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## **Chapter 1**

Spiritual Health Identity: Placing Black Women’s Lives in the Center of Analysis..... 1

*Y. Joy Harris-Smith, Princeton Theological Seminary, USA*

This chapter aims to identify the ways in which spirituality, religion and the Black Church help to shape a spiritual health identity in a group of Black women by placing their lived experiences at the center of analysis using methods that are epistemologically consistent with how they understand the world. A spiritual health identity refers to the recognition and consciousness that a healthy spiritual life is essential to one’s existence. It effects how they see themselves and their relationships to other people. Black women’s ways of knowing are often pushed to the margins and lacking validation in mainstream society. Utilizing a womanist epistemological framework allows Black women to define themselves and lifts up the ways, spaces and places that help them make meaning.

## **Chapter 2**

Becoming ‘Multi-Racial’: The Young Women’s Christian Association in Kenya, 1955-1965 ..... 24

*Eleanor Tiplady Higgs, SOAS University of London, UK*

This chapter addresses issues of identity and racial exclusion by looking at Christianity and whiteness at the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) in the context of late colonial Kenya. Between 1955 and 1965, Kenya YWCA rejected its identity as an organization for white/European women, and became inclusive of African women for the first time. The history of Kenya YWCA written by its last white leader, Vera

Harley, is an important source of information about this period in Kenya YWCA's history. The narrative Harley constructs is an important part of the identity of the organization in the present day. Studying this narrative of 'race' and inclusion yields two key insights; firstly, that in late colonial Kenya racial and religious identity were strongly connected, even mutually constitutive. Secondly, women in African contexts have historically been excluded from (some) Christian organisations.

**Chapter 3**

Body Image and Wellbeing in Religious Male and Female Youth in Israel:  
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*Shraga Fisherman, Shaanan College, Israel*

In the current study described in this chapter, we examined the relationship between body image and well-being among religiously observant male and female youth from four age groups: 16, 17, 19, and 22. MANOVA analysis of age x gender produced a significant interaction regarding body image. Various trends were found among the two genders according to age group. Among the girls, there is a moderate rise in body image (BI) with age, whereas among the boys there is an obvious decline between 17 and 19, followed by an increase. The boys' BI scores were significantly higher than those of the girls aged 16, 17, and 19, but not for age 22. There were significant and positive correlations between BI and well-being for all age groups and both genders. There were high correlations among the girls relative to those among the boys.

**Chapter 4**

Psychological Essentialism: Diversity and the Religious Experience ..... 80  
*Sheri Young, John Carroll University, USA*

This chapter uses a case study, and supporting literature, to explore the function of Psychological Essentialism (the process of giving meaning to perceived "sameness") in explaining tensions that often arise as we struggle to improve our understanding of diversity and inclusion in higher education, as well as in other social settings. The case study presented throughout the chapter was constructed as an amalgamation of experiences diverse faculty typically report while working on campuses struggling with recruiting and retaining diverse groups. It provides examples of experiences that occur on a range from malicious intent to those that occur, seemingly, without consciousness. The larger question is whether religious and social institutions approach essentialism and stereotyping differently, when it occurs. Seemingly, they do not. The conclusion of this chapter offers solutions for dealing with the barriers faced when attempting to create campus climates that are nurturing and supportive rather than hostile and exclusionary.

**Chapter 5**

Laborare est Orare: Starting a Gay-Straight Alliance at a Rural, Private, Catholic College..... 124

*Tara M. Tuttle, University of Louisville, USA*

Despite regional, religious, and political conservatism and fears of donor alienation and diocesan disapproval, a small group of faculty, staff, and avowed sisters at the private Catholic institution described in this article successfully achieved approval for the development of a gay-straight alliance. Using documents from official Church doctrine, researching benchmarks from Catholic institutions across the region, and demonstrating unmet student needs of the mostly closeted LGBTQ student population, the committee successfully obtained approval to host a discussion series examining the intersections and confrontations of LGBTQ lived experiences with spiritual practices and religious teaching. This chapter not only tells that story but provides a tactical model for others seeking to overcome barriers of institutional religious-based heterosexism to carve out a safe space for LGBTQ students while respecting the religious views students and employees of private, religious institutions have agreed to uphold.

**Chapter 6**

The Promise for African American Male Students in Teacher Education at Marygrove College..... 137

*Chukwunyere E. Okezie, Marygrove College, USA*

*Judy Alhamisi, Marygrove College, USA*

*Blanche Jackson Glimps, Tennessee State University, USA*

The recruitment of African American males into the teaching profession in the United States of America is an increasing challenge at national, state, and local levels. Gender and racial disparities between teachers in this country and the students they teach are present in classrooms. This chapter examines the Marygrove College’s Griot program as an initiative established to address the underrepresentation of African American males in teaching. The philosophy and heritage from which the Griot Program was developed, along with key events and decisions throughout its life span are discussed. Model African American initiatives in K-12 and higher education that can help shape Griot’s future as it tries to increase recruitment, retention, and graduation of African American men to assume positions in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education also are presented.

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<i>Theron N. Ford, John Carroll University, USA</i>	
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The Catholic Church has been a major player in the field of education, both nationally and internationally. Numerous religious orders, such as the Jesuits, Felicians, created higher education institutions. Such institutions afforded college education to first-generation students and were a ladder for upward mobility. A perception lingers of Catholic institutions being an exemplar of Christian values of love, acceptance and social justice. In reality, some institutions are far more successful in actualizing those values. This chapter looks retrospectively at Madonna University and compares it to John Carroll University to highlight differences in how each has dealt with the issue of inclusiveness. While each of the institutions is a single instance within the Catholic higher education community, there are still lessons we may take from this examination that intersect with issues related to religion, gender and inclusiveness.

## **Chapter 8**

Race Relations in the Churches of Christ: Strategies towards Reconciliation... 184	
<i>Tanya Smith Brice, Benedict College, USA</i>	

The denomination of Churches of Christ is racially segregated. While this is true for most Christian denominations, this chapter argues that this segregation is by design. This chapter presents a historical context of race relations within the Churches of Christ. Specifically, this chapter relies on primary sources to highlight this Christian denomination’s doctrine that is steeped in racist ideology. Finally, this chapter concludes with suggested strategies towards racial reconciliation within the contemporary denomination.

## **Chapter 9**

Women, Faith, and Social Cohesion .....	200
<i>John Anthony Lawler, University of Bradford, UK</i>	
<i>Ghazala Mir, University of Leeds, UK</i>	

This chapter presents findings from a research study examining the relationship between faith communities, social cohesion activity and the leadership role of women. The study examined women’s exercise of leadership or influence in small intercultural, interfaith projects, which they had developed to improve social cohesion in their local communities. Data were gathered using qualitative interviews and participatory research methods, predominantly with women from a range of religious backgrounds. Findings indicated that women involved in interfaith activity often occupied roles with relatively little power within their communities. Despite this

they were at times able to affect considerable influence within their own contexts. Contrary to expectations from existing evidence, changes resulting from the interfaith activities under consideration occurred despite rather than because of formal leadership. The concept and practice of leadership in interfaith activity and how this might relate to different conceptualizations of social cohesion and leadership within faith communities are discussed.

## **Chapter 10**

The Role of Women in the Development of New Religious Movements in

Latin America: The Case of Pentecostalism..... 224

*Angel Belzunegui Eraso, Rovira i Virgili University, Spain*

*David Dueñas Cid, Rovira i Virgili University, Spain*

In this chapter we focus on the growth of “new religions” and new religious movements in Latin America and attempt to find explanations for this growth. Although other explanations for the increase in religious plurality exist, we focus on the role of women in this development. The expansion of movements such as Pentecostalism is challenging the centrality of Catholicism in many Latin American countries. Basically, we therefore aim to answer the following question: Why has Pentecostalism grown so much in some Latin American countries while Catholicism has experienced a certain decline? One possible explanation for this is the role of women in this expansion, which has fostered greater social cohesion within families and communities. Pentecostalism has led to a certain empowerment of the women living in precarious conditions, affording them greater visibility and importance within their communities and giving them a role in the re-education of behaviours that are rooted in male domination.

## **Chapter 11**

Navigating the Terrain of Diversity: Lessons and Insights for Religious

Institutions and Faculty from Diverse Backgrounds..... 248

*Moses Rumano, Malone University, USA*

*Rhoda Sommers, Malone University, USA*

In this chapter the authors suggest that religious institutions are strategically and morally positioned to advocate for the inclusion of faculty from diverse backgrounds who will become the voice of the voiceless and the ambassadors for many historically oppressed and underrepresented groups in higher education. The successful integration of faculty from diverse backgrounds at predominantly European American religious institutions of higher education brings the much needed transformation into the social, spiritual, and academic lives of students. Through the lived experiences of six faculty members from diverse backgrounds serving at a variety of religious institutions, the authors discuss ways religious institutions of higher education can advocate



for faculty from diverse backgrounds by adopting distinctive policies and beliefs, creating a strong support base through mentorship, and providing opportunities for professional growth to create a welcoming work environment.

**Chapter 12**

Sense of Belonging in Religious-Based Colleges and Universities: Predictors and Patterns among Students of Color and White Students ..... 269

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- Kizzy M. Lopez, California State University, Fresno, USA*

Given the shifting demographic composition of the American higher education system and the need to understand how students of various backgrounds develop sense of belonging within a normative religious environment, this chapter examines how the level and predictors of sense of belonging among students of color at Christian colleges and universities differ from those for their White counterparts. This chapter provides an overview of sense of belonging with the purpose to understand the challenges and experiences of students of color in religious homogenous settings. The theoretical frameworks of this chapter are grounded in Astin’s input-environment-output (I-E-O) model and Hurtado and Carter’s sense of belonging study. While other studies have examined similar issues in secular institutions, the structure of the religious environment suggests unique patterns and predictors of sense of belonging among both White students and students of color. Implications for scholars and practitioners are discussed.

**Chapter 13**

Changing the Traditional Education of Igbo Females: The Role of Religion in Colonial Education..... 291

- Flora Igah, Public Health Department for Dayton and Montgomery County, USA*

Over the years, education has been defined by different people, according to their perceptual values. Education has also been perceived by many scholars as an abstract term. In the Nigerian pre colonial era, in Igbo-Nigerian Culture, people consulted and worshiped multiple deities or entities. This belief system (higher power) is often referred to as Oracle; for answers or consultations in difficult areas such as in higher education towards achieving their goals and objectives. Some cultures in Igbo land presently, maintain this practice of education. Often in life, people pursue and attain education in many ways. Hence, many adopted whatever notion the culture they were born into teaches about life’s processes. This is true especially in disciplines such as education and language. Ultimately, the outcome of culture and education as well as the part female gender plays are inevitable in the long run and is the focus of discussion in this chapter.

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