

COMBINED REFLECTION PAPER - COMPETENCIES 4A, B, C

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A Combined Reflection Paper for Competencies 4a, b, c: Reading, Evaluating, Conducting,  
Reporting, and Implementing Research

Pursuant to the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in Leadership

by

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## **Introduction**

I am the founder and president of The Matzevah Foundation, Inc. (TMF). TMF is an incorporated non-profit in the State of Georgia in the United States of America. TMF is classified as a public charity by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The mission of TMF is two-fold: to educate the public about the Shoah, and to care for and restore the Jewish cemeteries of Poland in partnership with Jewish of Polish descent and with Christians, living in the US or Poland. My reflection papers for Competency 4abc: Reading, Evaluating, Conducting, Reporting, and Implementing Research, will be combined and written as one reflection paper due to the interconnectedness of this disciplines within this research competency.

I will divide my reflection paper into three chapters. First, in Chapter 1, I will discuss reading and evaluating research. Second, in Chapter 2, I will explore conducting research and examine quantitative and qualitative research methods. I will also review the process of writing my dissertation proposal and the subsequent IRB process. Finally, in Chapter 3, I will present what I have learned from reporting and implementing research. I will briefly discuss the structure of my dissertation including the problem statement, purpose, research questions, and my methodology. Additionally, I will provide feedback and evaluations from several people who have read my dissertation.

Moreover, I have discussed my dissertation, its major findings, conclusions, and recommendations with the board of directors of TMF. As an organization, we have begun to take steps toward some of the recommendations that I have recommend to the board. One implication of my research for us to consider as an organization in the short-term is the continued development of the cultural stewardship model with which we have been experimenting for some time.

## CHAPTER 1

### THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

#### **Definitions of Key Terms**

**Competency 4: Leadership and Research:** The Andrews University Leadership Department advances a set of leadership competencies, which require students to have “theoretical knowledge and practical application” within a set of “core [leadership] competencies” of which the “leadership and research” is one group of competencies (*Leadership Handbook*, 2011, p. 37). This collection of competencies addresses the importance of data necessity “use data to communicate, persuade, and make decisions, and to contribute to the knowledge base for leadership” (*Leadership Handbook*, 2011, p. 37). It is necessary to demonstrate competency in qualitative and quantitative research methods. There are three concentrations within this competency, (a) Reading and evaluating research, (b) conducting research, and (c) reporting and implementing research (*Leadership Handbook*, 2011, p. 37).

**Dialogue:** Kessler (2013) argues that the word “dialogue,” along with circumstances surrounding it, are not well demarcated (p. 52). To clarify the meaning of dialogue, it is essential to note what it is not. Dialogue is not a debate, nor a discussion. It is not centered on “making a decision” by ruling out options, which leads to “closure and completion” (Isaacs, 1999, p. 45).

According to Isaacs, the root connotation of the meaning of decision means to “murder the alternative” (p. 45). Dialogue, on the other hand, does not rule out options. Instead, dialogue seeks to discover new options, which provide insight and a means by which to reorder knowledge, “particularly the taken-for-granted assumptions that people bring to the table” (Isaacs, 1999, p. 45).

**Jewish-Christian Relations:** Jewish-Christian relations are a product of the Twentieth Century, especially since the Shoah. Kessler (2013) argues that Jewish-Christian relations should be considered apart from Jewish-Christian dialogue. He states that the notion of Jewish-Christian relations applies to “the whole history and significance of the contact of Jews and Christians,” which includes “the positive contacts and influence upon each other” (p. 52). Kessler additionally suggests that it could “also include the external influences upon each [group], or the question as to how each will fare in the modern world” (p. 52). On the other hand Jewish-Christian dialogue, he asserts “is a subset of relations, . . . and is predicated on the need for reconciliation between the two faiths, and is generally founded upon theological issues” (Kessler, 2013, p. 52).

**Matzevah:** The term *matzevah* (מצבה) is Hebrew and means a memorial stone or monument; a matzevah is erected in memory of a significant event or placed at the head of the grave of a deceased person. In Jewish cemeteries, the headstone or matzevah signifies remembering and honoring the dead and ensures that the grave will not be desecrated. The Matzevah Foundation uses the iconography of the matzevah because its mission is to honor the memory of the Jewish community of Poland by caring for and restoring Jewish cemeteries in Poland as a means to reconcile Jews and Christians.

**Jewish Cemetery:** Burial grounds in Jewish life and particularly in religious practice, are viewed differently and are considered to be holy places. In Hebrew, various terms refer to burial grounds or cemeteries; the main ones are “*Bet Kevarot* ‘house of graves’, *Bet Hayim* ‘house of life,’ or *Bet Olam* ‘house of eternity’” (Kadish, 2011, p. 59). In my association and work with *Komisja Rabiniczna do Spraw Cmentarzy w Polsce* (RCC in Poland), I primarily encounter in Hebrew, *Beit Chaim*, which in Polish is *Dom Żywych*, or “the house of the living.”

**Liminality:** Liminality is a concept “created by Arnold Van Gennep (1909) and Victor Turner (1959)” (Auton-Cuff & Gruenhage, 2014, p. 2). Liminality is an idea that describes being between or in the middle of two spaces, literally in-between the two—a third space; it is like the front porch of a house, which separates the home from the front yard or the street. Franks and Meteyard (2007) state that liminality is derived from the Latin word for threshold; it is “the state of being betwixt and between where the old world has been left behind, but we have not yet arrived at what is to come” (p. 215). These authors consider the suggestion of Richard Rohr (2003) that the only escape for a person entrapped in “normalcy, the way things are,” is to enter into a “sacred space,” frequently termed *liminality* (from the Latin *limen*) (p. 155). Furthermore, Rohr reasons that in liminal space, it is possible to encounter “all transformation” by moving “out of ‘business as usual’” and leave behind the “old world, . . . but we’re not sure of the new one yet” (p. 155).

**Reconciliation:** Miroslav Volf (2000) considers reconciliation to have more than a theological meaning, which most Christian theologians understand as the “reconciliation of the individual and God” (p. 162). Nevertheless, Volf maintains that justice should be understood “as a dimension of the pursuit of reconciliation, whose ultimate goal is a community of love” (p. 163). Furthermore, he correctly reasons that reconciliation has a vertical dimension (between G-d

and humanity) and a horizontal dimension (among men and women) and concludes that without this “horizontal dimension reconciliation would simply not exist” (p. 166).

**Restoration:** Restoration is a concept in which something becomes “corrupt and is restored to a new condition” (Wilkins & Sanford, 2009, p. 196). The idea of restoration is related to redemption, which means to redeem or to repurchase something or to regain possession of something through paying a price.

**Shoah:** Unless citing a source which uses the term Holocaust, I will use the Hebrew term, *Shoah* (catastrophe or destruction) to define the events of what many refer to as the Holocaust. I make this distinction for two reasons. Firstly, as Manosevitz (2010) emphasizes, the term Shoah is “used by modern scholars in reference to that event” and secondly, the word, Holocaust, is a Greek word that means “burnt offering,” which according to Manosevitz extends some type of “religious significance” to the event, adding that “there was nothing religious about Hitler's ‘Final Solution’” (p. 55).

### **Reading and Evaluating Research**

In this chapter, I will briefly consider my research background, and recall what I have encountered and learned regarding the reading and evaluation of research. As documented in the Andrews University *Leadership Handbook*,

Leadership critiques the adequacy of research reports, conducts literature reviews using electronic sources, and relates research to the body of knowledge in their professional field (*Leadership Handbook*, 2011, p. 37).

Thus, in Chapter 1, I will examine the literature review process, the dissertation proposal, and the IRB application procedure along with a few ethical issues related to gaining permission to conduct research.

## Research Background

Before entering the leadership program at Andrews University, I did not have any formal coursework in my undergraduate or seminary experiences related to the methodology of conducting academic research. Although, I did not formally learn how to conduct a research project, I did scientific research in my undergraduate studies. I also wrote research papers while in seminary based on literary research; however, I did not conduct formal literature reviews. My first and most extensive research project in which I participated was while serving as a pastor in Poland. In 2005, our mission organization, the International Mission Board (IMB) conducted a mixed methods research project examining its church planting initiatives across Central and Eastern Europe.

I served on the Central and Eastern European (CEE) research team. My role was to prepare interview questions, conduct interviews with field personnel, and analyze the interview data (**Artifacts:** [Face to Face Interview Questions](#) and [Case Study Survey For Second Generation Church](#)). I also participated in statistical analysis by running reports using MS Access. I did not know how to code or do data analysis, but I learned. Rather intuitively, I discovered trends in both the numerical and textual data. Finally, I was one of the two writers of the final report that we submitted to regional leadership in January 2006 (**Verification:** [Evaluation Report 01-06-06](#)). Sadly, the report was shelved, and no action was taken on any of the recommendations made as a result of the study.

## Reading and Evaluating Research

As a part of the Andrews Leadership program, I began soon enough coursework related to reading and evaluating research. First, I enrolled in EDRM505 Research Methods in the spring of 2012 (**Artifacts:** [EDRM505 Syllabus Spring2012a](#) and [EDRM505 Spring 2012 Syllabus](#)

[Addendum](#)). I followed next with EDRM611 Statistics in the summer of 2012 (**Artifact:** [EDRM611 Course Syllabus Sum2012](#)). This course was my first formal encounter with statistical analysis and quantitative methodology. A classmate and I read and evaluated research related to the effect of organizational and religious commitment on job satisfaction. We conducted statistical analysis on a data set and wrote up our results in a class project (**Verification:** [Kuhn and Reece Class Project Final](#)).

In my third, course LEAD535 Principles of Academic Writing, I began gathering a few research articles and I also began reading books related to my emerging research topic of the Shoah and Jewish-Christian relations. I wrote an evaluation and summary of a journal article that I read regarding Polish perception of Jews (**Artifact:** [A Summary Ordinary Poles Look at the Jews](#)). I produced an annotated bibliography on Shoah related books (**Artifact:** [Reece Short Annotated Bibliography](#)), and I wrote a book review of the book *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and its Aftermath*, by Joshua Zimmerman (2003) (**Artifact:** [BR Contested Memories Steven Reece](#)).

### Literature Review

In the fall of 2014, I enrolled in LEAD637 Issues in Research and I began the intensive process of reviewing the academic literature searching for resources related to my yet unclear dissertation topic (**Artifact:** [LEAD637 Issues in Research Fall 2014 Full Syllabus](#) and [Reece Literature Review Chart REV](#)). The purpose of my literature review was to establish the importance of Jewish and Christian relations, Jewish-Christian dialogue, forgiveness, and reconciliation in the literature, and thereby, demonstrate the lack of research regarding this field and research discipline. In my review of the literature, I discovered seven qualitative articles examining Jewish-Christian relations and only one study addressing Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Furthermore, I discovered three quantitative studies concerning Jewish-Christian relations. Primarily, I limited my review of the literature to ethical considerations from an academic, Jewish and Christian perspective (**Verification:** [Literature Review Final](#)).

At the time of conducting my literature review, I honestly admit that I did not know what I was doing. Although I knew how to search for excellent resources using numerous databases, I did not understand how to select and structure my resources into a coherent and logical document that would become the second chapter of my dissertation. Notwithstanding, as I reflect, I did find some golden nuggets of priceless information that later proved to be extremely instrumental in constructing my theoretical framework for my dissertation.

For example, in my search of academic literature regarding liminality and liminal space, I mostly encountered essays and only located two research studies. I evaluated an article written by Auton-Cuff and Gruenhage (2014) concerning a qualitative study they conducted dealing with the concept of liminality in assessing the persistence of a specific group of university students in Canada. Although the article focuses on educational issues, I was drawn to it due to authors' treatment of liminality as a theoretical construct and how they coupled it with identity development as a lens to conduct their study.

At the time, I was looking for a similar theoretical lens or construct by which to conduct my dissertation research. I tried connecting liminal space in my searches using terms such as non-profit organizations, dialogue, reconciliation, Jewish and Christian relations; however, I did not find any of these concepts associated with liminality. And, I certainly did not find any research connecting liminality to the Jewish cemetery in Poland.

My understanding of what I was doing in my work in Polish Jewish cemeteries, at the time when I was reading and evaluating the literature and writing my literature review, was that I

had constructed a liminal space through TMF in which Jew and Christian may interact. One of the conclusions that the Auton-Cuff and Gruenhage (2014) make in their study is: “When we live and work within a liminal space, change is very possible” (p. 6). I resonated with their conclusion because I saw the possibility of changing perceptions and the possibility of opening a deeper dialogue between the Jewish and Christian communities within the construct of TMF.

### Dissertation Proposal

In the spring of 2015, I enrolled in LEAD880 Dissertation Proposal (**Artifact:** [Lead 880 Spring 2015 Syllabus](#)), and I began the long journey of conducting my research for my doctoral study. Little did I know that at the time, that I was embarking on a five-year voyage of researching, analyzing, writing, revising, writing, defending, and celebrating the successful publication of my dissertation in the fall of 2019. I also enrolled in LEAD625 Research Writing Seminar and used the course as a means to write and assess my dissertation proposal as I wrote its three chapters (**Artifact:** [LEAD 625 F14 final](#)). Dr. Jay Brand provided for me excellent and constructive feedback that enabled me to produce my dissertation proposal (**Evaluations:** [Re: Complete Dissertation Proposal](#) and [Reece Ch 1 - 3 Dissertation Proposal Dr Brand edit 05-05-2015](#)). With Dr. Erich Baumgartner’s assistance, I worked to revise my dissertation proposal and produced and defended it in May 2015 (**Artifact:** [Reece Ch 1 - 3 Dissertation Proposal \(ewb\)](#)).

### IRB Application and Ethical Issues

Following the successful defense of my dissertation proposal, I began the process of securing IRB approval to conduct my dissertation research (**Artifacts:** [IRB Application](#), [Individual Research Participation Consent Form](#), [Focus Group Research Participation Consent Form](#), [Interview Protocol](#), [Reece IRB Research Protocol](#), [Reece IRB Application Form](#), along

with two **Verifications:** [Reece NIH Certificate of Completion](#) and [Matzevah Letter of Consent](#)).

I received IRB permission to conduct my research project on September 30, 2015 (**Verification:** [IRB protocol number 15-121 full](#)).

For my study, the primary ethical issues that I was encountering were, first, how I planned to protect or safeguard “the rights of participants,” in my study; second, how I planned to provide “informed consent” to the participants, and third, “protecting participants from harm, and ensuring confidentiality” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 111). In order to protect the identity of the participants in this study, all interview responses are anonymous, and consequently, I used pseudonyms for identifying participants in the findings of this report. For my research, I obtained signed informed consent forms from interview participants, who participated in individual and focus group interviews (**Artifacts:** [Individual Research Participation Consent Form](#) and [Focus Group Research Participation Consent Form](#)).

Additionally, Bloomberg and Volpe recommend that researchers must be mindful during their study of the relationship between themselves and the participants, “which is determined by roles, status, and cultural norms” (p. 112). The latter consideration presented me with a challenging cross-cultural scenario in which I had to be aware of differences in Jewish-Christian religious culture, American-Polish culture, and American-German or European culture as well as language differences. In retrospect, I think that I navigated these cross-cultural issues well, and my study, in and of itself, verifies my efforts.

### **Summary**

Even though I had done academic research while in seminary, and participated in an extensive research project while serving as a pastor in Poland, my research background was nominal. I think that the coursework in which I enrolled at Andrews University gave me the

knowledge base and practical skill set to search for and discover, read and evaluate good academic research. At times, I learned, it is necessary to cast a net broadly to find and capture what I was looking for, but in the end what I found proved to be valuable.

Learning to read and evaluate research is a skill that I developed and honed at Andrews University. I did so by researching the literature and then ultimately writing my literature review as a part of LEAD637. From my review of the literature, I was able to construct and develop my theoretical framework, which enabled me to construct my problem statement, state the purpose of my study, and my research questions.

Moreover, from my coursework, I developed a rationale for creating the methodical approach to my study. Similarly, and based on my learning experience, I wrote and successfully defended my dissertation proposal allowing me to apply for and receive IRB approval to conduct my research. All in all, I think my learning journey at Andrews University developed within me a competency to read and evaluate research, which provided for me a more than adequate foundation from which to conduct my research project.

## CHAPTER 2

### APPLYING THEORY TO PRACTICE

#### **Conducting Research**

In my research background, I have been exposed to scientific inquiry and several research methodologies; nonetheless, I have never conducted a major investigation of a particular academic topic. Regarding the matter of conducting research, the *Leadership Handbook* of Andrews University stipulates,

Leadership understands the logic and processes of scientific inquiry, explains major research methodologies, formulates empirically-driven research problems, selects appropriate research designs, explains standards for data collection, and conducts basic data collection and analysis (*Leadership Handbook*, 2011, p. 37).

In this chapter, I will review quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research methodologies, and the rationale for using a qualitative approach to conduct my study. I also will discuss succinctly a pilot qualitative research project that I conducted as a means to experiment with the qualitative approach for conducting research. Finally, the majority of this chapter will concentrate on my actual case study of TMF. I will present my problem statement, purpose, research questions, and methodology. I will provide a link to my post-defense dissertation for review, as well.

## Research Methodologies

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) assert that quantitative research focuses on “objectivity in measuring and describing phenomena,” and it seeks to be objective or more scientific by “using numbers, statistics, structure, and control” (p. 21). On the other hand, they state that qualitative is “systematic” as quantitative but it emphasizes collecting data from “naturally occurring phenomena” in the form of “words rather than numbers” (p. 23). Lastly, mixed methods research design combines elements of quantitative and qualitative methods and “provide a more complete investigation” into a particular phenomenon with the advantage being that researchers using this approach “can show the result (quantitative) and explain why it was obtained (qualitative)” (p. 25).

Quantitative embraces experimental and non-experimental methods. Within experimental research methods there are three different types: true experimental, quasi-experimental, and single subject (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, pp. 21-22). We see six types of non-experimental designs: descriptive, comparative, correlational, survey, *ex-post-facto* and secondary data analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, pp. 22-23).

Qualitative designs on the other hand can be categorized by “a focus on individual lived experiences” and “a focus on society and culture” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 23). Qualitative has five different types: ethnography, phenomenology, case study, grounded theory and critical studies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, pp. 23-24). I did not have access to a primary source for Eisner’s six features of a qualitative study, so I cited Stokrocki (1997) who stated that qualitative studies are (para. 3):

1. Field-focused
2. Constructed so that the researcher is an instrument

3. Interpretive in nature
4. Expressive in language
5. Highly detailed
6. Persuasive

Specifically expanding upon these statements, I found a broader treatment of Eisner's six features of qualitative study, and I will share one of Janesick (2011) re-statements of Eisner's six features of qualitative study: "Qualitative studies rely on the self as research instrument" (p. 11).

Every researcher makes judgments regarding what he or she considers being important or not; identifying personal bias as well as the bias of others is also important. In light of the fact that in qualitative inquiries, the researcher is the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data, I disclosed a few things about myself that have influenced me personally and have given direction to my research. In my dissertation, I examined six main periods of my development as a researcher from being a photojournalist (an observer), the parallels of photojournalism and qualitative research, documenting my journey, becoming a participant observer, becoming an activist, and that of an emerging researcher. I will not discuss these phases here in this paper.

Notwithstanding, qualitative inquiries are subjective investigations, which may be problematic for some investigators in the field of Shoah research due to the non-objective nature of its methodology. As a philosopher, I addressed aspects of Jewish-Christian interaction and dialogue, which may not be quantitatively analyzed, synthesized, collated, and "demonstrated empirically" (Knight, 2006, p. 6).

My study sought to understand the phenomenon of Jewish-Christian dialogue within the context of the work of TMF that I lead in Poland in caring for Jewish cemeteries. In my research interviews, I asked seven questions that related to meaning and purpose (**Artifact:** [Interview](#)

[Protocol](#)). I did not pursue hard data via correlations, statistical significance, or predictive factors. Instead, I attempted to understand how Jews and Christians interacted and learned to dialogue within the framework of TMF, and its work.

### Pilot Research Project

Creswell (2013) recommends that beginning researchers “with limited data collection” experience, as Sampson suggested in 2004, conduct “a pilot project to gain some initial experiences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 171). Consequently, I decided to conduct a pilot research project using qualitative methodology before I began my research project for my dissertation. In 2014, as a part of LEAD756 Qualitative Research Methods—EDRM605 (**Artifact:** [Reece Course Syllabus Qualitative Research Methods—EDRM605](#)), I conducted my first qualitative research project based on photo-elicitation. I used several of my photographs to generate discussion, capture responses from a focus group, and select individuals.

For the independent analysis of the photographs, I developed and used two sets of questions as a means to identify “a set of comprehensive themes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 45) from the photographs (**Artifact:** [Photographs for Photo-elicitation](#)). For my study, I also prepared, but did not share with the participants, a numbered description of the photographs that I used for photo-elicitation (**Artifact:** [Numbering and Description of Photographs](#)).

To conduct my study, I selected ten individuals, including several board members of the board of directors for TMF, to participate in my study. I sent them instructions, which included the seven open-ended questions (**Artifact:** [Instructions for Qualitative Visual Data](#)). The participants then conveyed to me their responses via email. Ten people responded to my qualitative survey and evaluated the photographs. Of this number, two participants were Jewish with one being a rabbi living in Atlanta, Georgia, and the other a college student living in Israel.

One colleague from the Andrews PhD program responded. Additionally, six people, who are Baptist Christians and who have been associated with TMF for several years also gave me input regarding the photographs. The final respondent is a Jewish Christian, whom I met recently and who became a part of TMF for a while.

Additionally, I planned an exercise to for the board and our volunteers to consider these photographs as a small group exercise during our March 2014 board meeting (**Artifact:** [Agenda TMF Board Meeting 12-April-2014 Photographic](#), **Note:** the relevant section is highlighted). I used the same research questions. The purpose of the small group exercise was not for me to gather additional data but it was for member checking. Through member checking, I sought to gain participant feedback to safeguard “the credibility of the findings” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252) of my pilot study. Galvan (2013) indicates that member checking occurs when participants or members of the study check the accuracy of the results; by allowing member checking the researcher, I ensured “that the results reflect the realities as perceived by the participants” (p. 58).

Concerning the findings of my pilot study, I began with the broad idea that I was primarily dealing with the theme of remembering in the photographs along with restoration and to a lesser extent reconciliation. The theme of remembering is echoed in the responses albeit in different manners. Dialogue and reconciliation emerged as a joint theme in the comments made by another participant, who added, “Dialogue with self (sorting it out for yourself, what are you going to do about it?”

Oftentimes, we do not think of reconciliation in light of coming to terms with our own person and our response to some great injustice or tragedy. The Prophet Micah admonishes us to “act justly” (Micah 6:8), which is an indication that we are to respond to injustice by doing what is right or just – we cannot ignore injustice; we must deal with it.

Interestingly several respondents identified monuments, “lines of separation,” barriers, walls, “memories of the living,” and “remembering the fallen.” Other respondents saw teamwork, concern (care), and commitment; people “communing together to ensure those who died are not forgotten and their deaths mean something.” This particular respondent went on to add, “We must remember the terrible things man is capable of. We must reflect on our own mistakes or where we rationalized wrong to be right, learn from it, and not repeat ourselves.” One respondent identified in the photographs “the gulf between men” and how they saw them as an attempt “to understand how to bridge the gulf, and why it exists.” I have provided a [link](#) for the reader to review my study (**Verification:** [Reece Qualitative Consideration of Remembering](#)).

### **Dissertation Research: A Case Study of TMF**

In the next few sections, I will briefly present my case study of TMF; I will include the problem statement, purpose, research questions, methodology, and finally, I will provide a link to my post-defense and published dissertation.

#### **Problem Statement**

Due to the long-standing tensions resulting from the Shoah and the remaining gulf that separates Jews and Christians concerning the person of Jesus Christ, a complex and challenging relationship exists between these two religious faith groups. Consequently, Jews and Christians struggle to engage each other in meaningful dialogue that possibly could lead to forgiveness and reconciliation.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to describe the process of how acts of loving-kindness (mercy), as demonstrated and encountered through the work of The Matzevah Foundation in

caring for and restoring Jewish cemeteries in Poland, have influenced dialogue (or lack thereof) among Jews and Christians. The study explored mercy as the language of dialogue, and the organization that I lead, The Matzevah Foundation (TMF), illustrated that dialogue. Mercy may be operationalized and understood in terms of “loving acts” (Johnson, 2012, p. 127); loving acts may be corroborated by humane orientation, concern for others or compassion, charity, and altruism.

### Research Questions

In order to explore how those involved and those affected by the work of The Matzevah Foundation have developed in their relationship to one another, I pursued the following research questions:

1. How have Jews and Christians responded to the work of The Matzevah Foundation?
2. In what ways do Jews and Christians learn how to dialogue through their mutual interaction within the context of the work of The Matzevah Foundation?

### Research Methods

A case study method proved to be the best methodological approach for investigating the work of TMF. Through inquiry, I sought to understand how Jews and Christians respond to the work of TMF—the third space, and in what ways people learn to dialogue within the framework of the Jewish cemetery in Poland. Additionally, I wanted to determine whether or not loving acts or acts of loving-kindness influenced attitudes and created mutual bridges of understanding, which might serve as the underpinning for dialogue.

Principally, I examined the responses of 15 people individually and corporately to open-ended questions about their experience in working with TMF in its educational initiatives and its

Jewish cemetery restoration projects in Poland. I selected specific participants (and sites) primarily for this study using the criterion of Patton (2002) as to whether or not participants are “information-rich” (p. 237), and who had knowledge of, and experience in working with TMF in the U.S. or Poland. I prepared seven fundamental and open-ended interview questions (**Artifact: [Interview Protocol](#)**), which I used in conducting individual and focus group interviews among a diverse group of people, including Polish Jews, Jews of Polish descent, Polish and Evangelical Christians, and non-believers from Poland, the US and the UK.

Sources of data for this case study were derived from direct observations of participants, interviews, participant-observation, and documents/artifacts such as printed articles, photographs, emails, and personal reflective journals. Ideally, a case study should interview roughly 12 to 14 people. I interviewed fifteen people individually in face-to-face interviews and corporately in two field-based focus groups. Of the interviewees, four were board members of TMF and included one long-term Polish-Christian volunteer in the work of TMF. This group of five people is all Christians. I interviewed four Jewish partners with whom I have worked most closely; all are leaders in the Jewish community, in either the U.S. or Poland.

As noted above, I employed two focus groups as a means to question a group of people about their involvement with TMF. Each focus group contained four participants and was conducted during Jewish cemetery restoration projects in Poland. The first focus group consisted of one TMF board member and three first-time participants in a TMF Jewish cemetery restoration project. The second focus group was also conducted during a field project and consisted of three volunteers—two Jewish and one Christian and also included one TMF board member.

Through inquiry of the interaction of Jews and Christians within the construct of the third space [liminal space] of the work of TMF, I sought to understand how *gemilut chasadim* or acts of loving-kindness (mercy) influenced attitudes and created mutual bridges of understanding as to the underpinning for dialogue. Principally, I studied the responses of people individually and corporately to seven open-ended questions about their experiences in working with TMF in its educational initiatives and its Jewish cemetery restoration projects in Poland. Focus groups were employed as a means of inquiry; Moloney (2011) identifies as a focus group as a “sacred container,” (p. 71) that functions as a transformative, liminal space. Within the focus group, Jews, Christians, and other individuals may interact and dialogue more freely about critical issues confronting them.

Data analysis began with coding the data. It was an extremely tedious task and it was time consuming due the amount of textual data that I collected. During my analysis, I ended up with six major themes from which I developed numerous codes (**Artifact:** [Code Tree Development v3.0](#)). Nonetheless, it was satisfying especially once a code tree emerged, and I began to piece my findings together and write the final chapters of my dissertation.

Finally, I researched, wrote, successfully defended, and published my dissertation (**Verification:** [The Third Space: The Meeting of Jew and Christian in the Act of Remembering, Restoring, and Reconciling - A Case Study of the Matzevah Foundation](#)). My dissertation has been copyrighted (**Verifications:** [US Copyright Registration Confirmation](#) and [US Copyright Registration Record](#)).

## Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research methodologies. I also considered the rationale for using a qualitative approach to conduct my

study for my dissertation. I succinctly discussed a pilot qualitative research project that I conducted using photographic analysis as a means to experiment with and to learn from the qualitative approach for conducting my research. I think that the pilot project was instrumental in assisting me think through the formulation of open-ended research questions that would assist me to identify “a set of comprehensive themes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). I think that the pilot project, and especially, this foundational learning greatly assisted me in the data analysis phase of my case study of TMF.

Furthermore, in this chapter, I presented the problem statement, purpose, and research questions from my study. I discussed the methodology of my case study of TMF and I also pointed out Eisner’s six features of a qualitative studies. Subsequently, I considered my position in the study as the primary research instrument and briefly how disclosed my personal bias in the study. I roughed out how I approached the data analysis and the development of themes and the coding tree for my analysis. Finally, I provided a link to my post-defense dissertation for review, as well.

## CHAPTER 3

### KEY LEARNINGS AND SERVING OTHERS

In this final chapter, I will consider the defense of my dissertation and some of the feedback and recommendations that I received for its post-defense improvement. I will also report on how I have communicated my “research findings” to the board of TMF and some of the action steps that we have taken to implement “the findings in the workplace” (*Leadership Handbook*, 2011, p. 37). Additionally, I will share feedback that I have received from individuals among whom I distributed my dissertation. Finally, I will discuss briefly some planned activities that have grown out of the implementation of my study.

#### **Reporting and Implementing Research**

##### Dissertation Defense

After more than five years of work, I successfully defended my dissertation on Wednesday, July 24, 2020 in Berrien Springs, MI (**Artifacts:** [Re Dissertation Defense Preparation](#) and [Reece Oral Defense of the Doctoral Dissertation](#)). As a guide, I prepared a 20 minute PowerPoint Presentation for my dissertation defense (**Artifact:** [Reece Dissertation Defense](#)), which outlined my life story, introduced the background and purpose of my study, my

methodology, key literature, research questions, major findings, conclusions, and recommendations. It was an intense, two and a half hour experience; nonetheless, it was highly rewarding and an extremely satisfying experience. I completed a major step toward my doctorate, and I did it with friends, who loved me and nurtured me along the way.

Based on the feedback from the external reader, I needed to make a few revisions to make the defense of my dissertation complete (**Evaluation:** [Orla-Bukowska Recommendations for Revisions of Steven Reece's Dissertation](#)). I purchased a few additional books, and began reading them so that I could make Orla-Bukowska's recommended revisions. After I returned from Poland in early September, I began making the revisions and within a month, I completed them and submitted my post-defense dissertation for approval (**Verification:** [Final Revisions](#)). I submitted my dissertation to the Andrews Dissertation Office, and following a few minor corrections, I copyrighted and published my dissertation via ProQuest (**Verification:** [Reece Dissertation Pro-Quest ETD](#), [US Copyright Registration Confirmation](#) and [US Copyright Registration Record](#), and [Third Space Certificate of Registration](#)).

I shared my dissertation with the board of TMF (**Verification:** [My Dissertation](#)) and with other people directly via the [Digital Commons at Andrews](#). At the time of the writing this reflection paper, my dissertation has been downloaded globally 89 times. Following my dissertation defense, editors of *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* asked me to write an article for the journal based on my dissertation; the article has been peer-reviewed and awaiting publication (**Verification:** [Leading in the Third Space REV v3](#)).

#### TMF Board Meeting

At our October 2019 board meeting in Chattanooga, TN, I presented my dissertation to the board of directors and volunteer staff of TMF (**Verification:** [2019 Fall TMF Board Meeting](#)

[Minutes](#)—**Please Note**, the relevant section is highlighted). To present my dissertation, I used my outline of my PowerPoint Presentation ([Reece Dissertation Defense](#)) that I created earlier. We spent about two hours unpacking and discussing the findings, conclusions, recommendations, and their implications. Below, I will share a few immediate outcomes from our discussion regarding next steps:

1. Joint project between Christian congregation (BBC?) and Jewish congregation
2. Can you link your worldviews with those of another?
3. What other liminal spaces exist?
4. We are part of a global conversation about Jewish/Christian relationship
5. Steven should write a book

#### Distribution of Dissertation/Feedback

As I stated previously, I have widely distributed my dissertation among my closest friends and partners. I asked several people to provide me their feedback. In this section, I will share some of their evaluations of my dissertation. Jay Osborn is a dear friend and partner in the work of preserving Jewish heritage (**Evaluation:** [Jay Re My Dissertation](#)). He is not Jewish but is married to Marla, a Jewish woman whose family is from Rohatyn, now a part of Ukraine. He writes,

[Y]ou may be surprised to learn that I've already digitally highlighted a number of passages and references you quote in chapters 2 and 3. As for almost everything these days, I read with mercenary intent, i.e. how we can use what we read for our own projects. So you should not be surprised if a part of your work shows up somewhere in something we write up ahead for our websites; I hope you don't feel used 😊.

Furthermore, Jay explains that reading my dissertation “has already been enjoyable to read . . .,” and he states that “your writing style makes it feel like we have you in the room with us, and that's very nice indeed 😊.”

Marla, as I mentioned above, is Jewish. She is not necessarily religious, but she is an activist and a Fulbright Scholar working on a Jewish heritage preservation project connected with her work in Rohatyn. I asked her for her feedback (**Evaluation:** [Marla Re My Dissertation](#)). Marla states, “[M]y favorite portion, and a quote from a dear friend and wonderful academic, used by you on p. 53 . . . Annamaria Orla-Bukowska.” Additionally, she states,

Certainly mirrors our own feelings on the topic, and of course has crossborder implications for our work in Rohatyn. Thank you for quoting her, in this passage.

The most extensive feedback that I received came from Rachel McRae, Director of Communications for TMF (**Evaluation:** [Dissertation Notes Rachel](#)). I will not share all that Rachel wrote, but will include a few of her key comments.

I am overwhelmed by the sheer amount of work, reading, researching, thinking, writing, rewriting, etc. you had to do. Seeing it all here in one place is amazing. I know we all knew you were pouring your life (blood, sweat, and tears) into this but seeing it first-hand just . . . wow.

I can see how your writing has grown as a result of this work. You always wrote fine, but this exercise of the last 3+ years has shaped you into a more clear and effective writer. And it's not just here in the dissertation. I've noticed it for a while in your emails and even in the way you speak in front of a group.

Reading it has given me more of a sense of urgency for our work. But I think my greatest takeaway is how, yes, it's definitely time for our work to shift. We'll always conduct commemorations and restoration projects. Those are the avenues for so much of what you've outlined. In addition to being in the cemetery, we have to help get you (and TMF) in front of groups, peers, and communities where you can help communicate the recommendations you've made to Christians and to the Jewish community. Most of that will be done outside of the cemetery.

While reading my dissertation, Rachel also kept a journal, so to speak, on Google Docs (**Verification:** [Dissertation Notes Rachel 2](#)) in which she captured passages of my dissertation that struck her. Proactively, she proposed an action step,

I plan on doing a one page document that lists the 10 recommendations you make to the board. I want us all to have quick and easy access to it as we move forward. These should be our guiding principles as individuals and as an organization.

From her proposal, we are already taking steps that are related to my tenth recommendation, regarding the cultural stewardship model: “TMF should continue to develop and explore the cultural stewardship model of linking Jewish descendants with local Polish communities in the long-term care of Jewish cemeteries.” I will discuss this matter further in the next section.

### Stewardship Model

My research demonstrates that the Jewish cemetery is a liminal space allowing for reconciliation to emerge among Jews and Christians. People who participated in my study moved from a space in which they *could not dialogue*, to one in which they *could dialogue* and talk with each other. One implication upon which I have recommended we act as an organization is that of exploring and developing the cultural stewardship model of linking Jewish descendants with local Polish communities in the long-term care of Jewish cemeteries. By so doing, TMF may facilitate not only the long-term care of cemeteries, but it may also develop communities of memory that facilitate the restoration of relationships, dialogue, healing, and reconciliation.

I have been in dialogue with a rabbi in Warsaw for the past seven years. He participated in my study. One concept that we have discussed extensively is the identity and role of TMF in the continuum of Jewish and Christian relations in Poland. Recently, he defined for me our role for the first time using a different framework. I will not develop this conceptual framework; I will only report it as a part of developing the cultural stewardship model.

*Shaliach* or *saliah* is a Hebrew term that “is not found in the [Tanakh or Old Testament] and came to prominence in the rabbinic period” (Agnew, 1986, p. 80). It designates one who is “trusted with the authority of [their] employer when taking messages” (Browning, 2009, p. xxxix). Consequently, *shaliach/saliah* embraces the concept of serving as an emissary (Aharonov, 2015, p. 190) and has embedded within it the “technical implication to describe a

commissioned agent, one sent to act in the name of another” (Agnew, 1986, p. 80). Even though such emissaries, “usually had a specific goal in their missions . . . they also served as a direct and living link” connecting the one who sent them and the community to where they were sent (Aharonov, 2015, p. 190).

This latter consideration is significant as defines and explains the linking and connecting role that I and TMF play in the continuum of Jewish and Christian relations in Poland and beyond. To illustrate what my role and the role of TMF and its volunteers play, I will share a newsletter from Alon Goldman and the World Society of Czestochowa Jews (**Verification:** [The Jewish Cemetery Cleaning Project in Czestochowa June 2020 is underway](#)). We have been working with Alon since 2016 to oversee the works in the renovation of the Czestochowa Jewish cemetery. We began the project in June of 2018 so that we could involve the local schools in the project. In his newsletter, Alon thanks TMF for their involvement in last year’s four-day project:

Thank you very much my dear friend from The Matzevah Foundation, the chairman, Pastor Steven D. Reece, Poland Operations Manager Przemek Panasiuk, without whom we could not have been executed and managed the project, thank you also to your volunteers of Rachael Romero from Miami and Yolanda Czyzewski-Bragues from Hamilton, Ontario, I am sure that you too will take these moments in the Czestochowa Cemetery in your hearts.

Collectively, as TMF, Alon reflects our role; we are fulfilling the role of *Shaliach*. Thus, we are linking the global Jewish community, whose roots are in Czestochowa with local Polish Christians, American Jews, and Christians as a representative of the Chief Rabbi of Poland and the Jewish community of Poland as their representatives to oversee the work (**Verification:** [Steven Reece Authorization Letter in Polish](#)).

## Conclusion

I have discussed my learnings related to reading, evaluating, conducting, reporting, and implementing research. I began my journey at Andrews University without any real research

experience. Despite my lack of competency in research, I learned how to read and evaluate research. Evidence of this fact is clearly demonstrated in completing the literature review for my dissertation. My learnings expanded my knowledge base and skill set allowing me to write my review of the literature. Subsequently, I was able to construct and develop my theoretical framework, which enabled me to construct my problem statement, state the purpose of my study, and my research questions.

Additionally, I studied and determined among which of the three research methods of research, i.e., quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods to conduct my study. Due to the nature of my investigation, I selected a case study of TMF as a means to investigate Jewish-Christian dialogue and reconciliation with the liminal space of the Jewish cemetery in Poland. To this end, I wrote and successfully defended my dissertation proposal enabling me to apply for and receive IRB approval to conduct my research. All in all, I think my learning journey at Andrews University developed within me a competency to read and evaluate research, which provided for me a more than adequate foundation from which to conduct my research project.

As a means to assist me conduct my research, I performed a pilot qualitative research project using photographic analysis as a means to experiment with and to learn more about qualitative approach. I think that the pilot project was instrumental in assisting me think through the formulation of open-ended research questions that would assist me to identify “a set of comprehensive themes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). I think that the pilot project greatly assisted me in the data analysis phase of my case study of TMF.

Furthermore, in this paper, I reviewed the construction of my dissertation and presented the problem statement, purpose, and research questions from my study. I discussed the methodology of my case study of TMF, and I considered my position in the study as the primary

research instrument and briefly how disclosed my personal bias in the study. I briefly discussed my data analysis and the development of themes and codes for my analysis. Finally, I provided a link to my post-defense dissertation for review, as well.

In retrospect, the entire dissertation process has been a long and arduous journey in which there have been many peaks and valleys; nonetheless, I have learned and developed a vital research competency to inform and direct the work of TMF. I may demonstrate my competency through my reporting and implementation of my research. First, I have shared my research with members of the Christian and Jewish communities, and most importantly, I have shared and discussed with my board not only my study, conclusions, and recommendations, but also the implications of my study. One board member, Rachel, provided me excellent feedback and developed one actionable item for the short-term and that is keeping the ten recommendations before us as TMF.

Second, based on the last recommendation, we will continue to explore and develop the cultural stewardship model of linking Jewish descendants with local Polish communities in the long-term care of Jewish cemeteries. By so doing, TMF may facilitate not only the long-term care of cemeteries, but it may also develop communities of memory that facilitate the restoration of relationships, dialogue, healing, and reconciliation. Whether it was appropriate or not, I introduced a new term that captured the essence of what my role and the role of TMF in the continuum of Jewish and Christian relations: *Shaliach*.

## Documentation of Competency

### Artifacts

1. [Face to Face Interview Questions](#)
2. [Case Study Survey For Second Generation Church](#)
3. [EDRM505 Syllabus Spring2012a](#)
4. [EDRM505 Spring 2012 Syllabus Addendum](#)
5. [EDRM611 Course Syllabus Sum2012](#)
6. [A Summary Ordinary Poles Look at the Jews](#)
7. [Reece Short Annotated Bibliography](#)
8. [BR Contested Memories Steven Reece](#)
9. [LEAD 637 Issues in Research Fall 2014 Full Syllabus](#)
10. [Reece Literature Review Chart REV](#)
11. [Lead 880 Spring 2015 Syllabus](#)
12. [LEAD 625 F14 final](#)
13. [Reece Ch 1 - 3 Dissertation Proposal \(ewb\)](#)
14. [IRB Application](#)
15. [Individual Research Participation Consent Form](#)
16. [Focus Group Research Participation Consent Form](#)
17. [Interview Protocol](#)
18. [Reece IRB Research Protocol](#)
19. [Reece IRB Application Form](#)
20. [Reece Course Syllabus Qualitative Research Methods—EDRM605](#)
21. [Photographs for Photo-elicitation](#)
22. [Numbering and Description of Photographs](#)
23. [Instructions for Qualitative Visual Data](#)
24. [Agenda TMF Board Meeting 12-April-2014 Photographic](#)
25. [Code Tree Development v3.0](#)
26. [Re Dissertation Defense Preparation](#)
27. [Reece Oral Defense of the Doctoral Dissertation](#)
28. [Reece Dissertation Defense](#)

### Verifications and Evaluations

1. [Evaluation Report 01-06-06R2](#)
2. [Kuhn and Reece Class Project Final](#)
3. [Literature Review Final](#)
4. [Re: Complete Dissertation Proposal](#)
5. [Reece Ch 1 - 3 Dissertation Proposal Dr Brand edit 05-05-2015](#)
6. [Reece NIH Certificate of Completion](#)
7. [Matzevah Letter of Consent](#)
8. [IRB protocol number 15-121 full](#)
9. [Reece Qualitative Consideration of Remembering](#)
10. [The Third Space: The Meeting of Jew and Christian in the Act of Remembering, Restoring, and Reconciling - A Case Study of the Matzevah Foundation](#)
11. [US Copyright Registration Confirmation](#)
12. [US Copyright Registration Record](#)
13. [Orla-Bukowska Recommendations for Revisions of Steven Reece's Dissertation](#)
14. [Final Revisions](#)
15. [Reece Dissertation Pro-Quest ETD](#)
16. [Third Space Certificate of Registration](#)
17. [My Dissertation](#)
18. [Leading in the Third Space REV v3](#)
19. [2019 Fall TMF Board Meeting Minutes](#)
20. [Jay Re My Dissertation](#)
21. [Marla Re My Dissertation](#)
22. [Dissertation Notes Rachel](#)
23. [Dissertation Notes Rachel 2](#)
24. [The Jewish Cemetery Cleaning Project in Czestochowa June 2020 is underway](#)
25. [Steven Reece Authorization Letter in Polish](#)

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