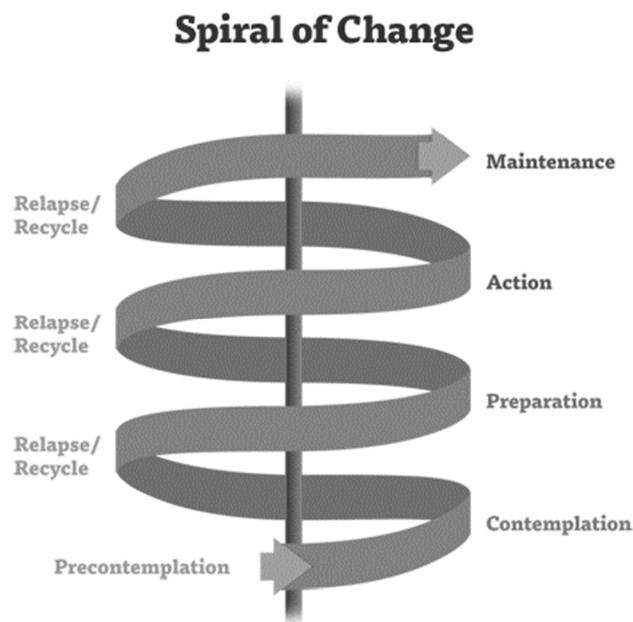
Non-linear is a theme not only for transformational relationships but also for theories of change and logic models which will be discussed in greater detail later. Woven into the theme of each program interview was the idea that relationships are not linear, so linear processes do not fit well with them. Pferdehirt observed that there are so many things that cannot be controlled that affect the lives of her clientele (personal communication, March 4, 2019). Transformational relationships are iterative and cyclical by their nature.

Part of the reason Transformational Relationships are not linear is the Theory of Stages of Change. This is a psychotherapy tool that emerged three times in the Capstone research. First, in the expert interview Pferdehirt referenced the theory and described its process as:

1. Precontemplation
2. Contemplation
3. Preparation
4. Action
5. Maintenance

She described examples of this in her work with women as it relates to seeking treatment for substance abuse or leaving a domestic abuse situation. She described a woman “thinking about thinking about” change, thinking about change, preparing to change, taking action to change and finally maintaining that change (Pferdehirt, personal communication, March 4, 2019.) In issues of domestic abuse, the average women will plan to leave seven times before she actually leaves (Pferdehirt, personal communication, March 4, 2019). Being in a transformational relationship with someone as they go through the stages of change is cyclical, can even feel repetitive, but as someone cycles through the process, change or growth or transformation is occurring.

**Figure 5: Spiral Model Example and Stages of Change Theory**



Source: (The Center for Harm Reduction Therapy, n.d.)

The Theory of Stages of Change presented itself during a second phase of research. While doing a google search for examples of spiral theories of change, a model of Theory of Stages of Change emerged that visualizes this process as a spiral in figure 5. (The Center for Harm Reduction Therapy, n.d.). This model was on the website for Harm Reduction Therapy. Harm reduction is a key strategy at Glide Foundation. Glide was one organization sought for an expert interview but was not able to connect with anyone within their organization. However, attendance at a forum was possible, hosted

at The Tenderloin Museum, that featured a panel discussion on the harm reduction program at Glide, valuable insights were gained on their program model (Harkin, Ector, White, Buehlman, & Williams, 2019) on February 28, 2019. This discussion provided valuable insights into how Glide frames relationships and recovery in their work. First their approach is centered on the individual's initiative, asking "where do you want to go?" in humility. Secondly, Glide recognizes that we all have relationships to substances, but some are more harmful than others. Third, it was observed that being "proximate to suffering" is where transformation happens. Fourth, relationship was described as unconditional acceptance, and the cyclical process of not giving up on anyone, going through second, third, fourth chances and so on. The panel went on to state that every life is worth saving. They view harm reduction services as an evidence-based intervention instead of relying on opinion-based interventions (i.e. remaining clean and sober). Glide does offer 12 step recovery groups for those that want it, but they don't push people into that program. Regardless of the strategy, they recognize the difference that community makes and that people in recovery should not be isolated. Lastly, they link their harm reduction program to liberation theology with a goal to free the people. Their approach is to go out "into the trenches" and bring ministry to the people, instead of staying within their walls.

### ***Client-Centered***

Client-centered refers to who is driving the transformation process in the relationship. Relationships can be the catalyst for change but do not cause the change. Binnquist admitted that as a program director he is "powerless" to make change happen (personal communication, March 4, 2019). For real change to take place, an individual has to make that decision for themselves; it can't be forced on them (Binnquist, personal communication, March 4, 2019). Similarly, Pferdehirt identified the principles of client-centered therapy in her work (personal communication, March 4, 2019). She uses this clinical skill in a non-clinical setting, with a focus on being responsive to the goals women set for themselves (Pferdehirt, personal communication, March 4, 2019). But, she acknowledged, that some women are still generating goals to please her, rather than for themselves, and consequently they are not following through with them (Pferdehirt, personal communication, March 4, 2019). In forming relapse prevention plans, she helps clients evaluate if the goals are genuine or set to please staff (Pferdehirt, personal communication, March 4, 2019). In light of this Pferdehirt says she personally is not the motivator for change, unless there is an immediate crisis and she needs to call the police or an ambulance (Pferdehirt, personal communication, March 4, 2019).

Pferdehirt identified another useful tool for use in client centered relationships. In motivational interviewing, her goal is to engage in conversations that help the individual connect past experiences and perceptions to current change strategies (Pferdehirt, March 4, 2019). Examples include questions such as “What has helped in the past?” and “What events or input supported change?” (Pferdehirt, personal communication, March 4, 2019). She appreciates this process because it helps honor change that has already happened, even if it is incremental, and helps the individual see the possibility of future change (Pferdehirt, personal communication, March 4, 2019).

### ***Boundary Negotiations***

Negotiating boundaries was a theme identified in Relationship-based social work and relational cultural theory and it emerged in the expert interviews as well. Binnquist characterized his relationships as friendship with boundaries (personal communication, March 4, 2018). Pferdehirt identified boundaries as a relationship skill taught to the women she works with (personal communication, March 4, 2018). This is similar to the principle that relationship skills taught in reparative relationships in Relational Cultural Theory as discussed in the previous section. Trudeau linked boundaries to the concept of stewarding resources in the sense that being wise and selective with resources requires holding people accountable (personal communication, March 9, 2019). Boundaries are also linked to the evaluation of enabling versus empowering and help identify who is really looking to make authentic change (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019). Which boundaries are set and how they are enforced should be negotiated within organizations and individual relationships. But they should not be neglected as they model healthy relationship and enhance relationship capacity.

### ***Qualitative vs Quantitative***

The tension between the qualitative nature of Transformational relationships and the quantitative nature of logic models was an undercurrent in both set of program and evaluation interviews. This theme will be discussed in greater detail in the planning and evaluation analysis. But it is worth noting that Transformational Relationships are classified as qualitative and are difficult to quantify. Relationships are not transformative by sheer volume. They are not something to check off a to-do list. Transformational relationships are based on very specific qualities. Some of the qualities of Transformational relationships are detailed in the following section.

### ***Qualities of Relationship***

Multiple descriptors of the qualities that make up a Transformational Interview were described in both the literature and the expert interviews. The limitations of this

research do not permit an exhaustive description of all of them. Instead, this discussion will highlight four foundational qualities of Transformational Relationships:

1. Listening
2. Trust
3. Countering Shame
4. Celebration

### ***Listening***

Trudeau identified listening as the starting point for relationship (personal communication, March 9, 2019). Perhaps it should be a component of connection. He observed that you cannot help anyone without understanding their story (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019). Their inmate mentorship program utilizes a timeline activity to introduce the participants to each other, sharing stories on their journeys (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019). The client-centered techniques Pferdehirt shared all require listening skills. Binnquist identified listening as a measure for mutuality which will be discussed in subsequent sections (personal communication, March 4, 2019). Trudeau also included listening as the starting point to evaluation (personal communication, March 9, 2019). Listening is a central quality of transformational relationships not only as a skill but as an indicator for impact.

### ***Trust***

Trust is part of the reparative relationships described in Relational Cultural Theory, leading to transformation. Pferdehirt observed that many people who are homeless, live in poverty, with mental illness and addiction, have a pattern of interrupted or chaotic attachment as children and therefore did not make an appropriate emotional attachment to a caring adult as a child (personal communication, March 4, 2019). She identified trust as critical to the development of a healthy, capable person who can establish relationships (Pferdehirt, personal communication, March 4, 2019). Relationships that establish trust help repair damage done as people begin to learn what it is like to trust someone again (Pferdehirt, personal communication, March 4, 2019).

### ***Countering Shame***

Shame contributes to the isolation that keeps people disconnected from relationships. Transformational relationships seek to counter that shame by offering acceptance. Certain faith-based contexts link the concepts of grace and forgiveness to countering shame. Brown's shame resilience theory is built on the work of Relational Cultural Theory. Binnquist identified shame as a contributor to some of the biggest social issues

in the Tenderloin (personal communication, March 4, 2019). He also identified the trend that Lupton describes, where charity is backwards, creating systems that give people things and creates a sense that beneficiaries are automatically less than whole (Binnquist, personal communication, March 4, 2019).

### ***Celebration and Motivation***

Relational Cultural Theory describes the need for authenticity in relationship. The authentic, friendship quality of transformational relationships is punctuated by celebration and motivation. Friends celebrate and motivate one another. Binnquist observed the need to celebrate progress with people and stay alongside with them in hard times (personal communication, March 4, 2019). Trudeau described the various celebrations that occupy their program's social space (personal communication, March 9, 2019). Pferdehirt referred to celebrating incremental steps taken in the stages of change (personal communication, March 4, 2019). Trudeau talked about rewarding success and getting behind people who are working hard to make change (personal communication, March 9, 2019). Binnquist identified relationships as motivators and that people go farther with relationship than without it (personal communication, March 4, 2019). Celebration and motivation are two qualities of authentic friendship in transformational relationships. Celebration and motivation also fit into the description of Relational Cultural Theories growth fostering relationships "zest and vitality."

### **Transformation**

If relationships are reparative and healing, according to relational cultural theory, then some sort of change, growth, or transformation should be observed in the relationship. Relationship-based social work refers to the working nature of relationships and relational cultural theory describes relationships as growth fostering. These themes were identified in the expert interviews as well. Relational Cultural Theory describes the mature functions of a relationship and the process of differentiation and elaboration that indicates growth. Differentiation and elaboration are related to the non-linear description of Transformative Relationships identified in the expert interviews. Relational cultural theory also names relationship competencies as a core principle. Pferdehirt described relationship tools such as boundaries, conflict resolution, healthy communication and emotional awareness and communication that have been transformative for the women she works with (personal communication, March 4, 2019). Trudeau identified accountability as a key component of the mentorship program (personal communication, March 9, 2019). Trudeau also identified an organizational need to implement case management, so they can formally maintain a place of progress for their clients (personal communication, March 9, 2019).

Transformational Relationships implies that a change is taking place. Pferdehirt recognized that relationship goals should be focused on increased qualities and change, even if those are incremental baby steps (personal communication, March 4, 2019). Binnquist identified current outcome goals that include leadership development (personal communication, March 4, 2019). The relationship is growing and individuals in it are growing at any pace. Lack of growth, change or transformation implies that the relationship is stuck in one of the stages of change. As relationships are negotiated, expectations for growth or change should be discussed as this is a fundamental component of transformation. As noted previously, at any point in the model an individual may experience transformation especially if they are coming from a context of extreme isolation or trauma. A relationship may result in transformation as a spill-over or unintended impact. But building a model of transformative relationships must include intentional growth generating components. One indicator that a relationship is growing or maturing towards transformation is the indicator of Mutuality and Reciprocity which is discussed in the next section.

### **Mutuality & Reciprocity**

Mutuality and Reciprocity emerged as two key relationship characteristics in the interviews. Since it corresponds so well to the central tenet of relational cultural theory it deserves its own description as a theme. First when asked to describe the characteristics of relationship, Binnquist said “mutual anything” (personal communication, March 4, 2019). Whatever it takes to be in a relationship needs to be reciprocated in a relationship (Binnquist, personal communication, March 4, 2019). He went on to identify mutual trust as an important conversation, the process of someone remembering and building off of past conversations and interactions, and genuinely wanting to know more about someone other than themselves (Binnquist, personal communication, March 4, 2019).

Trudeau described his work in developing a mentorship program in the county jail that is rooted in mutuality and reciprocity. The stated goal of the program is not fixing people but building reciprocal relationships where both people are held accountable to the goals they each set (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019). He carefully screens mentors for the program who are willing to be accountable to their mentee. He doesn't even like to use the terms mentor and mentee because it doesn't adequately capture the mutuality of the relationship (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019.) The relationship is defined by reciprocity, accountability, faithfulness, high commitment, defined space and healthiness (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019). The relationship is a dialog, not a monologue; bottom up, not top down (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019). Trudeau describes this level of

mutuality as “everyone has skin in the game and wants transformation” (personal communication, March 9, 2019).

Interestingly, the theme of mutuality came up in a nuanced way in the evaluation discussion. Fleisher described evaluation as part of partnership and reframing conversations from an organization/beneficiary model to an organization/partner model (personal communication, April 3, 2019). She asserted that measuring partnership is measuring something different and levels the playing field (Fleisher, 2019). She imagined evaluation questions framed from a partner point of view as:

1. How well is this partnership going?
2. Are you trusting in what we are doing?
3. Do you have confidence in the process?
4. Do you receive a benefit from the relationship?
5. Is the outcome what we agreed we were going to do?
6. Did you hold up your end of the agreement?
7. Did we hold up our end of the agreement?

(Fleisher, personal communication, April 3, 2019)

Evaluation will be described in greater detail in subsequent sections, but for now it is noted that mutuality is directly mapped to two of the seven principles of relational cultural theory discussed in the literature review. Mutuality and reciprocity also map to the description of relationship-based social work presented in the literature review.

Trudeau wove the theme of mutuality and reciprocity into the recovery process. Part of City Hope is a housing program for residents in the second stage of recovery (after completing a 12-month residential program). Residents are required to serve at the City Hope Center in any way they can. The goal is to dig deeper into their development and personal goals (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019). Giving back is considered a vital step in 12-step programs (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019)

### **Transformational Relationship Model Summary**

In summary, in the first set of data, Transformational Relationships are identified by five key components: connection, structure, qualities, growth and mutuality. A summary of the data is included in Table 3 and refers to key findings in both the literature review and expert interviews. Now that the components of Transformational Relationships have been identified and discussed, their implications for planning and evaluation and the components of theories of change, logic models and impact evaluation will be discussed next.

**Table 3: Summary of Data Related to Transformational Relationship Model**

Transformational Relationship Model: Literature Review & Expert Interviews				
Connection	Structure	Relationship Qualities	Transformation	Mutuality/Reciprocity
Connection - RCT	Long term - Bin	Celebrate - Bin, Tru	Accountability - FBSW, Tru	Reciprocity - FBSW, RBSW, Tru
Friendship - Bin, FBSW	Incremental - Pfe	Listening - Tru	Learning - FBSW	Mutual Exchange - RCT, Binn
Network of support - Bin, Pfe, Tru	Nonlinear - Binn, RCT	Asset Based - Tru	Dynamic - RBSW	Mutual Impact - RCT
Safety net - Tru	Client Centered - Pfe, Tru	Motivation - Binn	Differentiation - RCT	Shared power - RCT
Social Needs - Tru	Boundaries - Bin, Tru, RBSW, RCT	Counter Shame - Bin, Tru, Pfe	Elaboration - RCT	Mutual Empathy - RCT
One on one - Bin	Qualitative - FBSW, Bin, Tru, Pfe	Optimism RBSW	Development - FBSW	
Wide funnel - Tru, Pfe	Therapeutic use of self - RBSW	Holistic - FBSW	Strength-Based - RBSW	
Foundational - RBSW		Trust - Bin, Pfe, Tru, RBSW	Empowerment - Bin, Pfe	
		Empathy - FBSW, RCT	Growth Context - Pfe	
		Respect - Bin, Tru, RBSW	Relationship tools - Pfe, RCT	
		Sensitivity - RBSW	Capacity Building - RBSW	
		Hope - FBSW	Growth Fostering - RCT	
		Patience - RBSW	Problem Solving - RBSW	
		Counter Shame - RCT, SRT, Bin, Pfe, Tru	Corrective / Repairative - RCT	
		Compassion - FBSW	Relate to self & others - RBSW	
		Understanding - RBSW	Self Awareness - RCT	
		Nonjudgemental - FBSW		
		Concern - RBSW		
		Advocate & mediate - RBSW		
		Vulnerability - Tru, Pfe		
		Healthy - Tru, Pfe		

Source Key:	
Bin	Binnquist
FBSW	Faith-Based Social Work
Pfe	Pferdehirt
RBSW	Relationship-Based Social Work
RCT	Relational Cultural Theory
Tru	Trudeau

Source: author’s creation from expert interviews and multiple sources cited in the literature review.

### Transformational Relationships Planning & Evaluation

Now that a model for transformational relationships has been described, what are the implications for planning and evaluation? Remember there is a tension between relationship-based strategies, planning strategies and evaluation implications. The nonprofit planning and evaluation literature emphasized linear, causal approaches to theory of change and logic model development and impact is framed with an emphasis on hard skills.

Each interviewee was asked about the role of Theory of Change and Logic models in their work. Program staff were specifically asked how relationships work within those models. Evaluation professionals were asked about trends, other models, and addressing challenge with models. Themes that emerged were non-linear models, questioning their use, and an interesting integration with psychotherapy was identified.

#### Non-linear Models

Most theories of change and logic models are developed into linear models. Binnquist said that linear models are a big “turn off” for him (personal communication, March 4, 2019). Not only are relationships, non-linear, but faith is also non-linear (Chan, 2019).

Chan expanded on this theme with the assertion that linear logic models don't necessarily fit cross-culturally and can feel contrived by social scientists (personal communication, March 28, 2019).

Fleisher discussed the use of circular and even spiral models (personal communication, April 3, 2019). Whereas linear models show causal relationships, circular and spiral models show a contributive relationship (Fleisher, personal communication, April 3, 2019). Circular and spiral models look at the pieces and what they contribute. Evaluation is focused on having the right pieces and asks what kind of change would happen if the pieces were not included (Fleisher, personal communication, April 3, 2019). Chan commented that evaluation fails in circular models because it is hard to measure a non-linear process (personal communication, March 28, 2019). Evaluation will be discussed in more detail in subsequent sections.

### **Are they Useful?**

Fleisher and Chan had two different points of view regarding the use of theories of change and logic models in the nonprofit sector. Chan, speaking primarily from a foundation point of view, described pushback against logic models and theories of change (personal communication, March 28, 2019). She identified the topic of diversity and equity in funding as the primary motivation for this pushback, with lack of resources in smaller nonprofits as being a contributing factor (Chan, personal communication, March 28, 2019). Fleisher, however, speaking from a research perspective recognized that logic models are more accepted, recognized, and organizations are more open to working with them (personal communication, March 28, 2019). For Fleisher, logic models are more about the process than being an actual tool (personal communication, April 3, 2019). This process can be therapeutic, and is marked by collaboration, experiential learning, applied learning and the conversations that are generated (Fleisher, personal communication, April 3, 2019). Fleisher also noted that most organizations are spending so much time going through the planning process that they are skipping or skimming over the impact metric and are missing out on the best part (Fleisher, personal communication, April 3, 2019).

Program staff had varying responses on logic models. Binnquist described that many of the clients he works with have been burnt by system and logic model viewpoints by being treated like a statistic or a number and being pushed through the system. (Binnquist, personal communication, March 4, 2019). He stated his belief that logic models make the donor and organization feels good, but it isn't always what is right for the client and can hinder growth in the community (Binnquist, personal communication, March 4, 2019). Trudeau identified that they have a business plan but not a formalized program logic model or theory of change (personal communication, March 8, 2019).

Pferdehirt linked logic models to a therapeutic tool where simple and concrete logic models are used to help clients strategize personal change (personal communication, March 4, 2019). She linked this process to Theory of Stages of Change which was discussed in a previous section. Chan also shared her challenges with logic models recognizing that faith-based organizations have a philosophical issue with counting heads (personal communication, March 28, 2019). She compares this to the Biblical parable of the Lost Sheep<sup>2</sup> which makes no sense from a metric perspective to go after the one and leave the ninety-nine (Chan, personal communication, March 28, 2018). She also observed that time in a program does not always translate to the desired outcomes (Chan, personal communication, March 28, 2019).

### **Reframing Impact Evaluation**

All the interviewees acknowledged that measuring impact in relationships is not an easy task. Part of this is due to the nature of the work. Fleischer observed that relationship-based, high-touch programs aren't the typical 9-5 work day and can crowd out time for program planning and evaluation (Fleisher, personal communication, April 3, 2019). Chan observed that most faith-based organizations are counting outputs instead of outcomes, or measures of lives affected (personal communication, March 28, 2019). Chan also asserted that evaluation is a pseudo-scientific way to address social problems when there are lots of unknown, non-linear factors involved (personal communication, March 28, 2019).

Neither of the program interviewees described conducting any kind of pre-test, post-test or long-term beneficiary tracking (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019) (Binnquist, personal communication, March 4, 2019) (Pferdehirt, personal communication, March 4, 2019). Binnquist is using a modification of the Engle Scale to assess client progress (personal communication, March 4, 2019).

### **Reframing Donor Expectations**

Another common theme in evaluation was reframing donor expectations. Trudeau stated that he set the expectation for donors with 50% of what he knows is going to happen and 50% is unknown, as part of the intentional process of listening to the neighborhood (personal communication, March 9, 2019). Both of the evaluation interviewees highlighted the leveling of the playing field between funders and organizations. Chan observed that larger foundations are exploring ways to level the evaluation playing field by accepting alternate reports or site visits as a way to replace the traditional monitoring and evaluation process (personal communication, March 28,

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 18:12-14 or Luke 15:3-7

2019). Fleisher observed that funders are being more respectful of organizational processes and looking at the relationship between funders and organizations, asking, “What does it take to do good evaluation?” (personal communication, April 3, 2019). Dr. Kibel described pushback from “one-minute decision makers” that he received in developing evaluation methods and called it the life battle of his own work (personal communication, April 29, 2019). His evaluation methods were aimed at showing long term transformation and was not a short-term process (Kibel, personal communication, April 29, 2019). Chan stated there is an opportunity to educate donors on some the “pitfalls of evaluation” (personal communication, March 28, 2019).

### ***Evaluation Pit-Falls***

Chan offered some valuable insights on some evaluation pitfalls that the Transformational Relationship Model seeks to avoid. First, she described the process of “cream skimming” which can lead some organizations to focus efforts on those with the best chances of success in their program instead of meeting the needs of the hardest population in order to keep their success numbers up (Chan, personal communication, March 28, 2019). Valuing small changes allows a program to frame success in small ways and build a case for impact in even the hardest cases.

Chan also questioned how evaluation fits into a Biblical framework. First, she identified that evaluation takes the average result and measures the average impact, aggregating results together as if we are all the same (Chan, personal communication, March 28, 2019). She questioned how it fits into the perspective that we are all unique individuals with unique and personal journeys (Chan, personal communication, March 28, 2019). Similarly, Dr. Kibel described the methodology of story analysis that looks not at the best impact story, and not at the worst, but at the middle average and seeks to raise the average for all (personal communication, April 29, 2019). By identifying impact on a personal, micro level, the Transformational Relationship Model values the unique impact journey and does not rely on averages for impact measures.

Chan also identified Biblical challenges with the Randomized Control Trials which are the gold standard in impact evaluation. She observed that the Biblical accounts of randomness, such as casting lots, were actually used to identify God’s will and were not truly random (Chan, personal communication, March 28, 2019).

### ***Relationship-Based Impact Evaluation***

Reframing theories of change and logic models means also reframing how impact is evaluated. Instead of measuring impact with “hard skill indicators,” impact needs to be measured in terms of the relationship. Relational cultural theory tells us that the impact is found in the relationship. Chan observed that most evaluation is done from the

program lens and not that of relationship, but with the right mentor or coach you can accomplish anything (personal communication, March 28, 2019)! Kibel observed that there are a lot of variables that a program can't control, but they can control the quality of their relationships (personal communication, April 29, 2019).

Therefore, the evaluation framework must follow the transformational relationship model and focus on evaluating the components of the relationship: connection, structure, qualities, growth, and ultimately the degree of mutuality. Chan observed that establishing different proxies for relationship qualities can be a challenge because they are subjective (personal communication, March 28, 2019). She suggested letting beneficiaries define those qualities (personal communication, March 28, 2019) which is similar to the process Fleisher described in treating evaluation as a partnership between organization and client (personal communication, April 3, 2019).

As transformational relationships are a cyclical process and outcomes are conceived as increased healthy behavior and decreased destructive behavior, evaluation needs to focus not on the result but on the process of increase and decrease. This means assessing where a client is at on the Theory of Stages of Change Cycle. Journey Mapping was developed by Dr. Barry Kibel in 1999 and is based on the Theory of Stages of Change (Kibel, personal communication, April 29, 2019).

Transformation needs to be measured on the personal level, the community level and the larger societal level (collective impact). The indicators for each level of impact will be different, yet related, and based on the theory of change. The timeline for evaluating impact in transformational relationships should follow the same long-term guidelines that are set for organizational impact. The literature review established that outputs are measured in real time, outcomes are measured in the three to seven year marks and that impact is measure after seven to ten years. Why should the timeline be any different if we know that transformational relationships are long-term strategies?

Additionally, Dr. Kibel described an international NGO evaluation tool he contributed to called Outcome Mapping. The goal was to measure their impact in the sector by measuring the change of behavior in a variety of different relationships, such as participants, staff, family members, community, etc. (Kibel, personal communication, April 29, 2019). These relationships can be pictured as a radiating ring of impact (Kibel, personal communication, April 29, 2019). To his knowledge this tool is use prolifically internationally but is not adopted in domestic, community-based nonprofits (Kibel, personal communication, April 29, 2019). Based on this description, outcome mapping supports relationship-based impact and different levels of impact from personal to societal.

Along with the above relationship-based strategies, there were additional strategies identified in the expert interviews which are discussed below.

### ***Integrating Impact Evaluation***

Fleisher offered a recommendation for reframing evaluation and pointed to holistic models that are integrated into the program approach (personal communication, April 3, 2019). This suggestion includes framing evaluation in the same way program is framed; integrating it into the program instead of hosting it as a stand-alone process (Fleisher, personal communication, April 3, 2019). Dr. Kibel described his evaluation process of Journey Mapping as a tool for self-reflection, which fits in with the idea of integrating it into program (personal communication, 2019). Fleisher goes on to recommend that evaluation be conducted by someone who is familiar with the program, someone who is trusted, and someone who can “straddle methodologies” (Fleisher, personal communication, April 3, 2019). In this way, relationship is vital to the impact evaluation process. Fleisher also suggested that evaluation expectations should be set early in the program process (personal communication, April 3, 2019), much like the relationship negotiating highlighted in relationship-based practice and relational cultural theory.

### ***Listening***

Trudeau linked the transformational quality of listening to the impact evaluation process (personal communication, March 9, 2019). He highlighted the importance of weighing impact against the people who have been served and evaluating if the program has become an enabler or contributed to re-traumatizing the individual (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019). Their commitment to intentional listening and adaptation means that part of the program model is unknown (Trudeau, personal communication, March 9, 2019).

### ***Which Relationship is Being Measured?***

In re-framing relationship-based evaluation it is important to consider which relationship is being evaluated. Chan imagined a scenario where a program also measures the impact on volunteer relationships (personal communication, March 28, 2019). This helps frame success from a relationship viewpoint, rather than a hard skill outcome (Chan, personal communication, March 28, 2019). This helps evaluate impact from a variety of stakeholder perspectives. Dr. Kibel mentioned the development of Outcome Mapping which is one of the biggest tools used in international NGOs to measure impact (Kibel, personal communication, April 29, 2019). This approach is unique because it not only measures the beneficiary relationship but also the relationships of multiple stakeholders radiating from primary to secondary to tertiary,

etc. (Kibel, personal communication, 2019). Dr. Kibel observed that there are a number of factors that a program cannot control, but they can control the quality of their relationships (personal communication, 2019).

### **Section 5: Implications and Recommendations**

A number of recommendations are developed out of this research. There are implications for how programs are developed and how they are evaluated. They are listed here, and the ideas developed further in each subsection:

1. Ground relationship-based practice in a theory of change, such as the framework for Transformational Relationships.
2. Develop nonlinear program logic models.
3. Look for impact on different levels: individual, group, societal/systems
4. Develop relationship-based indicators
5. Utilize evaluation tools that blend qualitative and quantitative methods.

In addition to this list, Appendix A offers a list of compilation of resources for strategic planning and evaluation.

#### **Ground Practice in Theory**

The Transformational Relationship framework is an example of relationship-based practice in a theory of change. It meets the criteria established in the literature review of being grounded in established theory, built from multiple frameworks, and informed by practitioner experience. The model is considered a contributive model instead of a causal model because the components are related to one another but not necessarily sequential. Since Relational Cultural Theory tells us that isolation is the core of human suffering, then impact is possible with the first step of connection. But a relationship that has all five components is more likely to demonstrate lasting change. Additionally, the components of transformation and mutuality are important indicators for intentional transformation versus a spillover effect. Note that this model does not count a religious conversion in the process. It is general enough to use within a variety of frameworks. As Chan recognized, you can do anything with a mentor in your life, so this model could be used as an overlay for any type of service program. Figure 6 is a duplicate of the Transformational Relationship Framework.

**Figure 6: Transformational Relationship Framework (Duplicate)**



Source: Author's Creation; graphic design by Katherine Au

### **Develop Nonlinear Models**

This research has observed that relationships are not linear, and neither is the process of developing a logic model or theory of change. However, these models are most commonly conceptualized as a linear process with a beginning and an end. Linear models don't work for relationship-based practice. It can also be argued that linear models don't work for any kind of practice, because planning, execution, and evaluation should be an ever-evolving cycle.

Figure 7 frames logic models as a cyclical process similar to that of a causal loop and contains four primary movements. The starting point is the vision for impact, which in this case is transformational relationships. This is both the guiding theory and the metric for impact in this logic model. Next come the inputs and activities that are strategized to achieve the vision of impact. For transformational relationships, the inputs and activities are connection, the structure of the relationship, and the qualities of the relationship. Next, the model is anchored in concrete outputs. It is important for an abstract vision to be rooted in some concrete outputs. Programs can decide if they are going to count activity outputs such as attendance or participation in specific programs, or if they are going to count relational outputs such as the various qualities of a transformational relationship. But regardless of the approach, something needs to be counted as a foundation for the vision. This makes the abstract vision more concrete which is an important practice for staff and donors. Once the vision for impact has been grounded in concrete terms, the cycle pivots into outcome bearing activities. For

**Figure 7: Circular Logic Model (Program)**



Source: Author's own concept, graphic design by Katherine Au

transformational relationships, this is the shift into growth fostering relationships where there is intentional accountability to grow, change, and transform. The outcome can be incremental but at this stage there should be a shift. That shift is conceptualized by the expert interviewees as a decrease in self-destructive behavior and / or an increase in a healthy behavior. Lastly, as the cycle progresses, the vision of impact is revisited. The vision of impact is now assessed in a tangible way. Transformational relationships suppose that impact can occur at any point along the way, from connection to transformation. The non-linear nature of relationships indicates that the goal is not the end. It is part of the process. Transformational relationships cycle through this process, making incremental changes, realizing a portion of impact. But this is only part of the model.

### **Levels of Impact**

Theories of change and logic models include three areas of evaluation: outputs, outcomes and impact. Impact, too, can be conceptualized in 3 stages: individual, group, and societal or systems. When a circular logic model is being used with iterative cycles of growth, impact is conceptualized as a spiral.

**Figure 8: Relational Impact Model**



Source: Author's own creation; graphic design by Katherine Au

Figure 8 is the Relational Impact Model and describes the impact on expected on three levels as a spiral. (The circular model of transformational relationships (figure 7) is the top view of this spiral.) The Relational Impact Model identifies the three areas where the impact of transformational relationships is expected. This model can also be read from the bottom up or from the top down. It is interesting to note that the Theory of Stages of Change also follows a spiral model.

Reading from the bottom up, the first level is the point of individual impact or micro impact. The transformational relationship logic model can be completed with one person and one person can begin to see impact in their own life. But since the outcome of a transformational relationship is change, the cycle is not static. There is progress, and this is visualized as upward movement, cycling up through the spiral. The middle level describes the impact that a group experiences in transformational relationships, or the meso level. The transformational relationship logic model can be used in small groups where impact is experienced in the context of community. But this middle level is also a place for an individual who has been impacted by transformational relationships to start affecting the community around him or her. Lastly, the third level

identifies the societal or macro impact that can happen when a community has experienced transformational relationships. This is a broader category. But given that mutuality and reciprocity are an indicator of transformation, large scale impact is possible as more and more people engage in the mutual process. In this way, transformational relationships can move from micro to macro impact. Dr. Kibel observed that this model represents qualitatively related transformation that results in quantum leaps of change (personal communication, April 29, 2019).

This is a model that has implications for collective impact. In discussing this concept, Fleisher remarked that relationships are the social fabric, the “magic of the neighborhood” (personal communication, April 3, 2019). Collective impact research tells us that broad categories are important to measure (Bloch, 2012). What could be broader than relationships? Individual programs can build out their niche, but collective impact can be built by following and measuring a common model for transformational relationships.

This model can also be read from the top down. Program interviewees described using broad program models that are accessible to larger groups of people which then funnels down into more individualized engagement. As transformational relationships theorizes, impact can begin in broad contexts when someone who has experienced extreme isolation begins the process of connecting. Following this broad engagement and generalized experience, through transformational relationships the person can cycle into more small group experiences that deepen relationships and build on specific areas of transformation, such as attending a 12-step recovery group or a specialized type of program. Lastly, broader and specialized context can develop into deeper one-on-one relationships such as mentorship where an individual can engage in very personalized transformational relationships resulting in more personal impact.

### **Relationship-based Indicators**

Programs can feel stuck when they are using relationship-based practices but evaluating skills-based outcomes. The results don't always match between the effort and the impact. Developing relationship-based measures simply means you measure what you are putting into the program. If your inputs are relationship-based, then your output and outcome measures need to also be relationship-based. You need to use indicators and benchmarks that are apples to apples. Stakeholders, including funders need to understand why this is a valid measurement. Having the theoretical framework, such as Transformational Relationships helps re-frame expectations. It says that real, valid work is being done in the relationship which is foundational for different levels of impact.

The table of Transformational Relationships is a good place to start looking at relationship-based indicators. Programs should use this list like a menu to choose from

and make sure they are including inputs and indicators from each category. As programs build out the niche, they can choose to focus on certain factors more than others, such as qualities of respect, celebration, and advocacy while another program may focus on a different set of qualities. Then programs use measurement tools that are directly related to those qualities. This will re-frame the evaluation process to be more aligned with their theory of change.

Chan observed that developing measurement proxies for evaluation can be challenging (personal communication, March 28, 2019). For example, defining what trust is and how to measure it can spark a lot of conversations. These types of conversations are vital to the planning and evaluation process that Fleisher recommended (personal communication, April 3, 2019). These conversations should not be skimmed over because they will help inform the theory of change and field practice.

### **Blend Qualitative and Quantitative Evaluation Methodology**

Measuring the impact of Transformational Relationships requires a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodology. Penna identified Journey Mapping as an evaluation tool for measuring outcomes that blends data and anecdotal evidence (Penna, 2011). Developed by Dr. Barry Kibel, this tool was developed specifically to address the challenges of traditional methods when applied the transformation process (Penna, 2011). Kibel describes it as a blend of “evidential” and “evocative” measures (personal communication, April 29, 2019). This combination of data and stories tells a more holistic picture of transformation and is a powerful communication tool.

Journey Mapping is based on the Theory of Stages of Change which was briefly referenced previously by Piferdehirt and Glide. This tool helps map where a person is on their “heroic” journey, be it contemplation, preparation, action, success, and legacy (Kibel, n.d.). Journey Mapping was primarily designed for self-reflection by those closest to the transformation process instead of an outside evaluator (Kibel, personal communication, April 29, 2019) (Crunkilton, 2009). This is similar to the recommendation made by Fleisher to use someone who is trusted and familiar with the program to do the evaluation.

## **Section 6: Conclusions**

This Capstone asked what the influence of relationship theory was on a faith-based organization’s impact. The foundational literature review and data from 6 expert interviews indicated that faith-based, relationships-based programs can form a theoretical framework to describe the transformation they work for. Theories of change, logic models and impact evaluation can be re-framed to meet the unique nature and needs of relationship. Organizations should use non-linear models to

describe their work because relationships are non-linear and planning and evaluation is not a linear process. Impact should be expected and evaluated on three different levels, individual, group and societal. Relationship-based measures and mixed methods evaluation tools should be developed and used for a more holistic description of transformation.

The limits of this research were primarily due to time. Had there been more time, more organizations could have been contacted with a survey to learn from a broader sample of practitioners. Additionally, program participants could have been surveyed to capture their experience with transformational relationships. More time could have also been devoted to these additional areas of research:

1. Explore the connection between Relational Cultural Theory and mentoring.
2. Explore the connection between Relational Cultural Theory and Theory of Stages of Change.
3. Survey larger sample of practitioners to inform the Transformational Relationship Framework.
4. Develop proxies for relationship – based measurements for mixed methods evaluation.
5. Develop mixed methods evaluation tool for Transformational Relationships that measures different levels of impact.
6. Explore Outcome Mapping and its application to relationship-based practice and domestic organizations.
7. Explore Contributive models and Contributive Analysis.

I plan to continue exploring these topics and developing these concepts to share with the partner organizations and the nonprofit sector, demonstrating a commitment to bridge the gap between relationship-based programs and impact evaluation.

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## Appendix A: List of Resources

Alphabetical list of planning and evaluation resources  
recommended by various research sources:

[Annie E. Casey Foundation Resources](#)

[Balanced Scorecard](#)

[Bridgespan](#)

[Charting Impact \(Guidestar\)](#)

[Deloitte Monitor Institute](#)

[Impact Reporting and Investment Standards](#)

[Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide](#)

[Kellogg Foundation Resources](#)

[Learning for Sustainability](#)

[McKinsey & Company](#)

[Outcome Mapping](#)

[SEED Impact](#)

[Social Return on Investment](#)

[SuccessMeasures.org](#)

[The Data Playbook](#)

[The Nonprofit Outcome Toolbox](#)

[The Outcomes Toolkit](#)

[The Sustainability Mindset](#)

[United Way Measuring Program Outcomes](#)

[United Way Tool Finder](#)

## Appendix B: Capstone Interview Information and Consent Form



March 15, 2019

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this research project. Our interview is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_ and will be conducted at \_\_\_\_\_. This expert interview is part of the required research for my Capstone project in partial fulfillment of the Masters in Nonprofit Administration program at the University of San Francisco, School of Management. I am studying “Transformational Relationships, Logic Models, and Measuring Impact in Faith-Based Social-Service Organizations.” I am using the Tenderloin neighborhood of San Francisco as context for this research because of the concentration of community need and the diversity of faith-based organizations that are working to meet those needs.

This research will include reviewing and signing a consent form that includes consent to be recorded (see attached). The interview is expected to take one hour and will focus on questions regarding strategic planning, program evaluation and theoretical frameworks of relationships (see attached). Your comments will be included in my final paper and presentation on May 4, 2019 and may be included in publication on the USF MNA blog and possible addition to the USF library catalog. You may request a final copy of this project.

I would also like to disclose a possible conflict of interest. I, too, work for a faith-based organization in the Tenderloin, Because Justice Matters with YWAM Bay Area. The purpose of this research is to not obtain access to insider information or co-opt another organization’s strategy. The goal is to develop new frameworks for strategy and program evaluation that can be adopted by any number of agencies and customized for specific targets.

Any inquiries can be directed to myself (415-910-9406; [seschappert@dons.usfca.edu](mailto:seschappert@dons.usfca.edu)) or to my supervising professor, Dr. Marco Tavanti (415-422-4288; [mtavanti@usfca.edu](mailto:mtavanti@usfca.edu)). Thank you again for participating in this research and helping understand this important topic.

Sincerely,

Sonja E. Schappert

MNA candidate ‘19



**Consent to Participate University of San Francisco San Francisco, California**

Title of Study: Transformational Relationships, Logic Models, and Measuring Impact in Faith-Based Social-Service Organizations

Investigators: Sonja Schappert [seschappert@dons.usfca.edu](mailto:seschappert@dons.usfca.edu); 415-910-9406

**Introduction**

- You are being asked to participate in an expert interview as part of my Capstone research.
- You were selected as a participant because of your leadership in faith-based, social service programs in the Tenderloin.
- We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

**Purpose of Study**

- The purpose of the study is to create a theory of change around transformational relationships in faith-based, social-service programs that can be measured for impact.
- This research will be presented in a paper and in a presentation as a requirement for our Nonprofit Data course and in partial fulfillment of the Masters of Nonprofit Administration Program.

**Description of the Study Procedures**

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do answer a series of questions and provide copies of primary documents such as strategic plan, theory of change, logic models, and program descriptions if applicable.
- You are also consenting to be recorded in the interview process which will assist in interview transcription. This recording will not be published but is for the investigator’s sole benefit.

**Confidentiality**

- Your identity will be disclosed in the material that is given to the University of San Francisco. If you wish to remain anonymous, please let me know and I will work out a special arrangement.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study at any time without affecting your relationship with the investigators of this study or the University of San Francisco. Your decision will not result in any loss or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely from the interview at any point during the process; additionally, you have the right to request that the interviewer not use any of your interview material.

**Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns**

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by the research group before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact the investigator. If you like, a summary of the results of the study will be sent to you.
- If you have any problems or concerns that occur as a result of your participation, you can report them to Marco Tavanti, Ph.D., MNA Program Director; 415-422-4288; [mtavanti@usfca.edu](mailto:mtavanti@usfca.edu)

**Consent**

- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by the study investigators.

**Subject's Name (print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Subject's Signature: Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Investigator's Signature: Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Program Interview Questions



### Biographical Information:

1. What is your role at the organization and your professional background?

### Strategic Plan / Change Theory / Logic Model

2. What is your organization or program's plan for affecting change in the community?
3. Do you have a formal theory of change or logic model? Why or why not?
4. Do these plans fit within a broader strategic plan? If so, how do they correlate?

### Relationships

5. What role do interpersonal relationships play in your theory of change, logic model or informal strategy?
6. What are the differences (if any) are observed between clients with one or more strong interpersonal relationships, compared to those who have no strong interpersonal relationships?
7. What factors or components of relationships are the most beneficial to client success?
8. How do relationships contribute to various forms of recovery (addiction, homelessness, sexual exploitation)?
9. How are these relationships safeguarded against co-dependency?

### Indicators and Outcomes

10. How are relationships measured for effectiveness against your theory of change?
11. What indicators do you look for in successful relationships?
12. What are your expected outcomes of these relationships?

### Conclusion

13. Is there anything else you would like to add?

## Appendix D: Evaluation Interview Questions



### Biographical Information:

1. What is your experience in the areas of program monitoring and evaluation?

### Strategic Plan / Change Theory / Logic Model

2. What trends do you observe in logic model development?
3. What trends do you observe in monitoring and evaluation processes?
4. What challenges have you encountered with faith-based organizations adopting logic models?
5. What challenges have you encountered with relationship-based organization forming logic models?
6. How do you blend a qualitative program experience with the qualitative nature of logic models?
7. How do logic models and program evaluation translate in a cross-cultural context?

### Relationship-Based Theories of Change

8. What models for tracking impact through relationship have you observed?
9. What types of indicators have you observed in evaluating relationship-based programs?
10. What are the challenges of measuring impact in relationship-based programs?
11. What recommendations do you have for organizations in tracking impact through interpersonal relationships?

### Conclusion

12. Is there anything else you would like to add?

## Author's Bio

Sonja is a proficient nonprofit professional with a twenty-year career in the faith-based, urban nonprofit sector. A graduate of Biola University, she earned a degree in Christian Education Ministry with an emphasis in Children's Ministry and a Master of Arts in Intercultural Studies with an emphasis in Urban Ministry. Complimenting her formal education, Sonja cultivated multi-cultural competencies in an African American context at Faithful Central Bible Church and then in an Asian American context at NewSong Community Church which still inform her work today. Sonja developed a framework for urban Children's Ministry as part of her graduate coursework, co-taught seminars at Urban Youth Worker's Institute, and received an award for best practices in Children's Ministry for her work at NewSong LA.

Sonja has an entrepreneurial spirit, having owned a specialty retail store for several years. Sonja's Scrapbook Spot was voted best in LA for two straight years and was the only remaining independent scrapbook retailer in the city of Los Angeles when she closed in 2012. In addition to showcasing creative talent, Sonja displayed marketing and negotiation skills and keen business sense.

Returning to San Francisco, Sonja joined the team at the Salvation Army Kroc Center, first as an After School Program teacher and Human Resources Assistant and then as the Education Director. There, she significantly narrowed the program deficit, increased program visibility in the community, and successfully secured a five-year grant for \$925,000 from the City's Department of Children Youth and Families; the first of its kind for this program. She established herself as a strong community liaison and served on the community advisory board for the Tenderloin Community Benefit District's Safe Passage program.

This Capstone marks the completion of Sonja's second Master's Degree, Nonprofit Administration at University of San Francisco where she graduated with honors recognized by the Nu Lambda Mu, Phi Alpha Alpha, and Phi Gamma Mu societies. Inspired by her graduate studies and a strong desire to support program with excellent operations, Sonja transitioned from youth development to Director of Operations at Because Justice Matters, an extension of YWAM Bay Area. She excels in strategic planning, program development, and fundraising. Sonja is a native of San Francisco, never without a Starbucks in her hand, Aunty-Awesome, a world traveler, and spends her free time on urban hikes.