**The Influence of Student Affairs Professionals' Spirituality on the Development of
College Students: A Phenomenological Study**

A Dissertation

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Abstract

The Influence of Student Affairs Professionals' Spirituality on the Development of

College Students: A Phenomenological Study

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Increasing attention on the topic of spirituality in higher education points to empirical research that highlights students' needs, desire, and expectations for engagement in spiritual matters in college. However, student affairs professionals struggle in their efforts to guide students in the spiritual aspect of their development. This qualitative study explores how the spirituality of student affairs professionals' at a California public research university influences their responses to students' spiritual development and exploration of life's big questions.

The following research questions guided this study:

1) How do student affairs professionals define and describe spirituality?

2) How do student affairs professionals describe the role of spiritual development within the larger mission of student affairs work?

3) In what ways does the spirituality of student affairs professionals influence their approach to the spiritual development of students?

This phenomenological study consisted of thirteen student affairs professionals. The data was derived from semi-structured interviews, observations, and artifact analysis.

The data analysis was conducted manually and with data software to obtain emergent themes.

The five major findings were:

1. Nearly all of the participants define spirituality as an "inner" and "personal" journey.

2. All of the participants indicated that spirituality is an important aspect of life.

3. All of the participants indicated that they leverage personal sharing as an approach to engaging students in meaningful dialogue about spiritual matters.

4. Most of the participants indicated they had experienced students grappling with what they perceived to be spiritual matters.

5. Most of participants connected spirituality to the social justice commitment in student affairs work.

The results were: (a) The spiritual development of students poses unique and difficult challenges for student affairs professionals seeking to practice whole student development, (b) Despite the lack of clarity about spirituality, student affairs professionals do engage in the spiritual development of students, (c) Spirituality is intricately connected to the work of student affairs professional through the student affairs social justice mission, and (d) Ambiguity regarding the spiritual development of students may hamper student affairs professionals' effectiveness in providing whole student development. Recommendations for student affairs professionals and further research were included.

This Ed.D. Dissertation Committee from The School of Education at Drexel University
certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

The Influence of Student Affairs Professionals' Spirituality on the Development of

College Students: A Phenomenological Study

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Sherry Lynn Craig. Your gifts of love,

honesty, courage, and faith live deeply inside of me.

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This work is possible because of the collective efforts of several people. First, to my husband and best friend Mahsea Evans. You are an incredibly brilliant, compassionate, patient, and loving man. Thank you for always being a tender supporter and my number one fan. With you, everything is possible; I more than love you. To my precious daughter, Niara "Poppa" Evans, thank you for being exactly what I needed you to be to get through this process. You inspire me and I hope to make you proud.

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To Cohort 4, thanks for taking me in and making me one of your own. In your own way, each of you contributed to the completion of this work. Thank you.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research

> Great universities lost sight of the essential purpose of undergraduate
> education…Which is to help students learn 'who they are, to search for a larger
> purpose for their lives, and to leave college as better human beings'…A college or
> university is not just for the transmission of knowledge, but a forum for the
> exploration of life's mystery and meaning. (Lewis, 2007, p. xv)

Background

I invite you behind the door of a student affairs professional at a tier one research

university. A first-year student named Kim, who appears to be no more than 19 years

old, pokes her head into the slightly ajar office door, requesting permission to ask a quick

question. She takes a seat, observing the family photos on the desk, and begins to

describe her academic quandary. Kim explains that she recently failed a midterm exam

and is in jeopardy of failing her organic chemistry class, despite her best efforts to learn

and study the material.

After attentively listening, the advisor asks Kim a few questions to understand

more details about her academic challenges and personal ambitions as a student. Kim

explains that she selected her present classes mostly because her first-choice classes were

filled during registration period. She shares that among her four classes, she really only

enjoys the freshman seminar, *Women are More Than Half the Sky*. Kim goes on to

explain that she is in jeopardy of potentially failing her chemistry class and needs to get

an A on the final. Kim indicates that, despite her best efforts, she does not think she will

obtain the necessary grade to pass the class. As Kim describes the strategies she

employed and the countless hours she has spent studying, she grows frustrated and tears

begin to fall.

The conversation, which began as a "quick academic question," turned into a

lengthy 45-minute conversation about the complexities, uncertainties, and challenges of

life as an undergraduate student. At various points throughout the conversation, Kim

raised profound questions like, "What if my best isn't good enough? What does it mean if

I fail? Do I have what it takes to be successful here?" As an advisor, this interaction

prompted more questions than answers. Specifically, what is the role and responsibility

of student affairs professionals in addressing these questions and how should an advisor

or other professional respond to students like Kim in discovering the answers to these

"big questions" about life.

This situation is not an exception; rather it is illustrative of a larger dynamic for

student affairs professionals, the need to be responsive to students' spiritual needs. While

defined differently by an array of researchers, for the purpose of this study, Parks' (2000)

representation of spirituality is used:

> A longing for ways of speaking on the human experience of depth, meaning,
> mystery, moral purpose, transcendence, wholeness, intuition, vulnerability,
> tenderness, courage, the capacity to love, and the apprehension of spirit as the
> animating essence at the core of life. (Parks, 2000, p. 16)

Many of today's college students appear to be on a spiritual quest that entails asking

existential or *big questions* that require them to clarify their own beliefs, values, and

goals. These students are seeking a way of being that is self sustaining in the face of the

challenges, adversity, and contradictions they experience both within themselves and externally in the world. Dalton (2001) stated:

> College students typically find themselves at a crucial point in life, having to make major decisions about life-choices and directions, yet having few structured opportunities in higher education to examine the spiritual implications of such big decisions. (p. 23)

This dynamic calls for campus leaders and, more specifically, student affairs professionals to support students in seeking answers to the big questions they face. It is the gap between students' cries for spiritual help and the ambiguity of student affairs professionals' responses that was the inspiration for this research.

Spirituality in Higher Education

Over the past two decades, a growing body of research about spirituality in higher education has been published. Numerous researchers have made a strong case for the relevance of spirituality in higher education, purporting that spirituality is fundamental to students' lives (Bryant & Choi, 2003; Capeheart-Meningall, 2005; Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2006; Greenway, 2006; Hartley, 2004; Nash, 2010; Patel & Meyer, 2011; Tisdell, 2003). Students bring to college values and traditions from their upbringing that are often reexamined and challenged as they grow and mature through their educational experiences. This natural process of inquiry, coupled with the unprecedented historical, social, and financial global events of the time, have created a persuasive reason to give greater priority to the spirituality of students (Arnett, 2000; Levine & Dean, 2012; Palmer, Zajonc, & Scribner, 2010). Specifically, economic turbulence, technological advancement, diverse demographic composition of student populations, and recent global

events have prompted students to experience conflicting emotions ranging from hope

and optimism to fear and cynicism about the world and their place within it (Nash, 2010).

Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011) at the Higher Education Research Institute

(HERI) at the University of California, Los Angeles conducted compelling and

comprehensive empirical research about the spiritual development of students. This

groundbreaking research indicated that students are seeking outlets to discuss existential

questions. Their longitudinal study, spanning seven years, examined how students'

spiritual qualities changed during their college years. Their findings identified the role

college experience played in facilitating the development of the students' spiritual and

religious qualities. Two of their conclusions indicated that (a) engagement in inner work

helped facilitate spiritual growth and (b) specific educational experiences promoted

spiritual development, which in turn positively affected college outcomes such as

academic performance, leadership development, satisfaction with college, interest in

pursuing graduate study, and the ability to get along with other races and cultures.

Furthermore, their research suggests that spirituality matters to college students and

spiritual development positively impacts academic success. Drawing from these

conclusions, it seems important that campus leaders place emphasis on students' spiritual

development.

Student Affairs Profession

Unlike faculty, whose primary role is research and teaching, the student affairs

profession is rooted in the concept of educating the whole student. This present study is

built on a foundation of the student affairs mission, which emphasizes the development of

the whole student, incorporating their physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual lives.

The philosophical principles of student affairs outlined in the foundational document

Student Personnel Point of View (*SPPV*), created more than 60 years ago, remain central

to the profession's mission and inform the work of current student affairs practitioners.

The *SPPV* asserts:

> The development of students as whole persons interacting in social situations is
> the central concern of student personnel work and of other agencies of
> education…The concept of education is broadened to include attention to the
> student's well-rounded development physically, socially, emotionally, and
> spiritually, as well as intellectually. The student is thought of as a responsible
> participant in his own development and not as a passive recipient of an imprinted
> economic, political, or religious doctrine, or vocational skill. (American Council
> on Education, 1949, p. 2)

The development of the whole student has been a cornerstone of the student

affairs profession since its inception. Decades after the publication of the *SPPV*, the

American College Personnel Association's (ACPA) first core value indicates its mission

is "education and development of the total student" (ACPA, 2013, p. 1). The document

Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners, authored by the

National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), American

Association for Higher Education (AAHE), and ACPA, maintains that student affairs

professionals should be able to "articulate theories and models that describe the

development of college students and the conditions and practices that facilitate holistic

development" (NASPA, AAHE, & ACPA, 2010, p. 3). In addition, the two organizations

have collaborated to create documents reflecting the early *SPPV* mission including

Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-wide Focus on the Student Experience and *Principles*

of Good Practice in Student Affairs, which are critical to defining the profession's standards for well-informed practices.

Based upon the core principle to nurture the whole student, student affairs professionals in higher education are uniquely poised to support the spiritual development of students. Some student affairs professionals, however, struggle to respond to the spiritual dimension of students' needs because of a variety of complexities and complications. Lowery (2005) suggested this struggle is related to the affiliation of spirituality with religion and the desire to uphold the legal mandate of separation of church and State at public institutions. Palmer et alia (2010) noted the term spirituality is subjective in nature and lacks a common definition in higher education. Palmer and et al. also suggested a second contributing factor has been that student affairs professionals may feel inadequately trained to engage with students on spiritual matters. Despite these claims of ambiguity and uncertainty, research indicates that students' spiritual needs are an important aspect of their development and worthy of attention (Astin and others, 2011; Bugenhagen, 2009; Dalton, 2006; Greenway, 2006; Kocet & Stewart, 2011; Patel & Meyer, 2011). A commitment to enhancing students' spirituality necessitates the willingness of student affairs professionals to engage students in conversations that explore the big questions of life. When students are not provided with opportunities to engage in these conversations it may communicate that the spiritual aspect of their being is neither seen nor valued. One way for students to enhance their spiritual development is through opportunities for discussions, critical thinking, and reflection about spiritual matters (Astin and others, 2011).

Spiritual Development in Student Affairs Work

There are differing views regarding which, if any, campus entity has accountability for the spiritual development of students. Some scholars have advocated that faculty play an integral role in fostering holistic development, suggesting faculty are powerful role models students often emulate. Faculty members facilitate conversations about self-understanding and have a direct effect on students' personal development (Braskamp, Trautvetter, & Ward, 2006; Waggoner, 2011). Divergent views, suggested it is the role of student affairs professionals to respond to the spiritual needs of students (Dalton, 2006; Kocet & Stewart, 2011; Nash, 2001). Those seeing the role of student affairs linked to the spiritual development of students do so because of the profession's long-standing mission to provide a holistic approach to learning in the academy. Nash (2001) called student affairs professionals the "hidden educators" because of their contact, communication, and engagement with students around questions of meaning and purpose outside the classroom (p. 7). Furthering his claim, Nash (2001) explained that these hidden educators, in contrast to faculty, "frequently hear what touches students at the core of their lives because students tend to drop their guards whenever they leave the faculty advisor's office, the formal lecture hall, or the seminar room" (p. 7). Despite the different views of responsibility, the need to tend to the spiritual needs of students is apparent.

Spiritual Intelligence

Many researchers have agreed that spirituality should have a significant place in higher education, but contend it will transpire only if campus leaders intentionally

incorporate it into the campus culture (Astin & Astin, 2003; Braskamp and others, 2006; Nash & Murray, 2010; Palmer and others, 2010). Advancing the integration of spirituality in higher education and aiding students in their spiritual development requires that student affairs professionals have a solid perspective about their own spiritual understandings and practices (Glanzer, 2011; Kiessling, 2010; Kocet & Stewart, 2011; Seifert & Holman-Harmon, 2009). Zohar (2010) asserted that college educators could help the spiritual development of students through their own "spiritual intelligence", defined as "the intelligence with which we access our deepest meanings, values, purposes, and highest motivations" (p. 3). Drawing a connection between the student affairs professionals' spiritual intelligence and students' development, Zohar (2010) stated:

> An education fostered by the principles of spiritual intelligence seeks to capitalize on the excitement and almost insatiable curiosity that students bring to their campus experience. It encourages them to question their own previous assumptions and values and to open themselves to the wealth of new experiences available to them during their years at college. It opens their minds rather than filling them. (p. 5)

Challenges with Spirituality

The lack of a common definition for the term spirituality has contributed to the many challenges of responding to the spiritual needs of students. Dalton (2001) defined spirituality as the "universal instinct toward connection with others and discovery of our place in the larger web of life" (p. 17). Love and Talbot (1997) suggested that spirituality is defined as the "…growing recognition of a force larger than oneself; a force only accessible through faith, hope, love, and other non-rational aspects of human experience"

(p. 620). Braskamp and others (2006) explained spirituality as "finding one's purpose in life through inner reflection and introspection and taking action; to be morally responsible" (p. 23). The definition of spirituality used in this study—"a longing for ways of speaking on the human experience of depth, meaning, mystery, moral purpose, transcendence, wholeness, intuition, vulnerability, tenderness, courage, the capacity to love, and the apprehension of spirit as the animating essence at the core of life" (Parks 2000, p. 16)—works in tandem with the spiritual quest to answer life's big questions. According to Parks (2000), the "big questions" are:

1. Who am I?

2. What are my most deeply felt values?

3. What is my mission or purpose in life?

4. What sort of world do I want to create?

5. How will my life make a difference in the world? (p. 137)

Even with the various definitions of the term spirituality, there is a common assumption that the spiritual journey arises from a desire or need to align and balance one's inner and outer lives (Palmer, 1998).

Scholars have indicated that some colleges and universities are struggling to fulfill their promises of developing the whole student with regards to spiritual development (Astin and others, 2011; Bugenhagen, 2009; Chickering and others, 2006; Dalton & Crosby, 2012; Kazanijian & Laurence, 2002; Palmer and others, 2010; Parks, 2000; Waggoner, 2011). Student affairs professionals employ considerable effort and resources toward students' social, academic, and behavioral needs, but offer minimal

investment in their inner development (Nash, 2001). In higher education, student affairs professionals lead the charge in creating inclusive environments where exploration, reflection, and inquiry are encouraged and welcomed. Therefore, it can appear contradictory to the essence of student affairs work to hesitate in engaging students' spiritual interests.

Problem Statement

The student affairs profession is predicated on the development of the whole student, but some professionals provide relatively less attention to the spiritual aspect of students' being and are hesitant to engage students about spirituality. By acknowledging and cultivating their own spiritual intelligence, student affairs professionals are likely to be better equipped to help students with their own spiritual development.

Purpose and Significance of the Problem

Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how the essence of student affairs professionals' spirituality influences their experiences in support of students' spiritual development. While several empirical studies on spiritual development focus on students, there is limited research about the lived experiences of student affairs professionals and how they address the spiritual development of students. To this end, this research focused on perspectives, perceptions, and experiences of student affairs professionals and the phenomenon of spirituality.

Significance of the Problem

The topic of spirituality is important in our society. For some, it serves as the central source for the choices, actions, and decisions made in life. Questions and explorations about spiritual beliefs, personal values, and life purpose are intricately connected to notions of spirituality and considered critical components of leadership and character in the 21st century. In response to the Trayvon Martin case, President Obama stated, "as a nation we all have some soul searching to do" (The White House, 2013, paragraph 23). His statement pointed to the critical need for an examination and understanding of our most fundamental values and motivations. Similarly, several researchers have made a strong case for the relevance of spirituality in higher education (Bryant & Choi, 2003; Capeheart-Meningall, 2005; Chickering and others, 2006; Greenway, 2006; Hartley, 2004; Nash, 2010; Patel & Meyer, 2011; Tisdell, 2003). Students' spirituality has implications for how they make decisions in college, including their choice of major and minor and career, the social activities in which they will engage, what support systems they access, and whether to stay in college or drop out. The Astin and Astin (2003) study found that college students expressed a "high level of interest and involvement in spirituality and religion, are actively engaged in a spiritual quest, and have high expectations for the role their universities will play in their spiritual and emotional development" (p. 8). A solid understanding about one's own beliefs, values, hopes, and commitments are necessary to create a foundation by which to relate to others (Patel & Meyer, 2011).

Spiritual development is an essential part of students' growth (Capeheart-Meningall, 2005). Not only should spiritual development be attended to as an aspect of holistic development, but also because students expect and desire to explore their spirituality in their undergraduate college years (Astin & Astin, 2003). A lack of attention to spirituality compromises the ability to deliver on the university's mission to develop the whole student, but more importantly minimizes the opportunity for students to develop their own self-awareness and spiritual intelligence.

College can be an unsettling time for traditional-age students (ages 18-24) as they encounter questions about various aspects of their self-identity and navigate different stages of personal development. Chickering (1969) identified seven vectors as the foundation of understanding the developmental stages students encounter during college years: (a) developing competence, (b) managing emotions, (c) moving through autonomy toward interdependence, (d) developing interpersonal relationships, (e) establishing identity, (f) developing purpose, and (g) developing integrity. The last two vectors that pertain to purpose and integrity relate to students' spiritual development.

Spirituality is identified as a significant component of self-identity that has the potential to help students cope with the stress and fragmentation they frequently experience in college (Fowler, 1981; Parks, 2000). Students have sought ways to create a better college experience for themselves through their questioning of spiritual issues, yet it is unknown how student affairs professionals address the spiritual needs of students and their requests for engagement around spirituality (Love & Talbot, 1997).

Identifying and preparing for a satisfying career requires students to have a sense of both who they are and the skills and talents they have to offer the world (Chickering and others, 2006; Dalton & Crosby, 2012). If students have not reflected on these aspects of themselves, it may be difficult for them to act in ways that are congruent with their innermost beliefs. Furthermore, knowledge of self has been identified as the foundation for developing the leadership attributes that higher education aspires to nurture in students (Kotterman, 2006).

Research Questions

The following questions guided this research:

1. How do student affairs professionals' define and describe spirituality?

2. How do student affairs professionals describe the role of spiritual development within the larger mission of student affairs work?

3. In what ways does the spirituality of student affairs professionals influence their approach to the spiritual development of students?

Conceptual Framework

Researcher Stance

In research, the philosophical worldviews of the researcher often influences the research design. The research design for this study was partially driven by my worldview as a social constructivist. This paradigm holds that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work based upon their personal experiences. Gergen (1994) discusses social constructionism as an attempt to understand "how is it that people characterize and index themselves and the world about them so that their actions are

intelligible and justifiable" (p. 134). I sought to explore the varied and multiple meanings of spirituality and the impacts of those meanings on students' spiritual development as presented through student affairs professionals' voices. This approach assumes that subjective meanings are formed through interactions with others, and take into consideration the social settings, including historical, cultural, and institutional influences.

As a student affairs professional myself, I engaged in this study with an epistemological approach to obtain the perspectives and experiences of the participants. This approach offered firsthand information about student affairs professionals' unique spiritual practices and the ways it influences their work with students. Gathering information directly from the source provided close observation of the phenomenon and reduced the distance between the researcher and the study participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1998).

Given the subjective nature of spirituality, I also took an ontological approach to this study. Spirituality, in this study, is referenced in relation to an understanding of self, the world, and interconnectedness with others. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) as well as Creswell (2009) explained that ontology assumes there are multiple realities based on the context and rejects the existence of a single external reality. Acknowledging a lack of a common definition, in this study, I analyzed and reported on the participants' views of spirituality and experiences of spiritual development.

Spirituality is of the utmost importance to me as a researcher; therefore, it is essential I integrate an axiological perspective. My axiological stance attempted

recognition of biases that may be present in the research. To maintain the integrity of the study, I employed epoche or bracketing to view the phenomenon from a fresh and naïve lens (Moustakis, 1994). Figure 1 is a representation of my philosophical assumptions and inquiry paradigms.
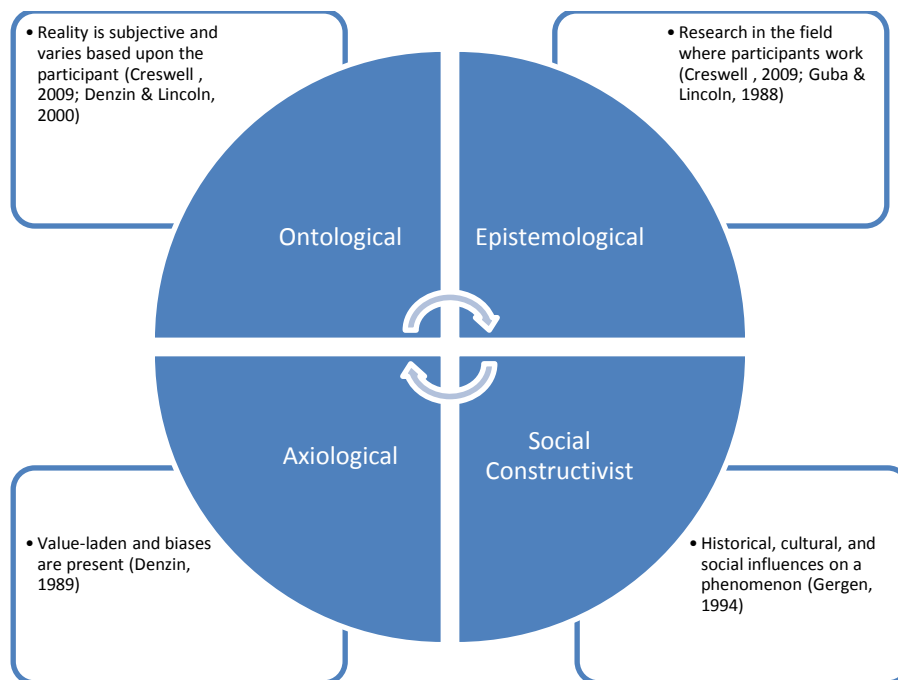
Figure 1. Researcher's stance

About the Researcher

This topic is personally important because I deeply care about the human spirit and how it is nurtured to inspire greatness. I wholeheartedly believe colleges and universities have the privilege and responsibility to develop human potential of students. Within the system of higher education, student affairs professionals provide a unique offering predicated on holistic development that seeks to harness and nurture the human

potential of students. With this in mind, I sought to understand how student affairs

professionals were responding to the spiritual aspect of development in higher education.

To provide a broader context, I believe it is important to disclose my own spiritual

background and interest in this topic. I am a deeply spiritual person who believes in a

Higher Power, but I do not identify with any particular religion or faith tradition. As

previously noted, I am passionate about people and the human spirit. As a student affairs

professional, I am committed to helping people acquire a holistic sense of self as a tool

for transformation and healing in the world.

My professional background and personal spiritual leanings are factors that

influence how I approached this study, specifically my word choice in denoting the

essence of spirituality. In higher education, inclusive words such as authenticity,

purpose, meaning making, integrity, inner work, wholeness, and values are frequently

used in lieu of the word spirituality. Despite sound rationale to use inclusive language

representative of people all faiths and life philosophies including agnostic, humanists,

and atheists, I have elected to use the term "spirituality". I have elected to use this word

because it acknowledges the mystery and sacred aspect of life and the human spirit in a

way other words do not quite capture.

Conceptual Framework of Three Research Streams

Figure 2 illustrates critical questions that each stream of theory, research, and

practice sought to address. The aforementioned streams served as the foundation for

understanding the phenomenon of spirituality and spiritual development within student

affairs work. The literature review integrates recent theory and research from student

development theory, religious and faith development, and the student affairs profession.

Student Development	• In what ways does the notion of whole student development inform student affairs practices? • How is student development applied in institutions of higher education today?
Spiritual Development	• What are the elements of spiritual development theory? • How does student affairs professionals seek to spiritually develop students?
Student Affairs Professionals	• What factors impact student affairs professionals' approach to the spiritual develpment of students? • How do student affairs professionals integrate their own spirituality into their work?

Figure 2. Questions of inquiry for each research stream.
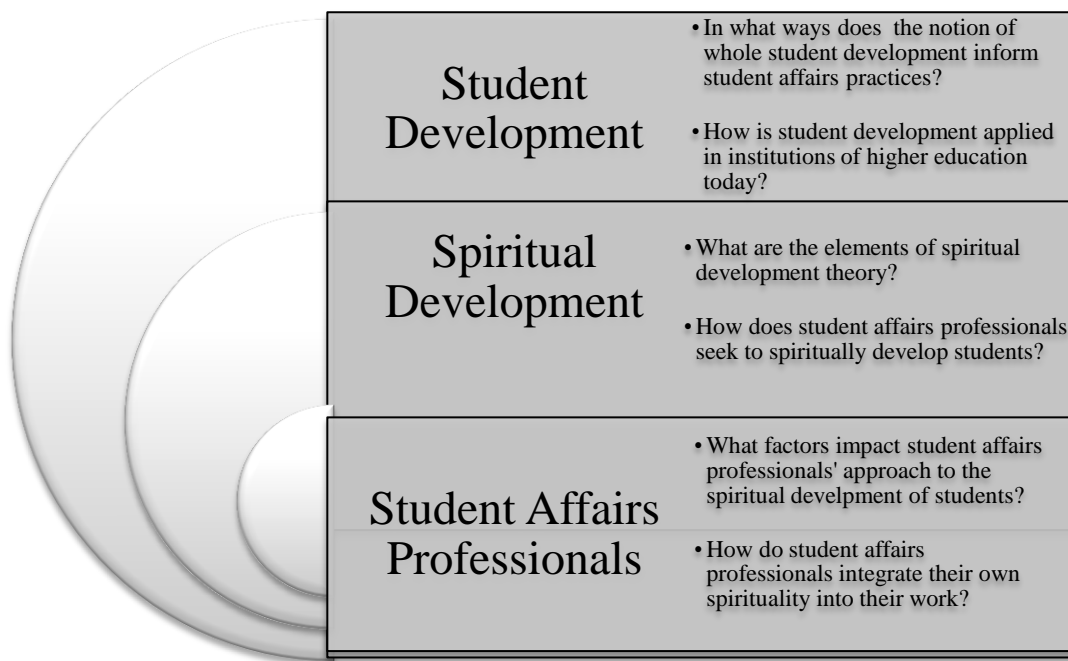
Figure 3 represents the overall conceptual framework for the student and

individual contributions of student development, spiritual development, and the student

affairs profession in addressing the spiritual needs of students. The specific empirical

studies and theories used are noted. The interplay of these streams of theory, research,

and practice inform this study.

Conceptual Framework for the Study		
Student Development Theory	**Spiritual Development**	**Student Affairs Profession**
Erikson (1959) - stages of development	Parks (2000) - search for meaning and purpose in college in faith development theory	Student Personnel Point of View (ACE, 1937, 1949) - holistic student development approach
Chickering (1969) - seven vectors including identity, integrity, and purpose	Fowler (1978) - stages of faith development	Kiessling (2010) - discrepancy of holistic student development in aim and reality
Baxter-Magolda (2001) - self authorship	Astin and Astin (2003)- students desire to engage in spirituality in college	Nash (2010) - college and university responsibility to help students find purpose
Arnett (2000) - Emerging adulthood	Hansen (2005) - spiritual practices influence approach to spiritual development	Stewart, Kocet, and Lodbell (2011)-hesitation to engage in spirituality
	Seifert and Holman-Harom (2009) - life purpose impacts student engagement	

Figure 3. Conceptual framework.

The work of Erikson (1959), Chickering (1969), Baxter-Magolda (2001), and Arnett (2000) provide a foundational understanding of the developmental stages of college students and the unique challenges they face in the 21st century. Spiritual development is viewed through the theoretical frameworks of Fowler's (1981) and Parks' (2000) faith development theories. Their work posited the developmental process of faith development for college students. In addition, the groundbreaking seven-year national study of spirituality conducted by the Astin and Astin (2003) offered an empirical foundation to understanding traditional college students' search for meaning and purpose. Hansen (2005), as well as Seifert and Holman-Harmon (2009), discussed particular practices of student affairs professionals that impact spiritual development.

Finally, the research of Kiessling (2010), Nash (2010), and Kocet et alia (2011) highlighted the unique challenges of integrating spirituality into student affairs. The *SPPV* (ACE, 1937, 1949) established the goal and mission of student affairs work and emphasized a holistic approach to development. Current research in student affairs is the basis for exploring the practices of student affairs professionals with regard to the spiritual development of students. Kocet et alia (2011) illustrated the hesitation of student affairs to engage in spirituality.

Definition of Terms

Holistic development

The focus on the whole student encompasses the development and education of the physical, social, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual aspects of their being (ACE, 1949).

Religion

The institutionalized system of beliefs, attitudes, and practices.

Spiritual development

Programs, services, and opportunities aimed to provide assistance in spiritual growth.

Spiritual intelligence

The intelligence with which we access our deepest meanings, values, purposes, and highest motivations (Zohar, 2010, p. 3).

Spirituality

"A longing for ways of speaking on the human experience of depth, meaning, mystery, moral purpose, transcendence, wholeness, intuition, vulnerability, tenderness, courage, the capacity to love, and the apprehension of spirit as the animating essence at the core of life" (Parks, 2000, p. 16).

Student Affairs

The organizational structure or unit within an institution responsible for students' out-of-class lives and learning and development (Winston, Creamer, & Miller, 2001).

Student affairs professionals

Persons employed to attend effectively to both the educational mission of a college or university and the fulfillment of their unit's goals in ways that are consistent with the historical values and ethical principles of the field (Winston and others, 2001).

Student personnel

The original term for student affairs that is no longer actively used in the field. It is used in this document only for historical references (Winston and others, 2001).

Student

An individual attending an educational institution.

Assumptions and Limitations

Researcher Assumptions Chart

The researcher subscribes to the seven assumptions originally detailed by Tisdell

(2003) about the nature of spirituality in relation to education. These assumptions are

congruent with the researcher's professional experiences of spirituality in the higher

education setting. Therefore, they have been adapted to reflect the researcher's

assumptions and applicability to this research.

Table 1

Researcher Assumptions

Researcher's Assumptions
1 There is a common misperception that spirituality and religion are the same. This misperception has influenced higher education's reluctance to embrace spirituality. They are distinctly different, but for many people they are interrelated.
2 Spirituality encompasses an awareness and honoring of wholeness and the interconnectedness of all things through the mystery of what is referred to as the Life-force, God, higher power, higher self, cosmic energy, Buddha nature, or Great Spirit [capitals in original quote]. It is also about acceptance of life that is infrequently linear, logical, or measurable.
3 Spirituality is ultimately about meaning making. At a fundamental level, student affairs work is about helping students make meaning of their lives in addition to supporting the academic mission of the institution.
4 Spirituality is always present in the learning environment. It is about the transformation of the heart and mind through relationships.
5 Spiritual development constitutes moving toward greater authenticity or to a more authentic self. Holistic development acknowledges and embraces all aspects of a student's being to gain understanding of true self.
6 Spirituality is about how people construct knowledge through largely unconscious and symbolic processes, often made more concrete in art forms such as music, art, image, symbol, and ritual, which are manifested culturally.

7 Spiritual experiences are most often unplanned, unexpected, and occur organically.

(Adapted from Tisdell, 2003, pp. 28-29)

Limitations

Limitations in a study are unanticipated factors that take place during the study and may impact one or more aspects of the study. Limitations occur in all studies because no study is without flaw and this study is no exception. There were a number of noteworthy limitations in this study. First, although the study satisfied a sufficient number of interviews for qualitative research, it explored the phenomenon of spiritual development from a relatively small number of student affairs professionals from a single-site institution. The findings are applicable to the specific population and institution under study; therefore, the study findings may have limited applicability to other institutions or groups.

Second, the timing in the year in which the data collection occurred may have impacted the study. The study was conducted during a particularly busy time of the academic year at CRU. There were several recruitment and selection processes happening within the student affairs Division that influenced staff participation in the study, scheduling interviews, and preparation for the interview for participants who accepted the study invitation. The researcher was unaware of the conflicting division-wide processes taking place during the time of the interviews.

The researcher sought to bracket her experiences in the findings and analysis. Manen (1990) warned

"The problem is that our common sense, pre-understandings, our supposition, assumptions, and the existing bodies of scientific knowledge predispose us to interpret

the nature of the phenomenon before we have even come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological questions." (p. 46)

The researcher encountered this struggle first-hand and attempted to note such occurrences when they arose in the study.

Summary

The topic of spirituality in higher education, and specifically in student affairs, has gained increased attention over the last decade. Student affairs professionals' mission to provide whole student development for students in higher education was explored with a particular focus on the spiritual dimension. Using the theoretical framework of student development, spiritual development, and the student affairs profession, this study sought to explore how student affairs professionals' spirituality   influences their efforts to support students in their spiritual development.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to Chapter 2

The importance of students' spirituality is well documented in student development literature, however how student affairs professionals respond to this need is unclear. There are several reasons why the spiritual development of students is a worthwhile endeavor for student affairs professionals. Research shows a relationship between the spiritual development of students and their academic success and experience in college (Astin and others, 2011). Students' spiritual orientation and religious beliefs often inform their identity and characterize self-understanding and awareness in fundamental ways (Stewart, 2013). In addition, the spiritual development of students is a foundational component of whole student development and a tenet of student affairs work. Universities and colleges generally make commitments in their mission statements to the development of the whole student, but often provide less attention to the spiritual aspects of their lives (Dalton, 2006).

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how the essence of student affairs professional's spirituality influences their experiences in support of students' spiritual development. This literature review provides a synthesis of three streams of theory, practice, and research that are central to the phenomenon of student affairs practices in support of the spiritual development of students. The first stream discusses student development theory in higher education. The second stream provides a review of the theory, research, and practice of spirituality and faith development theories.

The final stream addresses the philosophical and pragmatic approach of student affairs professionals to student development.

Specifically, the contributions of four empirical studies conducted between 2005 and 2011 inform this research. Hansen (2005) conducted a phenomenological study to understand how student affairs professionals integrate spirituality into their work. The study demonstrated that an individual's spiritual definitions and beliefs, perceptions of their ability to influence students' spirituality, and the campus culture and the context of interactions with students are factors that influence actions pertaining to spirituality. Siefert and Holman-Harmon (2009) partnered with ACPA to conduct a qualitative study to explore how the work of student affairs professionals was influenced by their spirituality or sense of life purpose. The study concluded there was a correlation between the student affairs professionals' sense of life purpose and how they engaged in matters pertaining to students' inner development. Kiessling (2010) conducted a quantitative study to explore how student affairs professionals' spirituality impacted their implementation of student development with regard to the way they performed their work. The study determined there was a discrepancy between the aim of achieving whole student development and the reality of how these goals are fulfilled by student affairs professionals, particularly with regard to the spiritual aspect of development. Burchell, Lee, and Olson (2011) examined how student affairs professionals' comfort levels with spirituality affected their interactions with students. Their findings indicated that participants' comfort in engaging in spiritual discussions with students was contingent upon their perceptions about the appropriateness of having spiritual

conversations with students. The present study will complement the aforementioned research by exploring both mid-level and senior-level student affairs professionals' experiences and understanding of spirituality and how it specifically influences their approach to the spiritual development of students.

Literature Review

Theories Pertinent to Student Development Theory

Student development theory serves as the theoretical foundation to understanding how college students learn and grow and guides the work of student affairs professionals. Student development theory takes into account all aspects of student being and is, therefore, holistic in nature. The concept of development of the whole student is rooted in the *SPPV* (ACE, 1937, 1949). As indicated in Chapter 1, the *SPPV* articulated that the focus on the whole student encompasses an approach to education that seeks to develop the physical, social, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual aspects of their being (ACE, 1949). The *SPPV* is reflected in current principles and competencies of the two leading professional organizations—ACPA and NASPA—for student affairs practitioners.

Erikson's identity development theory. Erikson's (1959) identity development theory has been influential in many aspects of education as it provided a chronological overview of life stages in establishing identity development. Within this model were eight stages of development, each stage characterized by a "turning point" resolved through a struggle between the internal self and the external environment. Among the eight stages, the fifth stage labeled "identity versus role confusion" was described as occurring between childhood and adulthood and is associated with an intense desire to

define oneself and develop a clear sense of values, beliefs, and goals (Erikson, 1968).

Most traditional college-aged students enter college in adolescence when they are seeking

to establish who they are, independent of their family and social communities. In this

stage, Erikson asserted that identity development is the most challenging aspect of

development. Although Erikson's work on identity development is foundational to

student development theory, it is susceptible to critique because it lacks specific details

about the stages, the study findings were biased against women, and the focus of the

study does not specifically address the needs of college students (Gillian, 1982).

      Chickering's seven vectors. Despite the limitations of Erikson's work, Evans,

Forney, Guido, Patton, and Renn (2010) have suggested it significantly influenced the

development of Chickering's seven-vector model. Chickering's (1969) seven-vector

model of college student development is widely recognized as a substantial influence on

college student development practice. The vectors are: (a) developing competence, (b)

managing emotions, (c) moving through autonomy toward independence, (d) developing

mature interpersonal relationships, (e) establishing identity, (f) developing purpose, and

(g) developing integrity. Chickering (1969) chose to use the term vectors "because each

seems to have direction and magnitude-even through developmental tasks that have both

direction and force" (p. 8). According to Chickering, one may work through more than

one vector concurrently, but a single vector is the central focus at any given time. Unlike

Erikson's sequential stages, Chickering's theory implied fluid motion of development

across the vectors, and he suggested that no two individuals will work through the vectors

exactly the same as their peers.

Baxter Magolda's self-authorship. Embracing Chickering's seven vectors, Baxter Magolda (2001) sought to understand how students move through stages of development and gain a sense of self, particularly in a fast-paced and ever changing world. Baxter Magolda (2001) conducted research that focused on the development of 101 students at Miami University. In the process, she developed the theory of self-authorship. Baxter Magolda defined self-authorship as "the internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity, and social relations" through the internal voice, building an internal foundation, and securing internal commitments (p. 269). From an epistemological perspective, the study sought to answer the questions, "how do I know what I know?; who am I?; and how do I want to construct relationships with others?" (p. 15). Baxter Magolda identified four phases of development students experience in the process of self-authorship. The first of the four phases is following formulas that pertain to meeting the expectations set out by external authorities. The second phase is experiencing a crossroads where it is recognized that external expectations no longer meet individual needs. The third phase is "becoming the author of one's life through a process where the student is able to identify, articulate, and enact their values and beliefs" and the fourth phase is "being internally centered, a point at which students know who they are and rely upon their own self perceptions more than the opinions of others" (p. 40).

In the study, Baxter Magolda found that students' epistemological development was intricately connected to their sense of self and how they related to others. She concluded that students graduate from college ill-equipped to make decisions based upon

their own inner voice and self-awareness. She suggests that higher education has an obligation to help students understand their full potential to make a positive impact in society, reiterating that the spiritual development in college is lacking.

In a later article, Baxter Magolda (2008) argued, "to prepare students for this century, self-authorship needs to be the basis for advanced learning outcomes in college" (p. 269). Although Baxter Magolda is known for conducting exemplary scholarship, it is important to note that a limitation of this research is the population at Miami University is primarily white and privileged undergraduate students, hence her work may be irrelevant to diverse student populations.

Knefelkamp, Parker, and Widick's approach to student development theory. Since the 1970s, a number of student development theories have emerged. To maintain consistency, relevancy, and theoretical applicability regarding the principles of student development, Knefelkamp, Parker, and Widick (1978) claimed student development theory needed to answer four questions: (a) what intrapersonal and interpersonal changes should occur while the student is in college?, (b) what factors lead to this development?, (c) what aspects of the college environment encourage or inhibit growth?, and (d) what developmental outcomes should we strive to achieve in college?

Rodgers (1990) defined student development as "the way that a student grows, progresses, or increases his or her developmental capabilities as a result of enrollment in an institution of higher education" (p. 27). The aforementioned questions and definition of student development are inclusive of both a philosophical and a programmatic approach to learning and student growth. His view of student development addresses the

need for the whole student and are particularly useful to the applications of student development theory.

      Arnett's emerging adulthood. Arnett explored how societal and historical occurrences impacted the development of students. His theory, emerging adulthood, provided new insights and considerations for thinking about student development. His theory identified characteristics about the world college students navigate in the 21st century that are different from that of previous generations. First, emerging adulthood depicted the development for late teens through the mid-20s, specifically 18-25, suggesting it is "neither adolescence nor young adulthood" (Arnett, 2000, p. 1). Arnett (2000) identified four social transformations that affect this demographic. The first is an increasingly large number of students attending college and universities immediately after high school in pursuit of the American dream. This shift has delayed the starting of careers and extended formal schooling for over 40% of the population (Smith & Snell, 2009). Students in these age groups similarly have been postponing marriage until they have established their careers. Another contributing factor to the social transformation is an unstable global economy which led to lower job security and the need for ongoing training and education (Arnett, 2000). These social shifts have created "a general psychological orientation of maximizing options and postponing commitments" (Smith & Snell, 2009, p. 5). Finally, in response to these factors, American parents now provide extended financial support to their children, supporting them well into their 20s and sometimes 30s. The cumulative impact of such factors can cause students to delay settling into full adulthood and has them remaining in adolescent roles for an extended

period. Arnett (2000) contends that such factors have drastically changed American life for those between the ages of 18 and 25, making life more complex, confusing, and disjointed than ever before. Arnett's work has provided an additional dimension in understanding social and societal factors that may impact current college student development.

        Levine and Dean's longitudinal studies. Levine and Dean (2012) conducted a series of longitudinal studies over the years 1978–2011, finding that key societal events significantly shaped the lives of students. They gathered data from approximately 30,0000 students and administrators using surveys to examine the attitudes, values, and experiences of undergraduates. Their findings revealed that students' experiences were shaped by occurrences happening in the world. For students born after 1990, major life events were the integration of technology in most aspects of their lives, the uncertainty of the impact of the economy on their future, the terrorist attacks within the US that created feelings of fear, being unsafe in the country, and the election of Barack Obama with his message of change. Arnett (2000) and Levine and Dean (2012) have drawn attention to the influences of a changing world on the college-age population.

        Rationale for how the stream informs the research. This stream provides valuable contributions to understanding student development. The research cited contends that considerations for current student development have grown more complicated since the foundational work of Erikson (1959) and Chickering (1969). Student development theories are evolving and student affairs professionals must

continue to remain current in their theoretical understandings to effectively support the

range of student needs arising from emerging environmental situations and conditions.

Spiritual Development

Spiritual development is acknowledged as an important component of whole

student development. Spirituality is a complex concept largely because of the variety of

definitions for the term. Researchers have acknowledged the subjective nature of the

term and sought to make "spirituality" a broad and inclusive concept; but this also has

presented challenges. A broadly defined review of the concept of spiritual development

that includes Fowler's (1981) and Parks' (2000) theoretical contributions to the topic of

spiritual development is provided.

Differences between religion and spirituality. Speck (2005) noted the terms

spirituality and religion are often used synonymously. With the increase of students who

identify as spiritual and not religious, it is necessary to provide distinctions between the

two terms (Astin and others, 2011). According to LaPierre (1994), spirituality is

> 1) a search for meaning in life; 2) an encounter with transcendence; 3) a sense
> of community; 4) a search for ultimate truth or highest value; 5) a respect and
> appreciation for the mystery of creation [and life]; and 6) a personal
> transformation. (p. 154)

When defining religion, Hill, Paragment, Hood, McCullough and Sawyers (2000)

suggested:

> Religion deals with the ultimate concerns of people and provides personal as well
>
> as social identity within the context of a cosmic or metaphysical background, but
>
> also stipulates behavior patterns and encourages adherents to practice certain

forms of religious expression, characteristics that many forms of spirituality do

not support or even resist. (p. 5)

Given the difference between religion and spirituality, it is important to note that spiritual

development does not require spiritual engagement. Based on the definition of spirituality

used in this study, religion is spiritual, but spirituality is not necessarily religious.

Speck's definitional dilemma. Speck (2005) indicated that the "definitional

dilemma" (p. 2) has added to resistance to addressing the spiritual needs of students.

Speck highlighted three points of tension. The first point of tension is the separation of

church and state often misinterpreted to mean that religion and spirituality should be

separate from public organizations and establishments. The second tension noted is "the

tendency for higher education to embrace empirical rationality" (p. 6) where the focus is

on intellectual endeavors that can be substantiated by evidence. Hence, higher education

is not necessarily seen as the most appropriate venue for explorations of faith and

spirituality. The last tension noted, "staff and faculty are unprepared to address issues

pertaining to spirituality" (p. 5).

Speck (2005) suggested scholars examine their own worldview prior to providing

a definition of the word spirituality. He recommended this worldview expand to include

ideas about the natural and supernatural worlds, thoughts of how the world operates, and

clarity for oneself on what is the purpose of life. Using worldview models as a

framework, Speck (2005) sought to address how to approach the lack of definition of the

word spirituality. He added value in providing tensions or points of contrast that add to

the understanding of higher education's resistance to responding to students' spiritual needs and the importance of taking one's worldview into account when discussing spiritual matters. Although these suggestions are useful, they may have limited applicability because they do not offer tangible ways to immediately respond to the spiritual needs of students. Furthermore, it is unclear what or whose worldview would frame a shared model.

Estanek's narrative themes. Building on Speck's (2005) research, Estanek's (2006) qualitative study explored the evolution of the term "spirituality" within education, purporting that change must be considered in current conversations about spirituality. Estanek (2006) claimed that identifying one definition of the term spirituality does not benefit the emerging discourse; in fact, the exploration of the meaning is part of the interpretation and nature of the inquiry. With this thinking, Estanek (2006) used the narrative method of peer review for analysis to identify five definitional themes as a framework to understand spirituality. Estanek's (2006) study found the following themes: "a.) spirituality defined as a spiritual development, b.) spirituality used as a critique, c.) spirituality understood as an empty container for individual meaning, d.) spirituality understood as common ground or 'field' and e.) spirituality as quasi-religion" (p. 478). Estanek concluded that the current disassociation of spirituality from religion calls for a new discussion and a developmental approach for creating a new definition of spirituality.

Although the definition of the term spirituality is ambiguous in the literature, a broad and inclusive meaning is preferred to have relevance for a wide range of people

and experiences. Currently, a range of terms aiming to clarify how students create ideas of value, beliefs, and significance during their college years is used including: meaning-making, inner development, authenticity, purpose, and faith development. These terms used to depict the essence of spirituality and how it is discussed is critical.

  Astin and Astin's HERI research. The most comprehensive empirical research on spirituality in higher education has been conducted by Astin and Astin (2003) at the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). Their longitudinal study examined how students' spiritual qualities changed during college and identified the role the college experience played in facilitating the development of their spiritual and religious qualities. This study, conducted over seven years, surveyed 112,000 first-year students enrolled in 136 colleges and universities, then followed up with 14,527 of these students as they completed their junior year in college. Two of their key findings indicated that engagement in inner work helps facilitate spiritual growth and specific educational experiences promote spiritual development, which in turn positively affects college outcomes and positively impacts student success.

  Astin and Astin's study made critical claims that captured the attention of student affairs professionals. It affirmed that students are engaged in spiritual explorations during college years, but indicated students received little support from college programs, professors, and classroom engagement (Astin & Astin, 2003). Additionally, the research indicated students are interested in spiritual matters. According to the participants, fifty-eight (58%) stated "integrating spirituality into their life is important" (p.12); seventy-three percent (73%) claimed their religion or spiritual beliefs helped support, and

guidance"; and seventy-four percent (74%) stated their "faith provided them with strength, support and guidance" (p. 3). The HERI (Astin & Astin, 2003) study demonstrated that spirituality is an important area of many college students' lives, yet is minimally supported by faculty and staff.

Welkender and Bowsher's study of meaning and purpose. Welkender and Bowsher (2012) conducted a qualitative study with 11 junior and senior undergraduates at a school in the Midwest to explore their understanding and interpretation of the terms "meaning and purpose," how these terms were used in their lives, and how their college engaged them about these themes. Using snowball sampling, the researchers administered a short reflective writing exercise and face–to-face interviews with the subjects to gather data. Their findings revealed that although participants viewed meaning and purpose differently, they experienced the concept as an essential aspect of having direction in life that guided their decision making. The participants highlighted courses in the humanities and activities such as study abroad, community service, and being in a leadership role as experiences that promoted the exploratoin of existential questions. Also life events such as loss and ending romantic relationships triggered deep thinking and reflection. This study emphasized the need for student affairs professionals and faculty to partner with students in helping them discover their own ideas about the concepts of "meaning and purpose." Students in the study appeared to "crave" opportunities to engage in dialogue about these topics.

Theoretical foundations for spiritual development.

Fowler's theory of faith development. Fowler's (1981) theory of faith

development indicated that faith is universal and uniquely expressed by the individual.

His model incorporated seven stages of faith development are (a) primal faith, which is

derived from primary caretakers at a young age; (b) intuitive–projective faith in which

toddlers (about the age of two) construct images of God based on their environments; (c)

mythic–literal faith (ages 6-7) when children can see and value the perspective of others;

(d) synthetic–conventional faith (during adolescence) in which individuals are able to

think more critically and integrate various sources into their ideas of faith; (e)

individuative–reflective faith (20s–40s) in which religious or spiritual identity is strongly

developed and characteristics are defined; (f) conjunctive faith (later adulthood) in which

life is viewed as complex, changing, and uncontrollable suggesting an openness to other

faith practices; and (g) universalizing faith, in which God is seen in others and throughout

the world. Although Fowler published amended versions of his stages of faith

development through 2000, the essence of the stages has remained the same. Fowlers'

work is the basis for several theories pertaining to spiritual development.

Parks and the search for meaning. Parks added depth to the discussion of

spirituality with the publication of two books: *The Critical Years: Young Adults and the*

Search for Meaning, Faith, and Commitment (Parks, 1986) and *Big Questions, Worthy*

Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose and Faith

(2000). Her second work critiqued Fowler's (1981) theory, noting it did not account for

the dynamic features of young adulthood in which individuals take greater ownership of

themselves and their identity. Parks (2000) identified three forms of development—

cognition, dependence, and community—as essential to faith development. She noted

that higher education has a critical role and responsibility to create educational

environments where students can explore concepts and ideas of their spirituality. Both

Fowler (1978) and Parks (2000) offer a foundation for understanding concepts of spiritual

development amongst college students. Their work adds a critical dimension to the

understanding of the spiritual aspect of whole student development.

Rationale for how the stream informs the research. The aforementioned

research demonstrates that college students are on a spiritual search. It provides a

foundation for understanding the complex nature of students' spiritual development. This

research stream underscores challenges related to the definition and language related to

spirituality. Although questions of spirituality are evident, scholars continue to conduct

and advance empirical research in this area because it is an important and significant

aspect of student development and identity.

Student Affairs Profession

Brief history of student affairs. The development of the whole student is a core

tenet of student affairs work. While faculty are charged with supporting the intellectual

development of the student, student affairs professionals focus on supporting five aspects

of whole student development—intellectual, social, physical, emotional and spiritual.

The work of the student affairs professionals aids the university in offering a holistic

experience of learning and development that links knowing and feeling (Mentkowski,

2000).

In the 1920s, colleges and universities began to move beyond the notion that the primary purpose of college was a gateway to occupational security. The personal characteristics of students became a considered factor in determining the best fit for a job. Educational philosophers advanced this notion and asserted that student learning was enriched when both the rational and emotional aspects of their being was incorporated into the educational enterprise (Dewey, 1938). This paradigm shift prompted higher education leadership to consider a broader range of student needs rather than just skill development for employment. This shift was the basis for the inception of a profession responsible for whole student development.

From 1925 to 1936 institutions collected data to examine students' development (Stamm, 2005). These efforts eventually resulted in the American Council on Education's (ACE) original *Student Personnel Point of View* (ACE, 1937). This original document affirmed higher education's mission for "the preservation, transmission, and enrichment of the important elements of culture" by way of "scholarship, research, creative imagination, and human experience" (p. 67). The report explicitly urged educators to acknowledge and nurture the whole student in its efforts to create productive and responsible citizens for society. It stated, in part:

> This philosophy imposes upon educational institutions the obligation to consider the student as a whole—his intellectual capacity and achievement, his emotional make up, his physical condition, his social relationships, his vocational aptitudes and skills, his moral and religious values, his economic resources, his aesthetic appreciations. It puts emphasis, in brief, upon the development of the student as a person rather than upon his intellectual training alone. (ACE, 1937, p. 3)

In 1949, the *SPPV* was revised to emphasize the development of the whole student as a focal point for student affairs professionals and as an imperative for responsible and value-driven participation in a democratic society. In addition, it emphasized a critical role in fulfilling the mission of the university. This document continues to provide a philosophical foundation for those who work in the profession. The emphasis on development of the whole person remains pivotal to those who take on these roles.

The 1960s marked a time of sweeping changes in higher education as social movements including Civil Rights and the Women's Movements affected college student demographics. Students from various backgrounds, including women, veterans, and students of color from various social classes began enrolling in increasing numbers in higher education. Student affairs professionals were called upon to respond to the needs and experiences of these unique groups. Student affairs professionals drew from psychological models to understand human development (Evans and others, 2010).

During the 1960s and 1970s, professional associations including the ACPA and the NASPA were formed to solidify the professional role of student affairs in higher education. During this period, theories of human development, intellectual development, and identity development came together to shape the theoretical foundations for student development theory. These theories continue to provide a basis for understanding traditional student development, informing both programmatic and philosophical approaches to practice (Evans and others, 2010).

Decades after the publication of the *SPPV*, its mission and objectives remain alive and well. Student Affairs has evolved into a dynamic profession with "complex responsibilities and constant change" (Shutt, Garret, Lynch, & Dean, 2012, p. 65). Student affairs professionals support faculty to assist the institution's research and education missions. The scope of their work is broad and diverse and often referred to as supporting student needs outside the classroom. Shutt and others (2012) describe the work as "continuously evolving to respond to changing student populations and demographics, budgets, technology, expectations, and roles" (p. 65).

Legal considerations. Public institutions of higher education and their student affairs practitioners appear uncertain about whether they should and if so, how to address the spiritual aspect of students' lives. Nash (2001) observed that some campuses are hesitant to address these issues because "some educational leaders mistakenly believe that the First Amendment requires a strict separation between church and state, religion and the academy" (p. 5). The confusion about the law appears to stem from an interpretation of two seemingly conflicting clauses of the First Amendment that address issues of religion: the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause (Lowery, 2005).

Kaplin and Lee and the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses. Kaplin and Lee (2007) described the requirements under the Establishment Clause for public institutions of higher education stating:

> Under the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, public institutions must maintain a neutral stance regarding religious beliefs and activities; they must, in other words, maintain religious neutrality. Public institutions cannot favor or

support one religion over another and cannot favor or support religion over non-religion. (p. 43)

The Free Exercise Clause suggests students have a right to exercise their religious beliefs (Lowery, 2004). Student affairs professionals should be aware of both the institutions' and students' legal rights and responsibilities when addressing their needs.

Kiessling's correlational study of curriculum and spirituality. Kiessling (2010) examined how the spirituality of student affairs professionals impacted their implementation of holistic student development in their work. Using preexisting instruments and scales available from previous data collection in the HERI (2005) study, Kiessling found that mentoring and several other spirituality scales were predictors that student affairs professionals would employ holistic and spiritually-based practices in the workplace. Kiessling concluded there is a discrepancy between the aim of achieving holistic student development and the reality of how these goals are fulfilled by student affairs practitioners. Although student affairs practitioners were highly concerned about students, as demonstrated through "authentic interactions" with students, spirituality was not acknowledged as a foundational concept in the developmental work of students. Kiessling suggested student affairs professionals fell short in this regard.

Hansen's phenomenological study of the spirituality of student affairs practitioners. Hansen (2005) also drew attention to the need for student affairs to approach the topic of spirituality. He conducted a phenomenological study to determine how mid-level student affairs professionals integrated spirituality in their work. The term spirituality was defined as "one's sacred and personal journey or quest to find meaning

and purpose in life" (p. 28). Hansen interviewed five mid-level student affairs professionals, and specifically examined their definition and understanding of spirituality, the role spirituality played in their philosophical and practical approach to student affairs work, and how the student affairs participants engaged in their spirituality when working with students.

Hansen discovered that his participants' definition of spirituality was shaped by "the participants' spiritual upbringing, spiritual guides, and spiritual journeys" (p. 150). Two themes surfaced as major influences of spiritual development: (a) common perceptions that appear among the participants' thoughts and experiences and (b) how the campus context influenced the participants' thoughts and actions regarding spirituality. This study spoke to student affairs professionals' perceptions and practices of spirituality, and to what extent those perceptions shaped their work and dealings with students. A significant limitation of the study was that the researcher had difficulty bracketing his Christian background in the interpretations and perceptions of the study. This study provided insights that have been incorporated into the design of this present study.

Stewart, Kocet and Lobdell's study of campus environment. Stewart, Kocet, and Lobdell (2011) borrowed from a multidimensional framework for understanding campus climate that focused on components that contribute to an inclusive environment. These factors included acknowledging the institutional legacy, structural diversity, visibility or lack thereof of diversity and connection, communication, and community among and between different groups. Each of these factors create the look and feel of a campus. Stewart and others made a similar argument in considering how to change

campus climates for religious and secular diversity. Drawing from Parks's (2000)

research on faith development, the authors urged the campus community to explore the

institutional climate and establish an approach to developing an educational community

that incorporates dialogue about meaning and purpose.

   Siefert and Holman-Harmon partnership with ACPA. Siefert and Holman-

Harmon (2009) partnered with ACPA to understand how the work of student affairs

professionals was influenced by their spirituality or sense of life purpose. The

participants consisted of approximately 1,500 ACPA graduate and professional members.

The three-part online survey sought to measure both purpose in life and spiritual well-

being; it also inventoried how often the respondents engaged in specific activities with

students.

   Siefert and Holman-Harmon's findings suggested there is a connection between

student affairs professionals' sense of life purpose and how they engage in matters

pertaining to students' inner development. Based on their findings, the researchers

concluded that identifying as either "spiritual or religious" does not make one better

suited to nurture students' inner development; rather, "the important thing is a strong

sense of meaning or purpose in life" (p. 16). They recommended reframing

conversations about spiritual development to focus on the insights, reflections, and

wisdom campus professionals have garnered from their life experiences and not their

spiritual practices or religious affiliation. They further recommended elimination of

ambiguous words like "spirituality" and incorporation of inclusive and accessible

language such as "inner development." Finally, they urged student affairs professionals

to clarify their own responses to the big questions of life, before seeking to assist students.

Hirt, Amelink, and Schneiter and the mission of liberal art colleges. Hirt, Amelink, and Schneiter (2004) drew direct connections to the mission of liberal arts institutions (LACs) and the work of student affairs professionals in their goal to educate the whole student. The traditional liberal arts curriculum focuses on four competencies of "knowledge, theoretical skills, moral principles, and practical skills" (p. 95). Rooted in a humanistic approach, they explored how student affairs administrators carry out these competencies in their work. Their mixed methods study was part of a larger study conducted at a NASPA conference focusing on the nature of student affairs work at various types of institutions. Drawing on 24 focus groups, five focus groups had 43 respondents with varying levels of responsibility from private liberal arts colleges that enrolled a range of 1,000 to 4,000 undergraduate students (Hirt and others, 2004). Their results and conclusions debunked the assumption that most student affairs work is similar regardless of the setting or institutional type, instead finding that student affairs professionals at liberal arts colleges have a service orientation to proactively develop students that may be different at other institutions.

Craft's study of interactions between religion and spirituality. Craft (2011) conducted a phenomenological study to investigate the interactions pertaining to religion and spirituality between student affairs administrators and students at public and private institutions of higher education in the Midwest. The study included twenty four student affairs administrators from four different types of institutions including public research II

institution, private Jesuit institution, private Baptist-affiliated liberal arts college, and public community college. The findings indicate that the role of spirituality and religion are important to students, tragedy prompts students to make meaning of tragic events in their lives, spirituality and religion influence students' involvement in clubs and student organizations, students are "terrified to talk" about spirituality, and student affairs administrators believe in the importance of the spiritual and religious aspects of student development, but were uncertain about their role in this facet of development. The emergent themes and findings from Craft's work are directly applicable to this research study.

Burchell, Lee, and Olson study of comfort level. Burchell and others (2011) conducted a qualitative study to examine how student affairs professionals' comfort level with spirituality affected their interactions with students. The study included 70 in-depth interviews of student affairs staff to understand their spiritual interactions with students. Although the comfort level varied among the participants, the findings indicated that student affairs professionals' perceptions about the appropriateness of discussing spirituality with students related to their comfort in having such conversations. Some staff felt comfortable when students initiated the conversation and when students held similar beliefs. Student affairs professionals also felt comfortable having conversations about spirituality when they had a relationship with the student.

Rationale for how the stream informs the research. Student affairs work is wide and varied in an effort to support the academic mission of institutions of higher education and provide services and programs that support the whole student. This

portion of the literature review provides context and background regarding the student affairs profession with an emphasis on both internal and external factors that impact how they work, with particular emphasis regarding the spiritual development of students. This section also illuminated the challenges faced by student affairs professionals in helping to spiritually develop students.

Summary

Over the last few decades, research has identified that the spiritual aspect of students' lives and development receives less attention than other aspects of whole student development in institutions of higher education. Spirituality, as defined in this study, includes an exploration of life's big questions. Students are longing to explore spiritual matters in college, but have little opportunity for engagement. As educators attempt to address this area of concern, student affairs professionals have to reflect upon their own spirituality to aid students in answering their own big life questions. This study aimed to understand how student affairs professionals are using their own spiritual understandings in helping students develop spiritually.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Introduction

Employing a qualitative research methodology, the researcher sought to explore how student affairs professionals thought about and engaged in the spiritual development

of students. Given the subjective nature of the term spirituality and a lack of common

definition of the term, acquiring an understanding of how student affairs professionals

defined spirituality for themselves and as a component of whole student development was

the first step in addressing this phenomenon. Qualitative research seeks to explore and

understand how individuals or a group perceive, experience, and engage a human

phenomenon or problem (Creswell, 2009). The researcher was seeking to uncover how

student affairs professionals at a public university understood the meaning of spirituality

and the spiritual development of students. The qualitative approach of phenomenology

for inquiry allowed participants to give voice to their lived experiences by exploring the

central phenomenon of spirituality within the context of whole student development. To

gain such insight, participants were asked to expose a private, personal, and unprobed

aspect of their lives by discussing characteristics of their spirituality and how it is

integrated in their professional role. The exploration of the spiritual development of

students was explored through the lens of student affairs professionals. The purpose of

this phenomenological study was to explore how student affairs professionals' spirituality

influenced their efforts to support students' spiritual development at a public research

university in California identified as California Research University (CRU). The research

questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. How do student affairs professionals define and describe spirituality?

2. How do student affairs professionals describe the role of spiritual

    development within the larger mission of student affairs work?

3. In what ways does the spirituality of student affairs professionals influence their approach to the spiritual development of students?

This chapter provides a comprehensive description of the research design, details about the target population, and the approach used to select the sample for this study. It then provides a description of research methods including data collection for the interviews and artifacts. In addition, the researcher provides an overview of the steps for data analysis, including transcription, coding, horizontalization, text description, and text themes, describing how the work was completed using the Dedoose software program to help store, organize, and code the data. Finally, this chapter concludes with ethical considerations surrounding the conduct of the study.

Research Design and Rationale

Qualitative research is "a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell 2009, p. 4). The qualitative researcher seeks to enter the world of the participants to become intimately familiar with the details of their lives. This orientation makes qualitative the preferred research methodology to best understand the phenomenon of spiritual development within the context of whole student development in student affairs. Phenomenology uses the lived experience to identify the essence of the human experience (Moustakis, 1994). In this study, the researcher sought to understand how student affairs staff members responded in their everyday practices to the spiritual needs of students. A secondary aim of this study was to examine the student affairs professionals' thoughts and perceptions about whole student development.

As a self-identified spiritual person, the researcher actively employed epoche or bracketing, prior to the start of the interview process. The bracketing process entailed reflection about her personal experiences and mental models about the topic of spirituality and its connection and relevance to the work of student affairs professionals. These thoughts and reflections were captured in a research journal and contemplated at great lengths for weeks prior to the data collection process. This step was critical not only as an effort to surface her own judgments and assumptions, but more importantly as a clearing to make room for a new perspective of the phenomenon based on the lived experiences of the participants. Moustakas (1994) warned that this process is challenging, but may be achieved when the researcher recognize and mentally set aside their own experiences prior to engaging with the experiences of others.

Site and Population

Population Description

The target population selected for this study was drawn from two groups of student affairs professionals at CRU: mid-level student affairs professionals and senior-level student affairs administrators. Although, both of these populations work directly with students, their contact and engagement is different based on their roles and responsibilities. For the purposes of this study, mid-level student affairs professional are those who work within a single unit or office. Senior-level student affairs professionals are professionals who oversee more than one unit, office, or program within the division. These two groups were identified because of their engagement with students outside of

the classroom, their influence in shaping the development of students, and the
collaborative partnerships of these groups to fulfill the mission of student affairs at CRU.

Site Description

The site selected for the study was CRU. CRU is a large public research
University located in northern California.

The Division of Student Affairs. The Division of Student Affairs at CRU is
large and incorporates more than 20 departments or units with operational budgets
exceeding $300 million annually and oversees approximately 2 million square feet of
assignable space. The departments include, but are not limited to, Campus Recreation
and Unions, Cross Cultural Center, Financial Aid, Graduate Student Association,
Intercollegiate Athletics, the Career Center, Student Affairs Development, Student
Affairs Vice Chancellor's Office, Student Disability Center, Student Health and
Counseling Services, Student Housing, Student Judicial Affairs, Undergraduate
Admissions, University Dining Services, and the University Registrar. All units within
the Division of Student Affairs at CRU were considered, but units with a particular focus
on student development in their department mission and strategic intent were the target
for this study. The study participants represented nine different units in Student Affairs
at CRU.

CRU student profile. CRU has a total population of more than 30,000 students
of which 25,000 are undergraduate students and more than 5,000 are graduate students.
The average incoming freshmen has a grade point average of 3.93, Scholastic Aptitude
Test (SAT) scores of 1770-2100, and brings a high level of energy and commitment to

their educational pursuits. The population consists of 95% traditional students (ages 18–24). The ethnic population of first-year students in 2013 at CRU was 41.2% Asian, 41% White, 16% Hispanic, 3% African-American, and 1% American Indian.

Site Access

To gain access to the site location, the researcher abided by Drexel's and the CRU's IRB protocols and procedures. This process required written approval from the Associate Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs at CRU. Once this approval was acquired, access to the site location and study participants was relatively easy.

Although the researcher had no difficulty accessing the participants, establishing meeting times that were compatible with the researcher and the study participants' schedules proved to be challenging. Out of convenience for the study participants, the researcher sought to schedule all interviews during the workday from 8 a.m.–5 p.m. This was useful for the participants but created unique challenges. The researcher was granted verbal consent from her supervisor to conduct interviews during the business day of 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday through Friday; however, all interviews were required to be scheduled around all work-related priorities. This stipulation limited the researcher's availability for interviews and slightly delayed the completion of the interview process.

An additional factor that affected participation was the timing in which the interviews occurred. The interviews were conducted during a three-week period from January 27 to February 14, 2014. At CRU, this is a time in which student affairs professionals are involved in two significant processes: recruitment and selection of professional and student staff positions and participation in admissions processes for the

incoming Fall class. Some participants were directly involved in these processes, which made it challenging to carve out 30-60 minutes for a research study interview.

<div align="center">**Research Methods**</div>

Description of Each Method Used

In phenomenological research, the perception of the participants is regarded as the "primary source of knowledge, the sources that cannot be doubted" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 52). To gain a thorough understanding of perceptions and judgments of the philosophical and pragmatic approaches of student affairs professionals in the spiritual development of college students, the researcher used two primary methods of qualitative data collection. The data collection for this phenomenological research study was triangulated by (a) semi-structured interviews (b) researcher observation of participants during the interviews and (c) artifact review. The following section provides specific details on the aforementioned methods including instrument description, participant selection, identification and invitation, and data collection.

One-on-one semi-structured interviews. The researcher conducted a single face-to-face, semi-structured, one-on-one interview with 13 study participants. Semi-structured interviews are designed to prompt the participants about a topic and allow them to explore and direct the discussion based upon their experiences and perceptions. This form of data collection also permitted the researcher to ask follow-up or clarifying questions when necessary (Patton, 2002). In this study, phenomenology techniques allowed the researcher to explore the subjective topic of spirituality and spiritual development in greater depth with the participants.

Probing questions were asked based upon the responses received from the participants. When necessary, the researcher asked follow-up questions to gain clarity or to acquire greater depth about the participants' responses. All interviews took place in a private space with a door to allow for privacy and minimal distractions. To ensure accurate recollection of the data provided, all interviews were audio recorded with two recording devices, and then transcribed.

The researcher had a brief conversation with each participant before recording the interview. This conversation attempted to build rapport, make the participants feel comfortable, and ensure readiness for the interview. Specifically during this portion of the interview, the researcher worked with the study participant to determine the best seating arrangement for the recording instruments and for making field observations, inquired if the participants preferred a hard copy of the questions, asked the participants to identify their own pseudonym, and addressed any preliminary questions.

Instrument description. The interview questions were purposely broad and open-ended to prompt participants to share their thoughts and experiences about the phenomenon with the researcher (see Appendix A). The interview began with straightforward questions to establish a level of ease and comfort with the researcher. As the interview progressed, the questions required more reflection and explanation. The interview consisted of a set of 12 questions for mid-level professionals and 14 questions for senior-level professions. The duration of the interviews ranged in length from 18 to 58 minutes. All participants were asked the same questions with follow-up questions as deemed necessary by the researcher. All participants were provided an email copy of the

interview questions within a range of one to nine days in advance, depending on the date the interview was scheduled and date the interview occurred. The interview questions required the participants to think deeply about their spiritual understandings and practices and how it intersections in their work with students. In addition, the questions aimed to explore the participants' job responsibilities and understanding of whole student development.

Participant selection. To achieve the goal of the study, the researcher used purposeful sampling to identify participants and followed the recommendations from the Associate Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs. Patton (2002) stated, "purposeful sampling can provide 'information-rich cases' that allow for in-depth study in which the researcher learns a substantial amount of data about issues of central importance to the study" (p. 40). The mid-level student affairs professionals were identified based upon their direct contact with students on campus, their unit's aim in creating and implementing programs that focus on the development of the whole student, and their willingness to participate in the study.

Identification and invitation. To identify potential participants, the researcher reviewed the CRU student affairs organizational chart and their stated mission and goals on their websites. In addition, recommendations made by the Associate Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs of units that best fit the research criteria. Forty-five student affairs staff members were identified and contacted via email with an invitation to participate (see Appendix B). The email highlighted the purpose of the study with a definition of spirituality, anticipated length of time, participant confidentiality, and the participant's

option to conclude the interview at any time. After invitees responded with an email

interest in the study, the researcher confirmed their interest to participate and scheduled

the interview. Participants were selected on a first-come, first-served basis and

compatible interview times with the researcher.

Data collection. All interviews were audio recorded using a digital recorder and a

cell phone recording application. Recordings were manually transcribed after the first six

interviews. The researcher opted for verbatim transcription because it illustrates an

additional layer of observation with regard to participant responses by noting other

sounds such as pauses, hesitations, and sighs. The transcription included both

understandable words and incomprehensible sounds and phrases. As requested by the

researcher, the transcriber sought to capture the words exactly as they were spoken on the

audio recording. Despite best efforts for exact replication, it is important to note that

perfect accuracy in transcription is problematic and nearly impossible because

transcriptions are based on the subjective interpretation of the transcriber. Recordings

and transcriptions will be maintained for three years in a locked cabinet accessible only

by the principal investigator.

Artifacts. Artifacts are a form of data collection in qualitative research that

provides additional depth and understanding about a phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

Artifacts may be particularly helpful in gaining insight into aspects of participants' lives

that may not be directly observable, especially as it pertains to spiritual understandings,

experiences, or perceptions.

Instrument description. Participants were invited to supply artifacts to provide deeper insight about their understanding of student affairs work, their own spiritual practices, and students' spiritual development. Examples of such items include spiritual documents, professional credentials, programs, videos, or objects that represent their lived experiences.

Participant selection. The artifacts were reviewed, photographed, and immediately returned. The participants provided artifacts that pertained to both the student affairs profession and spirituality. These artifacts provided a framework for participants' understanding about student affairs work, specifically a holistic approach to student development and their spiritual practices. The collected artifacts represent a range of items such as texts, personal journals, symbols, objects, or pictures.

Identification and invitation. In the email confirmation, all participants were informed of the option to provide any artifacts. During the interview, all participants were asked if they had any supporting artifacts they were willing to provide to supplement the information provided in the interview.

Data collection. Of the 13 study participants, 12 discussed and 11 produced objects connected to their spirituality and/or work as student affairs professionals. All artifacts were photographed, categorized, and coded by the researcher and incorporated into the analysis. The original artifacts were immediately returned to the participant.

Researcher journal and observation. To establish credibility in phenomenological research, the investigator examined her own biases and experiences prior to the interview process with a goal to highlight her own preconceptions and

judgments about the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). These assumptions were bracketed, or set aside, to allow the investigator to view the phenomenon anew through the voices and words of the participants. Although the researcher has some contextual knowledge and experiences of the phenomenon, such experiences are not universal. Therefore, it is essential to document pre-conceived notions observed and gathered through epoche and consistently strive to maintain a fresh perspective.

"Observation is the process of gathering firsthand information by observing the study participants at the research site" (Creswell, 2008, p. 221). During the interview, the researcher had the dual role of conducting the interview while simultaneously acting as a participant observer. A participant observer is one who takes part in the setting as research is being conducted. Essentially, the researcher collected two sets of data during the interviews: information from the interviews and observation notes. In the observer role, the researcher paid particular attention to and documented the actual behavior, body language, and non-verbal behaviors while the interview was in progress.

Data Collection

The data collection and analysis process took place as specified in the action steps noted in Figure 4.
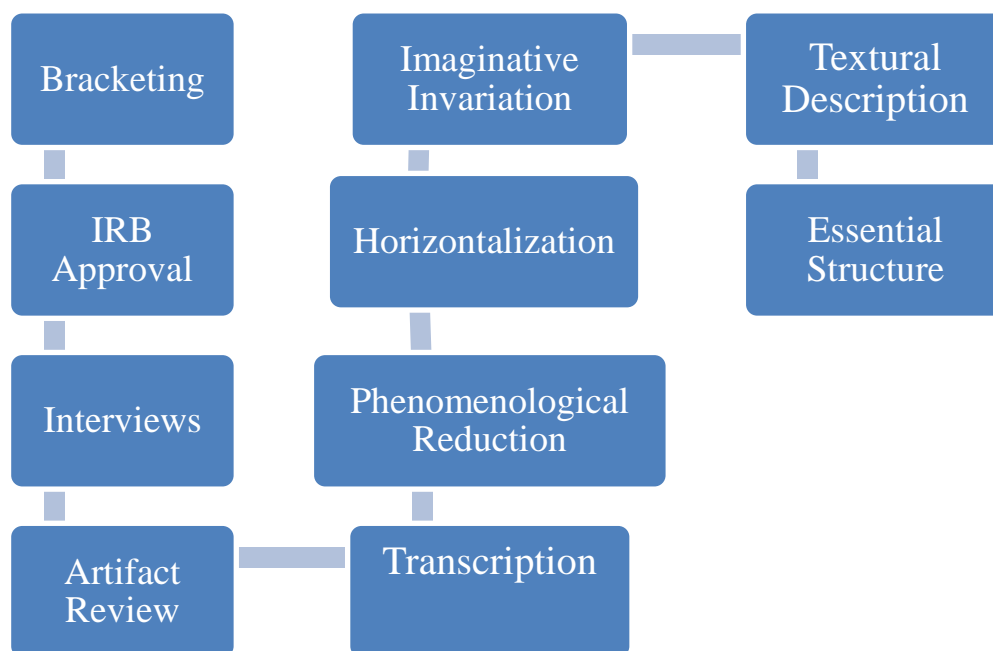
Adapted from Moustakas (1994)

Figure 4. Data collection and analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures

One of the challenges with phenomenological research is the quantity of data the researcher must analyze. For this study, the researcher analyzed transcription notes from the audio-recorded interviews, artifacts provided by the study participants that correlated to spirituality and/or student affairs practices, and field observation notes. This was 110 pages of single-spaced data. In its raw state, the researcher began the first read-through of the data to become familiar with the content. To move from familiarity to a deeper level of intimacy with the data, the researcher listened to the audio files while simultaneously reading the transcriptions numerous times. Once the researcher became accustomed with the data and organized them in a manageable format, she began to follow the phenomenological data analysis steps.

In research, the method of analysis must be consistent with the objectives and research design (Krathwohol & Smith, 2005). Moustakas (1994) recommended three specific analysis procedures and guidelines to best examine phenomenological data called phenomenological reduction, horizontalization, and imaginative variation. In the phenomenological reduction stage, the researcher scours the data to gain an understanding of the overall experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon. This is achieved by reducing the data into common themes, experiences, meanings, and structures of the phenomenon as described by the study participants. Next was the process of horizontalization. Moustakas (1994) stated:

> There is an interweaving of person, conscious experience, and phenomenon. In the process of explicating the phenomenon, qualities are recognized and described; every perception is granted equal value, non-repetitive constituents of experience are linked thematically, and a full description is derived. (p. 96)

This step requires the researcher to lay out all the data and view them equally, thus allowing the researcher to obtain a "balcony view" of the data. The imaginative variation involved viewing the data from contrary and congruent perspectives from current research and the researcher's point of reference. The last step in phenomenology is to develop a composite of textural descriptions that capture the essence of the phenomenon and common experiences of the participants.

The researcher set up both manual and electronic systems to analyze the data. The manual system entailed reviewing hard copies of transcripts and the implementation of a color-coded system to highlight important statements based on both interview questions and the research questions. While conducting manual analysis, the researcher

also simultaneously set up a Dedoose account. Dedoose is a software program that

analyzes qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research. This program allows the

researcher to develop codes and themes and group the raw data accordingly. The

researcher opted to set up structural codes, which are pre-identified codes developed prior

to examining the data and are based on the interview and research questions. In addition,

the researcher set up fields to identify the characteristics of the participants and link the

transcripts with the individual participants. In this study, Dedoose served two purposes.

The first was to keep the data organized in a single location and the second was to

identify emergent patterns and themes. This program was helpful for management of the

data, while the bulk of the analysis was manually conducted.

Validity Strategy

To increase credibility and accuracy of the findings, the researcher employed a

number of strategies to ensure qualitative validity. These strategies include transcription

review of each interview to confirm accurate transcription of the interviews and to correct

obvious mistakes of interpretation. Also, the researcher set up an intercoder agreement

with another doctoral student who was unrelated or unaware of the content in the study.

This agreement was set up to cross check the codes used by the researcher and another

person to examine agreement and congruity. Miles and Huberman (1994) recommended

that at least 80% of the codes be similar in qualitative research. In addition, the

researcher used the triangulation of interviews, artifacts, and field observation notes to

develop themes and codes in the study. To help the readers experience the findings, the

researcher employed the use of "thick rich description" to convey the findings which are

critical to understanding the phenomenon. Also, another aspect of phenomenology is

the process of epoche whereby the researcher made known her own judgments and biases

and attempts to view the phenomenon with fresh eyes. Finally, the researcher sought out

an external auditor to review the research project, paying particular attention to the

analysis and findings. These strategic actions increased the validity of the research

findings.

Data storage. All data gathered and researched was stored on a password-

protected drive that does not have internet access. This includes all documents such as

interview protocols, participation invitations, interview questions, transcriptions, artifacts,

research drafts, and field observation notes. All field notes and artifacts were scanned

and filed onto the drive. The drive will be stored in a locked cabinet in the Principal

Investigator's office.

Stages of data collection. The proposed research timeline provided an

anticipated framework for completion of the study and is outlined in Table 2.

Table 2

Research Timeline

Research Activity	Completion Date
Committee review and revisions	September 2013
Proposal hearing and approval	September 2013
Drexel and CRU IRB certifications	January 2014
Recruitment and selection of participants	January 2014
Participant interviews	February 2014
Artifact review	February 2014
Data analysis	February–March 2014
Draft Chapters 4 and 5	April 2014
Dissertation revisions and final edits	May 2014
Dissertation celebration	June 2014

Ethical Considerations

As a scholar practitioner, ethical conduct is essential when spearheading a research study. First, in working with human subjects at an educational institution, the researcher sought and obtained IRB approval from both the host institution at Drexel University and at CRU. Although Drexel's and CRU's IRB applications were similar, both institutions had different application processes, data requirements, information, and practices for IRB approval. The researcher obtained IRB approval for both institutions prior to conducting the study.

One of the most challenging ethical considerations is confidentiality to ensure privacy. The researcher instituted several proactive measures to maintain the integrity of the study in this regard. First, all interviews were conducted behind closed doors to maintain the privacy between the researcher and participants. Second, to protect the

identity and maintain anonymity of the participants and the institution, the researcher used pseudonyms when referring to the participants. At no point in the study are participants' real names used or written. Third, the researcher omitted any identifying information from the study. Finally, the researcher emphasized the criticality of maintaining confidentiality when the interview was scheduled and confirmed.

The research study asked participants to discuss details about spirituality and how they approached their work. This has the potential to cause participants to feel uncomfortable because the participants were asked to disclose their personal values or religious beliefs that may be unknown within the work environment. To mitigate potential unease or discomfort, the researcher reiterated the confidential nature of the study and reminded all participants that the focus was not about any one person in particular, nor an opportunity to place judgment about job performance, or a time to point out deficits in practice. Rather, the researcher was seeking to understand the phenomenon of the response of an aggregate group of Student Affairs professionals to students' spiritual development. The primary goal of this action-based research study was to provide information that helps better serve students. Lastly, the researcher first completed the Drexel IRB process and shortly thereafter began the process for CRU's IRB approval to ensure compliance with all university rules and regulations and protection of all subjects involved in the study.

<h3 align="center">Summary</h3>

Using sound research practices that are in alignment with qualitative research, the study sought to capture the essence of phenomenology, which is to "reflectively bringing

into nearness that which tends to be obscure, that which tends to evade the

intelligibility of our natural attitude of every life" as it pertains to the spiritual

development of college students through the lens and experiences of student affairs

professionals (Manen, 1990, p. 32). Through these efforts, the researcher was able to

gather insight about the lived experiences of student affairs professional's effort to aid

students in their spiritual development.

Chapter 4: Findings, Results, and Interpretations

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how student affairs professionals' spirituality influenced their efforts to support students' spiritual development. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do student affairs professionals define and describe spirituality?

2. How do student affairs professionals describe the role of spiritual development within the larger mission of student affairs work?

3. In what ways does the spirituality of student affairs professionals influence their approach to the spiritual development of students?

This chapter is divided into three major sections. The first section provides information about the study participants and their personal and professional backgrounds. The second section illustrates the findings and emergent themes that surfaced from the data. The last section provides the researcher's analysis and interpretations of the captured data.

In line with the phenomenological research methodology, the findings in this study captured the thick rich description and texture of participants' experiences of the phenomenon. The phenomenon of spirituality is voiced through the lens of student affairs professionals.

Pre-Interview Observations

At the onset of the study, there were significant concerns about whether the ambiguity and personal nature of the topic of spirituality would derail the candid participation of student affairs professionals. Fortunately a derailment was not realized,

as there was an overwhelmingly positive response to the invitation to participate in the study. The researcher noticed that a significant majority of study participants were eager to engage in the topic of spirituality in higher education and responded quickly to the email invitation. The immediate response, coupled with the disappointment expressed by potential prospects who did not meet the criteria for participation, validated interest in the topic.

During the interviews, an overwhelming proportion of participants appeared comfortable and expressed genuine interest in the topic of spirituality within the context of whole student development. The researcher provided all participants with the interview questions and the working definition of the term "spirituality" used in this study prior to the interview. The approach of providing the questions and working definition in advance proved to be advantageous in this study. Consistently, participants provided feedback suggesting this effort was highly beneficial and helped them offer acutely reflective and thoughtful responses during the course of the interviews. Additionally, participants suggested the preview of the questions laid the foundation for a positive rapport between the researcher and participant.

During this study, participants described their spiritual and/or religious experiences, culture, and upbringing. Based on the level of detail participants provided and visible cues observed during the interviews, the researcher perceived that the commentary from the participants was deeply sincere. A majority of participants acknowledged that their participation in the interviews made them more aware of their own views on spirituality. They also stated their involvement in the study allowed them

to make new discoveries about their own understandings of spirituality in higher education. The researcher shared in the intrigue, interest, and inspiration the participants expressed in their beliefs and values about being a staff member at CRU.

Maintaining a comfortable rapport and disposition with the study participants is critical in qualitative research. The researcher perceived a noticeable difference in the conversations conducted with participants prior to activating the recording device and immediately after recording commenced. The participants displayed open and relaxed mannerisms before the recording was turned on. However, when the recording began, the participants seemed less relaxed and appeared to somewhat nervous. Nervousness among participants manifested itself in the form of deep breaths, fidgeting with clothing, continually shifting positions, and shifting eye contact away from the researcher. These observations of behavioral shifts informed the researcher of the level of comfort or nervousness the participants experienced when answering the questions.

Participant Profiles

This section introduces the 13 study participants. It includes information about their role, responsibilities, spiritual backgrounds, and experiences as they pertained to their work as student affairs professionals. The names used in this section are pseudonyms, self-selected by the participants.

Participant One—Bob

Bob worked in Early Outreach at CRU. In his job, he worked with local high schools and middle schools in the region to encourage students to seek postsecondary opportunities. The combination of Bob's 10 year experience at CRU, education training,

and professional background has helped to shape is skills in working with undergraduate students and understanding their plight and challenges. Similar to his own background, many of the undergraduate employees with whom he worked were first-generation students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds.

Bob is Catholic, but distinguishes himself from his upbringing noting, "I am not a conservative Catholic." He defined spirituality as "the ongoing healthy dialogue and understanding of why we are here and what we're meant to accomplish while we're here." Bob highlighted service, forgiveness, and love as tenets of his spiritual practice. He sought to integrate these aspects into his work as a student affairs professional.

Participant Two—Yolanda

Yolanda worked in an advisory role that supported programs and services focusing on recruitment and retention at CRU. Yolanda worked closely with student leaders who created programs to enhance recruitment and retention efforts on campus. To prepare students for their roles, Yolanda spent considerable time on student and leadership development through trainings and meetings.

Religiously, Yolanda considers herself a non-practicing Catholic. Although she grew up Catholic, she did not partake in many of their traditions including attending mass. Yolanda feels awkward in group-like settings such as church or mass, in part because she finds minimal value in the sermons from the priest. With the teachings, she feels "I have already made sense of that." Yolanda defined spirituality as "understanding what I feel, and why I feel and how it connects to other energy, or how it connects to belief systems that are not my own, but that I buy into." Yolanda's spiritual

understandings are self-generated and stemmed from her life experiences. Her

spiritual practice consists of prayer with her family, taking time to be alone, meditation,

and becoming who she wants to be.

Participant Three—Jada

Jada worked in a consultative capacity to support recruitment and retention efforts

at CRU. Jada worked closely with 40 student employees and several interns to provide

programs for potential CRU students. She described her responsibilities as "all fiscal,

human resources, and co-curricular advising with students and everything in between."

Jada understands religion and spirituality are distinctly different, but for her the

two are intertwined. Her spiritual practices are partially driven by her religious leanings.

Jada defined spirituality as "whatever understanding, philosophy, or way of being that

makes one centered or grounded." The topic of spirituality is ripe for Jada. Within the

last few months, Jada experienced a sense of discontent where she "didn't quite feel like

herself." She noticed she was not happy nor was she sad. For her "it didn't feel good."

This experience prompted Jada to reengage in spiritual practices that have helped her feel

more centered. Jada's spiritual practices consist of prayer, reflection, gratitude, and

communing with a small group of people about spiritual matters.

Participant Four—Maria

Maria worked in the Women's Center at CRU. She talked about her job

responsibilities as having four different components. These components include: one-to-

one advising support, assisting students with identity development and formation,

advocating for institutional policies and practices that support gender equity, and oversight of the center.

With regard to her work as a student affairs professional and the spiritual development of students, she draws from the influences of her Jesuit background and Buddhist interests. From the Jesuit tradition, she is mindful of "the three Bs," which stand for "be attentive, be reflective, and be loving." Another useful teaching from the same tradition is vocational discernment, which asks the three questions "what are you good at, what brings you joy, and what does the world need you to do?" Maria explained that the opportunity to explore these questions with students was what partially drew her to student affairs work.

Maria described her spirituality as a "casserole of spiritual practices; I have taken away things that resonate with me from different communities or religious practices that I have been raised [with] or experienced." Maria defined spirituality as "my inner sense of being and whatever guides me or someone and how they move in the world." She does not subscribe to a particular religion, but her spiritual practices include meditation and the use of crystals.

Participant Five—Leo

Leo worked in Student Housing at CRU. Unlike most of the other participants, Leo took a non-traditional path into the field of student affairs. Leo became familiar with the profession through another person who worked in the field. While pursuing his graduate studies, Leo became interested in student affairs. Leo had limited experiences working with college students, but had previous military experience working with 17-22

year-old young adults. These experiences provided a foundation and transferable skills for being a student affairs professional.

Leo considered himself an existentialist and a life-long learner. He emphasized that he was not an atheist or an agnostic, as neither accurately portrayed him. As an existentialist, he believes "the physical plane in which we operate in the moment is all there is." He believes the big questions are ones every human being asks at some point in their life and have been pondered by humankind since the beginning of time. He defines spirituality as "whatever anyone does to address those questions and handle the angst … that comes from answering those questions." Leo's definition of spirituality is related to his approach to the spiritual development of students. Leo explained he "sees it as his responsibility, on a personal level, to help students understand their questions and learn how to arrive at answers on their own."

Participant Six—Anne

Anne's unique role straddles both recruitment and retention efforts and academic advising with a specific population of students. In working with international students, Anne often engaged with students regarding their religious backgrounds. When talking about her students, Anne said "they often wear their religion on their sleeve." She was excited and welcomed the opportunity to have a conversation about spirituality and student affairs work.

Anne loves the profession of student affairs because it "allows you to be completely authentic and bring your whole self" to the job. Based on Anne's religious and professional philosophies, she strives to help students feel "whole" in their

experiences as students. She believes this is an important aspect of student affairs work. Anne stated she is constantly reminded that what is happening in the world is so much bigger than each individual person—a viewpoint she attributes to her Hindu religious practice. She acknowledges those who have come before her and sees their lives as direct contributions to her success. She carries this way of thinking into her work as a student affairs professional seeing students as future leaders and "ancestors who are paving the way for others in the future." She uses prayer, journaling, mediation, slowing down, and service as her spiritual practices.

Participant Seven—Morgan

Morgan worked in a leadership capacity in student affairs at CRU. Most of Morgan's professional experiences have been focused on issues within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and asexual communities. In her role, she works closely with the campus resource centers.

With regard to the spiritual development of students, Morgan noted that students with whom she worked experienced struggle between their beliefs and queer identities. In her experience, "it has been such a source of pain" for students. Morgan talked about spirituality as "a personal process of how people find connection to the source." Morgan does not affiliate with any particular religion or spiritual practice. Morgan has explored several different ways of understanding spirituality through her own explorations of spiritual topics. At the time of the study, she was exploring spirituality through the use and practice of crystals.

Participant Eight—Angelina

Angelina worked at the LGBT Center at CRU. She provided oversight for all the programming, supervised full-time professional career position, student interns, and graduate student researchers. In addition, she proactively provided educational events to campus constituents about the various identities within the LGBT community she served. Another portion of her job was to provide direct one-on-one contact with students in crisis pertaining to issues of sexuality.

Angelina resonated with the definition of spirituality provided for the study. In her own definition of spirituality, she stated, "there is something more to the world than the things we sense with like the five senses." Angelina experienced a "spiritual rift" with the religion of her childhood, which she identified as "conservative Christianity" because of her sexuality. Angelina's spiritual practices are influenced by Buddhism and include meditation, genuine listening, being in the present, and holding open space. Recently, Angelina has drawn direct connection between her spiritual practice and how she understands social justice. This is discovery also illumined "so much of why I'm doing student affairs is hinged on social justice."

Participant Nine—Hope

In his role, Hope provided leadership and established the vision to actualize the mission of the Cultural Center. He supported the daily operations of the staff and spearheaded opportunities between the Center and other units on campus to work together. Hope identifies as a Christian and "a follower of Christ," but he does not consider himself a religious person. Emphasizing a difference between religion and

spirituality, he explained spirituality as a "way of making a connection to the Creator of the world and how I find meaning in the work I do through that connection." His spiritual practice entailed attending church and worship through song. As a student affairs professional, Hope summed up his approach indicating "my entire ethos is about selling hope, and it is to empower students to help them believe in their abilities."

Participant Ten—Lena

At the Women's Center, Lena's responsibilities included supervision of four professional staff members, office oversight, and budget management. Another important component of Lena's responsibilities was to influence the culture at CRU to "raise awareness about patriarchy, gender equity, raise awareness, and issues of social justice and intersecting identities."

Lena's spiritual practices stemmed from her family's loyalty to the Catholic church and her native Hawaiian upbringing. Although Lena does not consider herself Catholic, she utilizes some of their traditions in her spiritual practice. For instance, she prays to specific saints for specific purposes, such as St. Jude, the patron saint of lost souls, when she needs direction. Lena also incorporates her native traditions of connecting with nature and the earth as a way to get balanced and inspired. Lena integrates her spiritual understanding into her role as a student affairs professional by taking a deep breath, especially during difficult or emotional conversations with staff or students. In working with students, Lena emphasized her desire to empower students by educating them about well-informed choices and options.

Participant Eleven—Denise

Denise provided oversight and leadership for two programs that provided academic assistance to first-year students in their transition to CRU. In her role, she supervised professional staff and, indirectly, several student interns in the center.

Denise has a Christian background, but she was grappling with her own spiritual understanding. She described her spiritual struggle stating, "It feels far away from what I was taught to be my energy source." When asked about her definition of spirituality, Denise stated, "I'm still sort of formulating what that really means for me, that makes sense for me and not necessarily what has been told to me." Denise is struggling to answer some of the "big questions" for herself. Given her frustrations, Denise would like to see students begin to develop responses to the big questions while in college so they can establish greater clarity with these questions later on in life.

Participant Twelve—Sheba

Sheba worked in Early Outreach at CRU. She provided overall leadership and management in alignment with stated objectives seeking to increase the diversity of underrepresented students and students from lower socioeconomic circumstances in post-secondary education in California. Sheba supervised six professional staff and several student staff members, indirectly.

Sheba's spiritual practices and understandings have "evolved" from her upbringing in the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E) church. Unlike in her childhood, she attends church irregularly but continues to use prayer as part of her spiritual practice. Today, Sheba considers herself more of a spiritual rather than religious person. She

defined spirituality as "the belief system that gives context to life" and considers the

thoughts one holds about themselves to be essential. Thus, when working with students,

Sheba aimed to "help students realize the potential they have inside of them." In

threading her values into her work, Sheba made a concerted effort to appreciate the

unique gifts of each person and strove to appreciate what was happening in the moment.

Participant Thirteen—Paulie

Paulie worked in a leadership capacity within Academic Support Services. Paulie

oversaw an academic support department that used "a holistic approach" to empower

students to take responsibility for their learning. In this role, Paulie provided leadership

for more than 20 professionals and 200 student staff.

Paulie was raised in a Methodist church. When talking about her spirituality,

Paulie differentiated between the spiritual and religious aspects of her understandings and

practices. She stated, "I went to a church where the doctrine taught you rules about

what's right and wrong and I connected with that." Paulie also has a spiritual aspect of

herself that is "not attached to any religion." She defined spirituality as a way of

connecting with a Higher Power and "finding hope and finding who I am and what I

believe." As a spiritual practice, Paulie sometimes went to church, meditated, reflected,

and read spiritual materials. Paulie encouraged students to be in touch with their

emotions. She explained that she told students, "it's okay to feel, you gonna feel a lot of

different things and life is gonna present many challenges, but it's all about how you

respond." As a seminar instructor, Paulie created opportunities for students to reflect

through course assignments and activities in class. Paulie felt it was important for

students to develop their own inner support systems.

Table 3

Study Participants' Profiles

Name Pseudonym	Gender	Student Affairs Unit	Student Affairs Level	Degrees Earned	Religious/Spiritual Identity/Background
Bob	Male	Early Outreach	Mid	Masters	Catholic
Yolanda	Female	Retention & Recruitment	Mid	Masters	Catholic
Jada	Female	Retention & Recruitment	Mid	Masters	Christian
Maria	Female	Women's Center	Mid	Masters	Jesuit
Leo	Male	Student Housing	Mid	PhD	Existentialist
Anne	Female	Academic Support	Mid	Masters	Hindu
Morgan	Female	Resource Center	Senior	Masters	NA
Angelina	Female	LGBT Center	Senior	Masters	Christian
Hope	Male	Cultural Center	Senior	Masters	Christian
Lena	Female	Women's Center	Senior	PhD	Catholic/Native Tradition
Denise	Female	Academic Support	Senior	Masters	Christian
Sheba	Female	Early Outreach	Senior	Masters	Methodist
Paulie	Female	Academic Support	Senior	Masters	Methodist

The sample for the study included 13 participants, six in mid-level management and seven in senior-level management positions in Student Affairs. Three participants were men while 10 were women. The participants represented eight different offices within the Division of Student Affairs at CRU and described seven different religious and

spiritual backgrounds. Collectively, the participants had more than 160 years of student affairs experience.

Coding and Analysis

Prior to the analysis process, the researcher verified the accuracy of the transcriptions by cross-referencing them with the audio recordings. The analysis process followed a phenomenological approach. For the first review of the data, the researcher identified structural codes based on the research and interview questions. In this process, a priori codes were examined and further developed. Structural codes were added as additional themes emerged from the voices of the participants. In the second review of the data, the researcher sought to group common themes and experiences across all participants. Through an inductive manner, the themes became further defined to "see the direction in which to take the study" (Saldana, 2009, p. 81). The researcher captured the "textural description" of the participants' experience and examples of supporting excerpts (Moustakis, 1994). After the data were explored across participants, research and interview questions, and emergent themes, the researcher took a "balcony view" of the data to capture themes that may have been previously overlooked. Artifacts were catalogued and incorporated into the analysis as relevant to the emergent themes. Figure 5 illustrates the themes and sub-themes extracted from the captured data.

spirituality defined	•Unfolding journey •It is personal •Shaped by culture and personal experiences
value of spirituality	•Importance to students •Importance to staff
personal sharing	•Cautious disclosure •Critical questions •Listening
expressions of spiritual struggles	•Personal life choices •Major selection •The CRU environment •Mental Health
social justice and spirituality	•Intersectionality •Pushed by pain •Pulled by a vision •Commitment to make a difference

Figure 5. Data themes and sub-themes.

Findings

Similar to the integrative nature of spirituality, the findings and themes for this study relate and in some instances overlap with each other. The understandings, perceptions, and beliefs that student affairs professionals held about spirituality were explored to understand the influence of their views on the spiritual development of students. Through the voices and lived experiences of the study participants, five themes emerged to provide insight about the influences of student affairs personnel on the spiritual development of students at CRU.

The five major findings were:

1. Nearly all of the participants define spirituality as an "inner" and "personal" journey.

2. All of the participants indicated that spirituality is an important aspect of life.

3. All of the participants indicated that they leverage personal sharing as an approach to engaging students in meaningful dialogue about spiritual matters.

4. Most of the participants indicated they had experienced students grappling with what they perceived to be spiritual matters.

5. Most of participants connected spirituality to the social justice commitment to student affairs work.

Finding One—An Individual Journey

Most (12 of 13) participants defined spirituality as an "inner" and "personal" journey. Despite the lack of a standard definition for the term spirituality, participants identified three common descriptions regarding their perceptions of the phenomenon of spirituality. The participants used the words "personal," "inner," and "journey" frequently to describe spirituality. Participants viewed spirituality as an individual exploration in which one's spiritual understandings were nurtured and evolved over time. The participants who described spirituality as an inner and personal journey also listed factors they believed influenced one's spiritual understandings. The most common factors listed included one's religion, culture, and personal search.

Spirituality: It is personal. When asked how they defined spirituality, a common descriptor applied to the term was that of a "personal journey." Often, the response was noted in contrast to religion, which was acknowledged to take place within the context of a group with others who held similar beliefs. Spirituality was seen as an

individual "inner" process. Maria defined it as "my inner sense of being and whatever

guides me or someone and how they move in the world." Anne defined spirituality:

> A deeper level of religion… I think with religion you can pray, and you might be
> given a set of rituals that you're supposed to do but it's within the time you're
> doing these rituals, what you're feeling and what you're thinking, while you are
> doing these rituals.

Denise, Paulie, and Bob shared similar ideas noting it was about self-definition and not

relying upon what one has been told or taught by others. Bob indicated that spirituality is

about how one lives and behaves. He stated that spirituality is

> not just what the guy on Sunday tells you at the pew, it is what you do, and it how
> you communicate with others, and how you support others in the same
> experiences of answering the question [big questions]… why am I here, and what
> is my existence to me, to the world, and to others.

Different than the other participants, Angelina provided a definition that did not highlight

the personal aspect of spirituality. She sought to capture the essence of spirituality as,

"there is something to the world that is more than the things we sense with like the five

senses." This definition points to an acknowledgement and belief of an entity that is

unseen, but perceived to be influential in her life and the world. As evidenced by the

responses, spirituality is perceived to be a personal and individual journey. Spirituality

entails reflection, awareness, and self-definition. This is a primary distinction between

religion and spirituality.

Spirituality: It is an unfolding journey. The participants discussed the evolving

nature of their perceptions of spirituality as an ongoing process. Reflecting on their life

experiences, they identified that their spiritual understandings were influenced by specific

occurrences or life situations. For most of the participants, their understanding of

spirituality and their spiritual practices had changed over time. For instance, when

asked how does she answer some of life's big questions for herself, Angelina provided a

compelling description of the process that was analogous to a meal, stating

> I feel sometimes I have answers to them [big questions] like I believe that we are
> connected, I believe that opening our hearts continually to each other leads to a
> better world …I think I do have some answers.. [it] is like having a meal or
> something… I need another one probably in three hours …they nourish me and
> then I ask again maybe I need a different kind of nourishment, or maybe that
> answer didn't nourish a second part of me so I need to explore deeper.

For some of the study participants, they indicated their spiritual understandings have

"evolved" over time. Denise knew intimately about the shifting nature of spirituality. At

the time of the interview, she was engulfed in her own spiritual struggle. In a tone of

sadness and frustration, she explained:

> Here I have been in this field for 12 years and still having to grapple with and
> question myself about my worth and my values and what I bring to this school,
> am I even supposed to be here. What am I offering?

Spirituality was discussed with a degree of fluidity, flexibility, and change. The

responses indicate that one's spiritual understandings may develop based upon various

external factors. The changing nature of spirituality is a key factor in the personalization

of it as an individual process and a "narrative in one's own right."

Spirituality: Shaped by culture and personal experiences. All participants

discussed the impact of their family, upbringing, religious norms, culture, and personal

search on their understandings of spirituality. These factors, according to participants,

were not the sole determining factor but had a significant influence on how the

participants came to their spiritual understandings. For Bob, his definition of

spirituality was shaped by his Catholic upbringing in South America.

> I was raised in a very conservative Catholic country… I was accountable to the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit… you know it wasn't until later in life when I actually came to the United States I began to develop a better sense of what this spirituality really means.

At various points throughout the interview Bob talked about his spiritual commitments

involving service to others, love, community, and social justice.

Lena spoke about her struggles to rectify her cultural and religious traditions. She

inherited a love for the Catholic church from her grandmother, but she also recognized

"the church had a huge role in colonizing…and a horrendous impact on the loss of

culture." This was particularly difficult for Lena. Although Lena attempted to hold on to

the practices that were passed down to her, she acknowledged, "I try to balance or

integrate my native traditions and…my Catholic faith and spirituality and figure out how

does this work?…Because it doesn't."

The term spirituality means different things to different people. As with several

other phenomena, it is shaped by the lived experiences through which it is gleaned. With

the varying definitions of spirituality, participants ironically agreed on the fact that

spirituality is experiential. They concurred that it was a personal and unfolding journey

influenced by the aforementioned external factors.

Finding Two—Value of Spirituality

All (13 of 13) participants indicated that spirituality was important to them and

perceived to be important to students. Study participants noted that spirituality is

important and plays a role in their lives. They described spirituality as "grounding"

and "centering" affect. In addition to the personal value they derived from their own

spirituality, interview respondents shared their perceptions about how spirituality also

benefits higher education students.

     It is important to students. Study participants spoke to the value of spirituality

based on their interactions with students. Anne talked about the importance of

spirituality for her students.

> You know, I think of because of the nature of my position, I work with a lot of
> students who, wear their religion and their spiritual beliefs… [It is] so important
> to them, and they are threatened…when they discuss their identity. They're…
> associated with clubs that are religiously affiliated. It's such an important part of
> their life.

     According to Hope, spirituality encompassed feelings of connection and

belonging. He emphasized students' spiritual needs as the need for connection. He

explained, "young people that I work with find that they need a place where they belong,

where they can find meaning in what they're trying to achieve." Hope questioned

whether students understand the need for spiritual connection stating, "I do think there is

a deep need for spiritual connection, but I don't know that students understand it to be

that, and I'm never going to be the one to tell them that's what they need."

     Similar to Hope, Morgan saw spirituality as an important aspect of development.

She stated, "I think it's a really interesting, valuable conversation and, and topic. I think

it's… definitely something that hasn't been discussed a lot. So, I really think that… it's a

piece of development." Bob not only thought that spirituality was important but

suggested, "there's real hunger for it." Not all respondents believed spirituality was a

critical issue for students. Lena explained that although important, spirituality may not be an area of struggle or focus for all students, saying, "I have interacted with students who know exactly what they need, they are in a good place with their spirituality."

When describing their perceptions of the importance of spirituality to students, participants described varying reasons why spirituality may matter to students. They also described that students experienced varying levels of spirituality and a spiritual identity—wavering spirituality or strong. This aligned with the previous finding that spirituality was a personal experience. Nevertheless, participants overwhelmingly agreed that spirituality is an aspect of a student's identity that is difficult to ignore or overlook. From the perspective of belonging and feeling like a member of a community, or as a tool to express their religious views, spiritualty appears to be important to the lives of students.

It is critical to staff. Study participants discussed the personal importance of spirituality to their professional careers in student affairs. The respondents expressed varying degrees to which they were conscious of the impact of their spirituality on their work. The responses ranged from "I never thought about it" to "I take deep breaths to remain calm during difficult conversations." Yolanda described that spirituality is about a connection with how she feels—a factor that affects her day-to-day effectiveness at work. She uses this connection as a way of sting in tuned with herself. She stated, "I am what I experience, I am what I've enjoyed, and if something is not good for me, if it doesn't go well with me, I don't let it be a part of me."

When asked how she integrated her spiritual practice into her work as a student affairs professional, Anne stated, "because my spiritual practice is so tied to who I am

and how I treat other people, I think it's, it's not maybe even as conscious as … you might think." For Anne, spirituality is not an action she does, but is who she is. For both Yolanda and Anne, spirituality is foundational to being who they want to be in the world and the approach they take to serving students. To illustrate the value and power of spirituality, Lena discussed the application of her spirituality. She told the story of how she was struggling with completing her dissertation and was instructed by her father to spiritually reconnect with the physical environment by "taking off her shoes and walking in the grass." She stated, "So and I went and I took off my shoes and it was that reminder that I needed to have that connection to the land." For Lena, her spiritual connection or reconnection was at the core of how she faced challenge, something she described as being highly critical in her work environment.

The importance of spirituality to the staff was further reflected in the fact that 12 of 13 participants were in constant possession of artifacts that reminded them of spirituality. Morgan showed a necklace with a blue crystal pendant that holds sentimental value, Maria displayed a handful of crystals she carries on her person, Bob presented an amulet of the patron saint St. Gregorio he carries in his pocket, both Sheba and Paulie had stones engraved with the word "faith" in their offices, Leo noted a biblical passage in which he gained spiritual insight, and Jada's office was littered with figurines with inscribed inspirational messages on them. The immediate proximity of these artifacts and how they were embedded either on participants' bodies or in their offices was compelling. It suggested that reminders of values, faith, hope—all of which are tied

to spirituality—are kept close in their work environments to help participants remain grounded and spiritually connected while at work.

Finding Three—Connection Through Vulnerability and Heart-to-Heart Sharing

Most of the participants (11 of 13) indicated that when prompted or invited, they engaged students in conversation about spiritual matters through personal sharing. Participants expressed they had significant hesitance around engaging with students on spiritual issues. A common reason for this apparent reluctance was avoidance of being perceived as proselytizing or seeking religious conversion. Another reason that contributed to the hesitance was the legal mandate of separation of church and state. For the most part, participants described how they began any such conversation with students by first establishing clear intentions. Once they clearly established their intent with students, a significant majority of participants indicated they willingly discussed their personal experiences with students. The act of personal sharing and the content of their stories embodied struggle or challenge and the overcoming or restoration that is taking or had taken place.

Disclosure with caution. Hope shared his cautious approach to discussing spirituality and stated:

> When people ask me, I'm happy to, disclose and I am happy to share because it's what we do here. We disclose and we share. We talk about who, all of who we are. We don't hide from it, and I think that's what, what power comes from it. …Uh, and I don't have to tell you about this thing called the separation of church and state. As a public entity, it's one that we have to be very careful.

Lena had significant concerns about spiritual or religious disclosure, but noted a different concern than Hope. She highlighted the potential for religious conflict to ensue. Morgan

wanted to keep the focus on students. She stated, "Sometimes, I will share… my personal experiences…my personal background, but I'm very careful to not… make it about me."

Most participants shared similar views to those expressed by Morgan. Their cautious approach was rooted in apprehension about negatively impacting the personal exploration in which each student must engage to gain spiritual understanding. When deemed appropriate, personal sharing was the manner with which they approached such discussions.

Personal sharing. Personal sharing was noted as a primary form of engagement around spirituality. Specifically, study participants shared insights or specific examples from their lives to provide perspective or to aid students. Leo spoke about his perceptions of students' spiritual struggles stating:

> Yeah, I think a big part, … is just sharing my own story about my own struggle, with them…..cause I think… we're all limited. Our imaginations are limited by what we see, or what we think we see and what we think we know. And, so, they [students] walk in and see this older guy, who has it all...together…well….I've had, like, eight or nine different jobs, and…this kind of thing.

In his conversations, Leo reminds students that their perceptions are one dimensional. Jada recognized the power of owning and sharing aspects of her life to help students grow. Jada stated:

> The reason why I think I'm successful at my job is not that I necessarily give the best advice or… something completely new. I think because I do feel comfortable tapping into those personal stories and my own spiritual grounding, it ends up being an Ah-ha moment for the students.

Leo discussed that he shared personal information with students as a way to provide insight from his experiences. He explained that students often perceive professional staff to have few personal struggles or challenges. He described how he shared his challenges, as they are relevant to the conversation, and lessons he had learned over time. He perceived that students tended to appreciate when he shared in such a way.

The study participants shared personal stories with the students as a way to show they understood and as their best offerings to aid students in their quest. It was one of the few tools readily available to participants. It also illustrated the common experience of spiritual struggle or questioning that students and professionals face.

Listening: A practice of care. Study participants discussed listening to students' needs as an important component for engagement and understanding. Unlike other aspects of their work with students, tending to the spiritual needs of students requires the time to actively listen and be present with them. Hope poignantly identified challenges with meeting the spiritual need of students at CRU.

> You have to do some critical thinking with students and help the student to really discover what's…you gotta get to the root. Not, not, the surface stuff, and it takes time, and, and this day and age of ten minute advising that usually doesn't happen. So, you have to invest the time and get to a place where you help the student.

Maria acknowledged the importance of developing the skill of listening when serving students in student affairs. She explained how she truly listened.

> I have learned a lot from them by really asking them questions and really waiting for an answer, and I am not asking a question and hoping they say the right thing… instead of asking a question and hoping that they are saying what I want them to say.

Angelina talked about how naturally and almost effortlessly she wove her spiritual

practices, which included listening and being present, into her role as a student affairs

professional.

> Again I think I bring to this my spiritual practices or like ways of understanding the world so some of it is like listening and presence because I feel like part of someone's process of answering these questions has to do with … what is being heard … and having like someone hold open space.

Leo purposefully used "active listening" when engaging with students. He "listens,

repeats back" highlighting what he perceived to be important based upon what the

students had shared. For the participants, attentive listening is essential in tending to the

spiritual needs of students.

Empowerment through inquiry. Student affairs professionals tend to use a

specific type of inquiry while conversing with students that empowers the students and

increases their level of awareness. These questions focus on students' feelings and

perceptions, rather than on facts and information. Sheba stated that when she met with a

student who was not performing as expected, she asked, "Well what was happening here?

Do you feel this reflects the best of what you're capable of?" Jada asked questions that

reflected a holistic approach to student affairs work. She encouraged students to think

about their success within the context of their life, not just the circumstance. She

recognized the interconnectedness of students' lives. Jada stated:

> I try to look at my students holistically and remind them of all parts of themselves. Even when they do really well in school, I'm like, great, did you tell your family? How do you feel?…I try not to put emphasis on any one thing because I want them to feel good about who they are, all around.

Paulie indicated that asking questions and reflection are a critical aspect of how she

sought to address these issues. She used one-to-one conversations to engage in the

questions. She stated:

> So, I really try to talk to students, especially when students are facing some very
> serious hardships or challenges…to really do some soul-searching, ask themselves
> those really tough questions to help guide them in terms of their thinking, but also
> what it is that they want to do to find some satisfaction. So when I'm advising…I
> have to start there in, in terms of asking students…what's important to you? What
> do you want to do? And why?

From Angelina's experience, directly engaging in the big questions can be difficult for

students. Angelina provided four children's books as artifacts to illustrate how she

cleverly engaged in the big questions through the experiences of the characters.

It appears that asking big questions and listening deeply offer insights into a

student's circumstances and experiences. Given the nature of these questions, which

explore students' perceptions, how they feel, and their interpretations, they call for

students to talk aloud about their thoughts and illustrate ways to listen and pay attention

to their own inner voices.

Listening appears to be a specific activity that allows student affairs professionals

to perceive students' spiritual needs. These participants described listening not just to

understand what is being said, but also to understand what was taking place behind the

words. It is a necessity in determining whether or not students' needs are spiritual in

nature. Effective listening requires time and focus to understand what is being conveyed

as a way to ascertain the needs explicitly stated or implied by the students.

Finding Four—Eyes to See and Ears to Hear Students' Spiritual Needs

Most of the participants (9 of 13) discussed what they perceived to be expressions of students' spiritual needs. Given the time student affairs professionals spend with students outside the classroom, they frequently learned about students' personal struggles. Based on both their own perceptions and the definition of the term spirituality provided in this study, the participants explained their experiences and perceptions of students' spiritual challenges. These life challenges ranged from the death of a loved one to selecting a major. Within the context of spiritual challenges, some participants described the emergence of students' mental health issues to potentially be linked to issues of spirituality.

Personal challenges. Spiritual conversations with students surface in numerous ways. The participants noted that personal challenges are a common trigger for deeper-level conversations. Yolanda explained that death is an occurrence that often leads to spiritual conversations with students. She recalled having a conversation with a Hmong student whose grandparent had recently died and in her conversation she learned about Hmong cultural customs around death and the mourning process.

Morgan discussed the suicide of a student, which served as a significant reason she embarked on her own spiritual journey. She was befuddled by how and why someone would take their life. She stated:

> The other piece that really moved me to delve really more deeply into my own spirituality was also the death of a student that I worked with and was really close with. It was very… difficult and I was like why?

Lena discussed the sadness she experienced when students are consumed with anger or

frustration in response to a life challenge. Lena recalled an instance with a student

stating, "I could see the student losing her faith" and described the experience as

"watching a building implode…in their structure in a way that they were sitting, like

being so intense and then all of a sudden just crumbling down." Not all personal

challenges prompt a spiritual need or crisis. Some students have a solid spiritual

understanding and practices that are not an issue. However, for students searching or

unsure about their beliefs, conversations about spirituality seem to be a place in which

they conceptualize their issues.

      Selecting a major. Participants described the process of selecting a major or

career as particularly stressful for students. The student affairs professionals noted that

for some students, this process is a matter of choosing between their passion and what is

practical—essentially choosing between their head and heart. Paulie talked about her

experiences supporting a student's career choice:

> She learned that her G.P.A. wasn't where it needs to be to be admitted to a Ph.D.
> program, so her professor told her she would probably need to get a Master's
> degree first, and then, look at a Ph.D. program. But then she said her professor
> showed her a chart of the job prospects for a history Ph.D., and it's not too
> promising at all. So, she was so discouraged.
> So, I asked…her, well, why do you want to do it? Why do you wanna be a
> history professor? And she said, "because all the professors, all my history
> professors have been so fascinating, I just love 'em." I said, well, what is it about
> 'em that you love?…She said, "I-don't-know." I just said, that's why I told her,
> what's important to you? What do you wanna to do? What makes you happy?
> What makes you feel good? …..I said, so, ask yourself, what is it about teaching
> that you want to do, and does it have to be, at the college, does it have to be in
> history? But ask yourself, what really makes you want to teach? What is it that
> you want to do in the world? What do you value about the teaching profession?

…But that's just one example of how I ask for certain questions that she really hadn't really given a lot of thought to.

Denise also talked about how parental pressure makes decision-making about major and career particularly difficult.

Another piece that comes up or something I see a lot is some of the parental pressure that they have; so students … are even afraid to find out what it is they are passionate about, and are afraid to pursue it. Like because maybe mom and dad set this expectations. No you need to make this income or you need to get a degree in this because that degree won't pay or that sort of thing.

Participants talked about how selecting a major was a significant source of stress for students. The stress stemmed from the difficulty in deciding whether to follow a practical or heartfelt path. It appeared to be a struggle between listening to the heart or other external forces such as parents or professors. Essentially, some students are put in a position where they have to balance the counsel of others and their own voices and desires.

Where's the love: The environment at CRU. While talking about challenges, participants brought up the culture and climate at CRU as an area of particular difficulty for students. Some participants described the campus as being harsh and unloving. Three participants indicated there is a perception that there is "little room to make mistakes" for students at CRU. Jada noted, "It's easy, again, at, especially at this type of university, for them to feel really bad about themselves, or for them to feel apathetic."

Similar to an expectation of perfection, Lena described an unspoken expectation of behavior and action. She explained, "Also this perception that there is a right way to do it and a wrong way to do it." Noting that the perception of doing things the wrong

way can be difficult especially for first-year students who are acclimating to college life. Bob described adjustment at CRU, "We bring them here and we blew them out because they, they can't survive here. And this place is a meat grinder for some students."

Some participants described CRU as "fast-paced," particularly with the quarter system; "not diverse" as it relates to culture and ethnicity; "academically challenging and competitive;" and "overwhelming." According to the participants, these are factors that negatively impact the college environment and place significant stress on students.

Mental health. It is interesting that a significant portion of the study participants linked student mental health to spiritual struggles. Their responses indicated that high levels of stress sometimes stemmed from the mental models from which students operated. Students' perceptions, expectations, and experiences appeared to directly impact their mental wellness. Paulie, Sheba, and Leo discussed the sheer angst and struggle some students encountered when they ask for help. Somewhat related, Yolanda indicated that students' self-imposed demands and expectations were another contributing factor to their state of worry.

Angelina indicated that the response to feelings of isolation in the LGBT community is sometimes suicide. She stated:

> I think with LGBTQIA students there has been so much alienation and loneliness for so many of them… I just looking at suicide rates and we were looking at this research studies the other day that was like 40 something percent of trans people have attempted suicide. And that statistic has no relationship to any other identity, like that you can control for any like a social class or ability or any of those other things … when I think of suicide I do think that's like such a spiritual

> thing….the pain is so great that it .. outweighs anything else… that stands out, it's like a really dark spiritual need or really dark emptiness that exists.

The participants highlighted a possible linkage between spiritual struggle and mental health issues. They indicated that students' frames of reference for thinking about their circumstances and potential resolutions can be overwhelming.

Finding Five—Pushed by Pain or Pulled by a Vision

Many of the participants (9 of 13) drew a direct connection between spirituality and social justice. Study participants discussed social justice and spirituality as either a source of pain in their experiences or a source of hope and vision for the future. Some of the participants described the challenge of discovering multiple aspects of their identities while others were drawn to the potential to create change in the world.

Intersectionality: The unifying element. Several of the study participants utilized the term "intersectionality" when discussing social justice and spirituality. The term was utilized within the context of multiple identities being explored simultaneously. Based on the manner intersectionality was discussed, this term was likely introduced because it highlighted the students' inability to separate of various forms of identity, including spirituality. Lena spoke about intersectionality as a new exploration for students. She stated:

> The folks that I have interacted with have really never had the opportunity to talk to other people about it [spirituality]. Whether it be about their spiritual identity, their racial identity, the intersection of gender and class, they have either never had the opportunity to talk about it, never had to think about it.

Yolanda described a student's struggle with intersectionality of religion and sexuality.

> There was one student who I didn't know why she was struggling, being
> within our space and feeling comfortable with being inclusive, especially of
> gender and sexuality identities. And, after she left I found out,…that
> she,…follows that Jehovah's Witness religion. And she had a really hard time
> accepting that others were homosexual or queer. Very hard time.

Jada challenged students to own the intersections of their identity as a unique stamp of

their identity. She stated:

> But I get the students who, they find that side of themselves, and they try to
> balance that with their other identities. And that's always a discussion I'll have
> with the students, and it's sometimes it's me pushing back…. I'm like, no, you're
> all of that, and your someone's child… you're also your own person… you don't
> have to let any of these things define you.

Yolanda's artifact was a hand-drawn picture of herself from an activity she

conducted with students. The picture, drawn on a paper plate, is two-sided with a picture

that represents visible aspects of her identity and what can be seen and observed on one

side. On the opposite side were symbols that represent aspects of her identity that are

unknown such as her family history and religious background. This drawing vividly

represents the intersectionality of identities based on what is known and unknown about

an individual.

Pushed by pain. Some study participants discussed the pain associated with

spirituality or religion as it intersected with their identity. In some cases, the spiritual

aspect of their identity contradicted other identities they may have held. For example**,**

Angelina discussed the "religious rift" she experienced between her sexual orientation

and her religion.

> You know my upbringing was very conservative Christian and that was so
> important to me for so much of my life growing up. And then there was these
> kind of rift that happened because I had been taught certain things about kind of

Jesus and God that led me to believe like kind of my sexuality was an abomination or hateful or whatever, so like growing up there was like this, I felt very lonely in the world I had lots of kind of trauma and bad things with my family but God and Jesus were like this safe loving place.

And that was what I thought the only thing I could rely on was kind of God and Jesus. And then kind of learning more about myself, more about them as there were kind of taught to me, then there was like this kind of rift of like well if I'm hate for an abomination to the only kind of dependable love that I have been taught like where is that leave me.

Spirituality can be a source of pain for participants. This may be the case particularly when there is a perceived need or desire to unify seemingly incongruent identities or choose one identity over another. It can be particularly difficult and painful.

Pulled by a vision. For some study participants, spirituality is a source of inspiration because it makes the unseen and their hope for change possible. It provides hope for a vision of social justice regardless of the current state of social conditions. Hope discussed how his work is connected to spirituality saying, "people have to understand how oppression persists and how does liberation work, and in that work spirituality has a role to play." Angelina eloquently stated:

I only think that social justice is possible because I believe in the spiritual realm … everything in the sensed world has taught me that's not going to be possible for us to ever achieve like equality and treating each other with love and kindness but I think that's to some like higher purpose and meaning and possibilities is what connects me still to the idea of like social justice.

Anne stated:

Interpersonal relationships mean a lot of me in a spiritual practice and I think talking [about] … how to be a good ally. I think that.. it feels like it has a direct impact on my soul. It feels like, when we open ourselves up to be stronger than we ever thought we could on somebody else's behalf that feels like a very, serious spiritual practice.

The participants discussed spirituality as helping them believe in the future of what they wanted to create. Their spirituality is the basis for the hope and faith that what they are striving for will somehow manifest. In this regard, spirituality is essential to the participants.

Commitment to make a difference in the world. Most of the participants (10 of 13) explicitly discussed their desire to make a difference in the world, particularly through the social justice aspect of their work in student affairs. For the participants, spirituality played a role in making a difference in the world. Bob stated:

> What drives me to actually…to do the work … it all comes back down to love. I mean, at the end of the day it's, is that if we show love, we can cure. If we show love, we can feed. If we show love, we can educate. If we show love, we can, you know, be patient.

Morgan stated:

> So, for me…connects spirituality and like social justice and social change. I see so tightly linked. I see my purpose of being here is to make the world a better place, … it's gonna be … a long process… I needed to sustain how I do that, …I'm not gonna see the end of it, you know? So, but how do I during my time here, physically contribute to that progress.

Anne brought a weeping Buddha as an artifact of her spirituality. Anne explained its significance as a reminder of the pain in the world, noting that she believes people are "more than capable of minimizing the hurt" that happens in the world.

The link between the respondents' spirituality and social justice is evident. Social justice is more than a goal in their professional lives. For many of the participants, it served as the driving force for why they had chosen to work in the field of student affairs.

Results and Interpretation

A "balcony view" of findings of how student affairs professionals' spirituality influences their efforts to support student spiritual development provides a foundation for the results and interpretation described in this section.

Result One: The spiritual development of students poses unique and difficult challenges for student affairs professionals seeking to practice whole student development.

Providing spiritual development has both personal and professional implications for student affairs professionals. In considering the personal viewpoint, as indicated by the respondents, spirituality is personal. Therefore, to embark on the spiritual development of students requires that student affairs professionals have some degree of self-awareness and understanding of their own spirituality and articulation of life's big questions. In other words, student affairs professionals have to gauge their own spiritual intelligence. Spiritual development, unlike other aspects of whole student development, does not have volumes of theoretical and practical tools and resources. By default, student affairs professionals and their own approach to spirituality become a tool for learning and engagement for spiritual matters. Siefert and Holman-Harmon (2009) adds a helpful perspective. Their study findings claimed that student affairs professionals' identity as "spiritual and religious" is less important than understanding one's own insights, reflections, and wisdom gained through life experiences. These findings are congruent with the researcher's insights in the sense that how one identifies is not as critical as identifying and owning their worldview.

Professionally, the spiritual development component of whole student development receives minimal attention in comparison to the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical aspects. Still, study participants at CRU do respond to the spiritual development of students. Their responses are varied because the topic of spirituality is particularly complicated when it comes to student development. Spirituality lacks a common definition in higher education, but is generally perceived to be a personal and "inner" process that evolves over time by study participants. According to Speck (2005), the "definitional dilemma" (p. 2) served as a contributing factor to the resistance of addressing students' spiritual needs. Palmer and others (2010) claimed that another reason student affairs professionals shy away from the spiritual aspect of development is due to a lack of professional training to address such issues. The lack of a common definition of spirituality was echoed by the study participants. Based upon the findings, student affairs professionals at CRU make assumptions or draw upon their own personal perceptions about the meaning of the term "spirituality." The combination of the lack of definition and no professional training adds to the difficulties in addressing this area.

Another feature of spirituality that contributes to its complexity is its evolving nature. Study participants described spirituality and spiritual development as an ever-changing process. The current literature does not address the unique challenges the evolving process of spirituality poses. In Fowler's (1981) theory of faith development, conjunctive faith (in late adulthood) characterizes life as "complex, changing, and uncontrollable." However, this is in reference to a much older population than college

students and does not address how one's spirituality or spiritual understandings may shift over time. Parks (2000) included cognition, dependence, and community as important features in faith development. However, Fowler nor Parks work directly addresses the evolving nature of spirituality. The personal and ever-changing aspects of spirituality add an additional layer of complexity for student affairs professionals as they support students in this area of development.

Based upon the study findings, student affairs professionals' spirituality is most influenced by their religious backgrounds or cultural experiences. This is congruent with the findings from Hansen (2005), which illustrated that a person's definition of spirituality was shaped by religious background, "spiritual guides and spiritual journeys" (p. 150). While it is important for student affairs professionals to know the sources of their spiritual understandings, it is also critical they examine their own biases or assumptions prior to aiding students in this area of development.

Result Two: Despite the lack of clarity about spirituality, student affairs professionals do engage in the spiritual development of students.

Study participants indicated that when spiritual matters arose with students, they did not turn students away; they addressed the question or concern using their best thinking. The student affairs profession is a helping profession that aims to help students develop outside the classroom. Shutt et alia (2012) described student affairs work as "complex responsibilities and constant change" (p. 66). Astin and Astin (2003) indicated that student affairs professionals can take pride in helping students develop socially, emotionally, intellectually, but lack attention to the spiritual aspect of students' lives. In

contrast to this research, the study indicates that student affairs professionals are

indeed engaging in the spiritual development of students, even though the participants'

efforts are often undocumented or unrecognized by the institution; nonetheless it is

occurring.

Study participants noted they exercise a degree of caution in addressing spiritual

matters. A primary factor for student affairs personnel's reticence is the fear of being

perceived as proselytizing or having a lack of understanding regarding the legal mandate

of separation of church and state. Nash (2001) warned, "some educational leaders

mistakenly believe that the First Amendment requires a strict separation of church and

state, religion and the academy" (p. 5). Student affairs professionals in the study sought

to address those concerns by talking about spirituality only when prompted by the student

or in a workshop environment. The study participants shared spiritual insight based upon

their own understandings and experiences. They used sound judgment and critical

thinking to determine what information was appropriate and useful to disclose.

During such interactions, student affairs professionals posed critical questions to

empower students, to hear their own voices, and to increase their level of self-awareness

on the spiritual journey. Baxter Magolda's (2001) theory of self-authorship aligns with

the practices of the participants. This theory is defined as "the internal capacity to define

one's beliefs, identity, and social relations" through the internal voice, building an

internal foundation, and securing internal commitments (p. 269). This theory is marked

by students owning their lives through the ability to identify, articulate, and enact their

values and beliefs. Rodgers (1990) defined a feature of being a student as "the way that

a student grows, progresses, or increases his or her developmental capabilities as a

result of enrollment in an institution of higher education" (p. 27). The statement suggests

students will grow and develop by virtue of being in an educational environment.

However, this study suggests that for students to grow spiritually, purposeful actions

must be made. This study's researcher argues that intentionality should exist among mid-

level student affairs professionals and senior-level leadership regarding their commitment

to spiritual development. The participants have varying degrees of understanding about

whole student development and several assumptions about how they are expected to

respond to the spiritual development of students based on their roles and responsibilities.

Result Three: Spiritual development is intricately connected to the work of student affairs professionals through its social justice mission.

Data in the study highlighted that spirituality is an important link for student

affairs professionals and undergraduate students. For some of these professionals,

spirituality intersects with the mission of student affairs and their personal ambition for

working in the field. Student affairs professionals drew a direct parallel between their

work and notions of making a difference in the world, noting that spirituality creates a

vision that change can happen.

For students, spirituality is an integral part of their intersecting identities. Erikson

(1959) declared that traditional undergraduate students enter college during one of the

most challenging phases of their identity development. This is a time when students are

seeking to establish who they are independently of their family and social communities.

Chickering's (1969) theory reiterated the developmental phases students encounter, in

which two of the vectors directly pertain to spirituality based on the definition provided in this study. Chickering and others (2006) stated, "They [student affairs] have often failed to recognize the centrality of spirituality in the identity development of students during the college years and have underestimated the power of students' spiritual quests to help them cope with stress and fragmentation in college" (p. 147). The assistance of student affairs professionals could be particularly helpful as students navigate various stages of development.

Some of the study participants used the word "intersectionality" when discussing their experiences of students' spiritual sense of spirituality. Intersectionality, based on the context in which it was used, alludes to the overlapping of social identities that influence perceptions of support, community, and connection. Study participants appear to recognize and incorporate spiritual identity alongside other identities. Intersectionality suggests students' identities are intertwined and separating spirituality from other forms of identity is nearly impossible. In the study, student affairs professionals discussed their experiences with students who struggle with intersectionality. They noted that the need to address this challenge manifests when students attempt to reconcile conflicting intersecting identities. Participants noted that the skill necessary to help students navigate these inner conflicts is amplified when students' religious identities clash with their newfound or evolving identities.

Result Four: Ambiguity regarding the spiritual development of students may hamper student affairs professionals' effectiveness in providing whole student development.

Although implied, the researcher noted a degree of ambiguity shared by the study participants as it pertained to the spirituality and the spiritual development of students. Three distinct areas of vagueness were evident. First, although there were common traits in the definition of spirituality, all the participants had various definitions of the term. Second, study participants expressed a variety of responses with regard to spirituality as a component of whole student development. Finally, study participants were hesitant in both addressing the spiritual needs and proactively bringing it up in discussion.

The hole in whole student development. A slight majority (7 of 13) of the participants, mentioned terms related to whole student or holistic development. They noted it included "all aspects of student lives" but did not indicate the specific components being referenced in the term "all." One participant highlighted how loosely the term is used stating, "it is thrown around." Other participants claimed to recognize the "whole human being and their intersecting identities" as the context of whole student development. These responses indicate there are different definitions and a varying understanding of how it is applied at CRU. The lack of clarity causes the researcher to ponder what the study participants understand about whole student development and what overarching student development theories and philosophies are utilized at CRU.

Hesitant to talk about spirituality. There was a consistent tone of uncertainty about whether to discuss spirituality. When tending to the inner development of students, several participants "noted they do not call the work spiritual." They tended to use words

like "personal development" or "wellness" and expressed hesitancy about explicitly naming and engaging spirituality. One study participant, stated "it [spirituality] can be taboo just to talk about it" among staff and students. Another study participant stated, "we're terrified of spirituality." At CRU, it seems participants are unsure whether spirituality is permissible to openly discuss.

This study concurs with research that notes an imbalanced approach to the spiritual development of students. Researchers contended that spirituality will have a formal place in higher education when campus leaders intentionally incorporate it into the campus culture (Astin, 2004; Braskamp and others, 2006; Nash & Murray, 2010; Palmer and others, 2010). Other research suggests student affairs professionals establish an understanding about their own spiritual understandings and practices to aid students in their own development (Glanzer, 2011; Kiessling, 2010; Kocet & Stewart, 2011; Seifert & Holman-Harmon, 2009). In addition, ambiguity of a term is a reason to engage rather than disengage in spiritual matters. Zohar (2010) indicated that a lack of engagement about spirituality because of its complex nature communicates to students that one should cower in the face of challenge. Yet this is a fundamentally different approach to education than the research culture at colleges and universities. Typically, the lack of clarity is seen as an opportunity for exploration rather than something to disregard. In this study, most of the participants did have a sense of their own spiritual perceptions and understandings. Based on this, study participants have individually incorporated spiritual development strategies, such as asking critical questions, into their work practices to aid

students on their inner journeys. Though admirable, especially in the absence of any formal training, additional support to foster this aspect of students' lives is required.

What to name it?: Another concern regarding spirituality is not only what does it mean but also what to name it. The literature discussed the need to capture the essence of spirituality using terms that are inclusive of those who do not identify with a spiritual tradition such as atheists, agnostics, and humanists. Therefore, a considerable amount of intentionality is necessary when defining the essence of spirituality and determining the appropriate terminology for it.

<center>**Summary**</center>

In summation, this chapter discussed the findings of the study, which illustrated the five major themes that emerged from the field research: (a) perceptions of spirituality, (b) significance of spirituality, (c) personal sharing, (d) student expressions of spiritual needs, and (e) social justice and spiritual development. In addition to the findings, there were four results of the study. The results were: (a) The spiritual development of students poses unique and difficult challenges for student affairs professionals seeking to practice whole student development, (b) Despite the lack of clarity about spirituality, student affairs professionals do engage in the spiritual development of students, (c) Spirituality is intricately connected to the work of student affairs professional through the student affairs social justice mission, and (d) Ambiguity regarding the spiritual development of students may hamper student affairs professionals' effectiveness in providing whole student development. These results were grounded in the study findings, current literature on the topic, and the researcher's interpretations. The

combination of the findings and results form the basis for the recommendations in the

following chapter.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of student affairs professional's spirituality on the spiritual development of students at a public research institution in California. In this study, spirituality was defined as

> a longing for ways of speaking on the human experience of depth, meaning, mystery, moral purpose, transcendence, wholeness, intuition, vulnerability, tenderness, courage, the capacity to love, and the apprehension of spirit as the animating essence at the core of life. (Parks, 2000, p. 16)

The definition also incorporated life's big questions of who am I, what do I believe, and how do I make a difference in the world? Guided by a phenomenological methodology of research and analysis, this study revealed five major findings pertaining to the student affairs professionals' influence of spirituality. The findings are comprised of (a) perceptions of spirituality, (b) significance of spirituality, (c) personal sharing, (d) student expressions of spiritual needs, and (e) social justice and spiritual development.

Conclusions

This research focused on the role of spirituality in the personal and professional lives of student affairs professionals as a basis for understanding how it influences their approach to the spiritual development of students. The researcher aimed to provide a detailed account of the participants' experiences and perceptions of spirituality and how it affects their approach to student affairs work. The study was guided by three primary research questions designed to explore the participants' perceptions of spirituality and how those views inform their approach to holistic student development.

Research Question One: How do student affairs professionals define and describe spirituality?

  Inner and personal journey. The first major finding of this study was that student affairs professionals commonly describe spirituality as an" inner" and "personal journey" that constantly changes and is influenced by religion, culture, or a personal search. Many participants described spirituality in contrast to religion. Based on the study findings, a conclusion is that participants recognized the difference between religion and spirituality and operated under their own interpretations of the terms. While student affairs professionals had varying ideas of the term spirituality, they held four characteristics in common: seeing it as personal, ongoing, and evolving, and influenced by external factors such as culture and religion.

  The perception of spirituality being an inner and personal journey may contribute to the hesitation these professionals expressed in addressing the spiritual dimension of students' lives. Conversations about spirituality are rare and potentially deemed unimportant. Although the participants willingly engaged in discussions when spiritual matters arose, this is a reactive approach. Therefore, it is important student affairs professionals acknowledge and embrace spirituality as a component of whole student development. When student affairs professionals speak openly about spirituality, it acknowledges its existence and invites further exploration and dialogue.

Research Question Two: How do student affairs professionals describe the role of spiritual development within the larger mission of student affairs work?

Many of the participants shy away from using the term spiritual or spirituality within the context of student affairs work. It appears the lack of use stems from the perception that the word spirituality has religious connotations and produces feelings of discomfort. Study participants used terms such as "personal development" or "wellness" to address the spiritual aspects of development. The terms are broad and have a common understanding among study participants.

Spirituality is seen as a potential tool for empowerment. When a context and definition of spirituality was provided, student affairs professionals described it as a tool that may offer a sense of being "balanced" and "centered" particularly during challenging times. As a helping profession, a core goal of student affairs is to support and empower students for success in their college experience. Based on this aim, equipping students with the emotional and spiritual tools should be a priority. Spiritual intelligence has the potential to support this goal while providing students with empowering coping mechanisms that can be used in all aspects of their lives.

Research Question 3: In what way does the spirituality of student affairs professionals influence their approach to the spiritual development of students?

Personal toolbox. The spirituality of student affairs professionals does influence their approach to the spiritual development of students. In working with students, participants used their understandings or spirituality as a tool to perceive and understand students' needs. In the absence of a clear message about spirituality, study participants relied upon their own religious and spiritual resources to perceive students' spiritual

needs. While these professionals, who strive to provide a holistic approach to student

development, are actively engaged in the process of spiritually supporting students.

These professionals sought ways to engage in the spiritual development of students.

Other higher education professionals may be reluctant to do so in the absence of training

or formal institutional approval.

Key to change. Study participants divulged that their beliefs and hopes for

change in the world stemmed from their spiritual beliefs and understandings. For many

of the participants, the hope for change was directly connected to their reason for

working in student affairs. Despite this fact, student affairs professionals rarely discuss

their passion for student affairs work in this manner because the topic of spirituality is

described as "taboo" within the workplace at CRU. The inability to openly discuss on

spirituality asks participants to silence an important part of their identity and their

personal ambitions for engagement in student affairs work. There appears a need at CRU

and perhaps other institutions to consider ways to create space for conversations for

spirituality to take place.

<div align="center">

Recommendations

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Based on findings, results, and conclusions of this study, the researcher offers the

following recommendations for student affairs professionals at CRU. The

recommendations are intended specifically for the study site and populations of this

study, but may be beneficial to comparable public research institutions.

1. Embrace and advocate for the recognition of spiritual development as a critical component of whole student development. If student affairs professionals are to fulfil the holistic mission of the work, then spiritual aspect of students' lives has to be seen, valued, and nurtured.

2. Encourage student affairs professionals to explore spirituality and its relevance and connection to the mission and purpose of the Division of Student Affairs at CRU. If whole student development is a priority for student affairs leaders, it should be reflected in the Division's mission statement and goals.

3. Intentionally create time for reflection and articulation of student affairs professionals' spiritual journey and understandings prior to aiding students in their own development. It is beneficial for student affairs professionals to have an awareness of how their own spiritual or religious beliefs may impact their ability to assist students in their spiritual development.

4. Take the initiative to expand their toolbox of spiritual resources pertaining to the topic of spiritual development in higher education. There are numerous resources available to strengthen student affairs professionals' knowledge and understanding to support students' spiritual development.

5. Set up opportunities for dialogue with other interested student affairs professionals regarding spirituality and the spiritual development of students (i.e., Brown bag lunch discussions, book club, forums, etc.). This is another

way to discuss the complexity of spirituality and establish a community

of support around the topic.

6. Challenge and support the student affairs leadership to live up to their

commitment of whole student development.

Recommendations for Further Research

The topic of spirituality in higher education is complex, dynamic, and alive in institutions of higher education and further research is needed in this area. Building upon the findings from this study, the researcher recommends the following investigations to develop a deeper understanding about the role and influences of student affairs professionals in the spiritual development of students.

Fifteen study participants were adequate for research purposes, but obtaining the voices, perspectives, and experiences of a larger representation of student affairs from CRU may be beneficial. The researcher recommends that this study be duplicated to include a larger sample size with a cross section of student affairs professionals at varying levels of the organization, across work functions, units, and departments, and with a wide range of spiritual traditions and leanings.

The need for conversation about the value and role of spiritual development in the mission of student affairs, particularly at a public research institution, surfaced in the study. Several of the participants' discussed varying views about the role of spirituality within student affairs work, particularly as it relates to social justice. An investigation of the link between spirituality, social justice, and student affairs work is strongly encouraged.

The findings from the study indicate that the participants are engaged in the spiritual development of students through dialogue and conversation. Another potential area for further study would be to explore specifically how student affairs professionals navigate conversations about spirituality with students. One might want to explore what skills, strategies, experiences, and knowledge based are utilized in engagement with students in conversation about spiritual matters.

Finally, according to the study, student affairs professionals are engaged in the spiritual development of students, it often goes unnamed and unrecognized at CRU. Unpacking what factors contribute to this dynamic including the relationships between students and student affairs professionals, institutional culture, and student affairs leadership would also increase an understanding of this spiritual development phenomenon.

Summary

This study sought to explore how the spirituality of student affairs professionals influenced their experiences of supporting students' spiritual development. The findings revealed that spirituality does impact their work in the field; specifically, their efforts to help students navigate the spiritual dimensions of their development and issues concerning intersecting identities.

Attempts to provide whole student development that incorporates spirituality is complex and multifaceted. This reality is present because such efforts are both personal and professional, and institutional roadblocks often limit the ability for it to be fully effective. One of the challenges is that spiritual development calls for student affairs

professionals to grapple with, understand, and own the various experiences that inform the foundation of their spirituality. Further, since spirituality is not recognized and named as a vital component of whole student development, efforts made by student affairs professional often go unnoticed and undocumented. Despite these various challenges, the study makes it clear that spirituality plays a significant role in the lives of these professionals who interact with students daily; making it a vital component of whole student development and a critical aspect of student affairs work.

In the introduction of this paper, I described an interaction with a student named Kim. She entered the office, ostensibly asking for academic support, but it was clear she was dealing with issues of self-doubt, pressure of unmet expectations, and uncertainty of the future. When Kim and students like her, enter my office with these burdens and tear-filled eyes, I cannot help but employ my spiritual resources to address their needs. I clearly saw the spiritual dimensions of Kim's struggle that extended beyond referrals and online forms that need to be submitted. As I felt compelled to address the underlying concerns being brought forth by the student, I wondered how other student affairs professionals were doing the same work.

Admittedly, the genesis of this research study was prompted by an uncertainty about the student affairs response to the spiritual aspect of students' lives. However, after interviewing the participants in the study, I am empowered. Through our conversations, I was able to connect with essence of their life's work—an almost vocational mission instilled with passion, purpose, and an unwavering commitment to supporting student success in the classroom and beyond. Although this spiritually infused work often goes

unseen and has its institutional challenges, I am moved by those who work for more

than a paycheck and seek to influence students to recognize and tap into their own inner

wisdom. I am appreciative of the participants who embrace their role as change agents,

empowering one student at a time. I am inspired knowing I am not alone in doing this

transformative work in the world.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Time: _____   Interview Date:_____
Interview Location:_____   Interviewer: Kawami Evans_____
Interviewee:_____
Title:_____

   The purpose of this phenomenological study is to examine how student affairs professionals' spiritual practices influence their efforts to support students' spiritual development and exploration of life's big questions. The audio-recorded interview is anticipated to last 45-60 minutes as you respond to 12-14 questions regarding how your spiritual practices influence your efforts to support students' spiritual development and exploration of life's big questions. I will also take notes throughout the interview to record pertinent observations to this study.
   Confidentiality is important. Your name as an interviewee will be replaced with a fictitious name (pseudonym) to maintain confidentiality. All data collected will be maintained in a secure locked cabinet at Drexel University Sacramento.
   As a requirement of this research project, I must have your stated consent to participate in this study. As a reminder, you can withdraw from the study at any time. At this time, I am inviting you to ask any unanswered questions. Do you agree to participate? (Turn on the recorder, read the formal consent statement and verbal consent). Thank you for your participation.
    I will now turn on the recording devices and begin recording.

<u>Interview Questions</u>

1.) Please state your job title and describe your role and job responsibilities.
2.) What education and training have you completed that prepared you to work in student affairs?
3.) How do you define "spirituality"?
4.) How do you describe your own spiritual practices and understandings?
5.) How do you integrate your spiritual beliefs into your work as a student affairs professional?
6.) Based upon the definition of spirituality you provided, what is your experience of students' spiritual needs? Please provide an example.
7.) How does your spiritual understandings influence your approach to the spiritual development of students?

  <u>Supplemental Questions for Senior Student Affairs Professionals</u>
   a) Do you discuss the spiritual development of students with your staff? If so, how do you talk about it?
   b) What training do you provide for your staff regarding the spiritual development of students?

8.)   How do you support students in answering life's big questions like:
   a. Who am I?
   b. What do I believe?
   c. What am I passionate about?
   d. What is my purpose in life?

9.)   How do you answer these questions for yourself?

10.)   How do you seek to address the spiritual development of students in your approach to the programs and services you provide?

11.)   What else would help me to understand your lived experiences with regards to the spiritual development of students?

12.)   What documents, symbols, pictures, photos, or objects that exemplify what we've discussed today are you willing to share?

<u>Closing</u>
Thank you for your time and participation. After I've completed the interviews, I will write a summary of your interview. Would you like a copy of the interview we've conducted today? Again thank you.

Appendix B: Letter/Email of Invitation

Date_____

Dear_____

      My name is Kawami Evans; I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership and Management program at Drexel University Sacramento under the supervision of Dr. Kathy Geller, Principal Investigator and dissertation Supervising Professor. I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study on the spirituality of student affairs professionals. The title of my dissertation is: *The Influence of Student Affairs Professionals' Spirituality on the Development of College Students: A Phenomenological Study*. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to examine how student affairs professionals' spiritual practices influence their efforts to support students' spiritual development and exploration of life's big questions. This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

      For your information, the term and concept of spirituality is central in this study. Given the lack of common definition of spirituality in the literature, in this study it is defined as ". . . a longing for ways of speaking on the human experience of depth, meaning, mystery, moral purpose, transcendence, wholeness, intuition, vulnerability, tenderness, courage, the capacity to love, and the apprehension of spirit as the animating essence at the core of life" (Parks 2000, p. 16). However, there are several other definitions of the term and they are welcomed in the study.

      Your participation in this research study is strictly voluntary. If you consent to participate, you will be provided a copy of the questions in advance of the interview. You will engage in a single face-to-face, 45-60-minute semi-structured interview of 12-14 questions. I will also take notes throughout the interview to record pertinent observations to this study. In addition, I will invite you to provide any objects, documents, or materials that guide your practice of whole student development as a student affairs professional or your spiritual practices. The interview will be scheduled based upon your convenience, and will be held at a location of your choice.

      During the interview, your responses will be digitally recorded. I will also be taking notes as you provide responses to the questions asked. Later these recordings will be transcribed and become the basis for the study's findings and conclusions. At no point will you be personally identified, rather a pseudonym will be used from the beginning of the study. The recording of your conversation will be handled with the utmost discretion. All recordings will be kept in strict confidence. Both recordings and all information pertaining to the study will be maintained in a locked cabinet at Drexel University.

      There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study. If you have any concerns or questions you are encouraged to ask them at any time. You may opt out of this study at any time and for any reason.

      If you have any questions, I would be happy to talk with you in more detail. I can be reached at (831) 325-4136 or by email at ke86@drexel.edu. You may also contact the

Principal Investigator: Kathy Geller, Ph.D., Drexel University (Sacramento Campus), School of Education, (916) 213- 2790; Kdg39@drexel.edu.

　　　In the coming week, I will follow-up this email with a telephone call to verify your interest and schedule the interview session.

Sincerely,

Kawami Evans
Doctoral Candidate
EdD in Educational Leadership and Management
Drexel University
School of Education