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RURAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS' SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS

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RURAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS' SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND

POLICY STUDIES

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way they were. I now understand that all they really wanted was for me to have a better life than they had; to be successful, not to want for more than I needed, to love the country of my birth-Germany, and to love the country that has become my home-America. Even though they are gone, their picture hangs on a wall in my office as a constant reminder of their love for one another and for me. God blessed me with the greatest parents anyone could ever hope for. They set examples for me to choose to follow or not which has become the fortification that has sustained my role as a husband, a parent, a teacher, and an administrator. My parents had their share of problems, but it was these problems and the strict militaristic discipline that personified my being. There were times when I hated my parents, but I always loved them. After their deaths, many of their closest friends called or came by the house to tell me how proud my parents were of me for being a great father, a great husband, and for being a son that made them so proud. Every now and then, I pray to God and ask Him to tell my parents hello, I love them, and that I miss them. Who I am, what I am, where I am, why I am, when I am, and how I am, is because of them.

The woman I married, Marsha LaRue Sparks-Moody, is in many ways, just like my mother, a very black and white, well organized, and structured individual. She is a woman that is not afraid to voice her opinion especially when she would challenge what I wanted to write in this dissertation. She provided thought provoking questions and made me prove to her with more than just words, the reasons why I believed so strongly and compassionately about being spiritually guided to lead. She spent countless hours reading and rereading page after page of text, filtering out spelling errors and sentences that were either too long or did not make sense. She has suffered and rejoiced as much as I have.

She took over the responsibilities that a father normally handles, with the exception of mowing the grass. She cooked, cleaned, tucked the kids into bed every night, went to PTA meetings and parent-teacher conferences, and drove our children all around town, while I stayed home with my laptop and reference materials scattered on the floor all around me. She is and has been the most patient and understanding person I have ever known. November 20th of this year will mark our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Happily, the past eight years, the entire duration of this study, coincidently, have been the best eight years of our marriage. She sacrificed more than I did, and for that, I have the rest of my life to repay my debt to her.

My children, Rob and Rachel, unfortunately, have been unwilling causalities, as they felt less significant than this project. It is only now when we talk about this dissertation that I sense the excitement in their eyes and voices when we talk about the process, the results, the meanings, and experiences I have gained from this new knowledge, that I feel a sense of forgiveness and appreciation. As I watch them prepare for their own college classes, going through familiar struggles and test anxieties, I see some very familiar preparation strategies and the determination to be academically successful. This demonstrates to me that they were paying attention to my dedication and to the late night hours, I spent pursuing my own academic success all these many years. I can never make up the time we did not get to share because of this dissertation, I can only hope that wherever this journey leads me, that my children will eventually understand the significance of this enormous undertaking and pat me on the back and say, "Great job, Dad."

My in-laws, Marjorie and Herschal Sparks, in a sense, became my adopted parents. They have been so supportive and encouraging. I spent many nights on their couch reading and writing the early drafts of this study. Their kindness and encouragement helped me maintain the energy and stamina to continue to work as a principal during four of the toughest years of my education career. When I left them to become a superintendent, I was a stronger, more confident administrator. Their kind words and belief in me pushed me towards a greater sense of self-confidence.

My two brother-in-laws, Mark and Mike Sparks, for whom my two co-researchers were respectfully named, were instrumentally supportive. Mark provided countless words of encouragement while Mike and his wife Karra not only provided me a cabin to relax in but a refuge that eliminated outside distractions that enabled me to put together the first two chapters in preparation for the general examination. The occasional glass(s) of wine and comforting conversation collaboratively provided relaxation and reassurance. Many times, they were not aware of the sustaining effect that their words had on me. A passing comment, informal and to the point, often was enough to strengthen me to continue.

The members of my doctoral committee, Co-chairs Dr. Jeff Maiden and Dr. Courtney Vaughn, Dr. Gregg Garn, Dr. Loraine Dunn, and Dr. Mary John O'Hair provided valuable insightfulness, direction, and guidance. Their commitment and support gave me additional self-assurance and the autonomy to construct a study that developed into a personal meaningful experience. Their positive energy and dedicated commitment directed me towards becoming a scholarly sponge that wanted to make a difference. Dr. Maiden, an active participant in my program from the start, had the courage to step outside the quantitative world of statistics and into the world of qualitative searches for

meanings of experiences. Dr. Vaughn presented in class the methodology of heuristic research that enabled me to find my voice and a process that gave me an ability to speak. Dr. Garn provided political, public relationships, and communication techniques that were put into practice with satisfactory results. Dr. O'Hair presented the concept of democratic schools that showed me how to lead from the center and not from the top. Dr. Dunn came into the committee as an unfamiliar member, not ever having taken a class with her as the instructor, however, at every meeting, she conveyed thought provoking reflective inquires that stimulated my intellect and natured my desire to lead spiritually in an academic world. I am so appreciative of their efforts and for taking time from their busy days to give personal and professional guidance to my program of study.

I want to acknowledge the original members of the doctoral cohort program Dennis Gentry, Ron Jackson, Rodney Sterns, and Sylvia Kirk. I will never forget how we made fun of each other, who feel asleep in class, who seemed to rant about something on and on, or who always knew what they were talking about in class. I would challenge anyone to find a more cohesive group of educational leaders that brought as much experience, compassion, dedication, and personal conviction to class as these individuals did. Our relationships from class developed into life-long friendships that continue to this day, providing comfort, support, and wisdom. I will forever rely on them to brighten the darkest of days as only they can do.

I dare not forget to acknowledge the supporting members of my journey who must remain nameless. I have told many educators through the years that if I could go back in time to change all that has happen, I would not, because then, I would not have had the opportunity to meet some of the finest, Christian individuals who accepted me as

an outsider trying to find a way to successfully fit in. They unknowingly became my

mentors, my guides, and my spiritual confidants.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

This study used the heuristic methodology to analyze the implications, characteristics, resemblances, and essences of the question, "How do rural school superintendents' perceptions of spirituality influence their leadership activities?" The heuristic methodology began with the researcher's subjective process of exploration, reflection, and sifting through information in order to formulate a research question.

This study concludes an eight-year review of relevant literature that included an exploration of books, thesis, and dissertations. Thorough inspections of retail bookstores with subsequent investigations of the reference and bibliography sections provided additional information. New knowledge and self-awareness are realized within the context of the literature.

Concepts utilized in heuristic research, including the focus of inquiry, self-dialogue, tacit knowing, intuition, indwelling, focusing, and internal frames of reference were elucidated in detail. Co-researchers were selected using purposive selection to seek out participants who were willing to discuss their perceptions of spirituality and its influence on their leadership activities.

The presentation of data commenced with three vignettes that described rural school superintendents' perceptions of how their spirituality influences their leadership activities. The vignettes were written in first person, each one included verbatim quotations that were drawn from the interview transcripts of the co-researchers. To maintain the confidentiality of the study, pseudonyms were given to both participants and to any data that could reveal the identity of the co-researchers.

Finally, a creative synthesis brought together the superintendents' perceptions of spirituality's influence on their leadership activities as an integrated whole while embracing the unique style of the primary researcher who was engaged in every phase of heuristic research and with each co-researcher. A comparison of the data to the literature review revealed similarities that emerged from the study: (1) making a difference; (2) unique life experiences; (3) the spiritual journey; (3) spiritual values and perceptions; (5) trust relationships; (6) prayer life; (7) spirituality in the workplace and finally; (8) proselytizing risks. Limitations, social significance, implications, recommendations for future research and practice, and a reflective summary were presented.

Chapter 1

Rural school districts educate a significant number of children in America. More than one in six American children attend,> schools in a rural community with fewer than 2,500 inhabitants (G. Carter, 2003). Rural superintendents routinely lack support as they execute miscellaneous roles that engender uncertainty, dissension, intemperance, and dissatisfaction while performing a medley of responsibilities. The value of the superintendent's leadership may be one of the most significant determinants to influencing the success of rural school districts (Wallace, 1996). Frequently, the superintendent is the catalyst for establishing innovative, ground-breaking curriculum and providing inducements for school success (Young, 1991). Stokley (2002) stated:

> These are challenging times for educators. Outside forces such as state standards, high-stakes testing and the influence of a violence-saturated commercial culture put conflicting pressures on us. Just at the time when a more holistic student-centered approach to learning is needed, it is becoming harder to provide. (p. 48)

Many rural superintendents often look to spiritual guidance while striving to comprehend the significance and rationale for such difficulties. Researchers have found that prayer can be used as a mechanism to help individuals cope with physical and mental health conditions, traumas, and crises (Lindgren & Coursey, 1995; McCullough, 1995). According to a recent Gallop Poll (2001) 95% of individuals living in the United States have a belief in God which can be integrated with meaningful life experiences (Stoll, 1989). Herman Smith, superintendent of Bryan Texas Schools, has sought spiritual guidance since his early childhood (J. R. Hoyle, 2002). Smith starts each day praying for the strength to be optimistic and to remain strong enough to manage tenacious personnel,

budget and community problems with a positive resolve to seek the spiritual best in people and the complicated issues in front of him (J. R. Hoyle, 2002). In *Leading with Soul,* Bolman and Deal (1995) stated their belief about spirituality:

> The world needs a spirituality that transcends sectarian boundaries. Living in the global village inevitably means that cultures and faiths meet and interpenetrate at a dizzying pace….Today's leaders change the sterile bureaucracies into tomorrow's communities of meaning…to look inward on a spiritual journey…to give gifts from the heart which breathe spirit and passion into ones life and organization. (pp. 2-12)

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how rural school superintendents' perceptions of spirituality influence their leadership activities. The likelihood that spirituality could offer an innovative aspect in leadership has emerged from a subsequent examination of leadership (Fairholm, 1998; Palmer, 1992; Peck, 1997). Contemporary theorists believe spirituality allows leaders to lead in a convincing way setting themselves apart from others, revealing their greatness to be a feature of honor, integrity, and morality (Blanchard & Peal, 1988; Bolman & Deal, 1991; Fairholm, 1998).

Problem Statement

The superintendency has emerged into a job that is very high risk with the likelihood to make an individual's life emotionally and psychologically distraught. The pressures of school systems classically come to congregate on the superintendent. Burbank (1968) maintained:

2

The superintendent is the visible and accessible symbol of the magnitude and power of the school system. He is the key person whose approval is so important to special pleaders. They work incessantly either to gain his support or to destroy his image as a responsible leader. Many and often devious are the ways in which they operate. (p. 42)

As we advance into the twenty-first century with our continually changing world and its schools, new knowledge must be sought about the quality of the superintendency so that we might better comprehend the expectations of the position. There are boundless possibilities for researchers "to contribute to existing knowledge in educational administration research by drawing on individual accounts of the lived experience" (Brunner, 2000, p. 79) of superintendents.

This dissertation ascertained the private insights of co-researchers who put into practice spiritual leadership. It scrutinized, through their eyes and voices, the subjective disposition of the superintendency and the implications for the individuals who fill the position. It invited these rural superintendents to reflect on their spirituality's influence on their leadership activities and asked them to present their analysis of their own journey to becoming spiritual leaders.

A boundless body of research exists that examines leadership, spiritual leadership, and superintendents. Of this research, a small amount focuses on superintendents that are spiritually guided. I attempted to influence this void in the literature. Combining both heuristic research and autobiography allowed me to become immersed in intuitions and insight that directed my awareness of my own spirituality and that of others. Moustakas

3

(1990) alleged the "heuristic researcher is not only intimately and autobiographically related to the question but learns to love the question" (p. 43).

During the time I was working on my Master's Degree, I was required to write case studies, metaphors, and various other articles for class assignments. Through these writings, I detailed certain events from my life that captured many of the life experiences that have lead to this research. Upon completion of the Master's program, I was accepted into the Doctorate of Philosophy program. Weekly assignments captured my moods, my fears, my aspirations, my failures, and my successes as I had moved from the classroom to a position of administration. The compilation of these writings was described within the context of my autobiography. It was difficult for me to envision any other way of revealing my story that would make sense.

This doctoral program provided an outlet for my story to be told. Clark Moustakas' 1990 book, *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Applications*, gave me a process to explore and to further my life experiences. Harner and Romer (1992) asserted "it is the connection to personal meaning that determines what parts of experience will become knowledge and what parts will fade quickly from memory and mind" (p. 18). While I am aware that my efforts may be unsuccessful and may not stimulate assertive responses, the dialogue may offer reassurance and support to other school leaders, in particular, superintendents who are traveling a similar road.

By developing a heuristic research epistemologically based on my own tacit knowledge, I was able to divulge events that shaped the very essence of my being. I investigated how spirituality influences the leadership activities of other rural school superintendents because of my own background associated with spiritual leadership. I

wanted to share my experience with others as I tried to understand their perceptions. It was not my intent to proselytize anyone beliefs towards my own. Moustakas (1997) remarked:

> If you do not sing your own song, if you don't play your own music and speak your own words, if you don't live your own words, if you don't live your own silence, then the power within you will not know where to find you. It will not know how to work for you. (p. 30)

During this journey, I sustained my inquisitiveness and observed perceptions from various different viewpoints.

<div align="center">Research Question</div>

A focal dissimilarity between Moustakas' model of heuristic research and other qualitative methods is his perseverance in formulating a single, focused research question (Moustakas, 1990). According to Moustakas there are supplementary questions imbedded in one central question, but the diversity and open-ended techniques engaged throughout heuristic research stimulate the affixing of a solitary question "having all the qualities of simplicity, concreteness, specificity, and clarity" (41). Moustakas went on further to explain that "all heuristic inquiry begins with the internal search to discover…a fundamental truth regarding the meaning and essence on one's own experience and that of others" (p. 40).

Polanyi (1969) suggested that "to see a problem is to see something hidden that may yet be accessible…It is an engrossing possession of incipient knowledge which passionately strives to validate itself. Such is the heuristic power of a problem" (pp. 131-132). In the heuristic design, Moustakas believes the research question must develop out

of my own individual enthusiasm and inquisitiveness. Throughout the development of the question, it is frequently difficult to distinguish a particular and suitable question because as the theme arises, countless associated fundamentals also come into awareness as will be demonstrated in the review of literature contained in Chapter 2.

This procedure was indispensable in ultimately reducing the question to one that was straightforward and unmistakably articulated the goal of this study. Specifically, Moustakas identified five distinctive characteristics that a heuristic research question should include. Moustakas' heuristic model formulated the template for this research. First, this inquiry sought to disclose the human experience of seeing the world through a new paradigm. Second, it pursued a qualitative viewpoint of what it would be like to be in this paradigm subjectively, not objectively. Third, it was a question of my personal quest evoking my own personal, passionate, and active participation. Fourth, this question did not seek informal interactions. Fifth, I sought a solution that was not quantitatively measured, rated, or scored. With the research question becoming a focal point, I was set to follow Moustakas' (1990) advice to "…strive to be humble and not hold a single presupposition, so as to be in a position to learn more" (p. 43). Heuristic research presents a holistic and scientific methodology to conducting human science research that positioned me in the center of the project (Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas' (1990) suggested process for formulating an effective heuristic research question was similar to brainstorming. Several interesting topic of personal interests were fabricated and subsequently classified into sub-themes. Sub-themes that entailed informal relations or innate conjectures were eradicated. The residual sub-themes

were compassionately reassessed, restructured, and reclassified until a lucid and distinct question was developed that approached my unambiguous interest.

After careful consideration, I developed the following research question, "*How do rural school superintendents' perceptions of spirituality influence their leadership activities?*" This question entailed a substantial degree of self-examination as well as the participation of individuals who were superintendents. The question was private to the individual with implications for intensifying the knowledge of the co-researcher, any other individual endeavoring to respond an analogous question, and to me (Moustakas, 1990). To endeavor to be entirely logical or dispassionate in this research would potentially make the understanding of this search less consequential to me as well as those who would be informed by the work. Moustakas further stated:

> The heuristic process is a way of being informed, a way of knowing. Whatever presents itself in consciousness of the investigator as a perception, sense, intuition, or knowledge represents an invitation for further elucidation. What appears, what shows itself as itself, casts a light that enables one to come to know more fully, what something is and means. In such a process, not only is knowledge extended but also the self of the researcher is illuminated. (p. 10-11)

The research question flowed from the knowledge and consciousness of the investigator and the heuristic research process demanded that the investigator become very engrossed in the research question under investigation. The individual contribution of the investigator in the heuristic research process made this research paradigm ideal for my study of superintendents and spirituality, because I have experienced both and lived with the perceptions as I tried to understand them.

Co-researchers were methodically informed of the character of the investigation and thus were personally involved in the process. Priority was given to self-awareness that was enriched in dialogue and connection with others. Emphasis was placed on the internal frame of reference, beginning with my own self-awareness that was magnified and extended in dialogue with others. My preference of the heuristic model to study rural school superintendents' perception of how spirituality influences their leadership activities permitted me to direct my efforts toward personal growth and identity attainment, as well as toward informing co-researchers and readers.

<div align="center">Definition of Terms</div>

Thomas and Brubaker (2000) proposed that "much misunderstanding in human communication results from people bringing different meanings to the words they use in speaking and writing" (p. 79). Because there are inconsistencies in meaning within the literature of certain terms or phrases used throughout this paper, I offer the following definitions as those that most closely reflect the meaning I intended. In order to create a shared understanding of this research, the reader is presented concise, operational definitions of 17 essential terms – career path, critical spirituality, cultural imagination, cultural identity, experience, imagination, leadership, micropolitical organizations, moral purpose, reflection, religion, rural school district, self-efficacy, spirituality, spiritual leadership, superintendent, and workplace spirituality.

Career Path

A career path includes a succession of jobs or positions ordered so that each provides experiences considered essential to perform in subsequent positions including information regarding demographics, personal data, educational background, and

previous areas of employment (McDonald, 1987). Adkinson (1991) suggested that "career paths consist of several types of positions….the transition from teaching to administration may be especially difficult" (p. 322). Fairholm (2000) believed that "our beliefs and moral visions determine our career paths and all that we do along these paths" (p. 132).

Critical Spirituality

According to Dantley (2005) critical spirituality is a fusion of the tenets of critical theory and spirituality. Dantley stated that "critical spirituality allows for not only a grappling with our individual sense of being and purpose but it also grounds our work in interrogating those social and political contexts within which we find ourselves" (p. 503). Critical spirituality allows one to question the resolute bias of American influence to preserve the status quo while supporting imperialism and individualism (Dantley, 2005).

Cultural Imagination

According to Florio-Ruane (2001) cultural imagination is the process of people connecting and discussing their cultural histories and restructuring these histories as a result of moment-to-moment engagements, as they discover new meanings about their and other's cultural lives. Culture, in this instance, is both meaning and the process of meaning-making. Spirituality has a tendency to concentrate on discovering the meaning in life, or meaning-making, and personal perceptions.

Cultural Identity

Tisdell (2005) defined cultural identity as the re-claiming of images, symbols, ways of being and celebrating individuality or members of a cultural community. There are four cultural beings; personal, political, historical, and sacred face. Re-claiming one's

cultural, gender, and other aspects of identity moves one towards authenticity. Spirituality is about moving towards one's deepest spirit, or a more authentic identity.

Experience

Experience is the consciousness of internal processes in relationship to survival. It involves the interaction of thoughts, feelings, spirit, senses, and behavior of the whole person (Emerson, 2002). Eysenck, Arnold, and Meili (1972) asserted that experience means, "to live through, meet with, find, feel, undergo, or be aware of any situation, object, sensation, or internal event" (p. 343).

Imagination

Imagination is an intellectual concept associated with religion, philosophy, and spirituality. Sontag (2003) described imagination as having the power to inspire, to help remember the horrors of history, and to help remember poems and visions that inspire. Greene (1995) stated that imagination should be integrated with rationality and critical analysis in a higher education classroom to increase one's ability to see multiple perspectives that gives credence to alternative realities which facilitates a sense of community.

Leadership

Covey's (2004) explained his definition of leadership as "simply put—at its most elemental and practical level—leadership is communicating to people their worth and potential so clearly that they come to see it in themselves" (p. 98). Covey (2004; 1984) asserted leaders must help people experience inherent feelings of worth having intrinsic value that is utterly separate from any association to others. Leaders must provide their followers with unconditional love, regardless of behavior or performance.

Micropolitical Organizations

Hoyle (1986) defined micropolitics as strategies used by groups and individuals in an organization "to use their resources of authority and influence to further their interests" (p. 126). It is important to contemplate whose interests are to be promoted when teachers obtain influence. The purpose of acquiring influence is to serve the interests of students; however, it would be naive to think that this has always been the case. Every school district has an organizational character of its own, its own life, social environment, organizational customs, and culture. No two schools are alike. Willower (1991) reported that "much can be gained by looking at schools using a micropolitics perspective. Its concern with political processes can furnish some alternative ways of seeing, interpreting, and explaining what goes on in those organizations" (p. 442). The actors in micropolitics of schools include teachers and principals, central office staff and school board members, parents and students.

Moral Purpose

Moral purpose is defined as attempts made to act with the intent to make a positive difference (Fullan, 2000). Fairholm (2000) pointed out that spiritual leaders are people "who live by a higher moral standard of conduct in their relationships. This inner moral standard affects all we do and become at work levels as well as at social levels of existence" (p. 132).

Reflection

Reflection is the essential part of the learning process because it results in making sense of or extracting meaning from the experience (Osterman, 1990). Schon (1983) calls for scholars to do more than apply theoretical knowledge to situations, but to "engage in

more inductive forms of reflection and experimentation that enable them to address the more ill-defined and messy problems that characterize administrative practice" (p. 395). Reflection is a time of relaxation and a time to rethink one's main concerns to create a balance in their existence. Time and energy that is spent in reflection can lead to judgment, which can lead to action.

Religion

Religion is "the behavior of human beings patterned on a set of beliefs, usually institutionalized, serving as arbiter of ultimate meaning" (King, 1991). Religions are structured communities of faith, beleaguered with power relations, politics, and division that typically have a formal belief system or written creed and codes of regulatory behavior designed to nurture a sense of spirituality within their membership (Tisdell, 2005). According to Tisdell, religion is a human institution preaching a particular message about what constitutes "salvation," or a "correct" way to live. Gorsuch (1994) stated that religion "is an end unto itself, a goal pursued in the absence of external reinforcement" (p. 317).

Rural School Districts

For the purpose of this study, rural school districts are defined, as districts comprised of preschool through twelfth grade students with enrollments equal to or less than 2500 students. One in three students attending public school in the United States attend a school in a rural area or small town of fewer than 25,000 people; more than one in six attend schools in places that have rural populations of 2,500 inhabitants or less, and close to one-half of public school districts are in rural locations (Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999). Rural schools play many roles in their communities. In addition to providing a

basic education, rural schools serve as social and cultural centers, providing

entertainment through sports, theater, music, and other civic activities (Lyson, 2002).

Rural schools are a place where generations come together and where community identity

is forged (Langdon, 2000).

Self-efficacy

A self-efficacious individual is confident in their ability to carry out a prescribed

task. Efficacious people, who accurately assess their self-efficacy, are likely to put forth

sufficient effort to produce successful outcomes, while inefficacious people are likely to

cease their efforts prematurely and fail at the task before them (Bandura, 1997). Bandura

treated self-efficacy as task specific and contended that "perceived self-efficacy is

concerned not with the number of skills you have, but with what you believe you can do

with what you have under a variety of conditions" (p. 37). According to Bandura,

possessing knowledge and skills is less important than being able to integrate them into a

proper course of action necessary to execute a specific task.

McCormick (2001) insisted that self-efficacy "affects the goals a leader selects,

leader motivation, development of functional leadership strategies and the skillful

execution of those strategies" (p. 30). The positive relationship between leadership self-

efficacy and leadership effectiveness was confirmed in an empirical study carried out by

Chemers et al. (2000) in which leaders with high self-efficacy fared much better than did

their less confident counterparts.

Spirituality

Wakefield (1983) described spirituality as a trendy word that describes attitudes,

beliefs, and practices that animate or inform people's lives and help them to reach out

towards supersensible realities. Teasdale (1999) acknowledged that "spirituality draws us into the depths of our being where we come face to face with ourselves, our weaknesses, and with ultimate mystery" (p. 18). Soder (2002) stated that spirituality is critical not as a way to escape but as a way to engage ourselves intelligently, effectively and ethically. Haynes (1999) cautioned that one should keep in mind that what one individual might call a spiritual view of the world may be seen by other individuals as a religious worldview.

Spiritual Leadership

Fairholm (1998) was one of the first leadership researchers who merged spirituality with leadership suggesting that spiritual leadership is "a holistic approach that considers the full capacities, needs and interests of both leader and led; spiritual leaders see leadership as a contextual relationship in which all participants want to grow and help others in their self-development activities" (p. 111). Fairholm proposed that the "spiritual leadership process includes building community within the group and a sense of personal spiritual wholeness in both leader and led. Spiritual leaders set and live by a higher moral standard and ask others to share that standard" (p. 40). Hagberg (1994) confirmed the concept of spiritual leadership and its effects on work efficiency and contentment is, relatively speaking, a new field of research. Spiritual leadership is an emerging form of leadership that is being investigated both in schools and organizations (Day, 2000; Hesselbein *et al.*, 1996).

Superintendent

Konnert and Augenstein (1995) recognized the superintendent as "the board's chief executive officer" (p. 137). Carter (1997) described the superintendent "as public

relations expert" (p. 117). Hoyle (1993) characterized the superintendent as "dream builder" for children (p. 4). Spillane and Regnier (1998) defined the superintendent as "conductor or choreographer," "part magician, part impresario" (p. 28). Hodgkinson and Montenegro (1999) acknowledged superintendents as the leaders of school districts and that almost all of the local school superintendents in the country are hired by a local board of education. Hodgkinson and Montenegro stated that "superintendents are charged with the responsibility of ensuring an effective teaching and learning process, as well as with the oversight of the financial, legal, and personnel operations aspects of the system" (p. 7).

Workplace Spirituality

The yearning for personal realization merged with profound individual spiritual experiences has resulted in several people desiring to bring spirituality into all significant facets of their lives including work (Cacioppe, 2000). Ashmos and Duchon (200) defined workplace spirituality as "…the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of communityº (p. 137). Gibbons (2000) explained that "while workplace spirituality is considered a highly personal and philosophical construct, nearly all of the academic definitions acknowledge that spirituality involves a sense of wholeness, connectedness at work, and deeper values" (p. 427).

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

In this chapter, I included an introduction, a purpose for the research, and a statement of the problem. Using Moustakas' heuristic model, I formulated my research questions: "How do rural school superintendents' perceptions of spirituality influence

<div align="center">15</div>

their leadership activities?" Lastly, I defined essential terms and phrases utilized in this research in order to preclude misinterpretation in an effort to accurately convey meaning. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature. It includes an introduction, a review of the published material that deals with leadership, religion, spirituality, spiritual leadership, and superintendents. Chapter 3 provides a detailed explanation of the heuristic research methodology. Chapter 4 contains three vignettes, including my autobiography. Chapter 5 recapitulates the findings and conclusions based on the outcome of the research. This chapter also contains suggestions for future training programs and further areas of research, as well as implications of the research.

Chapter 2

This literature review began at the University of Oklahoma Library in 1997 where I concluded a labor-intensive exploration of books, theses, and dissertations at the university library in Norman, Oklahoma. I also conducted a hands-on inspection of metro retail bookstores and libraries. Additionally, I explored the references and bibliographies found at the end of the articles and books. My initial task was to attempt to discover the language and the apposite literature bases that would illuminate, expound, and articulate my research interest.

This quest for knowledge had temporality ceased after changing focus numerous times, but the changes were inspired by the "at-the-time life-changing" events that demanded additional understanding in order to develop and strengthen my ability to lead. True leaders living in a culture of change value and enjoy the tensions inherent in addressing hard-to-solve problems, because that is where the greatest accomplishments are (Fullan, 2001). I found myself looking forward to the singularity of my particular personal experiences and all of their complexities and uniqueness (Risner, 2002).

From the very beginning of this quest for academic enlightenment, I was interested in discovering the meaning of *reflection.* I wondered if it could provide answers to the following questions: "Who am I? Why am I here? Why has this happened to me? How did I get here?" Robert Coles (1990) wanted to know at what age do we start wondering about it all, about the nature of the journey and the final destination. After leaving my family to become an administrator in a small rural community, my interests transformed from reflection to *micropolitical organizations.*

I discovered through the literature explanations as to why I was not well equipped for the inherently political roles and hidden agendas of the informal burgeoning local interest groups (Bork, 2001) that were a part of a micropolitical organization. Because of the chaos generated by the micropolitical organization, I questioned my *leadership* abilities as my ongoing search for confidence and meaning lead me to *spirituality* as a possible means to help me cope with the constant stress of leadership.

The literature revealed the differences between religion and spirituality. Southern (1996) stated that spirituality can be expressed separately from the conventional paths of religion. Bolman and Deal (1995) declared that spirituality is a process and that spirituality is the goal and religion is one path. Within the context of the literature, I gained new knowledge about *spiritual leadership* and *spirituality in the workplace*. Upon leaving the small rural community to accept a position of superintendent with another school system, I sought accompanying literature by searching such terms and phrases as *superintendent* and *spiritual superintendents*.

In this chapter, the literature pertaining to this study is revealed. Although the literature was chronologically sought out and discovered, it is presented in the text below in a more rational and systematic manner. The literature review includes a detailed investigation into leadership theories, religion, rural schools, spirituality, spiritual leadership, superintendents, and rural superintendents.

<u>Purpose of the Study</u>

Since 1991, I have met a substantial number of administrators from urban, suburban, and rural school districts who began their careers in the classroom. Each of them embrace a vast array of experiences, hopes, and desires to do a better job than their

predecessors. After completing a master's degree program and successfully passing the administration examinations, he or she becomes eligible to apply for a position of administration. The nature of the leadership role is often dependant on the size of the district. Employment by a larger district increases the likelihood that the first few years will be spent as a subordinate allowing for supervised training by a seasoned administrator. In smaller rural school districts, assistant administrators are not likely to be found.

In most school districts, budget restrictions regulate exactly how much money can be set aside for administrative costs. There simply is no additional money for smaller schools to be able to afford the expense of hiring an additional administrator. First year superintendents are required by the Oklahoma State Department of Education to attend 11 days of professional development training. Largely, on task-specific "on-the-job training" is the most effective professional development resource. For these administrators reflective practices are effective methods to quickly identify strengths and weaknesses (Polite, 2000).

There is an emergent awareness in the personal and contemplative qualities that point toward successful leadership practices (Cashman, 1999; Fairholm, 1998; Jaworski, 1998). Contemplative qualities such as values, virtues, and spiritual beliefs are theorized to be fundamental to the success of the evolved spiritual-based leadership styles (Fairholm, 1998; Mitroff & Denton, 1999b). The essence of leadership exists within an individual's background, experience and training, character, values, and response to crises (Hall & Thompson, 1980; Yukl, 1994).

Leadership Theories

There have been thousands of investigative papers, countless research, and numerous findings on how one becomes an effective leader; however, we continue to struggle to define leadership. Burns (1978) reported that "leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth" (p. 2). Burns declared that the key to comprehending leadership lies in current findings and concepts in personality.

According to Lunenburg (1991) there are virtually as many dissimilar definitions of effective leadership as there are researchers who have studied the concept. In a review of 1,000 studies, Bennis (1985) state that while there are more than 350 definitions of effective leadership, there is still no "clear and unequivocal understanding as to what distinguishes leaders from nonleaders and perhaps more important, what distinguishes effective leaders from ineffective leaders" (p. 4). Is it management or is it inspiration (Bennis, 1989) or both (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991)? Historically, leadership exploration focused on the perspectives of traits, charismatic, moral, power, situational, transactional, transformative, and visionary leadership. This literature review will further explain each of these focuses in detail. Burns (1978) declared "the development of certain leaders or rulers is described not in order to 'solve' leadership problems or necessarily to predict what kind of leader a person might become, but to raise questions inherent in the complexity of leadership processes" (p. 27).

Educational administrators are voracious consumers of various leadership theories. However, when educators such as Bolman, Deal, Sergiovanni, and Wheatley throw in morality, ethics, and spirituality into the educational leadership pot, suddenly our appetite is not quite satisfied. Sergiovanni expounded:

I think the door is open to a kind of revolution. We're beginning to recognize that

schools are special places where people care about teaching and learning. They're

not like most organizational principles to places characterized by sandboxes,

books, and children. Schools are more like families and small communities where,

if you can develop the right substitutes, you can throw traditional leadership

away. There is no need for it ever again. (R. Brandt, 1992, p. 49)

Cain (1997) compared leadership to singing:

Leadership is not an endowed consequence of positionship, just as singing ability

is not an endowed consequence of having a voice. The "stuff" that people see in a

leader is not always quantifiable or immediately recognized, but they know when

they see it, and they know when it is missing. (p. 149)

What matters is not how much leadership experience one has, but what is done with that

experience to acquire knowledge and solve the complex problems of practice (Leithwood

& Steinbach, 1995).

Trait Theory of Leadership

It was assumed that deity and ancestry proscribed who became leaders, thus

epitomizing the belief that leaders are "born" not "made" (D. S. G. Carter, 1993). Even

today, various leaders presume they are in leadership positions because they are

somehow fulfilling their "destiny" to be a leader. Early theorists sought to isolate

identifiable characteristics and train individuals to develop such attributes to become

leaders. This became known as the trait theory of leadership.

Many theorists prior to the 1950s searched for the "magical" qualities or personal

characteristics held by great leaders. These trait studies investigated individual traits such

as intelligence, birth order, socioeconomic status, and even child-rearing practices (Bass, 1960; Bird, 1940; Stogdill, 1948, 1974). Stogdill (1948) conducted an exhausted review of 124 leadership studies between 1904 and 1947 at Ohio State University. His research studied the validity of leadership traits and suggested that leaders possess certain traits and skills not seen in nonleaders. Stogdill discovered five traits associated with leadership:

1. Capacity—intelligence, alertness, verbal facility, originality, and judgment.

2. Achievement—scholarship, knowledge, and athletic accomplishments.

3. Responsibility—dependability, initiative, persistence, aggressiveness, self-confidence, and desire to excel.

4. Participation—activity, sociability, cooperation, adaptability, and humor.

5. Status—socioeconomic position, and popularity. (p. 64)

While some traits appeared meaningfully relevant for different leaders, Stogdill concluded that this mammoth effort was ineffectual in its endeavor to discover any specific trait that would pronounce leadership success. These traits continued to be recognized in later leadership studies.

In 1974, Stogdill evaluated another 163 studies on the characteristics of leadership. He reported the following:

The leader is characterized by a strong drive for responsibility and task completion, vigor, and persistence in pursuit of goals, venturesomeness and originality in problem solving, drive to exercise initiative in social situations, self-confidence and sense of personal identity, willingness to accept consequences of decision and action, readiness to absorb interpersonal stress, willingness to

tolerate frustration and delay, ability to influence other person's behavior, and

capacity to structure social interaction systems to the purpose at hand. (p. 81)

Konnert and Augenstein (1990) stated that although "possession of certain traits [does]

not guarantee that one would be a leader…it would be very difficult to be a leader if one

did not possess these traits" (p. 42).

The premise that some leader traits are absolutely necessary for effective

leadership has not been substantiated in several decades of trait research (Yukl, 1994).

Yukl further concluded that there is a call for further research that takes a holistic view,

investigating patterns of leader traits and skills as an alternative to focusing on solitary

leadership traits. Other researchers came to appreciate that possessing particular traits did

not automatically produce a leader, and other assessments were then explored (E. W.

Chance, 1992; Immegart, 1992; Owens, 1995).

Conversely, James Kouzes and Barry Posner, leadership specialists and authors of

The Leadership Challenge, surveyed thousands people around the world and performed

several case studies which revealed that honesty was the most frequently cited trait of a

good leader (Woolfe, 2002). Woolfe stated that "it doesn't matter how noble or

worthwhile your cause; if you haven't earned people's trust by constantly keeping your

word and being true to your values, people won't follow you too far" (pp. 1-2). Woolfe

asserted that these individuals "tend to exercise increase integrity and honesty when the

group culture supports these behaviors. It takes strong individuals to maintain these traits,

particularly when they are in a position of power, with no checks, balances, or rules" (p.

17).

Woolfe (2002) indicated that possessing both traits of honesty and integrity could transversely cut across seemingly impregnable religious borders of corporate giants. Curves for Women, an international franchisor of health clubs for women, is a company based largely on New Testament principles, has attracted Chasidic Jews as franchisees because they appreciate the company's value system and founder Gary Heavin's integrity stating, "we wouldn't trust someone without a value system" (p. 20). Bill O'Brien, Hanover Insurance President, stated that his company believes there is no fundamental tradeoff between the higher virtues of life (honesty and integrity) and economic success. "We believe we can have both. In fact, we believe that, over the long term, the more we practice (honesty and integrity) the higher virtues of life, the more economic success will have" (Woolfe, 2002, p. 22). Woolfe captured the essence of honesty and integrity in nine straightforward statements:

1. People won't follow leaders they think are dishonest.

2. You can't expect honest followers if you model dishonesty.

3. The higher you go, the more visible your integrity or lack of it becomes.

4. 'Insignificant' dishonest acts usually beget larger acts of dishonesty.

5. In times of crises, adversity, and temptation, a leader's integrity becomes most evident.

6. Integrity is exhibited in actions, not pronouncements of intention.

7. Honesty and integrity pay off long-term, though they may involve losses and sacrifices short-term.

8. An organization with an ethical code and system of safeguards can create more consistently honest leaders.

9. Act as is someone else with more power than you is watching. (p. 23)

Charismatic Leadership

Yoder (1997) defined charismatic leadership as the power and influence the leader holds over followers through exemplary dedication, high expectations, and a commitment to engender a high degree of loyalty, devotion, and trust. When a leader integrates values with his or her leadership practices he or she may then be described as a charismatic leader (Kouzes & Posner, 1993). Morgan (1997) stated that "charismatic authority arises when people respect the special qualities of an individual (charisma means "gift of grace") and see those qualities as defining the right of the individual to act on their behalf" (p. 172). Charismatic leaders, much like democratic leaders, allow situations to evolve from the views of others. Morgan continued by asserting "in managing the meanings and interpretations assigned to a situation, the leader in effect wields a form of symbolic power that exerts a decisive influence on how people perceive their realities and hence the way they act" (p. 189).

Lencioni (1999) defined charisma as the understanding that the leader's actions are more influential than those of the people he or she leads. According to Sergiovanni:

Leaders thought to be charismatic have the ability to touch people in meaningful ways. As a result, these people respond to their leaders and to the ideas and values that they stand for with unusual commitment and effort. The typical result is performance that is beyond expectations. (2001, p. 137)

Conger (1988) describes four stages of charismatic leadership:

1. Sense leadership opportunities and formulate a vision.

2. Communicate a clear vision that is better than the current situation.

3. Build trust by being sincere and committed.

4. Demonstrate the means to achieve the vision.

Conger (1989) indicated that if employees do not think their leader's visionary goals equal their own, they are less likely to identify him or her as a charismatic leader. Charismatic leaders set examples by their own actions and engage in acts to enhance their follower's enthusiasm (Clark & Clark, 1994). Spiritual leaders are described as charismatic, impartial, emotionally wise, ingenious, passionate, attentive, truthful, modest, brave and charitable (Blanchard & Peale, 1988; Fairholm, 1998).

<u>Moral Purpose</u>

Woolfe (2002) asserted that everyone needs a purpose. "Work without purpose (even it takes great skill) can become mindless, heartless drudgery" and added "purpose, even to so-called grunt work, and our work lives take on an expanded, even inspired dimension" (p. 24). John Kennedy announced to the nation that he wanted the United States to be the first country to place a man on the moon, not because it was easy, but because it was hard. He united a nation by creating a competitive purpose to exceed the accomplishments of the Soviet Union, who, at the time was far more advanced towards accomplishing manned space launches.

Contemporary individuals such as Steve Jobs of Apple convinced John Sculley to leave the soft-drink giant, Pepsi, to come to join his tiny company that had few resources with no guarantee of job security (Woolfe, 2002). What Jobs offered Sculley was a purpose, a chance "to radically change the way the world communicates, learns, and exchanges information" (p. 25).

Fullan (2001) believed "moral purpose is about both ends and means. In education, an important end is to make a difference in the lives of students. But the means of getting to that end are also crucial" (p. 13). Numerous individuals cross the threshold of life answering the educational calling because they desire to make a contribution; they possess a yearning to beget a positive transformation in the lives of individuals with whom they toil including, students, teachers, administrators, and the community (Fullan, 1994, 2001).

Generating a positive transformation calls for educators to lead with an awareness of bearing and educate with a sense of purpose. Fullan (2001) asserted that schools should strive to transform, "the way we do things around here" (p. 44) by establishing a culture, not just an organization, of change. This method of "reculturing" is "one that activates and deepens moral purpose through collaborative work cultures that respect differences and constantly build and test knowledge against measurable results - a culture within which one realizes that sometimes being off-balance is a learning moment" (p.44). "When a leader is dedicated to a purpose, and when all the 'troops' see that dedication is unwavering and 'for real,' great things happen" (Woolfe, 2002, p. 27).

In order to have a moral purpose educators must not assume students have learned, they must seek out verification of student performance that reveals understanding (Pellicer & Anderson, 1995). Fullan (1993) supposed that educators "should be pursuing moral purpose with greater and greater skill, conceptualizing their roles on a higher plane than they currently do" (p. 13). Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) contended that purposing elements of moral leadership in schools include vision, initiative, (proactive action) and resourcefulness (time-management). Proactive action

involves "knowing the right thing to do" (Blumberg, 1980, p. 139) and doing it

intuitively or by, as Schon (1987) asserted, "reflecting-in-action." Woolfe (2002) stated

"when the right leader shows commitment to purpose in the right way people (in this

case, members of a school community) respond empathically" (p. 38). In order to be an

effective leader, Fullan contended, you must conduct yourself in a morally purposeful

manner (Fullan, 2001).

Theorists also indicated that moral purposes of superintendents are to promote

democratic values, equity and social justice in school improvement (Slater, 1994; M. D.

Thomas, 1982). Thomas explained, "More than anything else, the (moral) purpose of

educational leadership is to promote equity, justice, equal opportunity and appropriate

educational opportunity for every individual" (p. 72). Fullan (1993) avowed "managing

moral purpose…is at the heart of productive educational change (p. 8). Most scholars

agree that the morals, values and beliefs of the superintendent as a leader dictate his or

her actions (Kasten & Ashbaugh, 1991).

Fullan believed that "moral purpose cannot just be stated, it must be accompanied

by strategies for realizing it, and those strategies are the leadership actions that energize

people to pursue a desired goal" (2001, p. 19). Yoder (1997) offered examples in which

the terms *moral* and *ethical* are used interchangeably and are defined as a "paradigm in

which the leader is clearly influenced by the needs of followers in making decisions and

followership replaces blind subordination" (p. 26).

Sergiovanni (1992) referred to moral and ethical leadership as designed to respect

the abilities of administration and staff to do what they think is right or good for their

schools. "Your philosophy of education is based on your philosophy of life. What you

believe about yourself, about others, and about life infuses and determines your philosophy of education" (Morrison, 2001). Educators characteristically reveal their beliefs through their behaviors (Witcher *et al.*, 2001) striving to improve how they live and work. According to Fullan (2001), this is a "moral purpose of the highest order" (p. 14).

Woolfe (2002) referred to another aspect of purpose, which she called a "no-exit strategy." Woolfe believed that "when you truly believe in a purpose, you don't look for a back door (or a side door) to make your escape when the going gets rough" (p. 33). Woolfe warned that very "few great purposes are accomplished without obstacles or oppositions" (p. 39). Choosing challenging purposes and bonding to them in complex times takes great courage and tenacity, particularly in a passionate career such as education (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998).

Reinoso (2002) suggested that it is important to have a morally guided mission to use as a tangle guide for students and teachers as they make educational decisions in an out of the classroom. "Moral purpose is social responsibility to others and the environment" (Fullan, 2002, p. 16). "Energetic-enthusiastic-hopeful leaders 'cause' greater moral purpose in themselves, bury themselves in change, naturally build relationships and knowledge, and seek coherence to consolidate moral purpose" (Fullan, 2001, p. 7). Newman (1994) stated:

> It comes down to a faith in our own values. And by values, I mean moral values, values that govern those actions…that really matter…values that make us think. To help others learn we must feel reasonably secure that we are on the right track." (p. 185)

Power

Power in organizations is for the purpose of influence and protection (Blase &

Anderson, 1995). Lukes (1974) argued that power is exercised in ways that are far more

amorphous and difficult to observe. "Power in organizations is basically the capacity to

get things to happen" (L. G. Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 165). Bolman and Deal stated:

In analyzing power, structural theorists emphasize authority: the legitimate

prerogative to make decisions binding on others. Managers make rational

decisions (optimal and consistent with purpose), monitor actions to assure that

decisions are implemented, and evaluate how well subordinates carry out

directives. (p. 167)

Power, according to Corbett (1991) was associated with varying the behavior of

others and can be both confining causing others to give up actions that they might prefer

to engage in. Power can be liberating by enabling others to take actions they have not

been accustomed to taking. Colbert stated that power only exists where there are

occasions to exercise authority over others. Thus an individual manager or leader cannot

be termed "powerful" unless some reference to other individuals can be inferred (p. 74).

Pfeffer (1992) contended that power is "the potential ability to influence behavior, to

change the course of events, to overcome resistance, and to get people to do things they

would not otherwise do" (p. 30).

Power is generally categorized into three categories: position, personal, and

political (Yukl, 1994). Position power is influence obtained because of a manager's

position in an organization. Yukl identified authority, control over resources and rewards,

control over punishments, control over information, and ecological control as

components that influence the amount of power attached to a managerial position.

Personal power consists of the achievable influence resulting from the personal

uniqueness of the person who occupies a leadership position. In addition, Yukl identified

three aspects of person power as expertise, friendship and loyalty, and charisma. Political

power in connection to others is expressed in terms of 'power over", "power through",

and "power with" (Blase & Anderson, 1995). Blase and Anderson (1995) clarified:

> Authoritarian forms of leadership tend to be based on 'power-over' assumptions,
> which associate power with domination and control; one enhances power at the
> expense of others. This vertical or hierarchical approach views power as a scarce
> resource. Competition for power pits people against each other in zero-sum power
> contests. These assumptions about how power operates in schools are rampant
> among teachers and especially educational administrators. (p. 13)

"Power-over" administrators rarely share power as they are fundamentally

authoritarian, offensive, and antagonistic in accomplishing their goals (Blase &

Anderson, 1995). In this type of school organization McNeil (1986) declared "schooling

is a ritual rather than an education" (p. 215). Weick (1976) reported that schools with

'power-over' administrators have become organizations where administrators and

teachers work independently of one another. This type of leadership tends to intensify

teachers' use of defensive strategies. Ball (1987) acknowledged when there are

competing interests and ideologies within schools there also will be confrontational

language with an emphasis on persuasion and commitment. "When power is concentrated

at the top of a highly regulated system, political activity is often forced underground" (L.

G. Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 171).

In "power-through," goals are accomplished by motivating individuals and groups of an organization who possess an awareness of ownership in the organization. Over the past two decades research has been conducted to determine to what extent which members of the organization are involved in the formulation of these goals (Crandall *et al.*, 1986). In "power-through" there is a sense that there are increased opportunities for follower participation and a more humane and professional school organization (Blase & Anderson, 1995). Dunlap (1991) described the concept of power as a facilitator of work where power is through others rather than established over them. This facilitative power is embedded in the kind of interaction, negotiation, and mutuality reminiscent of professional organizations (Dunlap & Goldman, 1991) as it creates a less alienated workforce and is seen as an improvement over the "power-over" model.

Teacher participation is still viewed as a privilege in this model because most of the issues are still negotiated (Blase & Anderson, 1995). Within the "power-through" model there exists a certain amount of uncertainty and managerial bias which tends to become artificial within such organizations (Hargreaves, 1991). According to Ferguson (1984) power-through "engages individuals in an active, self-creative process involving both cooperation with and opposition to others" (p. 99). The power-through model reveals a democratic and empowering shift from management to empowerment (Blase & Anderson, 1995).

The "power-with" model characterizes a disagreement towards conventional, hierarchical attitudes to leadership that persuades administrators not to expand personal relationships with subordinates. This model empowers subordinates by allowing democratic decision-making participation instead of a privileges doled out at the

preference of administrators (Blase & Anderson, 1995). Morgan (1997) contended that within democratic organizations the vigor to rule lies with the *demos,* or populace. "This power may be exercised through representative forms of management, where different stakeholders are formally represented in decision-making processes" (Morgan, 1997, p. 157). When followers become a part of the decision-making process, they give up their right to oppose any decisions that are made.

Situational

Situational leadership is founded on the possibility that there is no one singular successful leadership practice, but that leaders need to have a diversity of styles that can be personalized to the distinguishing arrangement of variables present in each situation. Hersey (1977) investigated the theory of situational leadership and determined there is no one best way to lead. The theory proposes that the preeminent leadership style is the one that matches the maturity of the followers.

Hersey (1996) stated situational leadership theory is based on two leadership behaviors: task and relationship. Within this leadership model are four leadership styles, which combine task and relationship behavior: telling, selling, participating, and delegating. In assigning each task, the leader must choose among the four styles adjusting to maturation. "Telling" is characterized by one-way communication in which the leader delineates the function of followers and instructs them what, how, when, and where to do various tasks. Individuals inside the group can be characterized as unable and unwilling or insecure. "Selling" is characterized by the leader's attempts to get followers to "buy into" decisions that have to be made. Here, group members can be characterized as unable and confident. "Participating" is characterized by the way leaders and followers

share in decision-making through two-way communication and facilitating behavior from the leader, since the followers have the ability and knowledge to do the task. These group members are often insecure. Finally, "delegating" allows the follower to "run their own show." The leader delegates to followers because they have the ability and are willing and able to take responsibility for managing their own behavior. Group members are confident, able, and willing.

<u>Transactional Leadership</u>

Burns (1978) distinguished transactional leadership as an association connecting leaders and followers centered on an exchange of appreciated things, which could be economic, political, or psychological in nature. In transactional leadership, the leaders and followers approach each other with the anticipation that dialogue will occur. These transactions are governed by instrumental values such as fairness, honesty, loyalty, and integrity. Numerous rewards from the organization are exchanged for services to individuals who are seen to be acting out of possible self-interest.

Transactional practices help individuals recognize what needs to be done in order to reach a desired outcome, increase confidence and enhance motivation (Leithwood *et al.*, 1993). Bass (1989) claimed that transactional leadership is necessary for organizational maintenance but does not stimulate change. Transactional focuses on basic extrinsic motives and needs while transformative leadership focuses on higher-order, intrinsic motives and needs (Sergiovanni, 1990). The structures of transactional leadership serve as the foundation for transformational leadership with more fulfillment, dedication, effort, and input to the organization as whole rather than the individual.

<u>Transformative</u>

The transformational leader "looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs and engages the full person of the followers" (Burns, 1978, p. 4). The idea of transformational leadership was first developed by Burns in 1978 and later extended by Bass and others as the act of leadership itself which transforms followers to higher levels of motivation and morality (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders meet the basic needs of their followers, in terms of Maslow's Hierarchy, which creates a sense of trust, loyalty, and respect. This translates into commitment to the organization and striving to achieve the goals of that organization.

In the book, *Choosing to Lead* by Clark and Clark, transformational leadership is referred to as charismatic leadership. Charismatic leaders set examples by their own performance and engage in actions to intensify their follower's enthusiasm. Transformational leaders create greater participation in work and promise further self-fulfillment for participants by expanding the intellectual and emotional participation of followers (Clark & Clark, 1994).

Hunt (1991) traced the origins of transformational leadership to the early works of Max Weber with his idea of charisma. Transformational leadership occurs when individuals unite with each other so that both leader and follower encourage one another to elevated levels of inspiration and morality. Transformational leadership produces mutual, collegial learning environments. Burns (1978) stated power bases are coupled for reciprocal support and common purposes. Transforming leaders are concerned with end values, such as liberty, justice, or equity. According to Bass (1990) the transformational leader invents, introduces, and advances new cultural forms.

Transformational leaders create greater involvement in work and assure more self-fulfillment for participants by increasing the intellectual and emotional involvement of followers (Clark & Clark, 1994). Carter (1993) stated transformational leaders are individuals who demonstrate leadership skills beyond those of managing the system in order to move the system toward completing its consequent phase of evolution. Konnert and Augenstein (1990) argued that:

> Transformational leadership is the superintendency. Transformational leadership means having a vision of what the school system can be and motivating all associated with the system to have pride in the system and to achieve more than the followers would have thought possible for the system. (p. 74)

Evans (2000) connected the morals of trust and loyalty with a leader's facility to formulate change:

> Trust is the essential link between leader and led. It is vital to people's job satisfactions…and loyalty is vital to followership. Trust is doubly important to organizations like schools that offer few extrinsic motivators (money, status, power), and it is as fragile as it is precious; once damaged, it is nearly impossible to repair. (p. 287)

<u>Visionary</u>

One of the most substantial responsibilities of today's prevailing leaders is to provide the organization with a shared vision that conveys the interests, values, and aspirations of the total organization and a plan for realizing that vision (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Bennis, 1993; Senge, 1994). Many of the characteristics of visionary leadership are similar to those of transformational leadership. This similarity

begets certain researchers to use the term visionary or transformational interchangeably. Transformational or visionary leadership theories foresee that such leaders educe significant and determined efforts by enabling and empowering followers.

Visionary leadership is the simultaneous merging of the leader, the circumstances, and the leader's behavior. Such leaders enjoy fundamental personality traits and wisdom required to engage in the pursuit of constructing a vision. Leadership begins with vision, an image of the desired future. Vision tells us where we are going, or where we want to go (Nanus, 1992). Vision is the key to effective leadership. Kotter (1988) stated that vision takes into account the legitimate interests of all the people involved. Vision is a force in people's hearts, a force of impressive power (Senge, 1990) but it must be widely accepted within an organization (Nanus, 1992). There is no more prevailing engine driving an organization toward distinction and long-range success than an appealing and attainable vision of the future that is broadly shared (Nanus, 1992).

Wheatley (1992) described vision as "the need for organizational clarity about purpose and direction" (p. 53). Senge (1990) believed "organizations do not have visions, people do. When the people within an organization build a shared vision, the vision transcends the organizational boundaries especially when we start to think of building community rather than improving organizationally" (p. 211). Superintendents must develop a vision that embraces the goals and objectives of their school system (Konnert & Augenstein, 1990). Visionary superintendents convert their vision into one that everyone in a school system shares and works towards collaboratively. Instigating and supporting a feeling of ownership and commitment can consummate this. Ownership

evokes a poignant reaction, which sways individuals to placing a greater value on attaining the vision.

Religion

Although religion is an acknowledged aspect of many American lives, researchers have had difficulty conceptualizing and operationalizing religion and what constitutes being religious (Levin *et al.*, 1995). For many individuals, religious institutions serve the purpose of providing members with a sense of community and family, particularly for members who moved away from their families (Pargament, 1990). The largest religious bodies based in the United States that have the largest worldwide memberships are the Assemblies of God, Southern Baptist Convention, United Methodist Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Seventh-day Adventists (Adherents, 1999). Scherer (1998) stated:

> Although we often talk about diversity of religions in terms of Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism, those categories are not nearly inclusive enough for children in our public schools today. Islam, Hinduism, and Taoism—some of the oldest religions in the world—are rapidly becoming parts of the American religious perspective as are lesser known spiritual practices. Integrating religion with politics is as old as our nation, continuing to be one of the most distinguishing aspects of American democracy (Willimon, 2005).

Willimon further stated:

> Religion is a continuing aspect of American political life. True, there was a time when (presidential candidate) Jimmy Carter had to say that, even though he was a 'born again' Baptist, if he were President, that wouldn't make a lot of

difference….remember the historic occasion when John Kennedy had to meet before the preachers in Dallas and tell them that, even though he was Catholic, he would pay more attention to Congress than to the Pope.

If we are going to do politics, the American way, we have got to let people of faith have their say, all the people, including us religious people. Editorials in the New York Times fulminate against narrow-minded religious bigots and fanatics. But in my experience, when you call someone a bigot and a fanatic, what you often mean is simply that their politics are different than yours.

Politics is a risky business for religious people, particularly Christian people….It is the vary nature of the Christian faith to be rather messy, to include a variety of voices and perspectives….no one voice can lay claim to being the one authoritative, uncontested Christian voice….when we religious folk play the political game, we must play through the political rules. Politics follows a different set of rules, rules that apply in a non-religious, secular, constitutional democracy. I don't really believe there is much biblical support for democracy, though; democracy has been a good system of government for us Christians. In the Bible, it's all hierarchy, God's authority that overrules everybody else, and there is no place for majority vote—truth determined by who can get the most votes. Our truth comes from God, or so we believe.

It is not fair for Christians to get into politics and then try to exclude other voices. Politics is the art of compromise, but most religious faiths consider compromise a bad thing. I am troubled when Christians attempt to force through legislation the standards we can't even achieve in our own churches. (pp. 12-14)

The term "secular" has come to represent a domain that is unbiased or, more specifically, "religion-free," a perception that the secular is a domain of facts dissimilar to the domain of spirituality (Benson, 1999). Benson (1999) believed that when religious believers realize that "virtues" are present "outside" religion, and non-religious believers realize that they too operate out of a progression of "faith assumptions," then conceivably one would be closer to a union that is long past due in today's society, a union that acknowledges that all human beings operate on some foundation of faith. Generally, both spiritual and secular school leaders share the same desire to help teachers and students overcome their problems, find meaning in life, and become healthy well-adjusted individuals, both mentally and emotionally. Benson (1999) stated that the often anti-religious attitude personified in secularism prohibits and eliminates religion from any practical place in culture because the ability to respect and incorporate religion and spirituality in the public sphere is uneven.

Constitutional Rights

In the book, *The Rights of Religious Persons in Public Education,* author John Whitehead (1994) stated that "when discussing the rights of religious persons, it must not be forgotten that the rights of students, faculty members, administrators, and non-students are at stake. A clear sequence of Supreme Court cases has upheld the rights of such persons" (p. 36). Whitehead declared that the Supreme Court has held that teaching about religion in public schools is entirely permissible. Declaring that "we are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being," (p. 36) the Court has held that the state may, through public schools, accommodate religion whenever it is constitutionally permissible.

Whitehead (1994) recognized that the possibility of hostility toward religion within an increasing secularistic society exists. Justice Clark, in *Schempp,* declared that "the State may not establish a 'religion of secularism' in the sense of affirmatively opposing or showing hostility to religion, thus preferring those who believe in no religion over those who do believe" (p. 63). "This prohibition was strengthened in *Torcaso v. Watkins,* where the Supreme Court held that the First Amendment grants the same protection to and imposes the same limitations on secular or humanistic religions as it does theistic religion" (p. 64).

Whitehead (1994) affirmed that teachers could converse about religious issues with their students on an individual basis. In *Roman v. Appleby,* a federal district court found that a public school guidance counselor had a First Amendment right to chat about religion as well as other delicate topics with a student. According to Whitehead, since teachers have the same First Amendment rights as counselors, they have the same rights in regard to students.

Roman held that the only restrictions on the discussions are that the student initiates the topic and that the student not be compelled or forced to discuss the subject or to accept the teacher's views. This is to eliminate the possibility of a teacher using his or her position to coerce an otherwise unwilling student into a conversation on religion.

The ability of the school district to restrict a teacher's right to freedom of expression also varies with the circumstances under which the expression is made. In *Texas State Teachers Association v. Garland Independent School District,* a federal court of appeals, making a distinction between classroom instruction time

and "contract time," concluded that teachers have more leeway to discuss religion with other teachers during "contract time." (Contract time is the time when a teacher is required to be on the school premises but is not involved in classroom instruction.) This, coupled with the fact that a teacher has a "captive" student audience during classroom time, leads to the conclusion that teachers will also have more freedom to discuss religion with students during "contract" time. (p. 118)

Whitehead (1994) affirmed that the public school system provides a confined audience of vulnerable young minds to which the state and local authorities can deliver potentially objectionable educational messages. The involvement of the public school system in communicating values inevitably leads to conflict with those parents and children who disagree with the selected values. However, the Supreme Court has stated:

Local school board must be permitted to 'establish and apply their curriculum in such a way as to transmit community values,' and 'there is a legitimate and substantial community interest in promoting respect for authority and traditional values be they social, moral, or political. (p. 176)

Whitehead (1994) stated that the leading judicial pronouncement on how public schools may observe religious holidays is *Florey v. Sioux Falls School District 49-5.* In *Florey,* a federal appellate court declared a local school board's policy, permitted holidays observances of either a secular and religious basis, provided that the celebrations are conducted in a prudent and objective manner. "The Supreme Court itself has recognized that the mere fact that a practice has a purely religious origin or that it

coincides with the beliefs of a religion does not necessarily render the activity

unconstitutional" (p. 218). Whitehead continued:

> A school district's written guidelines governing such observances should state
>
> expressly their secular purposes in order to avoid subsequent claims that the
>
> policy was adopted with the impermissible intent to advance religion. The use of
>
> religious symbols such as a cross, nativity scene, menorah, or other symbol is
>
> permitted, provided the symbols are used as instructional tools or resources,
>
> displayed on a temporary basis, and, exhibited as examples of the cultural and
>
> religious heritage attendant to the religious holiday. (p. 223)

Religion vs. Spirituality

It is vital to differentiate religion from spirituality, as some of the opposition to

the spiritual perspective is the fallacy that it is related to religion and that holds negative

implications for some practioners. Hawley (1993) defined the differences between

religion and spirituality: religion is a product of a certain time and place involving a

group of people; when seeking to obtain a goal, religious people follow a prescribed code

of conduct to obtain the goal; religion is a system of thought, a set of beliefs, rituals,

ceremonies that encourage progression; religion involves institutions and organizations;

and religion is a way of life. In contrast, according to Hawley, spirituality is: obtaining a

goal is more important than the path to the goal; spirituality is personal but contains

elements that are common to all religions such as love and beliefs; spirituality is an

adventure moving towards one's source; is a state beyond the senses; an inquiry into

one's true self; and a transition from uncertainty to clarity.

Religion refers to the explicit and distinct expression of spirituality where the experience of spirituality is turned into a concept and spirituality refers to the distinctively personal and subjective experience (Anderson & Worthen, 1997; Benjamin & Looby, 1998). Spirituality, though expressed in religion, surpasses dogma, ceremonies, doctrine, and institutions (Sermabekian, 1994). Religion is a structured set of beliefs and customs with formalized teachings. Religion is portrayed as a social collective which exists in all human cultures from an anthropological perspective (Linnenberg, 1997). According to Linnenberg, spirituality is an internal activity where the individual fabricates his or her own relationship with a "higher power," whereas religion is an external activity becoming a political force holding spiritual forces captive as a means of influencing people. The key difference between religion and spirituality is that religion is more concerned with outward appearance. While spirituality is about harnessing unseen forces, for various purposes, often to improve one's self.

Rural Schools

Jacob-Timm (1995) stated that there is no widely accepted definition of the term "rural." Reschly (1990) concurred that when discussing education, definitions of "rural school" are can differ across the country and are associated with the demographic characteristics of populations, geographic locality of the communities, the scale of population sparsity, and the organization of services and school district programs. However, for the purpose of this study, I will use Stephens and Turner's (1988) description of rural schools as having an enrollment of fewer than 2,500 students living in a community that is at least 25 miles from a city with a population of at least 50,000 residents. For many rural communities, the school is not only the social hub, but also

contributes to the sense of survival of adults in the culture. Rural schools tend to be numerous and small, both by necessity and by community preference (Beeson & Strange, 2000). They tend to be close to the communities they serve.

According to Jacob-Timm (1995), rural schools have a high level of teacher participation in decision-making, sense of pride in ownership of the school community, less bureaucracy, small teacher-pupil ratios, high levels of personal attention to students, use of innovative problem-solving practices, and supportive strategies, such as peer tutoring. Parental involvement, social and character education, a safe school climate, and good standardized test scores are evident in most small rural school districts. Sher (1991) stated that rural schools are characterized by site-based management, close relationships between students and teachers, multi-grade classrooms, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, interdisciplinary studies, older students teaching younger students, and intimate links between the community and the school.

Rural schools have special problems that are unique and not shared by their larger urban and suburban counterparts. Among these special problems:

- Recruitment and retention of rural teachers and administrators.
- Long bus rides.
- Teachers in areas they are not certified.
- High per-pupil costs.

Rural school districts suffer due to a lack of amenities, professional and social isolation. There is lack of available rental properties and housing that causes many of the teachers to drive from areas that are farther away. Rural schools have such barriers as dated and overcrowded buildings and constant financial challenges that continue to

plague the future of rural schools. Because of their physical isolation, rural schools are not exposed to the richness of multiple cultures that are a part of everyday life of their nonrural counterparts.

Because of the lack of financial support, fewer resources on site, and little, if any exposure to diversity of culture, rural schools provide their students with a less rich educational experience than other larger schools. Rural youth are less likely to take college preparatory classes and to attend college than their urban students (Stern, 1994). Those students who do aspire to higher education tend to be the ones who migrate out of the rural community (Herzog & Pittman, 1995).

Rural communities have the potential of applying overbearing pressure on the superintendent and the board. Competition for available grant money is often skewed in favor of large school districts. It is difficult to obtain support services to assist with problems associated with the increasing levels of child poverty. Richard (1990) declared that rural school districts are pinched by tight budgets and declining enrollments. Rural superintendents grapple with this issues everyday.

To complicate matters further, state legislators believe that consolidation of rural schools will free up more money for instruction, however, many rural communities refuse to embrace consolidation because the local residents are convinced that they can educate their children better themselves. There is a widely held misconception that small school districts are ineffective and inefficient and should be consolidated. For some, a declining population and the closing of rural schools are signs of the times. Manzo (1999) explained that if the school closes, the community will die because the community will not be able to attract new families.

<center>Spirituality</center>

Lerner (2000) described spirituality as "a lived experience, a set of practices and a consciousness" (p. 5). A truly spiritual individual reacts to the internal call, a "voice," and endeavors to integrate it in one's actions and decision making routine. Vaughn (1991) suggested that spirituality is not limited to any given doctrine or practice. Vaughn described qualities of spirituality:

> Spirituality may be theistic as in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, non-theistic as in Buddhism, or polytheistic as in Hinduism. It can also be humanistic, as expressed by Abraham Maslow in his research on peak experiences and transcendence. Spirituality can be found in the heart of the great religions and in no religion. (p. 116)

Wringe (2002) believed spirituality is more than "…a matter of learning about a range of religions or even learning about that religion which one thinks of as 'one's own' religion, as when one says 'I am Catholic, Jew, Moslem, Hindu' or whatever" (p. 161).

In the broadest sense, spirituality is an aspect of any attempt to approach or attend to the invisible factors in life and to transcend the personal, concrete, finite particulars of this world" (p. 232). Religious and "spiritual beliefs" are hypothesized to be compatible with proactive management principles. Spirituality incorporates the individual's specific values juxtaposed to one's conduct that delineates the individual as being in the world. Spirituality gives individuals the courage to look within and trust (Krippen & Welch, 1992). Kurtz and Ketcham (1992) stated:

> Spirituality is above all, a way of life. We don't just think about it or feel it or sense it around us—we live it. Spirituality permeates to the very core of our

<center>47</center>

human being, affecting the way we perceive the world around us, the way we feel

about the world, and the choices we make based on our perceptions and

sensations. In the experience of spirituality, three essential elements are always at

play: what we see; how we feel; and why we choose. (p. 68)

Hawley (1993) similarly stated his paralleling perspective as "the scope of spirituality

must be enlarged. Spirituality must include all of life, not only that which we generally

think of as religious. It must include our homes and our jobs" (p. 2).

Teasdale (1999) maintained that "life is a spiritual journey, and that each one of

us must take the journey alone" (p. 18). Assagioli (1965) concurred that "man's spiritual

development is a long and arduous journey, an adventure through strange lands full of

surprises, difficulties and even dangers" (p. 39). Many people are increasingly embarking

upon a spiritual journey, seeking to discover their true selves, searching for a higher

purpose and meaning to their lives (J. A. Conger, 1994).

Several authors e.g., (S. Covey, 1989; Mitroff *et al.*, 1994; Peck, 1993; Roof,

1993) referred to the spiritual journey as a process of focusing within, in order to gain an

awareness of Self. The journey toward spirituality represents the quest to unite one's

inner and outer world, to provide meaning and purpose to one's life. The search, and

consequent realization, provides an individual with sense of alignment and order—a

spiritual cohesiveness, which instills a sense of rightness and well-being.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) described the experience as a feeling of being in the flow.

Spirituality comprises a number of various dimensions. Dale (1991) defined

spirituality as "that human striving for the transforming power present in life; it is that

attraction and movement of the human person toward the divine" (p.5). A mutual premise

is that spirituality is present when individuals freely express their desires to find values and standards within their lives while living out a set of deeply held personal values (Block, 1993). Spirituality involves the concept of focusing one's energy on daily life activities toward their optimum, the best they can be (Helminiak, 1996).

It could be argued that spirituality has already been a part of the human race for thousands of years. According to historical philosophers, spirituality had once been believed to be the source of the most advanced wisdom, predominantly in religious gatherings. The role of spirituality is purposely separated from public schools sites. Glickman (1998) was concerned with the lack of acknowledgement of "a common core of virtue for American education, rooted in religious, spiritual, and private conscience" (p. 98). Typically, spirituality is a subject that is persistently shirked in nearly all-educational settings excluding conversations that discuss the implications of the first amendment of the US constitution for religion in the public school classroom, however, Glickman (1998) believed:

> Individuals do not leave their personal convictions and religious beliefs behind when they enter a schoolhouse, school board office, or state policymaking committee meeting. To say that people's religious and spiritual values should not influence their conception of a good society and good education is to leave men and women with a limited basis for reasoning with one another. (p. 95-96)

Spiritual Prayer

Prayer life is essential; nothing significant will happen apart from God (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001). When Nancy Reagan was diagnosed with a malignant tumor and had to go through a mastectomy, her husband, President Ronald Reagan exclaimed:

For all the powers of the president of the United States, there were some

situations that made me fell helpless and very humble. All I could do was pray—

and I did a lot of praying for Nancy during the next few weeks. (Blackaby &

Blackaby, 2001, p. 150)

Poloma and Pendleton (1991) revealed that individuals who pray have an

amplified sense of well-being and life satisfaction. Meadow and Kahoe (1984) asserted

that prayer can be offered in spoken or unspoken form. Prayer characterizes one of the

center elements of spirituality. Prayer consists of feelings, mind-set, and procedures

intended to convey or experience connection to the sacred (Miller, 1999). Dossey (1993)

defined the word prayer as follows:

…comes from the Latin precarious, "obtained by begging," and precari, "to

entreat"-to ask earnestly, beseech, implore. This suggests two of the commonest

forms of prayer-petition, asking for something for one's self, and intercession,

asking something for others. There also are prayers of confession, the repentance

of wrongdoing and the asking of forgiveness; lamentation, crying in distress and

asking for vindication; adoration, giving honor and praise; invocation,

summoning the presence of the Almighty; and thanksgiving, offering gratitude.

(p. 7)

A 1993 Gallup survey (Gallup Organization, 1993) showed that 90% of

Americans pray at least occasionally. A later poll on Americans and prayer reported 87%

believe God answers prayers (Woodward, 1997). In that same poll, 75% reported they

ask for strength to overcome personal weaknesses. Among older adults, prayer is a

primary and enduring means to adjust to, and cope with, life changes and resulting stress

(Levin & Taylor, 1997). Poloma and Pendleton (1991) stated research has shown that people who pray have an increased sense of well-being and life satisfaction. Richards and Bergin (1997) affirmed there that people who pray do believe that prayer helps them physically and psychologically. Poloma and Pendleton (1991) believed that "although some 90% of all Americans claim to pray, a review of social science literature will reveal that researchers have shown little interest in the topic" (p. 71). Paralleling the documented popular interest in spirituality and prayer, a new openness to it is presently occurring in scientific studies being conducted in the field of medicine that show prayer is effective in promoting physical recovery and healing of the body (Schlitz & Lewis, 2001).

Blackaby & Blackaby (2001) stated "More than any other single thing leaders do, it is their prayer life that determines their effectiveness" (p. 151). Blackaby further stated that leaders shouldn't force their beliefs on their staff, but a leader who is a person of prayer can affect even unbelieving employees. Glickman (1998) offered these words about prayer:

> These times remind me that I am a small part of a larger life of birth, growth, and death. Whether I call these moments prayer, meditation, or reflection are not important. I don't know which they are, nor do I particularly care. We all need time to pause and think about the world and where our life fits. Most of us—whether we are deeply religious or spiritual or not—seek such times. We know that the material world as it now exists is not right. It entices us to value what we don't want to value; it encourages us to be more hedonistic, aggressive, and self-

absorbed than what we know to be right. We also know that we either actively or

passively pass such corruptions on to our young. (pp. 97-98)

Spirituality in the Workplace

Over the past decade, a flood of books and journal articles have been written

addressing the role of spirituality in the workplace. A recent surge of articles both in

popular news articles and academic journals (E. Brandt, 1996; Graber, 2001; Gunther,

2001; Hein, 1999; McCarthy, 1996; Mitroff & Denton, 1999b) reflect the growing

interest in the corporate world in "spirituality." Conlin (1999) concluded that "a spiritual

revival is sweeping across corporate America as executives of all stripes are mixing

mysticism into their management, importing into office corridors the lessons usually

doled out in churches, temples, and mosques" (p. 150).

Businesses and their influential leaders have begun to acknowledge the

significance of the workplace in endorsing spiritual growth (Shellenbarger, 2000). Dale

(1991) stated that a fundamental characteristic of spirituality entails the significance of

one's work, something which an ever-increasing number of individuals are motivated to

realize. As a result, tapping the human soul at work has become a flourishing custom

because of the resulting enhanced organizational performances of those affected (Neck &

Milliman, 1994; Thompson, 2000; Turner, 1999). Holland (1989) suggested work is

intended to be one of the most profound ways of experiencing the divine presence in the

world, that is, of experiencing spirituality. Holland explained:

Even when we do not advert to it, work remains in its inner depth a spiritual

experience. Along with family, it is a fundamental way by which we humans

share in renewing and deepening the creativity of our species and of its wider ecological source in the earth. (p. 18)

While workplace spirituality is considered a highly private and theoretical concept, virtually all of the educational definitions recognize that spirituality entails a sense of totality, connectedness at work, and deeper values (Gibbons, 2000). Workplace spirituality involves an endeavor to discover one's decisive function in life, to acquire a well-built relationship between coworkers and other people associated with work, and to have uniformity linking one's core beliefs with the values of their organization (Mitroff and Denton, 1999). Accordingly, workplace spirituality can be defined as ". . . the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community" (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000, p. 137).

Spirituality in the workplace has become more apparent because people aspire to realize a connectedness to their work and believe that it is more valuable than getting their paycheck. The intent of spirituality in work is perceived as being able to accomplish one's full potential and to have optimistic outlook and interactions with the world (Hawley, 1993). Similarly, they desire to feel unified with each other at work in the search of an inspirational rationale (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).

In many spiritually based organizations there is a well-defined prominence on choosing individuals who are most likely to be at ease and prolific with a spiritual corporate culture (Wagner-Marsch & Conley, 1999). Neal (1997) has translated views of spirituality into the workplace:

Workplace spirituality refers to an individual's attempts to live his or her values

more fully in the workplace. Alternatively, it can refer to the ways in which

organizations structure themselves to support the spiritual growth of employees.

(p. 123)

Conversely, many employees desire opportunities for spiritual expression in the

workplace but are tentative because of fears of offending peers and administration (Lewis

& Geroy, 2000).

Several nationally recognized companies have espoused programs to provide a

listening forum to hear the spiritual concerns of their employees. Chick-fil-A, Southwest

Airlines, and Tom's of Maine function with a formidable spiritual foundation. Bromley

(1998) explained that spiritual corporations such as Amway, Herbalife, Mary Kay

Cosmetics, and ServiceMaster have adopted an spirit filled philosophy that has been

established to cast workers into a "tightly knit social network" that is "legitimated

symbolically by appeals to transcendent purposes" (p. 350). Bromley further stated that it

"serves as a vehicle for integrating important spheres of life that have become

disintegrated" (p. 359).

Still other decidedly dissimilar firms are advancing ahead endeavoring to

establish a spiritual approach to their corporate cultures: Herman Miller, TDIndustries,

Lancaster Laboratories, Wetherill Associates, Toro Company, Sisters of St Joseph Health

System, Medtronic, Townsend and Bottum, Schneider Engineering Corporation, and

Bank of Montreal (Wagner-Marsh & Conley, 1999). Neck and Milliman (1994) alluded

to research describing heightened personal originality, insight, organizational

modernization, self-actualization, and solidarity. There is also some proof that spiritually

active organizations boost shareholder value. In the US, generally speaking, a high degree of spiritual commitment has not lessened over the past two decades and may have even grown more (Wuthnow, 1994).

Detractors of workplace supported spirituality perceive it as basically the most current means through which declarations are brokered and accomplished (Elmes & Smith, 2001). While the advent of spirituality in the workplace might seem an optimistic step too far for some, Pedler and Aspinal (1998) stated:

> Balancing learning and worthwhile purposes is continuously difficult, and is unlikely to remain solved in any organization for long. However, this is a moral debate, which affects everyone who works in the company or is touched by its activities. Our plea is for that debate and argument to be given permission and space to take place in the context of the purpose of all organizations seeking to improve their performance and contribution. (p. 105)

Glickman (1998) declared:

> Knowing that the moral, natural, spiritual, and social world is beyond my ability to control and that I am insignificant in the total scheme of history, events, and the rhythm of the universe, I am better able to think about what I am and what I want to be. Can I make a dent in defining and forging a better world? I hope so…Wouldn't it be a much better world if we would be quiet, turn around, and listen to all of us seek heaven on earth? (p. 98)

<u>Spiritual Leadership</u>

Spiritual individuals in leadership must be dedicated to struggling with what it takes to transform profoundly deep-rooted behaviors concerning to how they believe,

what they value, how they control disappointment, and how they act. Moxley (2000) stated that "if leaders do not know what is deep within that drives them, they continue their anger-based, fear-based, approval-based, or insecurity-based practices of leadership. The impact on others, and the organization, costly" (p. 60). "While spiritual leadership involves many of the same principles as general leadership, spiritual leadership has certain distinctive qualities that must be understood and practiced if spiritual leaders are to be successful" (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001, p. 20).

Spiritual leadership, as reported by Fairholm (2000), is both new and old. It challenges all old ideas and practices. It is new, as researchers have not considered the spiritual orientation in people as a factor in their theories of leadership, management, or organization. Fairholm further stated:

The key elements of spiritual leadership have a dynamic relationship to each other and manifest themselves in leader-follower interactivity. Spiritual leadership is a dynamic process of building special skills such as visioning, servanthood, and work-task competence. Spiritual leaders engage in special processes of building community, encouraging personal wholeness, engaging in stewardship and creating a higher moral standard. They seek one primary goal among all the others challenging the leader's time and attention: continuous improvement of the individual and the group. (p. 134)

Hagberg (1994) acknowledged the concept of spiritual leadership and its effects on work efficiency and contentment is, relatively speaking, as a new field of research. Spiritual leadership is an emerging form of leadership that is being investigated both in

schools and organizations (Day, 2000; Hesselbein et al., 1996). According to Sanders (1994):

> Many people regard leaders as naturally gifted with intellect, personal forcefulness, and enthusiasm. Such qualities certainly enhance leadership potential, but they do not define the spiritual leader. True leaders must be willing to suffer for the sake of objectives great enough to demand their wholehearted obedience….One does not become a spiritual leader by merely filling an office, taking course work in the subject, or resolving in one's own will to do this task. (p. 18)

In *Leading With Soul,* Bolman and Deal (2001) acknowledged leading with soul as a new standard that will persuade organizations to go away from the scope of traditional leadership and into an arena that will allow leaders to advocate the spirituality, which serves as an internal authority that uphold significance and hope. Bolman and Deal (1995) described a leadership that "returns us to ancient spiritual basics—reclaiming the enduring human capacity that gives our lives passion and purpose" (p. 6) directly connecting leadership and spirituality. Their case for spirituality-centered leadership is strengthened by "the current images of leaders as heroes or skill analysts" (p. 2). These images of leaders emphasize our need "for a language of moral discourse that permits discussions of ethical and spiritual issues, connecting them to images of leadership" (pp. 2-3). Conger (1994) centered on the spiritual characteristic of leadership, predominantly on the qualities of constructing spiritual community and drawing on spiritual resources as a accomplishment of leadership.

Sanders (1994) reported spiritual leaders "must be sincere in promise, faithful in discharge of duty, upright in finances, loyal in service, and honest in speech" (p. 62). McCormick (1994) reported that Buddhist, Jewish, and Christian leaders all believe that compassion is an important aspect of leadership, however, it can create controversy within the workplace that are apathetic to or oppose compassion. McCormick continued by stating that role conflict transpires when spiritual ideals influence leaders to feel and express compassion at work but the organizational culture calls for hard-hearted decision-making criteria regardless of how it affects people. Such leaders "face the challenge of continuing to be true to their religious ideals despite the culture they work in (p. 6).

Spiritual leadership just does not rely on the techniques of leadership. To become a spiritual leader, the leader needs a change of heart and spirit, not just technique (Fairholm, 2000; Sanders, 1994). Sanders (1994) continued:

> Spiritual leadership requires spiritual power, which can never be generated by self. There is no such thing as a self-made spiritual leader. A true leader influences others spiritually only because the Spirit works in and through him to a greater degree than in those he leads. We can lead others only as far along the road as we ourselves have traveled. Merely pointing the way is not enough. If we are not walking, then no one can be following, and we are not leading anyone. (p. 28)

Dreher (1996) described leaders whose spirituality influences their leadership view everything that exists as a part of a larger whole, that the day-to-day successes and failures fit into a larger pattern of significance, remaining mindful of the belief that we are all part of something larger than ourselves.

In his inaugural address, David McAllister-Wilson (2003), President, Wesley

Theological Seminary asserts:

Ask anyone who has accomplished something great, and they will tell you that

first, came the vision. And vision creates a sense of mission….We want our lives

to count, to be a part of something bigger. There are things worse than death:

depression, hopelessness, meaninglessness. There are things more important than

life; that's why starving mothers will feed their babies first; it's why fireman run

up the stairs in burning buildings….Leaders of everything from corporations to

Girl Scout troups know that vision and sense of mission are the keys to success.

…faith is about mountains that we've turned into speed bumps, it's an opera we

have been singing like a nursery rhyme….You see, the great choice isn't whether

we will live or die. We are going to die one day. The question is, "what are you

dying for?" or, "what are you living for?" (pp. 219-220)

Spiritual leaders have unique life experiences. These experiences can significantly

influence the type of leader they become. Brandes (1985) suggests that individuals, close

to the age of 40, begin to question and reassess their careers after life-changing events

have occurred. The influence of a leader's upbringing cannot be underestimated as a

fundamental factor in leadership development. James MacGregor Burns in Henry

Blackaby's book, *The Spiritual Leader,* detailed the lives of several famous leaders who

grew up in dysfunctional homes. Generally, these leaders maintained a closer relationship

with their mothers while maintaining a distant relationship with their fathers (Blackaby &

Blackaby, 2001). Burns detailed the childhood experiences of Martin Luther King,

Woodrow Wilson, Winston Churchill, Gandhi, John F. Kennedy, and Bill Clinton. Each

of these leaders failed to win the approval of their estranged or abusive fathers. To compensate, they attempted to win the devotion of large groups of people to strive for greatness as a means of enhancing their battered self-esteem (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001).

Blackaby reported there are a significant number of well-known leaders that grew up in dysfunctional homes but have experienced God's healing grace, which transformed them into healthy, successful leaders. "Adding leadership potential to our lives usually requires that we shake off negative elements that hold us back" (Sanders, 1994, p. 37). Bolman and Deal (1995) reported that leaders need to lean into their fears, to "use life's wounds to discover their own spiritual centers. As they conquer their demons within, they achieve the inner peace and bedrock confidence that enable them to inspirit and inspire others" (p. 57).

Sanders (1994) stated that "every generation faces the stringent demands of spiritual leadership, and welcomes the few of who come forward to serve. …Effective spiritual leadership does not come as a result as theological training or seminary degree, as important as education is" (pp. 18-22). Hagberg (1994) asserts that the age and experience should make spiritual leaders less foolhardy, but not to the degree of turning out to be excessively self-protective. Hagberg believed:

> You cannot become a leader in the sense I describe without being keenly aware of yourself and willing to give up many of the traditional beliefs about power and leadership. You must at some point take a 'leap of faith' toward the emerging model of what it means to truly lead and away from the need to be successful, famous, rich, in control, or powerful. The kind of leadership I am advocating

arises out of the understanding of pain, the loss of innocence, the love of others,

the larger purpose, the pursuit of wisdom, the honor of life. Ask yourself if you

are willing to take the risk. (p. 174)

Spiritual leaders may find themselves in a position analogous to that of former

United States President Jimmy Carter. Troubled by the dissention in the convention, he

found himself in an unsustainable position with the leaders of the Southern Baptist

Convention (SBC) over numerous issues. He instigated a discussion and invited two

dozen Baptist leaders to The Carter Center in an effort to "overcome differences that

were impeding our common mission" (J. Carter, 2000). The meeting did not settle the

conflict, and ultimately Carter withdrew from the SBC, with which he had been

associated for 65 years. Carter (2000) unhappily announced his leaving in an open letter:

I have been disappointed and feel excluded by the adoption of polices and an

increasingly rigid SBC creed, including some provisions that violate the basic

premises of my Christian faith. I have finally decided that, after 65 years, I can no

longer be associated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

<div align="center">Spirituality in Higher Education</div>

During the 19th century, almost all state universities held compulsory chapel

services and some required church attendance (Marsden, 1994). In addition, many

schools required one or more courses in theology as a graduation requirement. The

university represented an important part of American religious and cultural

establishment, however, in the early 20th century, a philosophical change occurred in

higher education. Many of America's strongest universities and colleges including

Harvard, Yale, Wellesley, and Amherst were initially established as religiously affiliated institutions of higher learning, however, almost all became secularized (Knag, 1998).

According to Nord (1995) there are two reasons for this change. First, Western civilization has become more secular with religion becoming more private to the individual, consequently becoming separated from academic thoughts and ideas. Secondly, a great majority of scholars view religion as irrelevant to their subjects or as superstition to be contested creating an educational environment where spirituality is tolerated but not encouraged. Wuthnow (1998) wondered whether spirituality had become synonymous with flaky.

With the exclusion of adult religious education, spirituality has traditionally been given little consideration in conventional academia for adult education (Tisdell, 2001). Sollod (1992) believed that "spirituality in our society too often reflects retreat from the world of intellectual discourse and spiritual pursuits are often cloaked in a reflective anti-intellectualism which mirrors the view in academe of spirituality as an cultural residue" (p. 60).

Popular literature regarding spirituality and leadership has been filling retail books by leaps and bounds, however during the past two decades little empirical research was conducted to authoritatively scrutinize the associations that exist between the two indicating that the affect of spirituality and its influence on administrative activities was not of noteworthy interest to those practioners who scrutinized educational leadership (Hawley, 1993; Heider, 1985; Herman, 1994; Jones, 1995) until now. Our culture is commencing to progress away from the secular, mechanistic, amoral model that has prompted so much estrangement and division. Gustav Niebuhr (1996) comments:

In a time of outward tension and inner searching, when many Americans worry about social decay and also show a growing interest in spirituality, students, teachers and administrators on campuses are asking whether colleges ought to try once again to build moral and spiritual character as well as intellect. (p. 23)

Tisdell (2005) revealed that there is a current interest in spirituality in higher education. Tisdell further revealed that spirituality has become a hot topic as bookstores are overflowing with many popular titles associated to it, from Western religions to traditions of the East to new-age philosophies begging the question, "What do adult and higher education practioners make of this latest emphasis on spirituality?"

Tisdell further reported that along with a universal understanding among many in higher education that it is practically impossible to detach attitudes and beliefs from concern with definitive forms of meaning that often connect to spirituality. Zinn (1997) claimed that spirituality is at the root of adult education and should be integrated into the conventional theoretical foundations of adult education—liberal, progressive, humanistic, and radical, however, most adult educators have shied away from spirituality in their practice.

Laurence (1999) pondered whether colleges or universities should articulate a spiritual component to their educational programs:

Some feel that spirituality is too subjective to be of value in the objective, empirical world of academia. Others are afraid that it is associated with an attempt to influence curriculum to match religious views. But if connectedness is a primary aspect of spirituality, then what spirituality threatens most is the inherent fragmentation in our educational structures. (p. 14)

In a 1998 speech to the Education as Transformation National Gathering, Diana Chapman Walsh, Wellesley College President, told the assembly:

> Our task together is to envision a whole new place, a whole new space and role for spirituality in higher education, not as an isolated enterprise on the margins of the academy, nor as a new form of institutional social control, but as an essential element of the larger task of reorienting our institutions of higher learning to respond more adequately to the challenges the world presents us now: challenges to our teaching, to our learning, to our leading, to our lives.
>
> As we look to the new millennium, we know we are going to need people committed to living in ways that will ensure a sustainable future, people committed to the common good, to bringing diverse communities together, to inspire a shared sense of participation and mutual accountability, to igniting hope.

Hindman (2002) stated that spirituality is not something that has to be added to the curriculum, it is already there; the question is what spirit shall be affirmed and nurtured while attempting to increase awareness and to open minds to be able to see the possibilities. Tisdell (2005) declared that in attempting to bring spirituality to higher education does not mean that scientific inquiry or critical analysis will be abandoned because they have always be a part of higher education. Higher education must not coerce the individual to participate in practices opposed to his or her religious beliefs (Sheffer, 1999). Tisdell (2005) affirmed that, "drawing on spirituality in the classroom is NOT about pushing a religious agenda" (p. 3) because there are two distinct tensions in considering issues related to spirituality in the classroom; (1) the tension between

spirituality and religion, and (2) the different meanings people ascribe to these terms. Tisdell continued:

> There has been much recent discussion about the role of spirituality in higher education.…many argue that it is time to consider the multiple ways that people construct knowledge, and emphasize the fact that people's passions, ethics, and work choices are related to their deepest core values which are informed by their spiritual commitments…Thus, spirituality is an important influence on people's ongoing learning, and needs to be considered in higher education. (p. 5)

Researchers have recognized the significance of the many expressions of spirit that can occur during open dialogue about diverse cultures, religions, and traditions, indicating that spirituality may possibly inform work in education without impelling a religious agenda (Eck, 2001; Lerner, 2000). As the cultural fabric of North America is changing, educators are starting to breach the silence about the connection between spirituality and education causing a greater emphasis on constructing culturally applicable programs for unambiguous population groups (Tisdell, 2001). Tisdell declared that when spirituality is integral to the fabric of a community, it makes sense that educators might attend to it. bell hooks (2000) argued that "the spiritual awakening that is slowly taking place counter-culturally will become more of a daily norm as we all willingly break mainstream cultural taboos that silence or erase our passion for spiritual practice" (p. 82).

As suggested by Tisdell (2005) academic courses in higher education should include readings that deal with ideas pertinent to the course content and encourage the exploration of numerous viewpoints. Tisdell explained:

Spirituality is one of the ways people construct knowledge and meaning. It works in consort with the affective, the rational or cognitive, and the unconscious and symbolic domains. To ignore it, particularly in how it relates to teaching for personal and social transformation, is to ignore an important aspect of human experience and avenue of learning and meaning-making. This is why spirituality is important to the work of adult learning. (4)

<div align="center">Critical Spirituality</div>

According to Dantley (2005), school leaders who come to comprehend and utilize critical spirituality not only are reflective thinkers but also engage in performative creativity permitting the educational leader to embark upon activities that will lead to noticeable variations in the ways school districts engage issues of race, class, gender, and other indicators of difference. Critical spirituality is comprised of four basic elements: (1) psychology of critical self-reflection; (2) freedom of deconstructive interpretation; (3) performance creativity; and (4) transformative action (Dantley, 2005). Dantley described the four elements in greater detail:

A psychology of critical self-reflection involves the educational leader coming to grips with his or her own identity and juxtaposing that against the identity of the learning community….Coming to grips with identity is an extremely spiritual endeavor. It demands dealing with the truth about oneself and then embracing those verities even if done with some reservation….Identity for all people involves the integration of one's past, present, and the future into a unified whole…We have hand picked the past events that we have allowed to shape out authentic selves.

School leaders…not only spend time interrogating their motives and practices but they are then moved to engage in the arduous task of deconstructive interpretation….Aligned to this deconstructive interpretation is a grammar of hope....Transformative leaders are grounded in a grammar of hope because they see themselves…as initiators of discourse and deliberation that leads to changes in their neighborhoods, the nation, and the conditions across the globe.

Performative creativity can be manifested as school leaders sacrifice the comforts of their own ego protection in order to initiate projects to ensure cultural diversity in curricula, new was to consider classroom practices….It emanates from passion that is the result of leaders candidly and critically examining themselves, personally and professionally….It helps school leaders align what happens in schools to the social and political dynamics of the wider community.

The result of critical self-reflection, deconstructive interpretation, and formative creativity is transformative action….the focus…is the radical reconstruction of schooling….Clearly, transformative action must include changing the learning communities mind-set regarding student achievement and the prerequisites of academic success….Instructional leadership would then be perceived as a way to enhance students' academic achievement without dehumanizing, deskilling, and marginalizing teachers. Rather, they would be empowered to become coleaders in the efforts to advance the academic climate in the school. (pp. 501-516)

Spiritual vs. Secular Leadership

U.S. public schools by law are secular. Courts have ruled that public schools must conduct secular programs of study that keep religious espousal, guidance, and practice out of the public schools' curriculum and instruction. Schools also are required to serve all the youngsters—both religious and nonreligious—fairly and equitably. The aforementioned circumstance baffles many educators and the public, and there is a need to clear up the confusion. The confusion derives in part from reliance on common usage that equates the term "secular" to "nonreligious." In the context of public education, this is a serious error. This means the educational enterprise must be "religiously neutral." Some religious activists asserted that schools—because they are secular—favor a nonreligious outlook. Warren A. Nord and Charles Haynes in their book, *Taking Religion Seriously across the Curriculum* (1998) uphold this "school is skewed" assertion and recommend, as corrective, augmenting the school curriculum to include more teaching about religion so that students can come to understand "religious ways of knowing."

Eck (2001) maintained that accomplishing religious neutrality is a challenge for any school system, and this challenge will increase, as school systems are required to serve populations of widely varied faith and belief systems. The way schools stay on course with respect to student beliefs is by neither promoting nor inhibiting any religion or any nonreligion. Abrahamson and Smith (2002) stated that:

> In a public school, a teacher must try to be as objective as possible. To keep biases in check, he or she can imagine that a highly educated, diverse committee of scholars is monitoring the lessons. The imaginary committee includes religious

68

people of various faiths and nonreligious scholars as well. If such a group were actually in the classroom, the instructor would take special care to see that presentations and activities would be as non-biased as possible."(p. 1)

Discussion about religion and public schools often takes place at a high decibel level. Such issues as prayer-before-football games, school voucher initiatives, religious graduation valedictories, and postings of Christian commandments and may bring forth fiery commentary. In a political season, there is heightened public discourse concerning religion as it relates to the processes of public education. Much of the heat relates to diverse public conceptions of the schools' teaching of moral values. Raspberry (2005) reported that there are people who sincerely believe that they are called upon by their faith to promote the Kingdom of God by every means at their disposal.

Ruth A. Wooden, president of Public Agenda, revealed that most Americans are looking for a compromise, but others may see compromise as a retreat from core values and beliefs. There is general agreement that working things out is the right thing to do when it comes to secular disagreements, however, as many deeply religious Americans see it, compromise between righteousness and sin is still sin. Public officials, including rural school superintendents who profess to be spiritual may think it's a sin to have an abortion, support gay marriage or work on the Sabbath, however, they shouldn't, on the basis of their religious belief, deny anyone's right to any of them. Raspberry (2005) stated that even elected officials who are deeply religious sometimes have to make compromises and set their convictions aside to get results while in government.

What is a spiritual issue? What is a secular (non-religious) issue? How do we distinguish between the two? Unfortunately, there are no lucid or tangible answers to

these three questions. Both Christians and non-Christians often struggle to make a distinction between the "sacred" and the "secular." Hammond (2005) stated that it is popular to believe that one can privatize one's spirituality and restrict its impact in work, politics, economics, and community, but an individual that is firm with his or belief will strongly disagree. Hammond further states that to assume that an individual can be one person privately and another publicly is dangerous. This denies the intricate and interdependent nature of personality. Cline (2005) stated that the tension adherent to the conflict between spiritual and secular individuals can actually be beneficial, with each challenging the other to become better than they currently are; or it may be detrimental, as when one corrupts the other and makes it worse, or even when the conflict becomes violent.

What does all of this mean for today's educational leaders? To err on the side of caution. As the literature reports, small rural school districts are isolated communities with a deep set values and traditions, many of which can be linked to a religious affiliation. This does not necessarily hold true for the larger, more culturally diverse urban and suburban communities. Leadership must not only be transformative but as an administrator moves from one district to another, they must also be adaptive and sensitive to cultural identities.

The decision making process, whether secular or spiritual, ultimately depends on the value and belief system of the administrator. He or she is solely responsible for his or her own actions. A determination is made with each decision as to whether "it is my way or the highway" or "come to my office and let's talk about your actions today." Spiritual superintendents either live out on the edge, constantly professing their spirituality or

quietly lead by example, walking the walk; both can achieve the same results. However, living on the edge puts one closer to falling off. It is a personal preference as to what degree an individual will exude their spirituality.

<center>Rural Communities</center>

Rural communities tend to be homogeneous in terms of race and socioeconomic status (Seal & Harmon, 1995). Traditional values, such as discipline, hard work, and the importance of family are the norm. Helge (1985) declared that the residents of rural communities often place a higher value on traditions. Rural communities are viewed as safer and more connected to nature (Herzog & Pittman, 1995). Knight et al. (1996) cited closeness to family and beautiful surroundings as reasons for people choosing to live in a rural community. Beckner (1983) noted that rural communities were generally conservative, parochial, and resistant to change. Rural communities serve as trade and service centers that nurture participation in civic and social affairs that anchor people to place.

Most rural communities that are not adjacent to growing metropolitan areas are experiencing population loss, are poorer, and offer fewer opportunities for educational and occupational advancement than do urban and suburban communities (Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999). Rural communities are so widely dispersed that they are politically invisible (Beeson & Strange, 2000). A study conducted Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research Inc. found:

> Perceptions of rural America are centered on a series of dichotomies - rural life represents traditional American values, but is behind the times; rural life is more relaxed and slower than city life, but harder and more grueling; rural life is

<center>71</center>

friendly, but intolerant of outsiders and difference; and rural life is richer in community life, but epitomized by individuals struggling independently to make ends meet. Rural America offers a particular quality of life including serenity and aesthetic surroundings, and yet it is plagued by lack of opportunities, including access to cultural activities. ("New report examines perception of rural America," 2002)

Hass (1991) argued that modern American society does not value the uniqueness of rural communities because of negative images and prejudices about rural people and settings based on longstanding historical stereotypes about "rubes," "hicks," "hillbillies," and "rednecks." Rural communities have a higher percentage of low-wage, low-benefit jobs than do urban areas (Herzog & Pittman, 1995). Rural America is far poorer than metropolitan areas as a whole, and nearly as poor as central cities.

Superintendent

Fueled by two decades of disparagement of American public schools, the role of superintendent has been redefined and developed into a multifaceted leadership position. Public education has undergone a decisive expansion and as a result the office of the superintendent has transformed. The superintendent is responsible for influencing organizational success. According to Hoyle (1993) he believed "to a great extent, the quality of America's schools depends on the effectiveness of school superintendents" (p. 3). Today's leaders are expected to be transformational leaders who possess the vision to empower employees to reach higher levels of moral development (Burns, 1978). Patterson (2000) conveyed an additional depiction of superintendents:

The world of permanent white water where nothing remains tranquil for even a moment. The skills required to navigate the rapids cannot be taught in a graduate course; they are learned amidst the changing currents and submerged hazards. Every school system has unique currents and undertows, but all share the goal of educating all their children. The most visible person in that enterprise is the superintendent. (p. v)

School administrators must direct their attention to utilizing facilitative power to make second-order changes in their schools; transformational leadership provides such a focus (Leithwood, 1992). Top-down management strategies will no longer afford superintendents the vehicle to lead our schools successfully into the 21st century. Charter schools and the voucher system movements are the direct result of a broad displeasure with how public schools are performing, placing superintendents in the middle of a intense argument over public education effectiveness (Short & Scribner, 2000).

Transformational superintendents have a vision of what the school system can be and motivate all associated with the system to have pride in the system and to achieve more than they thought possible for the good of the system (M. W. Konnert, 1995). The superintendent, as leader of a school district, is fundamental to the essence of the school community. It is the superintendent who directs and articulates the vision of the district. It is the superintendent's leadership, functioning within a process, such as decision-making, political influence, communication, or networking that becomes the consciousness of the district.

Numerous individuals believe that school patrons should demand a strong superintendent who can bring change in even superlative schools systems by applying

73

organizational research and behavioral principles (G. R. Carter & Cunningham, 1997).

Today's leader is also expected to be a "prophet, poet, philosopher, historian, genius, athlete—in short, a statesman" (Koestenbaum, 1991, p. 1).

Sergiovanni (1994) analyzed the significance of educational leadership with four superintendents from markedly dissimilar school systems. The first superintendent defined leadership as not so much doing, but being who she is, what she believes, and the communication she shares with others that matter. The second superintendent said leadership was "the ability to bring out the best in other people and to motivate others to take leadership roles in the school system" (p. 190). The third superintendent believed leadership needed to be constantly redefined and created as it was practiced. He described four fundamental values that guided his considerations and actions as an organizational leader:

1. Putting the role of the student in the center of the decision making process.

2. Wide sharing among staff, parents, and community members.

3. Ongoing evaluation of educational programs to prioritize district focus.

4. Taking personal responsibility for ensuring that the district makes sound fiscal decisions. (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 190)

The fourth superintendent was of the belief that leadership is about stewardship and service rather than supervision and power.

Schlechty (1990) contended that moral authority in, or bestowed upon, the school system resides in the office of the superintendent; therefore, the actions of the superintendent must be viewed as morally and ethically appropriate. "Who the superintendent is, what the superintendent values, and the style of operation supported by

the superintendent will be evident throughout the school system" (p. 128). Particular

principles, or ethics, are considered essential to "effective" or successful leadership.

These ethics are often considered intrinsic traits, individuality, mind-set, and behaviors,

which successful leaders possess. These traits include honesty, morals, integrity, and

empathy. Clifton and Nelson (1992) proposed that exceedingly prolific individuals in any

occupation know something divergent and talk differently from the ordinary or low

achievers, consequently, the only way to examine the disparity between the good and

great in any profession is to study the flourishing performer.

Effective leadership may differ significantly in dissimilar school districts,

dependent upon makeup, community needs, and the political beliefs in a school.

Hendricks and Ludeman (1996) contended that "in the 21st century, leaders' stance on

their spiritual practices will become synonymous with survival in the workplace" (p. 83).

Kaplan (1997) pointed out:

> Every moment of the day, the leader sends out messages that set the tone and
>
> level of excellence of the enterprise. Trust comes about when people become
>
> convinced that the leader means what he or she says because every statement is
>
> backed by a record of performance. (pp. 135-146)

Superintendents who desire to lead must discover ways to connect all members of the

learning community. When "personal commitment is genuine and mutual, authority and

responsibility are shared, power is dispersed, and influence is reciprocal," then leadership

is successful (Johnson, 1996, p. 149).

Gay Selby of the Washington State School Directors Association's

Superintendent-Search program acknowledged that "it's the leadership skills that are

really going to distinguish people and what's going to be required to succeed with all the school reform issues," (cited in Shaw, 1999, p. 3). The work of Johnson (1996); Glass (1992); Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000) presented authentication that superintendent success may be related to the effectual attainment and utilization of tacit knowledge. They concurred:

> The future of the superintendency in the 21st century seems to be tied more closely than ever to harmonious working relationships with boards and community groups. Successful superintendents will be those who have excellent communication skills, understand the instructional process, and can work to create functioning coalitions that will ensure the financial and educational survival of the public school system. (p. 16).

Additional research (Kirpatrick & Locke, 1991) made it clear that successful leaders are extraordinary people. To succeed, the superintendent "needs a board with three important characteristics: a supportive president, a strong board nucleus, and stable board composition" (Patterson, 2000, p. 27).

According to Houston (2001), "successful superintendents in the 21st century will be those who find a way of leading by sharing power and by engaging members of the organization. "Leadership in the future will be about the creation and maintenance of relationships…will require skills that differ from those traditionally used by superintendents" (Houston, 2001, p. 431). Blackaby and Blackaby (2001) stated:

> So many of history's great leaders suffered major failures, crises, and disappointments in their development as leaders that these traumas almost seem prerequisite to leadership success. If any conclusion can be drawn from the

biographies of great leaders, it is that none enjoyed easy paths to greatness. It could, in fact, be argued that, had they avoided hardship, greatness would also have eluded them….It would be as mistake to conclude that hardship and failure *always* produce successful leaders, just as it would be simplistic to assume that good leaders emerge only out of adversity….The key to leadership development lies not in the experiences, whether good or bad, but in peoples' responses to those experiences. (p. 41)

Thrall et al. (1999) concurred that all of us cause ourselves some distress through our own misfortunes, but it's our reaction to such misfortunes that establishes and develops character. Thrall et al. continued:

Although some suffering can come as a result of bad choice, suffering and trails can also come from making good choices….(Leaders) choose to do the right thing because the one asset they hold most dear is their influence….they view character maturity as worth the risks of potential setbacks….Even if no one sees or cares about your personal decisions of integrity, God does, and so do you. (pp. 124-125)

Rural School Superintendents

The literature revealed that rural school superintendents face a variety of locations, governance models, economies, performance challenges, and leadership needs that are dissimilar than those of superintendents in urban and suburban school districts. From this leadership position, the authority of a rural school superintendent visibly influences both the school campus and the surrounding community in which the school is located. Superintendents are caught among the demands and expectations of the Board of

Education, principals, teachers, parents, students, and community patrons (Owen &

Kottkamp, 2000). By receiving pressure and high expectations from all sectors of the

community, they are the most visible, important and influential figures in the community

(Schmuck & Schmuck, 1990).

Glass (1991) contended that rural superintendents were expected to be "all things

to all people" (p. 1). Lochry (1998) concurred that "superintendent of small-town districts

have to be adept at all trades. Like their urban and suburban counterparts, superintendents

work with school board policies, budgets, curricula, facilities, laws, and personnel, but

they do much more than that" (p. 20). Lochry further stated that rural school

superintendents are often seen:

> Coaching the girl's junior-high basketball team…directing traffic as school lets
>
> out...driving a bus load of students out of town…performing in a high school
>
> musical…involved in district work sometimes from 7:00 a.m. to
>
> midnight…eating breakfast with hungry elementary students…bringing home
>
> tired secondary students from a basketball tournament after a one-way drive of
>
> 175 miles.

In small, rural communities, district superintendents are frequently seen as

"bigger than life." Chance (1999) asserted that the job of superintendent was highly

complex and filled with conflict, politics, and community input; these parameters were

just as true for rural superintendents as for urban and suburban superintendents. Rural

School Superintendent Charlotte Gregory stated:

> Being a rural superintendent is very different, in terms of human relations. The
>
> superintendent is the only one appointed to represent the people, but, at the same

time, each group in the community thinks you're there to be their advocate. This

job is a series of juxtaposed positions. The teacher's union thinks you're good

because you represent educators to the board, or bad because you don't agree with

them on salaries. Parents expect you to stand up for their kids, but you have to

protect the privacy of the staff and not reveal what action you take, if any. If you

discuss too many things with the school board, it gets the idea you can't handle

the job; if you don't say enough, it believes you're closed minded and

authoritarian. In the community, you have to be an even better role model than the

teachers. And there's no one to talk to about all these things. If you're married,

you can go home and spill it all out on your spouse. If you're not married, you can

tell it to your dog. My two dogs have learned a lot. (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1990

in Lochry, 1998, p. 20)

Schmuck and Schmuck (1990) added:

Superintendents of small school districts are a ridiculous catchall, mostly doing

things that do not have to do with education. Fill pop machines, fill coffee

machines, know radon, asbestos, Right to Know, and lead in the drinking water.

All that's enough to drive you crazy. I've already gotten advertisements about

radon. That's what drives me nuts. It's a year usually full of baloney. (p. 3)

Reaves and Larmer (1996) acknowledged that rural superintendents may have

more obvious professional development needs and are less well educated than their urban

and suburban counterparts. Many rural superintendents have a tenure that is no longer

than five years as they consider their present location as a short rest stop on a long career

ladder; long term rural superintendents seem especially unique (E.W. Chance *et al.*,

1992). Rural superintendents are more isolated causing mentoring programs for early career superintendents to be almost nonexistent. For rural superintendents, the ability to exchange ideas with peers through networking seems is an extremely important feature of professional development initiatives. Networking was enabled during some initiatives through intra-district collaborations, distance learning technologies, and summer institutes (Peterson & Kelly, 2001).

Researchers found that rural superintendents had a wide range of interests, broad working knowledge of all school processes, and strong internal motivation (Church *et al.*, 1991). They concluded that successful rural superintendents:

- Sustained total engagement in the community.

- Took advantage of rural settings to retain and enhance environmental education programs.

- Maintained firm discipline by working directly with community organizations and churches.

- Offered continuing staff development and professional growth.

- Acknowledged that educational issues were community issues.

Because of their visibility at the center stage of community life, rural superintendents have greater opportunity, if not responsibility, than their urban and suburban peers, to act as participatory administrators and instructional leaders (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1990). Copeland and Chance (1996) investigated four long-surviving rural superintendents through in-depth qualitative research. They concluded that there was no distinct style of successful rural leadership, but discovered several key connections among these four leaders:

- All were born and reared within 100 miles of their service.

- All maintained high visibility in their respective communities.

- All were described as "people-oriented."

- All listened carefully to their constituents.

- All socialized rarely with members of the Board outside the context of scheduled meetings, but communicated daily with the Board as a body.

Hurley (1999) posited that successful rural superintendents and other educational leaders reject standardization and provide direct local benefits to students and their communities.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

In this chapter I disclosed a review of the literature I deemed would be beneficial in providing the reader an enhanced appreciation of the research I have proposed. While the review suggests there is a lack of published, formal research regarding how spirituality influences the leadership activities of rural school superintendents, it demonstrated the need to understand fully the phenomenon of spirituality and its influence on leadership. Concise summaries of the educational philosophy and theory relevant to the research were presented to aid the reader logically and systematically as they were inspired by the "at-the-time life-changing" events that demanded additional understanding of the relevancy of both the rationale and methodology of this research.

Chapter 3

The purpose of this study was to explore the leadership activities of rural school superintendents that are influenced by spirituality. I sought to comprise my own personal influence and empathic insight as part of the pertinent data of this research. I wanted to have direct contact with the superintendents who were a part of my research. I was interested in conducting interviews with open-ended questions. I wanted to conduct a vibrant inquiry, for leadership is a process wherein change is constant. This research specifically investigates how spirituality influences the leadership activities of rural school superintendents.

Heuristic Research

I discovered heuristic research as a first-year doctoral student when I was searching for a research methodology. I wasn't comfortable with the approach of quantitative research as I had discovered that qualitative methods allow for "more depth, detail, and meaning at a very personal level of experience" than does quantitative study (Patton, 1990, p. 18). Strauss and Corbin (1990) stated that qualitative methods can be used to "uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about little is yet known" (p. 19). The origin of the word *heuristic* is from the Greek word *heurkiskein,* which translates to mean *discover.* Heuristic inquiry is one form of qualitative research within the larger method known as phenomenology. Patton (1990) accentuated the discovery characteristic of heuristic research by situating one's experiences as central aspects of allusion.

Heuristic investigation is a course of action that commences with an uncertainty or dilemma, which the investigator seeks to discover or find. Moustakas noted that at the

heart of heuristic research there is an emphasis on unveiling the self as a way of supporting discovery in other individuals. The heuristic process is autobiographic, but with each personal question there can be some collective and possibly worldwide importance. Heuristics is a system of engaging in scientific investigation by means of schemes and progressions aimed at discovery; a means of self-inquiry and dialogue with others aimed at finding the underlying meanings of important human perceptions. The essence of heuristics is, for me, a direct personal encounter with the investigated phenomenon within the individual through one's senses, perceptions, beliefs, and judgments. This calls for a fervent, regimented dedication to continue with a question powerfully and endlessly awaiting enlightenment or solution.

Although heuristic inquiry is recognized as a process, it is a collection of concepts and processes: focus of inquiry, self-dialogue, tacit knowing, intuition, indwelling, focusing, and frame of reference (Moustakas, 1990). These concepts and processes are constantly linking back to an inner framework of orientation founded on one's encounters, insights, beliefs, viewpoints, and wits. It is vital to the understanding of the heuristic process that these concepts and processes are fully understood.

> *Focus of Inquiry* occurs through investigative open-ended examination, self-directed exploration, and engagement in dynamic happenings. The researcher is capable of getting within the question, grow to be one with it, and as a result realize an appreciation of it. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15)

The researcher spends so much time with the question he or she learns to love the question as becomes intertwined within his or soul. The researcher is driven by a sense of

urgency to discover the answer, but enjoys the journey that produces new and exciting insights along the way.

> *Self-dialogue* occurs while encountering a phenomenon and permitting the phenomenon to speak directly to the researcher's own experience. Openness and honesty are paramount for disclosure as self-dialogue recognizes that the starting point of all inquiry is within and questions the self to identify what it is that makes up one's experiences of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990, p. 16).

The researcher becomes totally engrossed in the process of self-dialogue as it comforts uncertainties and stimulates a deeper yearning to start the investigation. It continuously fuels the energy and provides motivation to pursue the investigation.

> *Tacit Knowing* is the single most important concept underlying heuristic research. It is made up of elements of perceptions that enter the researcher's conscious awareness. These elements create a center of attention and demand immediate consideration. They are detectable and can be explained with the capability to distinguish agreement or completeness from knowledge of personality traits or components. This knowing is achievable as the concealed features of the encounters become one with the cognizant elements of the experience to form a whole. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 20)

Tacit knowing is tied to a sense of discovery, finding an awareness of new understandings and meanings. The knowledge that one knows more than can be told served as an encourager for uncovering spirit and traces of the phenomenon that is under investigation. Tacit knowing directs the researcher cultivating the awareness and comprises the foundation of the heuristic process.

Intuition occurs when the researcher moves from observable factors to arrive at the knowledge of a whole. Intuition enables the researcher to express clues, sense patterns, and imagine relationships, to arrive at knowledge, which is inaccessible by means of uninterrupted study. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 23)

Intuition is a guiding force in heuristic investigation and a skill that the researcher develops and recognizes in order to tie together the unexplained with the explained realities of the world. One must have trust in one's self and his or her intuition to be able to be guided through a heuristic investigation.

Indwelling is the process of turning inward to seek out a deeper more absolute command of the nature or meaning of a quality or theme of human experience. It is the returning repeatedly to the researcher's experience of a phenomenon in order to seize its completeness. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 24)

Indwelling means to go within one's self, to become knowledgeable of specific premises, thoughts, and images. Indwelling is a cognizant process that reveals veiled truths so that a complete picture of the experience can materialize.

Focusing occurs when an inner attention of continuing with a persistent process of thoroughly making contact with the more vital significance of an experience. It is a confidential freedom that must be obtained in order to focus on the analysis and opinions surrounding the question. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 25)

Focusing encourages inner attention and is beneficial to the researcher as it can clear space to permit thoughts and feelings to flow unrestricted to help clarify and elucidate the research question. Focusing is a relaxed and receptive state of mind that allows for fuller exploration of the topic being investigated.

Frame of Reference occurs when there is a need to know and understand the

nature, meanings, and essences of the researcher's experience. It depends on the

person having the experience. Only the experiencing individuals can genuinely

provide interpretations of their experience. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 26)

Each co-researcher conveyed descriptions of their perceptions of the influences of

spirituality on their leadership activities from their personal frame of reference. Each

frame of reference is subjective and unique to each co-researcher. The researcher has a

intense sense of compassion and thoughtfulness, which is the basis for the essential

connections, which initiate interviews with the co-researchers as they work to reveal their

own stories.

Participants and Other Data Sources

Purposive selection, a technique that intentionally seeks out participants and data

sources because of certain qualities was used to find participants who were willing to

discuss their perceptions of how spirituality influences their leadership activities. These

participants were "…experiential experts and…authorities about a particular experience"

(Morse, 1998, p. 73) and are the only participants because of their knowledge of the

specific phenomenon that were included in the population (Creswell, 1998; Merriam,

1998). Beitz (1999) stated that "it is important to select participants who have extensive

experience of the phenomenon under study" (p. 187). Purposive selection expanded the

capacity of data revealed and exploited my capacity to recognize emerging themes that

captured an acceptable account of contextual circumstances and educational norms. The

participants for this research were superintendents that revealed their spirituality through

casual conversations. Each participant was asked if he knew individuals who were

information-rich and would be good participants for this study (Merriam, 2001). This technique is known as the snowball sampling method, in which knowledge from one group is obtained to find other participants (Babbie, 2001). Snowball sampling is used to identify potential subjects when appropriate candidates for the research are hard to locate (Babbie, 1982, 2001).

The parameters for superintendent selection were these: they have to have be considered to be a novice or rookie superintendent with less than four years of experience, live and work in a rural school system, profess to be guided by their spirituality, and are willing to tell their story. The validation for these parameters was to ascertain some homogeneity within the group, to allow geographic expediency to conduct the research, and to enhance the potential of the verbal and self-reflective abilities facilitative of this type of research. The key to leadership is to look more for quality than quantity, more for information richness than information volume. Patton believed "there are no rules for same size in qualitative inquiry" (1990, p. 184). The sample size for this research was three superintendents including myself. Because the purpose of this study was to explore the influences that spirituality has on leadership activities from a rural school superintendent's perspective, the "in-depth information from a small number of people will be very valuable" (Patton, 1990, p. 184).

<div align="center">Procedure</div>

Developing the Research Question

Every heuristic search begins with a question. The focus was on the underlying meanings of human perceptions. Recall that the heuristic process is autobiographical and therefore the question posed is a deeply personal one based on one's own experience with

the question or problem. The answers to the question are found within oneself. Heuristic investigation focuses on one's lived experiences and that is why this type of investigation fits in so well with my personality and desire to tell "my story."

At the beginning of this study, I was looking to understand who I was utilizing reflection to divulge solutions to handle the complexities of the micropolitical organization I was a member of. Though that was still partially true, as I progressed through this eight-year process it became abundantly clear that what I really wanted to know was whether my spirituality influenced and guided my leadership activities. If so, then can a spiritual superintendent attribute his or her leadership impartially to spirituality? Moustakas (1990) alleged that "freedom of the researcher or therapist to shift perspectives and methods at any point in the process recognizes the contribution that subjectively and immediately make to knowledge" (p. 103).

From the very onset of this research, I was engaged in ongoing self-reflection, since personal understandings and perceptions from my experiences have contributed to the incubation of the research question. Moustakas (1990) contended:

> The heuristic researcher is not only intimately and autobiographically related to the question but learns to love the question. It becomes a kind of song into which the researcher breathes life not only because the question leads to an answer, but also because the question itself is infused in the researcher's being. It creates a thirst to discover, to clarify, and to understand crucial dimensions of knowledge and experience. (p. 43)

Embedded in my curiosity about my experience was also a problem to solve. I needed to understand my own feelings, which were for the most part, were angry sensations,

anguish, and confusion. Moustakas (1990) described Polanyi's concept of research as problem solving:

Solving a problem means finding one's way. Like swimming, skiing, or playing the piano, it requires practice. To be able to swim one must enter the water, and to become a problem solver one learns to solve problems. (p. 43)

The problem can be best expressed in the form of a question with the answer being the reason to seek new knowledge. Answering the question "What is the experience of leadership of spiritual superintendents?" entails a substantial amount of self-examination as well as some very thorough involvement with those who have chosen to be superintendents. To attempt to be absolutely lucid or impartial in this research would potentially make the knowledge of this investigation less significant to me as well as those who would be informed by the work. According to Moustakas (1990):

The heuristic process is a way of being informed, a way of knowing. Whatever presents itself in the consciousness of the investigator as a perception, sense, intuition, or knowledge represents an initiation for further elucidation. What appears, what shows itself as itself, casts a light that enables one to come to know more fully what something is and means. In such a process not only is knowledge extended but the self of the researcher is illuminated….From the beginning and throughout an investigation, heuristic research involves self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery; the research question and the methodology flow out inner awareness, meaning, and inspiration. (pp. 10-11)

Institutional Review Board Approval

After settling upon my question and research design, I organized a fundamental explanation of my research and submitted an application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Oklahoma for authorization to begin this research. Upon its return, I commenced with the initial stages of the interview process. The data collected are revealed in Chapter 4.

Methods of Collecting Data: Primary Researcher

The heuristic inquiry paradigm is a variation of qualitative phenomenological research but unambiguously recognized my participation as the chief researcher, to the extent that my lived experience became the main focus of the research. I feel passionate about the research question (West, 1998a, 1998b). The outcome of the heuristic process in terms of knowledge and experience was placed in the context of my own internal frame of reference, and not some external frame. Although heuristic inquiry can certainly involve the exploration of the experiences of co-researchers, it was an approach to research that primarily focused on my experience as a researcher. Moustakas (1990) described this unique approach to research:

> A process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis. The self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge….When I consider an issue, problem, or question, I enter into it fully . . . I may challenge, confront, or even doubt my understanding of a human concern or issue; but when I persist in a

disciplined and devoted way I ultimately deepen my knowledge of the

phenomenon….I am personally involved….I may be entranced by visions,

images, and dreams that connect me to my quest. I may come into touch with new

regions of myself, and discover revealing connections with others. (pp. 9-11)

The intensity of the imprint of my personal factors on the research design and

hence on data gathering may be correlated to the extent of my own dedication to "know

thyself." Therefore, my own embodiment of the attitudinal quality of genuineness,

maintaining a self-awareness and centeredness within my world and how it affects other

individuals, was vital in data collection.   I wanted to be able to sense the unity or

wholeness of something from an understanding of the individual qualities or parts and to

be able to distinguish between the focal (foreground) and the subsidiary (background). I

wanted to realize the potential of elements of perception that enter into conscious

awareness being careful not to curtail the tacit in research as it would limit the

possibilities of knowing. The knowledge I sought was derived and attained through tacit,

intuitive, or observed phenomena. It was deepened through processes of indwelling,

focusing, self-searching, and dialoguing with others.

For some individuals the heuristic search will be difficult and intimidating. Yet,

my position here was that by going through the heuristic process, however difficult or

intimidating, I was determined to capture and articulate my own personal experiences

despite perception. Consequently, I was able to comprehend clearly the foundation of my

opinions and actions. Heuristic inquiry is recognized as a procedure that will be used to

"tap into" my knowledge, be it tacit, intuitive or explicit, and is persistently connecting

back to an internal frame of reference based on my experiences, perceptions, thoughts,

feelings, and senses. I was open and honest since these two qualities were paramount for disclosure.

Methods of Collecting Data: Co-Researchers

In heuristic research I sought to discover other similar individual perceptions of the same phenomenon. Patton (1990) reported that "the researcher, then, comes to understand the essence of the phenomenon through shared reflection and inquiry with co-researchers as they also intensively experience and reflect on the phenomenon in question" (p. 72). To seek out interested individuals, I made my topic know to other superintendents while at work, at workshops, seminars, and in-services. Co-researchers were selected according to their enthusiasm, support, willingness to make the dedication, and the propensity to consider ambiguity and pronounce the experience (Moustakas, 1990). I searched for co-researchers who were open to the potentiality of representing their experiences and perceptions using non-traditional ways of knowing (e.g. poetry, dance, painting, drama, along with more conventional modes like speaking and writing). By truly experiencing the phenomenon myself, I would be able to connect with the co-researchers in a manner that would not be attainable if I had not personally experienced the phenomenon. A relationship of confidence and reciprocal understanding was fashioned between the co-researchers and myself (Moustakas, 1990).

In addition to myself, four other individuals met the criteria, however, one resigned from his position, completely leaving the educational profession. Attempts to contact one other possible candidate that was recommended as a result of the snowballing technique failed. The remaining individuals were male, over the age of 45, married, and had children. One had a doctorate degree while the other two were working on theirs.

One superintendent had just finished his fourth year, one had just finished his second year, and the other one was a rookie.

Throughout the interview process I was looking for similarities between my situation and the events in my co-researcher's journeys. The interview process facilitated gathering data by capturing the authentic words of the co-researchers. From the interviews, the data consisted of "direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 10). "Interviews…serve the purpose of enabling people to report information about themselves – about their life condition, beliefs, or attitudes" (R. Thomas & Brubaker, 2000, p. 149). For this study, these interviews were used as a method for allowing superintendents to report information about their professional lives, their leadership, and their views on spirituality.

A loose-question strategy was utilized in the preliminary interview with each superintendent. According to Thomas and Brubaker (2000), "the aim of a loose or broad question approach is to reveal the variable ways respondents interpret a general question" (p. 151). "Because the purpose of the study is to expose the extent of variability among individuals' interpretations" (Thomas and Brubaker, 2000, p. 151), I posed questions in general, open-ended form. These questions offered participants unrestricted freedom to tell their stories.

Consequently, a second interview was necessary utilizing a response-guided strategy. "A response-guided approach consists of the interviewer beginning with a prepared question, then spontaneously creating follow-up queries related to the interviewee's answer to the opening question" (Thomas and Brubaker, 2000, p. 152). These interviews were conducted to expound points made in the initial interview and to

distinguish ideas that surfaced within the responses of the superintendents. Because more than one interview was conducted and the transcripts were made available to the co-researchers for review and editing, a greater depth of information was obtained as a result. These interviews were a means of "collecting their (narrators') voice, their biographies and memories as a way of constructing history" (Errante, 2000, p. 24) of the superintendency. Burdell and Swadener (1999) stated:

> Personal narratives…have long been used in education to evoke perspective taking, compassion, and critique of prevailing 'common sense' assumptions and to problematize categories of difference….Among the strengths of personal narratives is their potential to fracture the artificial closure of discourse in education-related disciplines….These narratives can create a space for conversation, reflection, and critique. (p. 23)

By conducting interviews, it provided me an opportunity to collect first hand experience based on participants' experience and perceptions.

I contacted each prospective co-researcher by phone and offered a succinct introduction to the research and then arranged a conference to discuss the proposed research in further detail. Agreements were made to meet at a neutral site of their choosing. Cole (1991) stressed the significance of this preliminary meeting to both "set the tone for subsequent encounters…to provide the participant with as much information about the project as possible" (p. 192). I did not expect the co-researchers to make a decision about participating in the research during the first meeting; however, they both did. For the purpose of confidentially, each co-researcher was given a pseudonym to conceal his identity. Pseudonyms were also used to conceal locations and facilities. I

94

didn't conduct the study in their schools because I didn't seek institutional consent. I

didn't observe the superintendents' actions at school, as I didn't believe they would

contribute to significance of this study. I trusted in their self-reporting as I did in my own.

I established myself to the co-researchers primarily as a learner and graduate

student. Next, I introduced myself as someone who comprehended the role of

superintendent being one himself. This preface offered a sense of my personal effort to

"understanding the language and culture of the respondents" (Fontana and Frey, 2000, p.

654).

As interviews and the transcription of tapes from the interviews were completed,

the process of analysis and reporting began. The goal was to examine the reflections and

narratives of the superintendents. In order to achieve this goal, the analysis of data was

focused on issues rather than on cases. This approach to analysis concerned "itself with

what could be learned about specific issues – or events or processes – from any and all

respondents" (Weiss, 1994, p. 153). Weiss believed that "an issue-focused description is

likely to move from discussion of issues within one area to discussion within another,

with each area logically connected to the other" (p. 154).

The interview tapes were translated verbatim. Each written transcription was

edited for permanence and to eradicate verbiage, while at the same time preserving the

thoughts and perspectives of the co-researchers. Each co-researcher was allowed to

review my findings as they pertain to each of them, which served as a cross-validation

technique for accuracy, allowing them the opportunity to develop fully their thoughts and

feelings. They read the transcripts for accuracy, checking for "sensitive topics" (Renzetti

and Lee, 1993). Any sensitive topic discovered during this process was excluded from the transcripts or was disguised in some way.

<div align="center">Analysis of Data</div>

This research was directed by the six phases of heuristic research as outline by Moustakas (1990). The six phases included initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis.

Initial engagement assesses my autobiography and compels me to encounter myself. The question for this research was formed in this phase and is the basis for understanding its underlying meanings. Moustakas (1990) stated:

> The initial engagement invites self-dialogue, an inner search to discover the topic and question. During this process one encounters the self, one's autobiography, and significant relationships within a social context….During the initial engagement, the investigator reaches inward for tacit awareness and knowledge, permitting intuition to run freely, and elucidates the context from which the question takes form and significance. (p.27)

The question remained within me as I anticipated the regimented obligation that disclosed its fundamental meanings from within the gamut of life experiences and perceptions. I filtered and developed knowledge of the subject matter and illuminated the terms of the question. I reached inward for tacit awareness and knowledge, permitting intuition to run liberally, and elucidated the context from which the question took form and significance.

The immersion phase occurred after the question was formulated. I have lived the question in waking, sleeping, and even dream states. Absolutely everything in my life was crystallized around the question. "The immersion process enables the researcher to

come to be on intimate terms with the question—to live it and grow in knowledge and understanding of it" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28).

I was attentive to every possibility and the significance of conversations I had with other individuals every time the subject matter was expressed or talked about-in public settings, in social contexts, or in professional meetings. Practically everything associated with the question became crude data for immersion, for staying with, and for preserving a continual focus and concentration. People, places, meetings, reading, and nature-all offered possibilities for understanding the phenomenon. Primary concepts for assisting the immersion process included spontaneous self-dialogue and self-searching, tracking intuitive clues or hunches, and drawing from the unknown and sources of energy and knowledge within the tacit dimension (Moustakas, 1990).

A retrospective assessment of my own research processes exposed something fascinating; I had been spontaneously engaged in the heuristic methodology process even as I was questioning it. For example, as I have already described, I was consciously immersed in my topic as I have already followed several different paths that have branched out in front of me. Each topic that was discovered along the journey lead to a new topic until the final question was asked, "How do rural school superintendents' perceptions of spirituality influence their leadership activities?" The interest in my research question became more intense during the last two years while serving as a superintendent. The entirety of these paths is disclosed within the text of Chapter 4.

The incubation phase took place when I withdraw from absolute immersion in the question and concentrated on tacit knowing and intuition. "Although the researcher is moving on a totally different path, detached from involvement with the question and

removed from awareness of its nature and meanings, on another level expansion of

knowledge is taking place (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). I was no longer engrossed in the

topic in any direct way or alerted to circumstances, people, or property that enhanced an

understanding of the phenomenon. Growth was occurring which allowed for "the inner

workings of the tacit dimension and intuition to continue to clarify and extend

understandings on levels outside of immediate awareness" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29).

Tacit knowledge is the capacity to feel the mood, ether, or atmosphere of an

environment or person. Tacit knowledge bridges meaning from vague and formless

insights (Moustakas, 1990). Intuition allowed me the ability to draw conclusions without

all of the facts and data. For example, an individual is trying to recall frantically a name,

an expression, or date and cannot while they are active in the process of recollection. Yet

when they move away and concentrate on something else, they finally remember.

Moustakas further explained:

> Incubation is a process in which a seed has been planted; the seed undergoes
>
> silent nourishment, support, and care that produces a creative awareness of some
>
> dimension of a phenomenon or a creative integration of its parts and qualities. (p.
>
> 29)

Since the conception of this study, circumstances, administrative problems, and

untimely illnesses have pulled my full and undivided attention away from my question. A

rather lengthy period of incubation occurred when I moved from the Leo Francis School

District to Greater Valley Schools when I accepted the position of superintendent. All

free time was spent actively engaged in daily preparation, as I was once again learning-

on-the-job as a rookie superintendent. When I was able to return to working on my

dissertation, it was common that my interests had either changed or the time away had allowed mental rest and I was more energized to continue to pursue the question and its elusive answers.

An additional illustration of this aspect would be moving away from the question of "why the co-researcher became a superintendent," and permitting my unconscious mind to take over. At the conclusion of this germination stage, lucid insights have expanded. The germination stage was comparable to the insight one has in viewing it again when well rested. The complication or quandary that seems overpowering when exhausted may seem inconsequential when well rested. The process of germination permitted tacit knowledge to grow in the unconscious mind.

The Illumination phase transpired when I become cognizant of a new expression of understanding of the question through the acquiescent mind when "the researcher is open and receptive to tacit knowledge and intuition. The illumination as such was a breakthrough into conscious awareness of qualities and a clustering of qualities into themes inherent in the question" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29). Illumination can embroil tweaking of vague understandings or disclosure of hidden meanings. If I am in an approachable state of mind without conscious striving or concentration, the insight or modification can occur. During this phase reflection was essential, but the mystery of situations required tacit workings to uncover meanings and essences. Illumination opened the door to new perceptions, altered old understandings, mixed disjointed data, and revealed an altogether new discovery of something that was present of some time yet beyond immediate awareness. It is the "aha" or "eureka" part of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990; Patton, 1990).

99

The explication phase allowed me to analyze fully what had been stimulated in consciousness as I commenced to position the pieces of the puzzle collectively. By searching for pieces and gazing at the image of the completed puzzle, I had a mental picture of what the completed outcome could be. "Once illumination relevant to themes, qualities, and components of a topic or question occurs, the heuristic researcher enters into a process of explication….to fully examine what has awakened in consciousness, in order to understand its various layers of meaning" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31).

I utilized focusing, indwelling, self-searching, and self-disclosure to understand that meanings are unique and unique to an experience and depended upon internal frames of reference (Moustakas, 1990). I had to pay attention to my own awareness, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and judgments as a prelude to the understanding that was derived from conversations and dialogues with other individuals. I brought together discoveries of meaning and organized them into a comprehensive depiction of the essences of the experiences and perceptions.

Creative synthesis is the final phase of heuristic research where all of the data blends together to form the major constituents, qualities, and themes and in the explication of the meanings and details of the experience as whole (Moustakas, 1990). Creative synthesis can only be accomplished through tacit and intuitive powers. I have mastered the knowledge of the material that illuminated and explicated the question. I have put the components and the core themes into a creative synthesis as a narrative depiction utilizing verbatim material from the co-researchers and my autobiography.

The phases of a heuristic research model as acknowledged by Moustakas and summarized above emulated a problem-solving process. This is logical, for heuristics is

problem solving. The heuristic process pursued meaning in experiences, conceded the answers are within the individual, and were searched for there. As Polanyi (1966) concurred:

> The capacity to know a problem is the most striking instance of our powers to integrate the meaning of a set of particulars by fixing our attention on a gap behind which we anticipate the presence of yet hidden knowledge. (p.170)

And so it is with ethics, for in every ethical or moral situation was a problem and the knowledge necessary to fully apprehend and understand the problem. Every heuristic search begins with a question that will lead to further questions and occasionally a poem such as the one that follows:

> I looked back on yesterday,
>
> To reflect upon memories and perceptions I hold so near.
>
> From my past my being has emerged,
>
> The reasons are now so apparent.
>
> It is the sharing of those experiences and perceptions,
>
> With my peers that I must overcome the apprehension,
>
> Of not being accepted for who I have become.

<u>Conclusion</u>

I began this chapter by summarizing the need for a research that seeks to answer my research question. Then I briefly summarized how this quest developed. After explaining the development of the heuristic research method, Moustakas' research design was explicated. The population of this study was described and I presented my procedures for gathering and analyzing my data. Lastly, my method for presenting the

creative synthesis of the data was discussed. The goal of this research was to gain,

through the method of heuristic inquiry, a deeper understanding of how spirituality

influences the leadership activities of rural school superintendents.

Chapter 4

Many administrators have challenged themselves to analyze the practices of other administrators who have received special recognition by either their peers or by the accomplishments of their schools in attempts to ascertain the keys of their leadership. By creating an opportunity for open dialogue between the co-researchers and myself, it is my aspiration and hope that by divulging the reciprocal sum of our life experiences and perceptions this research will engender perception, pursuing elements of tranquility, clarity, and completion. Each co-researcher was given a pseudonym to protect their identities and location. The presentation of data commences with three vignettes, written in first person, that describe how spirituality influences the leadership activities of rural school superintendents. The participants' words are indented to foreground their voices. Additional information that supports the quotes, but are not the participants' own words are not indented. I made these distinctions to facilitate the reading of the vignettes, and ensure that the co-researcher's own words are easily identifiable. The first vignette is my personal autobiography followed by two individual vignettes of "Mark" and "Mike." Each vignette incorporated applicable verbatim statements and vivid examples of the experience. We tell our stories by remembering incidents, thoughts, and feelings that evoked deep emotions and traumatic recollections. These vignettes comprehensively describe our experiences and perceptions of how spirituality influences our leadership as rural school superintendents.

<u>My Personal Experiences</u>

Looking back on the events of the past fifteen years, I can not help but wonder if I am the only person who has been drawn to the position of superintendent through

a series of mysterious, spiritual, life-transforming experiences that could not be circumvented. Are there others who were driven by unconventional motivations, who felt called to becoming a superintendent as they found themselves obsessed to follow a persuasive sense of spiritual guidance?

I am amazed to find myself enthusiastically doing things I had never thought about before, like praying daily for my students, parents, staff, and occasionally with individuals in private. I find myself talking about God on a regular basis with the members of my staff as well as members from the community. At administrative meetings with other superintendents, the conversations are finding their way to discussions about being led by God.

During the 2003 Oklahoma State Department of Education Summer Leadership Conference in Oklahoma City, the State Department of Education Superintendent Sandy Garrett proclaimed, "In times of need we must all look to God for answers." Oklahoma schools, during this time, were subjected to severe budgets cuts and the unfunded federal mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). A year later at the same conference, the Superintendent stated:

While the year we last met hasn't been all rainbows, the sun is beginning to shine. The financial storm has subsided for the moment and 'working in the rain' isn't as exhausting as it once was. Every day, I thank God for the many blessings we enjoy in our schools, in Oklahoma, in America, and in the world. (Garrett, 2004)

Oklahoma schools had begun to recover as more funding had become available and the financial outlook seemed brighter.

I overheard a first year superintendent give credit to God for providing an

opportunity to grow and prosper with his family in his new community. As I

attend these meetings I am discovering that there are others who, like me, are

crediting their current leadership position as a result of spiritual guidance.

"Your philosophy of education is based on your philosophy of life. What you

believe about yourself, about others, and about life infuses and determines your

philosophy of education" (Morrison, 2001, p. 13). Educators typically share their beliefs

through their behaviors, such as discussions with other teachers, curriculum

considerations, and grading practices (Witcher et al., 2001).

The time has come to tell of my own transformation in such a way that will speak

to the spirit and compassion of other narratives, which are apprehensively

yearning to be disclosed. I am aware that by revealing my story I must reflect

upon my own suffering. I must set the example that I am asking others to follow

as I familiarize myself with the process of self-disclosure.

According to Patton (1990), "The uniqueness of heuristic inquiry is the extent to

which it legitimizes and places at the fore (the) personal experiences, reflections, and

insights of the researchers" (p.72). Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath (1999) conceptualizes

the suggestion that God sows a seed of destiny deep within our souls:

The seed starts out small—so small it may go unnoticed or ignored for years. But

it is there nonetheless, planted by God to remind us that there is something more

to our lives that meets the eye. Just as a vine bears its flowers and then its fruit

(and some thorns along the way), so our seed can unfold, following more and

more of God's intended plan and purpose for our lives—our destiny. (p. 16)

It has been an incredible journey, but all journeys have a fair share of roadblocks, detours, and potholes.

Zinsser (1999) reports that "faith is the adrenaline of every spiritually inclined writer" (p. 17). He inquires:

Why was I the chosen witness? Mathematically, the odds favored my being there; writers who go on spiritual quests put themselves in a position to observe spiritual transactions. But I would argue that God—a God who wants to make sure His best stories get told, put me there. (p. 9)

I did not set out on this life-long journey thinking I would become a superintendent of a small rural school district leading by spiritual faith, but yet, here I am. Vince Lombardi is often credited with the expression acknowledging leaders aren't born, they're made. This study is not an argument pitting nature verses nurture, although both will be discussed.

In Bennis' (1989) research with 29 leaders, he determined that individuals have a tendency not to be leaders but live their lives and be themselves. In that process their leadership surfaces and their gifts and skills develop.

As I seek answers for meaning and the origin of my trek to become a superintendent, I must start in the middle of my life when I was subjected to the darkest of days.

Wheatley (2002) describes these periods of chaos as "dark nights of the soul." She says in our contemporary culture, these periods are called "clinical depressions. Every human being endures crucial losses and reversals, such as the passing away of a

loved one, loss of a favorite pet, business collapse or the discovery of an incurable illness (Minirth & Meier, 1994).

I had the misfortune of suffering through every one of these significant occurrences.

According to Thrall et al. (1999) God uses the entirety of our life experiences, both good and bad, to shape and fashion each of us exclusively toward particular purposes and goals for our lives. Leadership is found within our daily schedule—the decisions we make, the associations we select and nurture, how we apply and distribute our power. Mitroff and Denton (1999b) defines spirituality as one's desire to find definitive meaning in life and to live accordingly. Delbecq (1999) describes this desire that rages within me a "calling" that adds vitality and purpose to the leadership journey. Historically, vast numbers of US educators have seen themselves as "called" (Mayes, 2001). This journey is a calling to service, not simply a career, but a spiritual journey that allows and encourages the individual to bring the "private life of spirit" to the "public life" of work (Delbecq, 1999). History is filled with narratives about ordinary individuals who do astonishing things. In conquering suffering and grief they awaken their spirits and give them to others (L. G. Bolman & Deal, 2001).

> As used in Dr. Seuss's book, Oh the Places You'll Go, life's journey doesn't always follow a straight and predictable path. Seuss referred to the journey as the Great Balancing Act comparing it to life itself, full of ups and downs. Throughout Seuss's poem, a theme of encouragement to find the success that lies within the traveler is present. This is my story, full of its ups and downs and the resulting

experiences that were obtained as a result of having the courage and faith to continue the journey. Seuss's poem will be intertwined within the following text.

December 8, 1990 was a cold and lonely day. I was so tired of feeling sorry for myself. It had been an eternity since I was truly happy. On this day I was to have surgery to have both knee joints replaced. During the previous year I witnessed the passing of both of my parents due to complications of tobacco and alcohol abuse. I was audited by the Internal Revenue Service and levied a hefty fine. Now I will be classified as a handicapped person the rest of my life. My old life is over with a new one about to begin. I found myself drowning in my own pool of self-pity.

Mitchell (2000) asserts there would be times of confrontation and contradictions between what I had assumed my life to be and what it was to become. "It can either be a time of rich and unexpected blessings, or a time of painful doubt, anxiety, or guilt" (p. 181). Psychiatrists Minirth and Meier (1994) state:

Our genetic make-up does have an enormous effect on our intellectual and emotional potentials, but our degree of wisdom and happiness as adults is not predetermined genetically (as some would like to think). Most human depression is the result of our own irresponsible behavior—our own irresponsible handling of our anger and guilt. (p. 46)

On December 9, my wife Marsha received a phone call notifying her that her grandfather passed away. She and the rest of my family left to attend the funeral, leaving me alone to recover and ponder as a notion, perhaps a plan for

self-renewal began to formulate in my brain. Still out of focus, I started to sense the importance of this moment as hope within me began to resurface again.

I remembered the young teenager whom I had met the summer before last. He had confided in me that his parents were getting a divorce, blaming him for all of their struggles. We had talked at great length about how my parents had treated me the same way. I tried to convey to him that he should focus his time and energies on other matters of interest. According to Fullan's book, *Leading in a Culture of Change*, this would be my first attempt at acquiring a moral purpose as I was acting with the intent of making a positive difference in this young man's life. Tragically, he committed suicide a few days later. After I had dismissed the sorrow that pursued the unpleasant memory I began to question if there was something else I could have said or done to prevent his untimely death. Perhaps, my thoughts might be better spent on how I can make a difference now. What can I do now to help teenagers just like him who are crying out for help?

I was so bitter with all that had recently transpired. But yet, God must have been listening as my head was filled with only one thought. While under the influence of pain medication a 'voice' spoke from within. I was to become a teacher so I could reach out to troubled kids every day. Was it God's voice speaking to me? I didn't attend church services on a regular basis. I wasn't a very religious person and I did not lead a prayerful life. However, I was still excited about the possibility of working with children regardless of whom or what was responsible for the 'voice' inside my head. I couldn't wait to tell my wife about

my decision but it would have to wait until her return from PaPa Yandell's

funeral.

Killen and de Beer (2002) declare the choices we make everyday about living will have a

considerable impact not only for ourselves but future generations and the planet on which

we walk on.

Congratulations!

Today is your day.

You're off to Great Places!

You're off and away!

You have brains in your head.

You have feet in your shoes.

You can steer yourself

any direction you choose.

You're on your own. And you know what you know.

And YOU are the guy who'll decide where to go. (Seuss, 1990, pp. 1-2)

I told my family, my friends, and myself that if God had truly wanted me to be a

teacher I would have to get an 'A' in class in order to pursue this spiritually

influenced notion. After all, I wasn't truly convinced that it was God that had

spoken to me. I enrolled in an eight-week general psychology course at a local

junior college. After making below 70% on the first two tests, the closer the final

came the more I realized that I might not reach my goal of the 'A.' In fact, when

the final was handed out, I had to make a 99% to fulfill a possible destiny. I was

nervous. At the conclusion of the test I handed it in while shaking my head

showing my lack of confidence. I went home in utter disgust and disbelief. What

was I going to do now? Obviously I wasn't going to be teaching anytime soon.

You'll look up and down streets. Look 'em over with care.

About some you will say, 'I don't choose to go there.'

With your head full of brains and your shoes full of feet,

you're too smart to go down any not-so-good street. (Seuss, 1990, p. 4)

And when things start to happen,

don't worry. Don't stew.

Just go right along.

You'll start happening too. (Seuss, 1990, p. 9)

Much to my amazement I received an 'A' and on January 10, 1994, I walked into

a classroom as a student teacher. I felt just as awkward and out-of-place as I did

when I was student in the same classroom twenty-two years earlier. I wondered

how many of them had alcoholic parents as I had. I wondered how many waited

nightly for their parents to come home after midnight. I wondered how many of

them were made fun of by their peers; unfortunately, I did not have to wait long

as one young man was obviously the target of the classroom's bullies. As I sat

there, I became deeply saddened by the fact that much had not changed in the

classroom. I had so hoped that I was the last of my kind.

According to Darling-Hammond (1997) nearly 25% of students living in the United

States suffer from poverty and violence. Darling-Hammond asserted that students who

experience a wide array of stresses in their homes and neighborhoods can be found in

practically every classroom In fact, public schools, in general, are no worse today than before (Glickman, 1993).

Before the end of my first day I soon realized that none of the educational training or methods courses that I had taken prior to that point could prepare me to be the kind of teacher and administrator that I was about to become. The students were about take over my instruction and I was about to become be their student.

Before the end of my first week, my mentor tossed me his set of keys to the classroom, indicating he was going to get a fresh cup of coffee and would return shortly. I was not yet ready. I had not prepared a lesson. I did not know where his lesson plan books or answer guides were located. Within minutes after my mentor left the students began to throw crumpled paper, pencils, combs, and spit-wads across the room. I 'ordered' them to stop and to open their books and to start reading, but many of them had left their books at home, in their locker, or had lost them before Christmas break. Through all the chaos, time slipped quietly by and the dismissal bell had rung. As the seventh graders exited the room I stood there in total disbelief. As soon as the last student was gone, I quickly picked up the debris that was tossed all over the floor. I knew in order to be successful I had to discover a way to reach them in a manner that would hold their attention indefinitely and invoke learning.

After two weeks my mentor, Mr. Roach, a member of the Army Reserves, left on a mission of mercy to Central American for an eight-week tour of duty. The school hired a substitute to baby-sit me while I completed my student teaching for the remainder of the term. At my suggestion, I encouraged the

substitute to leave and enjoy reading his newspaper in the teachers' work lounge. At least if I screwed up, no one would know. I saw this as an opportunity to do whatever I wanted. The first thing I did was rearrange the room in order to be more functional. Several veteran teachers came by to express their concern about the change. I assured them I would move everything back if Mr. Adams insisted that it be changed back.

I began to listen to student conversations at times other than during class. I heard sadness, loneliness, anger, hatred, racism, and vulgarities by the hundreds. From all of these conversations, never once did I here anyone talk about school pride or school spirit. I began to make posters and banners with famous quotes and hung them in and outside of the classroom. I would misspell neighboring rival school names to evoke a laugh or smile. Students began to take notice of my unusual antics and began to respond better in class. I could see that the 'walls' were coming down. I could see the real opportunities for learning were about to occur.

During the next two months a great time of sharing and exchanging ideas took place. My remaining time passed too quickly as Mr. Roach came back in time to close out the year. He was shocked to see his room but would not allow me to change it back. In fact, he complimented me on being a 'risk taker' by taking the initiative to change the room without asking. He said, 'It is always better to ask for forgiveness than ask for permission.' I thanked him, said my good-byes to the students, and left for my own graduation.

OH!

THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!

You'll be on your way up!

You'll be seeing great sights!

You'll join the high flyers

who soar to high heights.

You won't lag behind, because you'll have the speed.

You'll pass the whole gang and you'll soon take the lead.

Wherever you fly, you'll be the best of the best.

Wherever you go, you will top all the rest. (Seuss, 1990, pp. 11-15)

I was hired to teach English at the same beloved school on June 15, 1994. It was the first best day of my professional career as an educator. My tool bag was full of personal stories to tell and I was ready to teach. Maybe it was God that had been that 'voice' inside of my head.

We all have crucial moments when we come to a realization, often unexpectedly, that our educational practices are lacking to some extent. One such realization came to me during August 1995, when a student was late to class because she said her locker was broken. I was having a bad day for a multitude of reasons so I took some of my frustrations out on her by yelling and accusing her of lying. I'm thinking how this can be since I personally changed all of the combinations myself. I knew for a fact they were all in perfect working order. As I was yelling, a sea of innocent adolescent faces had turned into a sea of horrified expressions. I further complicated matters by challenging her to prove to the class

114

and myself that her locker was indeed broken. As a group, we proceeded to her locker and I asked her to open it with my precise instructions. To my amazement, and my amazement only, her locker would not open. Of course, I could open it or so I thought, but I couldn't. I asked another student to try to the combination and she failed as well. Almost immediately several others students had the courage to report that their lockers were just as broken.

Then it hit me. I had become the one thing I feared the most. I had responded in anger just as my father had done so many times with me as a child. Yet, there I stood, a spitting image of an angry, bitter man, thinking this was the one thing I had sworn to never to do. I had suffered so many times, so many brutal physical and mental attacks due to his reoccurring forgetful drunken ways.

I'm sorry to say so

but, sadly, it's true

that Bang-ups

and Hang-ups

can happen to you. (Seuss, 1990, p. 17)

I did the only thing I could think of at the time. I apologized to her in front of her peers. I apologized to her classmates remembering how badly I wanted my father to apologize to me when I was right and he knew he was wrong. I gave her a hug and whispered in her ear again that I was truly sorry. I told my students that I would confront the administration until the locker problems had been solved. Whether it was because of my efforts or plans to replace the lockers had already been considered, the lockers were replaced the following summer.

From that day forward, I made a decree to each of my students. I told them I would never knowingly or intentionally lie to them. I would always tell the truth and give as much information as I legally could. I would open up a doorway of trust between the students and myself and expect them to be able to walk through it as well. I told them they could always come to me with a problem. I will always be a defender of student rights. If I am wrong I will sincerely offer an apology, but I expect the same in return. I will respect opinions, comments, concerns, and feelings, as I would expect everyone to do the same with mine. I said these things sincerely and respectfully. I looked at every individual standing in front of me, making eye contact with each one of them to signify the importance of this special bond.

This one incredible teachable moment has been permanently captured on my mind. Resolution of this observed situation came through an understanding of the students' problems, their desired goals, and acting, by some radical steps, to adjust the manner in which I perceived them as well as myself. This is a practice I still continue to this day. I now make the same statements to parents, teachers, and school board members. The doorway of trust was wide open now and the current of confidences began to flow like a raging river. My students were starting to write profoundly and personably. I read their cries of anguish and horror in as they spoke out in written expression. Several students came into my classroom before or after school to utter a word of thanks for being there for them. Some even said I was making a difference in their lives as well as the school and not to change or get discouraged. I was making a difference and it felt so good.

According to Cherry (1983), trust and sincerity are the cornerstones of change. Students learn at a very young age to mistrust adults because of what they see modeled at home, on the television, and unfortunately at the school where they attend. Cherry further states:

Teachers must be extremely careful not to make promises that they may not be able to keep, and they must keep the promises they make. If an emergency or unforeseen circumstance prevents you from keeping your promise on occasion, acknowledge that fact and apologize for it. By the tone of your voice, your expression, and your gestures and posture, you will impart sincerity and honesty, thus sustaining and increasing mutual trust. (p. 29)

During December 1996, a meeting was held at the local board of education office. Every teacher was invited to learn information about a condensed master's program directed by the Educational Administration Curriculum and Supervision (EACS) Department at the University of Oklahoma. I did not attend because I was too busy coaching and had no desire to leave the classroom. It was only after I was accused of being a 'wuss' by another coach who had signed up that I took interest. I didn't think I would have the time and energy to devote any additional time to this program. Conversely, if he can do it, so can I. Besides, whether or not I ever became an administrator my family would enjoy the benefits of the additional income a Master's of Education Degree would bring to our household budget.

In June 1997, I enrolled in Dr. Sally Zepeda's supervision class along with 31 other administrative cohort graduate students from Delmid Schools. As we sat

there and listened to the discussion, I was thinking the responses were varied and dissimilar. After silently summarizing the comments, I raised my hand to seek clarification. I wanted to make sure that I knew what it was that I was supposed to know. After a brief pause, Dr. Zepeda said, 'Mr. Moody. I have been watching you. You sit back there, listening, taking it all in, and summarizing the dialog while adding a personal experience to support your understanding. I can tell that you are a reflective practitioner.'

I had no idea what a reflective practitioner was, but by the way she smiled and acted as if it was an important characteristic to have, I sat a lot taller in my chair for the remainder of class. I couldn't help but wonder what a reflective practitioner was. I was so intrigued by it that it became a personal quest to discover its meaning. Little did I know at that time that my quest would become vital part of a life-long journey. As I dove head first into the Internet searching for reflective practioner I became aware of a process of thinking that I had unknowingly been practicing as early in my childhood as my scant memories could recall.

In May 1998, I asked my junior high principal a simple question, 'Mr. MacArthur how do you know when you are ready to become a principal?' After a short pause, he looked at me and answered, 'When it feels right, just jump in feet first. Don't worry about failure. You are an excellent teacher; your enthusiasm for teaching will be carried over into your new role as an administrator. Always keep the children first and you will go far.' Shortly a few weeks later Mr. MacArthur

retired from the district leaving me to wonder who could replace a man that I had

so admired.

> You'll come down from the Lurch
>
> with an unpleasant bump.
>
> And the chances are, then,
>
> that you'll be in a Slump.
>
> And when you're in a Slump,
>
> you're not in for much fun.
>
> Un-slumping yourself
>
> is not easily done. (Seuss, 1990, pp. 17-18)

The next school year, 1998-1999, was full of many disappointments, illnesses,

and disasters. The new administrator came in like a refreshing breath of fresh air,

only to leave a stale taste in my mouth. I told my wife in December that

something was not working right with my body. In March I had my gall bladder

removed. The surgery was successful but the recovery process took longer than

expected, as I did not return to work until May. On May 3, the worst tornado in

Oklahoma history left its destructive mark destroying a number of homes within

the school district. I returned to the classroom two weeks later only to discover I

would not be the head football coach the following year. My time off left me

feeling totally disconnected from the students I had come to love. Had my love

for teaching faded as well? Was I suffering from a mid-life crisis?

Brandes (1985) suggests that individuals, close to the age of 40, begin to question

and reassess their careers after life-changing events have occurred.

My 40th birthday was just a few short months away. In August 1999, I began the next leg of my life-long journey as I entered the doctorate cohort program at the University of Oklahoma. When this process started, I was not even sure what I was doing was research. Fortunately, I discovered in a qualitative class with Dr. Courtney Vaughn that my quest for understanding could be characterized as heuristic inquiry. Discovering the 1990 work of Clark Moustakas, I immediately acknowledged the phases of engagement, immersion, incubation, and illumination in my own work.

> You will come to a place where the streets are not marked.
>
> Some windows are lighted. But mostly they're darked.
>
> A place you could sprain both your elbow and chin!
>
> Do you dare to stay out? Do you dare to go in?
>
> How much can you lose? How much can you win?
>
> And *IF* you go in, should you turn left or right…
>
> or right-and-three-quarters? Or, maybe, not quite?
>
> Or go around back and sneak in from behind?
>
> Simple it's not, I'm afraid you will find,
>
> for a mind-maker-upper to make up his mind. (Seuss, 1990, pp. 20-21)

At the same time that I entered the doctorate cohort program I found myself leaving the large suburban school district to accept a position of high school principal at Leo Francis High School, a small rural school district in the southwest part of the United States.

As individuals change careers, they also change roles, which consist of a collection of behaviors characteristic of an individual in a given context (Biddle, 1979).

My wife and two children did not make the move. Marsha continued to teach second grade while my son, Rob and my daughter, Rachel continued to attend school with their friends. I was provided a place of residence as a part of my benefit package. The house was very old, in disrepair, and termite infested. It was sufficient since I only needed overnight accommodations Tuesdays and Thursdays as I commuted the rest of the week so I could continue to attend evening graduate classes.

In the beginning, starting a new job created so much excitement that time flew by. I had become somewhat stale as a teacher. I rather enjoyed driving back and forth. It was as if I had never really left home. During the morning drive I was able to plan my day and during the evening drive I was able to reflect on the days events deciding what I should or should not do the next day. I knew that as an inexperienced principal I would face many trials trying to fit into the existing rural school organization. I needed to maintain my individuality so that I could contribute successfully to the growth and development of the school. I had no prior administrative experience, only a beginning understanding of applicable content related to administration as represented by coursework and a principal internship.

Unlike the suburban school I had left where there was an administrative staff of three including one principal and two assistant principals, I soon discovered that most rural school districts generally have only one administrator

in the building other than the superintendent. The principal is responsible for handling every facet of school operations such as curriculum, teacher evaluations, discipline, and attending all after-school functions and activities. A suburban principal with additional assistants is able to delegate some of these responsibilities and may not have as much control or contact with the staff, parents, or students on a regular basis.

> You can get so confused
>
> that you'll start into race
>
> down long wiggled roads at break-necking pace
>
> and grind on for miles across weirdish wild space,
>
> headed, I fear, toward a most useless place.
>
> The Waiting Place... (Seuss, 1990, p. 23)

Soon after I was hired I quickly discovered that rural schools were very unique. I was given the keys to the building and expected to be successful without being provided any assistance or support. New principals learn much about their position not in university courses, but daily as they deal with the complexities of school. The superintendent of Leo Francis Public Schools, Mr. Cotton was a very intensive and high-strung individual that would occasionally display uncontrollable fits of anger. I began to notice that these fits would generally occur the day after the local school board meeting. In an attempt to soften Mr. Cotton, I regularly invited him to dinner and a movie. It seemed that a friendly but semi-professional relationship was beginning to develop as his outbursts discontinued.

In January 2000, I was confronted by two high school students stating that Mr. Cotton was sleeping with my secretary, Sally. I quickly denied the romance, assuring the students this was not the case. The school board rehired Mr. Cotton earlier that month; however, once news about the affair had spread throughout the community a special board meeting had been called to fire him for his recent improper actions. I was also told that the school board was pleased with my leadership, to keep up the good work, and not to be intimidated by what was about to happen.

Mr. Cotton was asked to resign (or get fired) effective at the end of the school year. He decided to resign, with the understanding that he would not become a lame duck superintendent. Unfortunately, this was not the case. Mr. Cotton spent most of his time putting together employment packets and conferring with his attorney about what legal actions he could take against the district. When he was not in his office, he would openly court Sally in the school car.

Just when I thought it could not get worse, it did. While eating lunch in my office, the P.E. teacher, Devin came in to express his impatience with a student who was slow to take off his hat when he entered the building. I explained to him that some of our students are forgetful and need to be gently reminded. He responded by saying, 'These kids don't want to learn. They will never amount to anything. We have no good students. It is so frustrating to be a teacher here. We get no support from the administration.'

I put down my chicken strip and replied, 'Devin, all of our students are good, just some are just better than others. You do not need to place such emphasis on how quickly the boys remove their hats when they enter the building. We have a school board member, Brandon, who never removes his hat when he is here especially during board meetings. I am thankful the students make an effort.' Just then the Mr. Cotton walked in and announced the parent of the boy in question, Allen, had requested an immediate parent-teacher conference to take place in my office. He left again, only to return with Allen. Allen explained that his son had informed him that Devin had struck his head while trying to remove his hat. Allen said, 'I am damn tired of the abuse my son goes through every day with this teacher. He has never liked me or my son. He acts as if he is better than both us. He has been that way ever since we moved here years ago. I am sick of it and I want it stopped!'

Devin responded by saying, 'Your boy never listens to me. He is so disrespectful. I did not touch him, only his hat.' Allen, while leaning against the closed office door with his arms crossed against his chest refuted, 'Mr. Moody this is bull sh--. I saw him do it. He was hiding behind the pop machine like he always does waiting for my son. If he says he didn't hit my son, well that is a mother f---ing lie.' Suddenly Devin lunged toward Allen and started to strike his face with both fists. Allen stood there and did not strike back; instead, he tried to cover his face with his forearms. Soon Allen's gray hair floated on to the floor into large piles.

Allen's son, Greg was standing behind my desk; he leaped across knocking off my computer and desk pad onto the floor in an effort to assist his dad. He put Devin in a headlock until he screamed, 'I give up! Stop, you are choking me. I can't breathe. Let go.' Mr. Cotton wrestled the boy away and ordered Devin to go home as he was suspended for fighting. He instructed Allen to call the sheriff's office and file a complaint. A special board meeting was called for a due process hearing to establish cause to terminate Allen on the grounds of moral turpitude. The school board met and ruled in favor of termination. Allen filed for a trial de novo in district court.

While sitting in the office taking a break from ongoing turmoil, the encumbrance clerk, Kathie and Tom, the janitor, and I began discussing the recent events. Somehow the discussion turned to religion and whether or not I prayed for guidance. Both employees told me to put my full trust in God and that He would help me get through all of this. They encouraged me to pray on a regular basis and suggested I start to listen to BOT, a Christian radio network, that offered words of encourage and ongoing Bible study. I followed their advice and began to listen to the radio station daily, especially when I traveled to and from the rural district, which was 200 miles round-trip. I learned a lot about Jesus and how he could help me be a better leader. I learned how, when, and what to pray for. The more I prayed the less insecure I felt.

In February 2000, another special board meeting was held. We eventually had six special meetings in all. The school board asked the superintendent to clear out his office and never set foot on campus again. I was asked to step in as 'acting

superintendent' until a replacement was found. By this time, I was praying

regularly, as I wanted out of this crazy district. I began to read the Sunday paper

searching the classified section for administrative openings. I began to say, 'I will

be where I am supposed to be in August.' I wanted to believe that God, because of

prayer, would relocate me and I would become happy again. The next few months

my search for self-direction, motivation, and a style of leadership that was more

in tune with a rural school district accelerated as I was trying desperately to

reestablish my sense of value and worth.

Manz (1991) calls this process self-leadership while others like Krishnakumar and Neck

(2002) have called it spirituality.

I had a difficult task ahead and I needed to build some self-confidence and

optimism; it couldn't get any worse.

This means putting an emphasis on optimistic, cheerful thoughts and shunning

pessimistic, unenthusiastic ones (Manz, 1991).

From March until the trial in July, several members of the community visited me

to express either their joy or displeasure in light of the recent events. The entire

volunteer fire department squeezed their way into my tiny office to voice their

collective disgust. I just sat there not knowing what to say or do so I silently

prayed for God to please get me out of this place. The next day I told Kathie what

had happened and how I had prayed because that was all I could think of doing at

the time. I wasn't surprised when she smiled and told me how she often prayed

for me. Just then, Tom walked in. He was a part-time preacher at a local church.

He quoted some scripture and told me not to worry, that it was in God's hands. He

told me to be strong and have faith. After that day we had spiritual dialogue on a regular basis.

During May 2000, Mr. Smith, a retired superintendent was hired. He was informed of the recent events and told me not to worry. The trial was all that anyone could talk about. It was impossible to go uptown without someone giving me a glaring stare as I had been accused of 'setting up the PE teacher' in an elaborate scheme to seek revenge against one of the local 'homeboys.' I continued my employment search looking for an opening somewhere else and of course, the prayers. I asked a local church parishioner to have her church pray for me and the heavy burden that was placed upon my shoulders.

When July had finally come and the defense attorney at the Trial de Novo had finished his fiery barrage of questioning, the judge had found Devin guilty of moral turpitude. The judge turned to me and accused me of lacking leadership and that this unfortunate incident could have been avoided. It was the first time that someone other than myself had questioned whether my leadership style was effective. Only three local patrons came to demonstrate their support for the PE teacher. I found that to be the saddest indication of a community that had no conception of commitment or loyalty. I spent the remainder of the summer desperately trying to secure a position with another school district. I had made it to three separate final interviews, only to fail due to my lack of confidence. It was becoming apparent that I was going to be back at Leo Francis for another year.

For the next three years I continued to apply, interview, and pray as I found myself with the same district. When no offers were made I would say, 'I

am where I am supposed to be.' To make the best of my situation I continued to make improvements by raising test scores to help the district remove their name from the list of 'school improvement schools.' I began to realize through conversations with my secretary and janitor that God was not ready for me to leave. I was there for a reason. I was very fortunate, for once; turmoil had crawled back into the depressing shadows from whence it came.

NO!

That's not for you!

Somehow you'll escape

all that waiting and staying.

You'll find the bright places

Where Boom Bands are playing.

With banner flip-flapping,

once more you'll ride high!

Ready for anything under the sky.

Ready because you're that kind of a guy! (Seuss, 1990, pp. 26-29)

During March 2002, I decided to raise my level of personal expectations and began to apply for superintendent instead of site administration positions. After a lengthy and tedious interview process I was hired as superintendent and high school principal of the Douglas School District. When I was asked to attend a local gathering the following week to celebrate my acceptance, I informed the school board that I was going to have surgery. The board clerk told me not worry

that they would postpone the event until I was able to attend. Three days later she called and wanted to know what kind of surgery. I told her I was going to have a knee replaced and that I had already endured two similar surgeries. I had this planned so that I would be ready to serve by my reporting date of July 1. She said it did not present a problem and to call when I got home to set up a date for the local gathering.

Two weeks later while walking at the mall for rehabilitation, the school board president called to inform me that the board had rescinded their decision to hire me because I had lied to them during the interview process. I had failed to tell them I had recurring health problems. I learned later they had called several of my staff to discuss my illness. Two particular teachers who weren't my biggest fans told the Douglas school Board that I was gone all the time, home sick. They felt that I was gone a lot and had made an inaccurate assumption that I was home sick. When in fact Mr. Smith had instructed me not to tell the teachers when I would be gone attending meetings on his behalf, as he did not like to travel outside the county. Most of the meetings were held close to my personal residence, which enabled me to stay with my family.

Oh, the place you'll go! There is fun to be done!

There are points to be scored. There are games to be won.

And the magical things you can do with that ball

will make you the winning-est winner of all.

Fame! You'll be famous as famous can be,

with the whole wide world watching you win on TV. (Seuss, 1990, p. 31)

I contacted the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to file a complaint. After several failed attempts to reach a compromise I was awarded a settlement from the school district for violation of my rights under the protection of American Disabilities Act. I was not sure if the money obtained would be sufficient to cover the possible career ending publicity my case had received in the Daily Oklahoman and other local newspapers. It was only a matter of time before my misfortune caught the eye of local television reporters as my picture and story were broadcasted on four of the local channels.

Except when they don't.

Because, sometimes, they won't.

> I'm afraid that *some* times
>
> you'll play lonely games too.
>
> Games you can't win
>
> 'cause you'll play against you (Seuss, 1990, p. 33).

My phone rang off the wall with calls from friends seeking answers. I sought comfort and reassurance from God, as I was totally confused as to why this opportunity was given and then taken away. Again, Kathie and Tom came to my emotional rescue and prayed with me, as they were grateful I was coming back for another year. Once again I knew where I was going to be in August. As my wife reminded me, 'This is meant to be.' It was difficult to make faith-sense of why I was hired then fired until I realized that God wanted me to experience this opportunity and grow stronger for having survived the ordeal.

All Along!

Whether you like it or not,

Along will be something

you'll be quite a lot.

And when you're alone, there's a very good chance

you'll meet things that scare you right out of your pants.

There are some, down the road between hither and yon,

that can scare you so much you won't want to go. (Seuss, 1990, pp. 34-35)

I returned to Leo Francis in August 2002, much to the dismay of the two teachers that plotted against me. During that year the district's Academic Performance Index (API) increased from a score of 644 in 2001 to 1282. For the first time in four years Leo Francis was no longer on the school improvement list. After recovering from my third replacement surgery in March and putting the EEOC mess behind me I was more determined and confident to become the best and most effective leader I could become. It was a great year as my teachers had a greater respect for my accomplishments and my relentless pursuit of academic excellence at Leo Francis.

But on you will go

through the weather be foul.

On you will go

though your enemies prowl.

On you will go

though the Hakken-Kraks howl.

Onward up many

a frightening creek,

though your arms may get sore

and your sneakers may leak. (Seuss, 1990, p. 36)

I continued successfully write grants and attend graduate school. I had finally

found happiness and no longer thought about where I was going to be in August

as I discontinued my search for a new position with another school district. I was

where I was supposed to be. I expressed my gratitude to my faithful employees

for their prayers and confidence. I thanked God for His rich blessings and for my

recent successes.

Unfortunately, my happiness was short-lived as Mr. Smith informed me

that he was going to retire because the district could no longer afford to pay for a

superintendent and a principal. Because we were no longer on the school

improvement list, Leo Francis would no longer receive the enormous federal

funding that had supported the district the past four years. At the January school

board meeting Mr. Smith was going to recommend that they combine the position

of superintendent and principal to save administrative costs. He told me that he

was going to recommend that they riff my position effective July 1, 2003. I told

him it was unnecessary to riff my position at this time. He should let the board

make that decision with the recommendation of the new superintendent. He led

me to believe that he agreed and was not going to recommend the riffing of my

position so I continued to plan a family vacation to Florida to visit my sister Mary

during Christmas break.

At the end of the last day of school before the break I received a certified letter in the mail from Mr. Smith, informing me that I had ten days to respond in writing my intent to contest his decision to recommend to the school board the riffing of my position. Mr. Smith lied to me. He had no intention of allowing the new superintendent the opportunity to make this decision. I could have cancelled my vacation to Miami, but by now I knew that God would take care of this situation as He had every other situation in my life. I prayed for guidance and asked that I would continue to understand and be patient. My time would come and so would a new employment opportunity.

On and on you will hike.

And I know you'll hike far

and face up to your problems

whatever they are. (Seuss, 1990, p. 39)

We went to Florida and had a great time. After praying for God's help I was no longer worried. After all I would be where I was supposed to be in August. While we were there I continued to put together application packets for superintendent openings. I mailed 30 packets from Florida, praying that I would be contacted for a few interviews when I got back to Oklahoma. I prayed for God's help as I placed the large envelopes in the mailbox.

In January 2003 the school board met and they accepted Mr. Smith's recommendations; he resigned, I was riffed, and then the school board asked me to apply for the newly combined position. Mr. Smith told me that he could not recommend me for the position, regardless of my contributions to the school

district during the past four years. He said it would be unfair to Carol, counselor/librarian, who had worked for the district for three years. Her total time as an educator was only five years as she had previously taught high school English at another district. Mr. Smith said she was just as qualified as I was.

You'll get mixed up, of course,

as you already know.

You'll get mixed up

with many strange birds as you go.

So be sure when you step.

Step with care and great tact

and remember that Life's

a Great Balancing Act.

Just never forget to be dexterous and deft.

And never mix up your right foot with your left. (Seuss, 1990, p. 40)

I couldn't believe this was happening. My faith was being tested again as I was beginning to doubt God had any plans of success for me. Once again my spiritual group of employees, whose membership had by now grown to five, told me not to worry as God was still working on a new home for me. They expressed their confidence as they reassured me that God had a bigger and better plan for me that included my leaving. One of the newest members of this group told me that I had been on the prayer list at his church for several weeks.

During March I received a phone call from Superintendent Jones from the Greater Valley School District to set up an interview at the end of the month. He

had received my packet from Florida and was very impressed with my qualifications. I met with the school board later that month, but only after surviving a potentially dangerous blown tire on the way to the interview. Again, I wondered if God had different plans for me.

I had a great interview and was told I was one of three finalists and that I would be called within the next few days as to my status. I did not receive a phone call; instead, I was notified by the board clerk that the position had been offered to someone else. Once again I was disappointed and concerned about my future and the well-being of my family. Again I prayed for patience and understanding, wondering if this craziness will ever end.

And will you succeed?

Yes! You will, indeed!

(98 and ¾ percent guaranteed.)

> *KID, YOU'LL MOVE MOUNTAINS!* (Seuss, 1990,
> p. 42)

A week after the rejection letter Mr. Jones called and asked if I was still interested in the superintendent's position as the first candidate had accepted an offer with another school district. I told Mr. Jones I would be more than happy to accept the position even though I was their second choice. I closed my eyes and thanked God for giving me a second chance and for His ongoing support. I finally had a new home and I knew where I was going to be in August. I was going to be the next superintendent at the Greater Valley School District.

On my last day to report to work at Leo Francis I had downloaded the song *Take this Job and Shove It*. I wanted to make a statement; a lasting commentary that I had hoped would bring some closure to mark the end of my tenure at Leo Francis. I was grateful for the experiences but not the emotional suffering that tagged along. Those scars are permanent. I was very fortunate that during those four years, I received encouragement and sympathy from understanding university professors and fellow classmates. I was able to vent on a weekly basis. I was able to capture the events that now define my life, in papers written as class assignments, which were an indispensable resource for this research.

So as I walked out the door for the last time while the computer speakers screaming out the sarcastic tune, Kathie bids me a farewell, but with a reminder that the weather had turned for the worst and that the county was under a tornado warning. I thanked her and headed home. As I was traveling north I could see the black clouds looming in the distance, most had already crossed the highway ahead. As I made the slow turn to the west darkness fell upon me. It was as if darkness had just swallowed the light. No cars could be seen from either direction. I was alone, all alone. Then the rain came down, pounding on the metal surface of my car; the sound was deafening. Subsequently my car began to shake from side-to-side on two tires at a time. I screamed, 'Dear Jesus, dear Jesus I don't want to die! Please Lord save me! I am not finished! I have so much more to do!'

Ripped shredded pieces of tin roofing were circling my car; I realized at that moment, I was in a tornado! I was so scared, and then finally the wind and the rain subsided. It was as calm as it had been minutes before; debris lay scattered around my car. As I completed my journey home, all I could think about was that God could have easily taken my life, but He didn't. At that instant I was confident that God wasn't done with me yet. I had a purpose for being and a mission yet to accomplish. A smile came to my face as I drove nervously home.

Upon my arrival at Greater Valley, members of my new staff, the kitchen workers in particular, asked if I was a God fearing man. When I replied yes they told me that I was an answer to their prayers. They indicated they wanted a superintendent that was a Christian who cared about the students more than anything else.

After four years of 'on-the-job training' at one of the smallest rural schools in the state I shifted my focus from reflecting-on-action to reflecting-for-action. After this era, my time devoted to prayer had become routine. I prayed upon waking, during the day, and before going to sleep. Unfortunately, I was no longer able to hear the same educational Christian radio broadcast, although I had found a new station that played modern Christian music that was very popular with the youth of the community.

During September, I wrote another technology grant for 75,000 dollars; I prayed daily while I wrote the grant. Throughout my brief year the school board was exceptionally supportive. I was only given two mandates: (1) to raise test scores and (2) to fully implement school-wide Great Expectations. Beginning

with the night I signed my contract I developed a wonderful relationship with the three board members. I had dinner with the board clerk and his wife regularly; they had taken me in much like a member of the family.

Most of the board meetings lasted around 45 minutes. Of the twelve regularly scheduled meetings, only one meeting was attended by a concerned parent that spoke to the board about a schedule change implemented by me at the beginning of the year. After hearing both sides of the argument, the board expressed its continued support of the change and thanked the parent for coming. I was always nervous before the meetings so I would pray for comfort, courage, and the ability to say and do what was right without putting the district in jeopardy or myself in disfavor with the board.

The parents of Greater Valley were very loyal and encouraging. It was such a refreshing change after four years of just the opposite. I thoroughly enjoyed attending ball games and other after-school events where the parents would sit by me just to talk, mostly to see how I liked being here and how long I was going to stay. Many would say, 'It sure is great to have someone who cares for the kids; someone who loves our kids.'

During the January school board meeting I was rehired for another year. On a four-point scale, I received a cumulative score of 3.87 on my annual evaluation. I was very pleased with the assessment. I wanted to ask for a three-year contract but I did not pursue the issue that night, something, maybe the voice' said to wait. I thought I could wait until after the bond election. I felt if it passed, I could then ask for a raise and a multi-year contract.

As the next months flew by, I was able to devote more time to myself and the writing of this research. I had two great secretaries that actually ran the school. Once I had become accustomed to the responsibilities and duties of being a superintendent, I realized that it was not as difficult or time consuming as I thought it would be. Due to the lack of stress during the day, I was able to settle down earlier in the evening and was able to conduct research and write for longer periods of time each night.

The more I prayed, the better my life became. The more I talked to my staff about prayer and God's spiritual intervention, the easier my job became. There would be days I would get too busy to pray. I began to notice that those days seemed longer; events would not go as smooth as those days I prayed. On a prayerful day, regardless of the event, the outcome was always peaceful and conclusive. What a difference prayer had made in my life!

Greater Valley had not passed a bond issue since 1985. The district started the process a few years prior to my arrival, but the community's concern for the mold in the classrooms brought the process to a screeching halt. Nonetheless, the district still desperately needed repairs, windows replaced, walls painted, and a new activity vehicle. A bond issue was brought before the community March 9, 2004; it passed with an overwhelming 85% approval rating.

During the same week I received a phone call from a superintendent friend of mine. She asked me if I was still happy at Greater Valley. I told her I couldn't be happier and then asked why she was inquiring. She told me she was leaving for another position in a neighboring state and wanted to know if I was interested in

applying for her position. It would mean more money, better benefits, more students, and more exposure. I told her I did not know if I was ready to leave my little dependent school paradise. She insisted that I tour her campus anyway.

My wife and I drove down on Sunday. I was very impressed with every thing I saw. She asked me to submit an application so I did with the understanding that under no circumstance was anyone to contact any member of the Greater Valley School community. I did not want anyone or anything to upset the harmony, the calm before the storm, as we had not yet had the bond election certified. We were also working intensely on testing preparation and I did not want to upset the students, fearing they would not do well on the April standardized tests.

By God's grace I successfully interviewed twice, was offered, and accepted the position of superintendent and not one single person with a connection to Greater Valley had a clue. During the May school board meeting I resigned my position. I was shocked by the response of the board. Two of the board members were visibly angry. I was accused of being unprofessional because of my poor timing. 'All of the good superintendents have already been picked,' one replied. 'You told us you would be here for awhile. We counted on you to keep things stable for a few more years. We realize this is stepping stone district but not after only one year,' the other board member retorted.

I apologized for my untimely decision but I told them I was not going to resign until an official offer was made and a contract had been signed. I did not want to go through the same mess I had at Douglas Public Schools. I told them

this is what I felt God wanted me to do and this opportunity would not have

presented itself if it weren't meant to be. 'I accomplished all that I was supposed

to accomplish in four years at Leo Francis. I did all that you asked me to do here.

Now God is sending me to another district. I do not know how long I will be

there, but when I leave it will be God's will.'

> So…
>
> be your name Buxbaum or Bixby or Bray
>
> or Mordecai Ali Van Allen O'Shea,
>
> you're off to Great Places!
>
> Today is your day!
>
> Your mountain is waiting.
>
> So…get on your way! (Seuss, 1990, p. 44)

After the students left for the summer from Greater Valley I was invited to attend

the end of year activities at my new district, Mayberry. The first event was

Baccalaureate where a student came to me, introduced himself by name and as the

junior class spokesperson. He said, 'I have one question that I want to ask you on

behalf of the next year's senior class. We all want to know if you are a believer.' I

told him, 'Yes I am a Christian. I will be transferring my membership to First

Baptist Church of Mayberry sometime during the summer.' He smiled as he took

his seat informing me he would see me in church.

After the service several people came up to me asking similar questions

about faith and religion but not educational philosophies. One patron told me the

community had been polled about what qualities and characteristics the new

superintendent must have. She told me that the majority of the patrons wanted a spiritual leader who put children first. Throughout the remainder of the week several more individuals came up to me welcoming me to the district. And again, the inquiries about faith and spirituality were asked.

June 2004 was an interesting month. During Mayberry's annual summer festival a member of my new staff introduced herself as the library assistant. She wanted to know what church I was planning to join; I told her the Baptist church. Her smile turned into a frown. I believe she was disappointed that I was going to join her church. Everywhere my wife and I went; we were invited to church. It was very clear; everyone was spot-checking our commitment to faithful worship.

After joining the Mayberry Baptist Church in July, I told the minister that I would love to speak to the students at church camp. I wasn't sure he heard me, as he did not respond to my request. A few days later, the church secretary called and wanted to know what day would work best for me. I was shocked that I received a call. I told her Wednesday and she said I would have to wait until after the evening service around 10:30 PM. I still accepted the offer to speak to the church youth.

There were at least thirty students, their parents, and several other members of the church waiting for me to speak. I felt uneasy, as this was a far more than I was mentally prepared to speak to. I asked God for reassurance and to help me say what he wanted me to say. I began to tell them I was a Christian first then a superintendent and that all my decisions were spiritual guided. I told them, 'God has richly blessed me and that He was responsible for me being here. I had a

very tough life as a youth and I am here because I survived the suffering so I can share my story to help those of you that are having difficulty with the everyday struggles of life.' Two sets of parents stopped me before I left the camp and told me they were so excited to know that a Christian was going to be their child's superintendent. One parent was curious if I was concerned about the legal ramifications of my spiritual openness. I assured him that I would be extremely careful with my choice of words but I would not conceal my positive attitude and demeanor.

Since November 2004, nearly six months after I made my first public appearance I have spoken to hundreds of patrons about my faith. I have written a weekly column in the local paper with every article containing at least one reference to God, prayer or faith. Every article says, 'It is meant to be.' Since the very first article, people have thanked me for my insightfulness and faithful dedication. One particular article struck a nerve as I was addressing the fact my sister has passed away due to a reckless lifestyle. I wrote that I did not know where she was going to spend eternity until I had read an old email she had sent to me days before her untimely death. It talked about how lucky we are to live in America and detailed the various freedoms we take for granted. After reading the email and its religious content, I concluded the article by stating that I was confident that I knew where she was headed.

One patron told me she had cut out the article and clipped it to her refrigerator for daily reference while another said she was going to take it to work and put it on her bulletin board. The elementary secretary told me she felt

ashamed about her attitude towards the uninvited guests living in her house. The article helped her grasp a new perspective and a forgiving heart. She was going to show patience and compassion towards her houseguests. She thanked me for the article.

One of Mayberry's citizens was diagnosed with cancer and tragically did not have any health insurance to cover the tremendous costs associated with this disease. A local church reserved the school's cafeteria to host a Sunday afternoon Indian Taco Dinner to collect donations to help this individual with medical costs. After making our way through the long line and finding a place to sit down and enjoy our meal, a local business owner came up behind me, first laying his hands on my shoulders, and then he reached out his hand to thank me for coming. He then said, 'Mr. Moody, I am sure glad you are here in our community. I am very proud that my daughters attend the school that you are its leader.'

Once again, I have two wonderful secretaries, Flo and Lavern, who have a very strong faithful connection to God. Both are called upon every time there is a death in the community to either sing or prepare meals for the families. We have conversations on a regular basis about faith and how it sustains us all. My wife and I have attended their church's services on special occasions.

Not every decision I have made this year has pleased Maysville parents. At least three disgruntled parents have either called or stopped by my office requesting information as to how to complain to the school board. In each instance, they picked up the proper forms, but did not follow through and attend the next scheduled meeting.

It would seem that not a day has gone by since my arrival that someone has not expressed his or her appreciation for my spiritual leadership. At the conclusion of the annual Thanksgiving lunch, I was determined to be the last person to eat. When the students left, the kitchen staff and several community volunteers completely cleaned the cafeteria and kitchen areas before sitting down to eat. As I fixed my plate, I noticed the cafeteria had become silent. As I walked in, every head turned toward me. I sat down and was told, 'We wanted to wait for you to say the blessing.' It was one of the most memorable and honorable requests I have ever been asked to do in my entire educational career. At no time before now have I ever felt more like a spiritual leader than I did at that moment, however, that one defining moment was about to be surpassed by an even greater moment.

To celebrate Thanksgiving, a group of four churches from Mayberry, known as the Mayberry Ministerial Alliance (MMA), collectively gathered for an evening meal followed by an evening worship service. I noticed in the bulletin there was an opportunity for the public to participate by giving their testimony. As the service proceeded I heard that familiar 'voice' telling me to give my testimony. I asked my wife for a pen and began to write down an outline of what I wanted to say. I could not believe I was going to stand up in front of over 400 community members, many of whom I had never met before that night. As members took turns standing and revealing their souls, I prayed for the words to say, the strength to say them, and then I stood up enthusiastically. 'Hello everyone, my name is Robert Moody and I am the 'intendent' of Mayberry

Schools.' Before I could finish my statement, one of the pastors yelled out, 'No, you are super!' The crowd laughed as I was cheerfully upstaged by his timely comment. 'Just like I write in my weekly article I want to start by saying I am here because I am supposed to be here; it is meant to be. Absolutely everything happens for a reason. I began my incredible journey to Mayberry in 1990 when I was in the hospital having both knees replaced.' I proceeded to tell them how I became a teacher and then an administrator.

Next I surprised my staff by stating, 'I want to recognize those I work with that make me super by asking my staff to please stand and be recognized.' As they stood up, I realized that I had over-calculated the number of staff in attendance. I was going to announce that almost half of my staff was present, but as they stood, their numbers had diminished since several employees were in the fellowship hall still cleaning. 'What other school district could proudly boast of such great numbers. These individuals are only a small representation of my entire staff.'

The congregation stood immediately and gave my staff a standing ovation. It was an overwhelming emotional event for everyone. After the cheering had subsided, I glanced at my notes and finished my comments, 'Jesus comes to Mayberry Schools everyday in the hearts and on the minds of these great individuals and those that could not attend this evening. These individuals are the true leaders of this community. Mayberry is an organization that many employees practice spirituality in the workplace.'

After I sat down, the elementary secretary jumped to her feet extremely

emotional and proclaimed, 'I want to publicly thank Mr. Moody for allowing us

to pray at ballgames and other events. I know when I get a phone call about

someone who has been hurt and desperately needs prayer that I have Mr. Moody's

blessing to go the classrooms asking teachers to pray for that person. I don't have

to worry about getting into trouble!' As she sat down a maintenance man from the

high school spoke from the back of the room, 'I appreciate having a

superintendent who is not afraid to let people know he is a Christian.'

Greenleaf (1991) presumes leadership is practiced within the context of a community,

where the leader and the followers are companion travelers sharing the same path.

Numerous employees yearn for opportunities for spiritual expression while at work but

are cautious because of fears of offending peers and management (Lewis & Geroy, 2000,

p. 683; Mitroff & Denton, 1999a).

The past year and half have provided the most rewarding and fulfilling

experiences that anyone could hope for. I have grown as an educational and

spiritual leader with the love and support of two caring communities. I have made

many mistakes through the years, but I have gained the experience from their

consequences. I would not trade a single day. Someone once said after learning

about my first year at Leo Francis that I had the equivalent of ten years of

experience. I am thankful that I did not physically age as quickly.

While I do not know how long I will be at Mayberry, I do understand my

spiritual journey is far from being over as the final chapter of my life is yet to be

written. I started on this journey without a map, not really knowing where I was

going. Occasionally I would seek advice, get some direction, doing so I discovered the traffic jams and potholes on the road of life where fewer and further apart. It took me a while to discover that when I went to God in prayer, life was less complicated and stressful.

I did not begin a prayerful commitment until after my arrival at Leo Francis where I was surrounded by extraordinary role models that provided Bible scriptures and inspirational words of encouragement. Through their guidance God became my mentor, providing the leadership direction I was denied by the lack of leadership from Mr. Cotton. Ironically if it weren't for his indiscretions I am relatively sure that I would not be writing about spirituality. This process of writing has been a continuation of what I have been doing for the past six years—reading, writing, reflecting, and changing my practice and myself; a process that will continue for the rest of my life.

I no longer reflect in the sense that I review the events of that day and try to rationalize my decision to discover if a better solution was available. Currently, I practice theological reflection and thus the stressful administrative decisions I make daily have become almost non-existent. Instead of reflecting on what went wrong and what I should have said differently I now prayerful reflect about the decisions I am about to make and the words that I am about to speak. I ask God to provide the words and the strength to deal with the situation in a calm, confident manner. When the outcome is revealed, I thank God for providing the experience and for giving me the opportunity to learn from the experience.

Killen and de Beer (2002) describe the transformation from reflection to theological reflection:

> The challenges confronting us and the pluralistic world in which we live demand that we reflect on questions of meaning and value….Today living on the verge of a new millennium and faced with personal, social, geographical, and environmental choices and challenges not even imagined thirty years ago, let alone a hundred years ago, the consequences of our reflection on questions of meaning and value are momentous….Because so much is at stake, we need to pay attention to the character and quality of our reflective practices….Seeking God's presence involves theological reflection, the artful discipline of putting our experience into conversation with the heritage of the Christian tradition. In this conversation we can be surprised and transformed by new angles of vision on our experience and acquire a deepened understanding and appreciation of our tradition. In this conversation we can find ourselves called to act in new, courageous, and compassionate ways. (p. p. 2-3)

Today I know the outcome of every decision has a 50% chance of success. Because of the strength of my spiritual faith I no longer needlessly worry about outcomes; I pray about them and the results will be God's will and I cheerfully accept the spiritual intervention. I do struggle with my newfound confidence when I am sick and when I have not had a lot of rest. When I am physically weak, my abilities to focus during theological reflection are affected and my stress levels increase accordingly.

While the experiences of the past six and half years as administrator have had their share of difficulties, I believe that I have been successful. I have developed a strong sense of efficacy as I have found and maintained a positive attitude towards my responsibilities and myself. Efficacy is a relatively new term, but the idea has been around for a long time. Originally, this idea was categorized as self-esteem, something I thought I had lost when I stopped teaching to become an administrator.

Self-efficacy is something Bandura (1977) defines as a particular type of expectation concerned with one's beliefs in one's capacity to implement a defined behavior or set of behaviors necessary to produce an outcome.

This doctoral program has provided an outlet for my story to be told. When I discovered Clark Moustakas'1990 book, *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Applications,* which reveals a link between the researcher and intent of the journey I was given a process to explore, further my life experiences and perceptions.

Harner and Romer (1992) consider "it is the connection to personal meaning that determines what parts of experience will become knowledge and what parts will fade quickly from memory and mind" (p. 18).

<center>Superintendent "Mark"</center>

During the data collection process Mark was a 47 year old male veteran educator with less than four years of superintendency experience. He lives and works in a small rural school community in the southwest part of the United States. He is married, has two children, and has professed to be spiritual led by his Christian guided faith. Mark

describes his perception of how spirituality influences his leadership activities as rural school superintendent in the following vignette:

> Growing up I was very well protected with hard work ethics instilled in me by my father. He had the attitude do it or get fired; you do your job and you will pull your weight. If he told you to do a chore, the chore better be done. I was just like him to the point that when we went into a business together we hired a family member that I later fired because he didn't pull his weight. You either do it or you don't have a job. I still have a very hard work ethic, in other words, am on time, stay late, work hard, and work long.
>
> It was at the age of seventeen that I knew I wanted to be an educator. It had always been a desire, but primarily in high school when I met with my high school counselor. He told me to not even think about it because I wouldn't finish college to become a teacher. I soon realized as I matured that was an incorrect statement, as I would continue to pursue my first love in spite of his discouraging words. While in high school I rough-necked in the oil fields part-time and then went to tech school but I decided I wanted more adventure, so I joined the Air Force for five and a half years.
>
> With the GI Bill and getting out in 1981 I went to college and got married shortly thereafter. Soon after getting married I quit school and went back to the oil fields. I then decided there wasn't much job security in the oil fields so I rejoined the service as an Army counterintelligence agent finding out that it agreed with my nature and remained for seven years. During this time I got divorced

becoming a single parent with custody of my two boys aged four and five. I went back to school again, using the GI Bill to get my certification in teaching.

I felt like I needed to go be with my dad who wasn't a Christian. Our time together was short as he died two years later. He never once said that he loved me; that hurt. If he had not passed on I probably would not have left the farm but I decided that I was okay and I could move away to be on my own again. I believe that many things would have happened differently if my father hadn't passed away. I was not happy that he was gone; however, God took a bad situation and helped me experience some good out of it.

I began my career in education in 1992. I started rural and went to suburban – inner-city suburban. I taught in an elementary classroom for eight years teaching third, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. I taught English, reading, American history, and physics. I ended my teaching career teaching six grade language arts. I enjoyed the rural setting and actually enjoyed the inner city as well. I made a difference there. I made home visits with my colleagues telling me I'm going to be killed going to some of the homes. But they didn't have phones or cars so I had to go to the parents. This helped me become very well accepted by the parents. I never had any disciplinary problems in my classrooms. Many things came out positive because of the relationships and my experiences with the inner city school.

In the meanwhile I had gotten my Masters as a Reading Specialist. I found out that it was still difficult to make a difference in the lives of my students because I had to go through the administration to achieve certain things. So I said

to myself that I could make a difference by becoming an administrator myself. I could make the necessary changes from the principal's office. It was very important to me to make a difference because I was committed to teaching - to teaching the students - not as just a way to make a living. I became a principal while I was working on my doctorate at the University of Oklahoma. While I was a principal I discovered that I was still limited in the decisions that I had to make at various levels. I was 43 years old when I decided to try to become a superintendent. I knew that as a superintendent I would be the one responsible for making recommendations and changes for the entire school district. I resolved that I could have more of an impact as a superintendent accepting my first superintendent position in 2001. If I ever had to go back to teaching, I'd rather go back to an inner city school, because I know the kids would look up to me.

Before I made the change from principal to superintendent, I prayed to the Lord to seek guidance as to where He needed me to go. At the same time I had been reading the book 'Prayer of Jabez.' I told God that I wanted to be used by Him and I would go wherever He would lead me to go. I left a very fine rural school district with about 200 students to become a first year superintendent of a school district of over a 1000 students. After I arrived at a larger rural district I met a special group of patrons know as Mom's in Touch. They were women from the community who were moms of students that had gotten together every morning for 10-15 minutes to pray for the school and to ask God to send them a Christian superintendent. I know it was God that brought me here as an answer to their prayers as well as my own.

Now after being a rookie rural school superintendent for four years I can tell you my most satisfying experiences have come when a program, an activity or initiative that I instigated were embraced successfully by the teachers. A real important example of a satisfying experience occurred after gathering data that revealed unacceptable reading grades. I helped locate funds to partially pay for tuition for a few of my teachers so that they could become reading specialists. I also took the time to help my students by working on their motivation providing after school and summer school tutoring for low- level readers. It was a great joy seeing those things becoming successful. Also, seeing my budget actually making a change with the decisions as superintendent, I found most satisfying.

My least satisfying experiences have occurred hand-in-hand with all the politics. There are certain power figures in communities, which are often represented by the local school board. I think they do not want you to change the status quo even though the current system is terrible and bad. I had a curriculum director who had been doing an outstanding job, discovering weak teachers along the way, trying to help the teachers change their focus and vision. When I recommended the director to be rehired, the school board voted 3 to 2 not to accept my recommendation. The director left the district as the school board wanted to stop the program she was in charge of.

Through the years I have discovered that there is a correlation between my effectiveness as a superintendent and my spirituality and prayer. I define my spirituality in general terms. I think spirituality is using the soul, but personally, to make better decisions. Some people use their spirituality along with information

instead of actually trying to obtain some direction from Jesus Christ, God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In my spirituality, I pray and ask for the guidance…to seek the guidance. I have practiced spirituality since the day of my salvation.

My spirituality is based on Christianity, but within the Christian faith I hold to the Baptist faith. However, I don't 100% agree with Baptist theology; because, in my opinion there has never been one faith or doctrine that man has established that I totally agree with it. It is important to state that I agree with the doctrine of the Holy Bible, and that is the doctrine I cling to.

But it hasn't always been this way. At a young age I grew up without spirituality and I thought I could do anything on my own. I would venture out and try to make decisions without praying about them, or seeking God's word about them through the Bible. I found out that I was not as successful as when God was in control. I have matured as a Christian; more through faith and experience, which has affected every single major or minor decision.

To me specifically, when I'm carnal or not spiritual, I am pretty much 'a cut-and-dry' or 'black-and-white' type of guy. During these weak moments I take the attitude that this is the way it's going to be and there's no discussion about it. But when I seek God's guidance through prayer, I realize sometimes that I need to listen more to seek the concerns of what people might actually be saying because when before when I was not acting in a spiritual manner I'd tell you, 'I was the boss and this is the way we are going to do it.'

But now I pray about it, and when someone's in disagreement I actually ask the Lord to open my eyes to see if they're wrong, to confirm my beliefs or to see if I am wrong. God has been faithful to show this to me. On several occasions God has actually shown that [bashful] person the opportunity to be spiritual and to pray about the situation before we'd make the final decision. I think that has brought me a lot of tranquility. I look at everything as a positive; I didn't allow myself to grieve on the negative.

If you're not true at home, you're not going to be true at work or anywhere else. I practice that by setting the example. I began each day with spiritual time with God. That actually begins at the moment I wake up in the morning when I begin my spiritual walk - my Christian walk. Even though I have a specific alarm time that goes off, I may wake up at 3:30 instead of 5:00 and begin my quite time then. I am not sure as to why this happens, but I believe that the Lord has established my day to begin then. I began my spirituality with the daily reading of God's word and then ending that way.

It has been easy for me to confidently continue my spirituality at work. It hasn't mattered where I was in my career, whether I was a teacher or a principal or any other place where I began a career; I would make what I call an accountability statement of my faith. I would make a statement of faith saying I'm a Christian and that I believe in all [term decisions], and I hope that by saying that openly it lets people know that I'm bound by that statement and I'm going to be true to my Lord.

For instance in this position that I'm in now, from the earliest days of my employment I made statements of faith. I could tell there were a lot of concerns when I first got here so I instigated a prayer walk around the school with members of the community. Sometime before the prayer walk had begun I had a parent come to my office to challenge my decision to conduct the prayer walk. She came in and declared that she was an atheist and said she was very displeased with my actions. I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit as I sat there talking about what it could do for the protection of our schoolchildren and our teachers. I told her prayer walks that involved walking the perimeter of our school were an effective method to get the community involved and on track. She was still in opposition to that. I explained to her that I did not intend to do anything to make her or other people upset. During our discussion she had remarked that she was going to leave the decision up to her child in order to make her own decision of faith. I told her that her child was making a decision of faith, by wanting to go and walk around the school with her classmates. She said she wasn't going to allow her to participate. I told her she couldn't have it both ways. She replied by telling me she was going to fight me on this issue.

She came back after a few days informing me she couldn't gather any support for her cause. Sadly, a lot of people started praying for her in the community. Strangely she disappeared without a trace and nobody knows why. I know that kind of sounds kind of criminal but a different type of prayer worked in this community. Everyone feels like her husband had something to do with her disappearance. It was a going to be a potential problem, she disappeared, and so

157

did the problem. We conducted the prayer walk as planned. While walking we talked to the neighbor kids but we didn't push any doctrine on them. We'd just lead them in a mediation walk that ended in prayer. During this time there wasn't any specific entity named.

I haven't always had to wait for the next prayer walk to talk about Jesus. There were times when my students and colleagues were made aware of my spirituality because we'd talk about it. I told them I was Christian and I believe in certain standards that I've got to live up to everyday like my dad did, even though he wasn't a Christian until just before he died. My dad would always say you're only as good as your name, who you are, and then you lay down your head at night and go to asleep. I spell out exactly what I believe in – faith and life. I've got to live it everyday, 24 hours a day and that includes my time working at school. The students have picked up on this right away. There's no telling how many times that I have had school counselors come to me with questions of faith seeking knowledge as how to not be [passed by the road of time].

I have never pushed anything on the students. I never said they had to pray or had to believe as I did. Students took advantage of opportunities when we were alone. They would ask me questions about being a teacher and my activities. I told them I'm a father and I'm a Christian and I go to a Christian church. I don't believe I have crossed any lines. I just speak to my students and occasionally realize that some of the students were [aloof]. They would ask me, 'How does a person go to heaven?' I'd tell them the truth, because they asked. I wouldn't tell them to believe what I believe; I just tell them what I believe. I have shared

testimonies with them about the pulpit or about being spiritually led. I tell them the Holy Spirit guides them, it quickens their heart and mind. I tell them, 'If you aren't in spiritual unity with God, it can lead to confusion.'

My employees and I often have prayer times at work. My secretaries and I will pray every time we hear of a teacher or a student in need. We often join hands together in a room and pray for the teachers and students. The school board members and community parents also pray a lot about the staff and other situations at school.

They know where I stand. I usually don't stop and think about the consequences of my spiritually lead actions because I've always felt that if I'm following God's will and got the leadership of the Holy Spirit that there's no such thing as a consequence. I don't consider it but at the same time, as a man of God I'm required to uphold the laws of man so I must present the word of God in a manner that's entrusted not hated. I use common sense through prayer, not forcing issues on anyone. Regardless, I am going to pray no matter what. I make my decisions based on what God would have me to make or has led me to; I know I have His support in that. My decisions didn't always come by correctness, or law, or by textbooks; but based upon what I consider to be the most outstanding book known as the Holy Bible.

I have prepared myself for the day when I will quit my job if it comes between what I believe in as a Christian. I don't want to see myself compromised in my faith when it comes to that. It's God first, family second, and job third, however, they all need to flow mutually. Being a superintendent is a very stressful

job, and if I don't seek God's answer it's becomes a vicious never-ending cycle. I have been in that cycle – a stressful situation – asking such questions as 'what if?' I have to remind myself the spirituality in the Bible stresses that we are to seek God in all things. 'Seek first the Kingdom of God, and then all of these things will be added onto you,' which brings me peace and prosperity. So in prayer, and knowing Him through prayer, I seek God. I pray about things that I can change, and leave the rest of it up to God. I work on the things that I can work on, and then let Him have the rest. The real stress for me is knowing that some of my decisions do hurt people, but yet, I'm going to be faithful and true to my job.

I make every effort to go to God with all decisions; however, when I catch myself not doing it I merely stop at that point and get to the prayer before continuing any thinking about that decision. Quite often I find myself just stepping outside of my building where my office is located to get personal with the Lord. Of course the Bible also directs me to be true to those that are lead by me. I'm required to abide by their policies, and that's why again, I don't really embrace them when it comes to spiritual things like prayer. I don't have a prayer walk every day around the school campus but when I do I get to visit with individuals about their teaching responsibilities, about their learning responsibilities and about their spiritual responsibilities. I had this teacher that lost her job due to my recommendation to fire her. Even though it turned out negative for that person the spiritual side of me continued to work with her and pray for her. But still, I realized that I had a greater obligation to meet the needs of the students in the district before hers.

There were times that I perceived that God did not answer certain prayers because of the outcome. I often want the answers today, thinking I will get them today. God is on his own timetable not mine. He has never let me down. I have been discouraged at times, but in the long run he has taken care of me.

I believe that if I am to be successful I have to be sincere. We are all sinners, and we continue to sin. Being spirituality means you've got to make sure that your life is whole before God. First, you want to make sure that your prayers reach Him, and secondly that you'll know He's talking to you through the Holy Spirit. I have to be true to the students, be trusted as one who knows what's best for the students. There is scripture that comes to mind where Jesus Christ said, 'As you do unto these little ones, you do unto Me.' I believe we are responsible for forming the hearts, souls, and minds of every student in our school community. We must be true to them because they're going to learn by our actions and by our decisions. So based on the first ethic – be true to yourself – again what I'm saying is that if it comes to the point where I have to give up my job to be true to my Christian faith, I've got to be prepared for that.

I have told people during my educational career to be careful when they become tired, as they will often shorten their daily time with God. I tell them to begin their day with spiritual time with the Lord. It easy to use the excuse of needing more sleep or tiredness to skip morning prayer time. If you do that, you'll slip quickly. I know from personal experience that it is a very fast slippery slope. One must grow in faith and realize that no matter what, you've got to start your

day with the Lord – whether you're late getting to work or not. You've got to start with the Lord in your day.

I believe in Oklahoma there are more rural Christian superintendents than suburban. I don't know if I ever heard…for instance, the superintendent of a large urban or suburban school district say here's my basis of faith. I think they perceive the community to be more non-sectarian. I don't think you will find many non-Christian religious individuals living in many of the rural communities in Oklahoma, but within the largest cities in this state you are going to find many other religions.

Because of my consistent walks with God, I could probably maintain a longer tenure here. But at the same time because of my walk, it could be shorter as I don't politic a lot like superintendents maybe should. I can see both sides, again, I stay true to what God wants for me. I believe it can strengthen you, but at the same time it can weaken you somewhat with some of the school board relationships, especially with your non-Christian board members. Truthfully, I really don't care about the weaknesses my spirituality creates because in the end I'm being true to God.

During this past year I found myself being in a position of surrendering my life to the ministry. I surrendered in October to be used by the Lord to minister, thinking that I could do it every once in awhile, filling the pulpit for a preacher on vacation. As God would have it I went to fill in at a particular church and I have never left it. The only real downside to this new adventure was that it was a 70 mile drive.

In return for my faithful obedience to the Lord, He told me to seek a new job location so I did. Almost instantly a job came open and I sent the school district a resume with only a cover letter and other important documents. I didn't call or inquire after I mailed the resume. But still, I was called for an interview and hired the next morning. This new school district is just 12 miles away from the church. Coincidently I had made a determination early to get out of debt. I needed to sell my present home; sold it within a week. I needed to sell my rental property in another county; it too sold very quickly. I took a smaller school district and still got about an $8000.00 raise. The district is also providing me with housing. The Lord has blessed me again. 'All good things come to those who put God first.' I am proud to say, 'Lord, you are a part of my life, now just let me be an instrument to continue to do your work in this new place.' As in this case, as well as every single other event in my life I believe that all things happen for a reason. I believe that wholeheartedly.

I think that a lot of times people use the phrase, 'If it's meant to be, it's meant to be,' as a cop out. I think that people need to be active occasionally and sometimes I think people need to follow an inactive role, or as someone called it last night 'lame duck.' In taking the 'lame duck' position, one can say it's meant to be this way and I can't change it. I believe you can change any situation through prayer. Daniel prayed for seven days and an angle appeared before him telling him I am here because of your prayers.

Possibly the best explanation of who I am that I can give someone who has never met me is, 'I am the man in the mirror looking back at whom I am and

lays his head down on the pillow and has to go to sleep with whom I am. To do that, I have to live according to God's direction that is revealed to me through prayer and the Bible.'

<p style="text-align: center;">Superintendent "Mike"</p>

During the time of the data collection process Mike was a 58 year old male serving as a first-year superintendent with twelve years of classroom and site administrative experience in public education. He maintains two separate homes; during the school week, he resides in a house in the rural community where he works that is located in the southwestern part of the United States. His other house, located within a large metropolitan city is where he would spend his weekends with his wife in the home they shared together. He, too has professed to be spiritually guided by his Christian tenants and belief system. Mark describes his perception of how spirituality influences his leadership activities as rural school superintendent in the following vignette:

> I was raised in a Christian home and my parents were devout Christians. I was raised in a sphere that believed there was more to life than the physical, temporal and worldly areas that we experience through our senses; there was a heaven to gain, a hell to shun, a God that was good, and a devil that wasn't. It wasn't all about what I wanted but it was all about what God wanted of me and that I needed to live with that in mind. The Bible told me the truth about all of that. I believe in a reasonably literal interpretation of the Bible and the teachings of the Bible have become my doctrine of life. I follow the more historically conservative, traditional, disciplines of the Christian faith; that's a real broad stroke because even conservative Christian faith goes in a lot of different directions. To narrow

the view a bit, I am a Christian by choice and faith and find that many Baptist churches come closer to what I believe than any other church, however, I do not agree with all Baptist churches because the Baptist church is not my source of faith - God's word is. If the Baptist church where I attend were to begin to teach something that I did not think was scriptural; then I would be gone. If Baptists as a whole were to turn from the conservative hermeneutical approach to interpreting the Scripture then I would not identify with this particular denomination any longer.

Spirituality to me is having the knowledge that there is more than what you can see, feel, taste, and hear, and that which is spiritual is as real and as much a part of life as what we can see, taste, smell, and hear. At the end of our lives we will go and spend the rest of eternity in that Spirit. Life is as a vapor that passes away and as the flower in the field that is soon cut down and gone. What we call life - and we put so much importance on it, and so much time and effort - is really the smallest part of our existence. Eternity is based on what we do in this small amount of time, thus making this life very, very important. When a person believes that, realizes that, lives their life in light of that, they will live differently than a person that thinks he or she is an accident of the primordial ooze. The person who feels as if he or she was accidentally sprung into meaningless existence and has no greater reason to live than a futile life, which is followed by personal annihilation, this person, has a different outlook on life than the believer. A beer company perhaps summed this life view up best by saying in an ad, 'You

only go around once so get all the gusto you can.' A person living a transient life for gusto lives differently than a person living with eternity in view.

As I got older, spirituality became less important to me. As a teenager I just wanted to have fun like everybody else. I was probably 17, 18, or 19 years-old when it really hit me that I had some decisions to make on how I was going to live my life. I'm in charge but once the decision is made the decision is in charge. What decision did I want to live with for the rest of my life? What decision was I going to make at 18, 19 years-old that was going to dictate to me a lot of events in my coming life? I chose to live a godly life the best I could. I'm not perfect by a long shot and made a lot of mistakes. I often tell people if I was God, I'd kill me right away. But I have tried to be the best I can be.

During my early years I had been very active in sports but I tore my knees up and couldn't play any longer; I thought that at least I could coach kids in high school. While I was in college I became involved in church ministry. I began to work with the local neighborhood kids, coaching church league and street teams in a large Midwestern city. After working with both groups I decided that I would rather work with kids within a church format, rather than those from the public schools; at the time I was more comfortable doing that.

I eventually went to a small rural community where they were having some serious problems at the local public school; in fact they had lost their accreditation. The community would not vote on a bond to build a new school. Students were going to school from 7:00 AM till noon and then from noon till 5:00 PM. The kids were riding buses for two hours to come to school because it

was the only school in the county. Because of this I saw a need and started my own school.

I saw a need among the kids. I was working with kids that often didn't have a home life; many came from dysfunctional families. They came from families where the kids were always in trouble with the law, in fact, their parents weren't much better they were. In spite of their hopeless circumstances they were pretty good kids, considering the environment they were living in. I wanted to give them help in every way that I could. Once again I started out working through the church and now also through Christian schools; but I ultimately came to the conclusion after many years that it was the kids in the public school system that needed the most help. The kids in the Christian school systems came from parents that cared. These parents were willing to pay school tuition; they were able to provide a better home life, creating a much better situation. If I was really going to go where the need was the greatest, I believe that I had found it in the public schools; I committed my all of my efforts to the public schools and made the change in 1992 when I was 45 years old.

I also had another reason for making the change. I learned that my wife had an illness that offered little hope of survival. We decided immediately on surgery and to fight this aggressively. My wife went to the hospital within the week and had surgery to remove the tumors. Three days after her surgery she was told that she might have six months to live – maybe 3-4 years – but that would be all. She asked me if I would join her as a teacher working together in a large urban school system. She reminded me that it doesn't pay very much and we may

loose the house. She jokingly told me that she really didn't have much need of a house anymore; that'll be my problem. We would be able to enjoy our last weekends and afternoons together. I told her I would do that for her. I enrolled in a local college and was told I would need 42 hours to gain certification in the state we were in. I continued to work in a job with flexible hours and finished 42 hours of course work in fourteen months, passed the teacher's test, and received my certification the week school began.

When I submitted my application for a position in the large urban district she worked in I told them I was raised on the wrong side of the tracks in the city and had worked with kids in several major cities. I asked them to put me in the toughest school they had. They couldn't believe that anyone would come in and ask for a real challenging school but truthfully that was where I was most at home. They granted my request and gave me a teaching position in a pretty tough little school. I taught overaged fifth Graders in an annex out behind the school; I never taught in a regular building. The young people they gave me were 12, 13, and 14-year-old fifth graders from a tough drug and gang ridden neighborhood where the gang-bangers were revered by the younger kids and good kids morphed into wanna-be bangers. These 'kids' were young teens who had failed repeatedly, some had just given up, and others had already had run-ins with the law. In this elementary school they took these students who had failed and failed and they put them in one classroom – that was my classroom. They believed, perhaps hoped, that I could get control, teach them, and then move them on to middle school while other teachers would have a chance to teach without so much interruption.

The parents in this poor neighborhood treated me as well as I ever had been treated in any situation. I believe I did a lot of good for those kids; their parents told me that. Some came to the school and told me that I literally saved their kids lives. Their kids were coming home from school with a different attitude, wanting to graduate from high school, having never talked about that before. Many students talked about going to college, having some dreams of being somebody, and doing something some day. I wondered – I didn't know – but I wondered if I could do that for a classroom, could I do it for a school? Sort of get my arms around a whole school, change the climate and culture a little bit and give these kids' dreams and hopes beyond what the street offered them. I didn't have time to wonder, I had kids to teach.

I was amazed at how much help I could be. It really surprised me. I went in with a firm hand and some love; I just wasn't always on their case all of the time. I even went out and played with them. I shot basketball with them and set up and organized a lunchtime soccer league. We had a lot of fun. About once a month I would tell them to go and get their lunch-trays and come to the classroom because I had too much to teach and we didn't have time to play today. They would sit there and take notes with one hand and eat with the other. I would hear them bragging how I had said they were the hardest working fifth grade class in the state. They would say how there was nobody that was cranking out as much work as they did. I couldn't believe they were bragging about it. Especially since these are kids that six months before were bragging about what thugs they were, about how much they had stolen, and how much they hated school. Now they

were bragging that they do more work than anybody else and they're the best fifth grade class in the state. It was truly amazing. They believed that because I told them that. The more they bragged the more I started to see a real change in their lives. School had become the place to be.

Three and half years later a representative from the school district asked me if I would become an administrator of an urban middle school that was also in trouble. It was going under fast, certainly education delayed and full of violence. The school district thought I might have a unique perspective having worked with kids outside of school, in Christian schools, and in private schools. It was hoped that I might be able to draw on all of those experiences and come in and do something with that school that hadn't been done in the past. I told them that I would take it and see what I could do with it. I no longer wonder what if, now was my time to see, put my classroom practices to the test as school-wide practices.

During my administrative tenure I can't help but remember one girl, a very troubled girl, who came to me as an eighth grader wanting to transfer to my school. She told me that she had been raped, that she was a gang-banger and was quite a mess. I was pretty hard on her as I told her that I normally would not want to let her in my school. I didn't have to, she was a transfer. But because what had happened to her, and because of the danger she was in where she was at, I'd give her a chance. One chance! Not three strikes and your out. One! She met the challenge and changed everything. She changed everything about herself. The last day of school she peeked her head in my office and said, 'Thank you Mr. Mike, you've change my life.' After several more similar successful experiences

like that one I began to wonder if I can do that for an entire school district as a superintendent.

I accepted a superintendent's position a few years later in a small rural school district. I came in as a rookie and immediately wanted to make some educational changes. I put some additional pressure on the principals and the principals reciprocated by putting more pressure on the teachers. This had never happened before. Athletics had always been a priority, not academics. Nobody, when they are talking about their son playing basketball goes out and says, 'Yeah, I'm really proud of him, he's so average.' But yet sometimes I have heard, 'We may not be the best educationally, but we're pretty good. We're pretty good, we do okay.' In view of what's best for children and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) everyone should want academic excellence instead of being just pretty good. Everyone should drive for excellence in the classroom as much as excellence on the field or court. No one wants a mediocre basketball team or just an okay football team nor should we want a mediocre school.

I don't want an okay school; I don't want okay academics. The requirements and the legislative mandates of NCLB, academic performance index (API) and average yearly progress (AYP) certainly adds some impetus to that. I came in letting folks know that this was going to be a tougher year. I put a lot of emphasis on teaching the state's academic student skills, and when asked, 'What did you teach today and what state objective does that represent,' they needed to know. They needed to know how many state objectives they have to teach, how

many they have taught, and how many more they have yet to teach before testing. They needed to know who had got it and who need remediation.

I would ask questions like, 'How did you do today?'

'Did fine,' responded a math teacher.

'What did you teach?'

'I taught fractions.'

'How many of them got it?'

'What do you mean, how many of them got it?'

'I mean, how many are you going to re-mediate, 100% mastered it, or did 10%? Where are we at on that?'

These teachers had never really been asked questions like that before. I worked with my principals to ask similar questions making sure that my principals understood that they were the educational leaders of their school; this shouldn't be new news to their staff. I reminded they weren't just disciplinarians and pencil pushers; they were the instructional leaders of their schools. They were to be the instructional leaders of the lead teachers, master teachers, and other mentors of the school. They are to be in the hallways and classrooms not always in their offices.

I told them when it is time to administer the state mandated tests, we would test completely different than they ever tested before. I was shocked when I heard how they had been testing the years prior to my arrival. There is a church nearby with a large, nice multipurpose room. Supposedly to get them away from the distractions, they would take them down to the gym and test them in mass –

which goes against all research. I asked why they had been doing this and was told, 'Well, you have to get too many monitors if you test in the classrooms. You have to change the bell schedule.' I told them that we would change the bell schedule and get on the mark sparing no expense. I don't believe that there is any amount of trouble that's too much trouble; we will test in the classrooms. The teacher who taught the subject would be the tester. This means, one teacher would give the test in Language Arts, and another teacher gives the test in Math, that's the way it's going to be done. In other words, I wanted the algebra teacher to give the test with proper monitors in the algebra classroom. I am going to do whatever it takes to help my staff do everything they can to make these kids successful, especially using research-based methodologies.

During the past year I read to the fifth graders just before testing, I read Doctor Seuss's last book, *Diesel Doffer Day,* about a little school that is going to be closed down if they didn't raise their test scores. I told my fifth graders if they banded together like the students in the book and if our test scores went up that we would have a Diesel Doffer Day.

I wanted learning to be fun. I didn't want it to be, 'Oh no! We've got a test.' I tried to relate to them how the football team plays games on Friday nights and they have to practice to win a championship. I told them the football players weren't saying, 'Oh no not another practice!' They practice so they can perform at their best on Friday nights. I want all of the fifth graders to be as competitive in the classroom as the Friday night heroes of the community.

I wanted to inspire them by telling them that their time in the classroom is like playing everybody to win the state championship. They had to practicing for eight months. Whether we win, loose, or draw these scores would be posted on the World Wide Web, and people all over the world – if they want to – would be able to look up our test scores and see how we did. All over the world, if they want to because they will be published on the Department of Education's Web Site. All over the world, they'll know where we are at, and where you are at educationally. I think my strategy of comparing the students to the athletes got them really fired up; so much so that our scores came up in every core area. We had the same teachers. We were using the same curriculum. We taught it in the same classroom. Everybody had told me that I was being ridiculous, some even called the board and reported on me, but our scores all came up at every grade level and I feel real good about that.

My first year had it share of ups as well as downs. The learning curve was steep. There were some situations from previous years that needed to be addressed. There were some on going problems that needed attention. And I made my own mistakes. Still I was committed to change. Change is always hard on those involved in the change process whether administrator or teacher. I'm a new Superintendent and I often feel as if I'm fighting for my life. I'm sure staff often feels the same way as they adjust to change. Some of the changes involved issue of privacy and confidentiality and I needed to deal with procedures and rules without the ability to fully explain what initiated the change. Sometimes I felt I was trying to tread water and they kept handing me another brick and said, 'See if

you can swim with this one old boy.' I think I did reasonably well and got some of the situations straightened out. It wasn't a lot of fun and it was not something I enjoyed doing. I wanted to do the best I could to show that I cared and was willing to work with the community and yet, there were still some things that I could not do.

I'm brand new at this and I've never claimed to be real smart but I'm willing to work hard, I read a lot and try to learn. But I sometimes confuse knowledge and wisdom. Wisdom knows the proper thing to do with knowledge. We can take what we know about the atom and nuclear devices and we can either heal people or we can blow them up. Same knowledge; but there's wisdom involved in how you use that knowledge. Somebody once said, 'A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.' I'm afraid that I have a little knowledge. I pray for the wisdom to know what to do or what to say when an angry parent walks into my office or when various factions of the school compete for limited resources or something comes at me that I'm not sure about. Here I lean on my faith and I pray a lot that I will do what is right, what is best for the kids, that parents and staff will understand, and that the answer I give will be the right answer.

I live my belief system at home, as well as in public. One of the better things that have been said about me occurred while I was with a large group of people at a birthday party. Everybody was trying to figure out something good to say about me, which was probably hard. One of the people I worked with stood up and said, 'I've worked with you a few years now and the thing that I would say

about you is that I've been in your home, I've been in your car, I've been at work with you, been to church with you and what everyone, including myself sees about you is what we all get. You are no different out playing a round of golf than you are in church. And that's how you live. It's just what you are.' That was a stirring moment me for me as I sat there and listened to his words. I, on the other hand, I would say that I'm a failed creature, but God loves me anyway. I'm doing the best I can.

There are times when - probably there should be more times - but there are times when I just say to God, if you want me here, then I'm here. And if you don't, I'm not; and that's your choice. I talk to God everyday and certainly every week. I have a prayer time on Saturdays when I certainly ask for wisdom.

I recently started for the first time in our school history a summer recreational and reading program; because I know a lot of our families are poor and cannot afford baby sitters. I know a lot of our families are single parents and that parent is away working, or both parents have to work and that there are a lot of kids that are left with an older sibling. Thirteen year olds don't always make the best baby sitters, they have their own issues. I was able to pull a grant and get some federal money to run a summer program where we're working educationally with the kids on reading, a little bit of math, some art; but also just having a quality time with the kids in a safe environment teaching some character traits along with the way. Part of the reason why I'm doing that besides just from a general love of the kids, is that I believe that we need to do what is right because

that's what God's word tell us - to do the right thing - and we do it the right way. I think this is what's right.

Spirituality is a real thing. If you leave it out of the classroom and just try to go from a scientific method you're leaving out a real part of the equation and there will always be something missing. There is in man's nature a spiritual side. Wherever you go in the world people innately have a God that they believe in, a religious side to them, a spiritual side to them. It's part of the makeup of man. If we ignore that as a staff and if we ignore that in our children - that spiritual side - then we're not hitting a home run. I'm not talking about teaching Christianity or the Bible. I'm saying there's a spiritual side to us and that has to be taken into account. It has to be addressed if we are going to do all for the child that we can and if we're going to be all that we can be.

Religion in education is that elephant in the corner. It's there. Everybody knows it's there. Some of our professors were Christian and went to church. We can't talk about it, we can't say anything about it; and yet it's a big part of a lot of people's lives. And so when we go to college, to study how to work with people and how to work with kids, this big part of Americana, this big part of staff's lives, this big part of children's lives is totally ignored. We know it's there and we are not doing a very good job about it.

I am what I am. I've found that only a few of my staff members really don't want to hear anything about my spirituality. There are those that are ambivalent. If it was up to them, it would never come up. The majority of my staff has some kind of religious spiritual connection. They like the fact that their

leader is spiritual, that it is a plus, and not a minus. It has never hurt me with my staff. Nobody has ever said, well I can't believe you because you're a Christian. But I have had people say, I can believe you because I know how you live your life, and that you believe. I have heard people say, 'I trust you basically because of who you are and what you believe.' I've never had anyone come up and say, 'I can't trust you because you're religious.'

I don't stand up at teachers meetings and say, 'Take your Bibles and turn to John 3 as we will discuss being born again.' I present myself as a Christian and a believer that lives by a certain set of principles. Over the course of six or eight months my staff is able to see me living that out. It helps me in my dealings with them because they understand where I'm coming from. The only question is whether they really believe it? Once they decide, they have to make that judgment; I can't make it for them. Furthermore when they decide that I am for real then they have a good idea of who I am so they trust me. In fact some of my staff has come by my office and asked me to pray for somebody or pray for them. They have also come by to discuss various religious topics.

I would probably say that my teacher aides have come to me for spiritual guidance more than anybody else. I have had teachers come and talk to me about some incredible things that I didn't know if I should even be listening to. I'm thinking, 'I'm here as an administrator, not as counselor, and you're telling me some pretty private stuff here.' I've had teachers come to me to talk out about certain things with a need for it not to go any further. They come to me because

they trust me and they know they can talk to me. Maybe I'll understand and maybe they don't want me to say anything, just listen.

I've had at least two very spiritual secretaries that were really on the same level as me. They could have been part of my family; come into my home, been Aunt Mary or whoever, and they wouldn't have changed a lick. I mean, we were on the same page. I've had a couple of secretaries that were of other Christian faiths or backgrounds and were not practicing. They had a lot of questions for me about why I was as active as I was and took some of the stands I took. They wanted to know what was the difference between what I believed and what they believed. I've not had any one of them come to my way of thinking, but I had a couple of them start going to their church and start going back to their denomination. They come to realize that it is for the good of their children or the family or whatever the reason may be, they need a spiritual influence in their life.

I had a couple of secretaries that had very little spiritual interest at all. They were good secretaries and good workers. They did what they did and that was fine too. We would have discussions about football and horses. I would talk about religion in a real non-threatening way; it is just a part of my life. I'm really open with my staff and they're real open with me and if I do something they don't like, they'll tell me, and that's fine, that's the way I want it to be. I don't want them to be afraid to talk to me.

I think if they didn't want me to talk to them about spirituality they would tell me that I'm way off base. I think if I was offending them that they say they would rather I not talk about that anymore, but I've never had anybody say that.

I'm not preaching at them, I'm just sharing experiences. It's a big part of my life, so I talk about at times. Sometimes my staff will ask, 'Well what's that all about?' I may go into a little more detail with them then if they ask me any questions about it.

The Bible says, 'All things work together for good to them that are called of the Lord according to His purpose.' Everything that happens is not always for good, but God takes care of his children, and that's a whole different matter. I think people do stupid things. What was the purpose in it? God knows. I don't know. I don't see any purpose in it. Now, God's child doing God's business in God's way, nothing will happen to him outside the will of God, and all of that is for a purpose, and all of that is for a reason. If I run over there and run my head into that wall, and get up and say that was for my good. No it wasn't. That was a stupid wrong thing to do. God never told you to put your head down and run into that wall. I did that all on my own. Bill Gothard explained it this way, 'It's raining and you don't want to get wet so you have an umbrella that God gave you. You put the umbrella over your head and as long as you stay under the umbrella you're okay. But if you run out from underneath that umbrella, you're going to get wet.' That was not God's will. You chose to run out from under the umbrella that God gave you. I'm afraid that we have people that are running out from under the umbrella of God's protection and the umbrella of God's will, getting wet and saying, 'Well, it's all God's will. No, it was God's will that you stay underneath the umbrella. That's why he gave it to you.'

I can't help but wonder what if all of this does not work out? What if my belief system and all of this does not work out? What if a guy over there that is very secular and humanistic and has no interest in spiritual things, is more successful than me? What if someone that is real smart comes along and tells me if I hadn't been quite so spiritual I would have gone a lot father, made a lot more money, been more successful, and wrote a book on how to be successful? My response to that would be something like this, 'We live in a world where the end justifies the means. If we look at what we want to do, and where we want to get, do we try to get there at any cost? My belief system says it's all about the journey. If you do the journey well, you will end up where you're supposed to be. It's not so much where you're at, but what direction you're going. The man a foot from hell headed to heaven is a whole lot better off than the man a foot from heaven, heading to hell.'

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the findings of my research on how rural school superintendents' perceptions of spirituality influence their leadership activities. My investigation began with a search to find meaning and purpose to my own life-long spiritual journey using heuristic inquiry as my guide. I wanted to seek deeper meaning of my experiences and perceptions by seeking out those with similar stories.

While reading the transcripts I engaged in heuristic immersion, incubation, indwelling, intuiting, tacit knowing, illumination, explication, and synthesis. I buried myself within the lived experiences only to flashback to the moments of the actual interviews, remembering the co-researchers facial expressions, crackling voices, and the

tears of joy and sadness that ran down their faces. These fervent and astonishing descriptions fused with mine as our solo voices joined to form a new choral society. I was elated that my co-researchers were willing to disclose their experiences and perceptions of spirituality and their predisposition to encounter daily complexities and continue to grow spiritually.

In the next chapter, I will present a creative synthesis, followed by a comparison of the current study to the existing research presented in the literature review. Next, limitations, social relevance, and implications are revealed. Finally, recommendations for future research, recommendations for practice, and a reflective summary are presented.

Chapter 5

This chapter summarizes my research investigation of the question, "How do rural

school superintendents' perceptions of spirituality influence their leadership activities?"

The chapter has been categorized into seven separate headings: (1) creative synthesis; (2)

a comparison of the current study to the existing research; (3) limitations of the current

study; (4) social significance and implications of the study; (5) recommendations for

future research and practice; and finally (6) a reflective summary.

Creative Synthesis

The creative synthesis of an experience and perception is more than the sum of its

parts. It brings together the experience as an integrated whole while embracing the unique

style of the primary researcher who is engaged in every phase of heuristic research and

with each co-researcher. Moustakas (1990) points out that, "The creative synthesis is the

peak moment when the researcher recognizes the universal nature of what something is

and means, and at the same time grows in self-understanding and as a self" (p. 90).

All of the co-researchers emphasize the fact that a major part of their leadership

experience is "wanting to make a difference." We see a need and take steps to accomplish

our task. This passionate drive began as a journey to discover whom we are and what we

are supposed to do with our lives. Somewhere in the journey, we acknowledge the fact

that, "it's not what we want to do but what God wants us to do." We are not ashamed to

tell people openly that we are Christians; we live our lives spiritually 24 hours a day – 7

days a week. We pray daily, sometimes hourly for spiritual guidance and direction, often

using the Holy Bible as a road map. The road we follow has twists and turns with

personal crises seen as just a fork-in-the-road, we keep going, as we are not yet at the end

of our journey. We work in a stressful environment and have to make tough decisions, but we are trusted with our conclusions.

We are humble enough to say we make mistakes and appreciate the recovery as a valuable process of learning. People we met along the way come to know us as educational leaders that live by certain standards and principals and have a hard work mentality. We believe in setting the example by being responsible and true. Our journey has taken us out of our comfort zones, far from what is familiar and safe. Where we go, what we do, whom we met, is insignificant. We know this life isn't important, eternity is. We spend our days praying for guidance as we strive to do what we were chosen by God to do, "to make a difference." After all, we know that, "the end justifies the means."

<u>Comparison to Existing Literature</u>

The present study is unique in that it explores the how three rural school superintendents perceive spirituality's influence on their leadership activities. Self-discovery and self-disclosure also has added an additional component to my research study, which makes it different from quantitative research. While leadership theories were not the focus of this research project, they were important to view and address. In this section, data obtained from the three vignettes of Mark, Mike, and Robert (I will refer to myself in the third person to help maintain the individuality between the co-researchers) reveals several communal alliances with current literature: (1) making a difference; (2) unique life experiences; (3) the spiritual journey; (3) spiritual values and perceptions; (5) trust relationships; (6) prayer life; (7) spirituality in the workplace; and (8) proselytizing risks.

<u>Making a Difference</u>

The literature reveals that true leaders live in a culture of change, valuing and enjoying the tensions inherent in addressing hard-to-solve problems, because that is where the greatest accomplishments are found (Fullan, 2001). Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) maintain that purposing essentials of moral leadership in schools include vision, initiative, and proactive action. Stogdill (1974) reports that leaders are self-confident and have a sense of personal identity.

Moral purpose is defined as attempts made to act with the intent to make a positive difference (Fullan, 2000). Fairholm (2000) points out that spiritual leaders are people "who live by a higher moral standard of conduct in their relationships. This inner moral standard affects all we do and become at work levels as well as at social levels of existence" (p. 132). Fullan (2001) believes "moral purpose is about both ends and means. In education, an important end is to make a difference in the lives of students. But the means of getting to that end are also crucial" (p. 13). Throughout their educational careers, each co-researcher discovers confidence and individual distinctiveness at dissimilar stages, but all wanting to make a difference in manners that are uniquely characteristic of themselves. Theorists indicated that the moral purposes of superintendents are to support democratic values, equity and social justice in school improvement (Slater, 1994; M. D. Thomas, 1982). Schlechty (1990) contends that moral authority resides in the office of the superintendent, whose actions must be viewed as morally and ethically appropriate. "Who the superintendent is, what the superintendent values, and the style of operation supported by the superintendent will be evident throughout the school system" (p. 128).

Mark

I enjoyed the rural setting and actually enjoyed the inner city as well. I made a

difference there. I found out that it was still difficult to make a difference in the

lives of my students because I had to go through the administration to achieve

certain things. So I said to myself that I could make a difference by becoming an

administrator myself. I could make the necessary changes from the principal's

office. It was very important to me to make a difference because I was committed

to teaching - to teaching the students - not as just a way to make a living.

Mike

I eventually went to a small rural community where they were having some

serious problems at the local public school; in fact they had lost their

accreditation. The community would not vote on a bond to build a new school.

Students were going to school from 7:00 AM till noon and then from noon till

5:00 PM. The kids were riding buses for two hours to come to school because it

was the only school in the county. Because of this I saw a need and started my

own school. I saw a need among the kids. I was working with kids that often

didn't have a home life; many came from dysfunctional families. They came from

families where the kids were always in trouble with the law, in fact, their parents

weren't much better they were. In spite of their hopeless circumstances they were

pretty good kids, considering the environment they were living in. I wanted to

give them help in every way that I could.

I ultimately came to the conclusion after many years that it was the kids in

the public school system that needed the most help. The kids in the Christian

school systems came from parents that cared. These parents were willing to pay school tuition; they were able to provide a better home life, creating a much better situation. If I was really going to go where the need was the greatest, I believe that I had found it in the public schools; I committed my all of my efforts to the public schools.

During my administrative tenure I can't help but remember one girl… an eighth grader wanting to transfer to my school. She told me that she had been raped…was a gang-banger. I was pretty hard on her…normally would not want to let her in my school…didn't have to, she was a transfer. But…I'd give her a chance. One chance! Not three strikes and your out. One! She met the challenge…changed everything about herself. The last day of school she peeked her head in my office and said, 'Thank you Mr. Mike, you've change my life.'

<u>Robert</u>

I was acting with the intent of making a positive difference in this young man's life. Tragically, he committed suicide a few days later. After I had dismissed the sorrow that pursued the unpleasant memory I began to question if there was something else I could have said or done to prevent his untimely death. Perhaps, my thoughts might be better spent on how I can make a difference now. What can I do now to help teenagers just like him who are crying out for help?

Several students came into my classroom before or after school to utter a word of thanks for being there for them. Some even said I was making a difference in their lives as well as the school and not to change or get discouraged.

I was making a difference and it felt so good. I had a purpose for being and a

mission yet to accomplish.

<u>Unique Life Experiences</u>

The literature reports that spiritual leaders have unique life experiences that can

significantly influence the type of leader they become. Thrall et al. (1999) state that God

uses our life experiences, both good and bad, for particular purposes and goals for our

lives. The influence of a leader's childhood cannot be misjudged as an essential factor of

leadership development. Burns (cited in Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001) details the

childhood experiences of Martin Luther King, Woodrow Wilson, Winston Churchill,

Gandhi, John F. Kennedy, and Bill Clinton, all of whom failed to win the approval of

their fathers. Burns reports that in order to compensate, these leaders wanted to win the

devotion of large groups of people to strive for greatness as a means of enhancing their

battered self-esteem. Mitchell (2000) asserts that life is full of confrontation and

contradictions. "It can either be a time of rich and unexpected blessings, or a time of

painful doubt, anxiety, or guilt" (p. 181). Sanders (1994) states that leaders must shake of

any negative element that may hold them back. Bolman and Deal (1995) report that

leaders need to face their fears, to "use life's wounds to discover their own spiritual

centers. As they conquer their demons within, they achieve the inner peace and bedrock

confidence that enable them to inspirit and inspire others" (p. 57). Hagberg believes that

one cannot become a leader unless one takes a "leap of faith." Bolman and Deal (2001)

state that history is filled with narratives about average individuals doing astonishing

things after conquering suffering and grief. Minirth and Meier (1994) report that

everyone endures crucial losses and reversals, such as death of a love one or a pet,

business failures, and incurable illnesses. Wheatley (2002) calls these periods of chaos "dark nights of the soul." Killen and de Beer (2002) declare the choices one makes everyday will impact future generation to come.

<div align="center">Mark</div>

Growing up I was very well protected with hard work ethics instilled in me by my father. He had the attitude do it or get fired; you do your job and you will pull your weight. If he told you to do a chore, the chore better be done.

It was at the age of seventeen that I knew I wanted to be an educator. While in high school I rough-necked in the oil fields part-time and then went to tech school but I decided I wanted more adventure, so I joined the Air Force for five and a half years.

In 1981, I went to college and got married shortly thereafter…. Soon after getting married I quit school and went back to the oil fields….decided there wasn't much job security in the oil fields so I rejoined the service as an Army counterintelligence…for seven years. During this time I got divorced becoming a single parent with custody of my two boys….I went back to school again, using the GI Bill to get my certification in teaching.

I felt like I needed to go be with my dad who wasn't a Christian. Our time together was short as he died two years later. He never once said that he loved me; that hurt. If he had not passed on I probably would not have left the farm but I decided that I was okay and I could move away to be on my own again. I believe that many things would have happened differently if my father hadn't passed

away. I was not happy that he was gone; however, God took a bad situation and helped me experience some good out of it.

I began my career in education in 1992. I started rural and went to suburban – inner-city suburban. I became a principal while I was working on my doctorate at the University of Oklahoma. While I was a principal I discovered that I was still limited in the decisions that I had to make at various levels. I was 43 years old when I decided to try to become a superintendent. I knew that as a superintendent I would be the one responsible for making recommendations and changes for the entire school district. I resolved that I could have more of an impact as a superintendent accepting my first superintendent position in 2001.

<u>Mike</u>

I was probably 17, 18, or 19 years-old when it really hit me that I had some decisions to make on how I was going to live my life. During my early years I had been very active in sports but I tore my knees up and couldn't play any longer; I thought that at least I could coach kids in high school….I began to work with the local neighborhood kids, coaching church league and street teams in a large Midwestern city. After working with both groups I decided that I would rather work with kids within a church format. I eventually went to a small rural community where they were having some serious problems at the local public school.

Because of this I saw a need and started my own school. I saw a need among the kids. I was working with kids that often didn't have a home life; many came from dysfunctional families….I ultimately came to the conclusion…that it

was the kids in the public school system that needed the most help. The kids in the Christian school systems came from parents that cared….parents were willing to pay school tuition…provide a better home life….I committed my all of my efforts to the public schools and made the change in 1992 when I was 45 years old.

I also had another reason for making the change. I learned that my wife had an illness that offered little hope of survival. We decided immediately on surgery and to fight this aggressively….to remove the tumors. Three days after her surgery she was told that she might have six months to live…. She asked me if I would join her as a teacher. She reminded me that it doesn't pay very much and we may loose the house. We would be able to enjoy our last weekends and afternoons together. I told her I would do that for her. When I submitted my application for a position in the large urban district….I asked them to put me in the toughest school they had.

Three and half years later a representative from the school district asked me if I would become an administrator of an urban middle school that was also in trouble. The school district thought I might have a unique perspective having worked with kids outside of school, in Christian schools, and in private schools. It was hoped that I might be able to draw on all of those experiences…do something…that hadn't been done in the past. I told them that I would take it and see what I could do with it. After several…successful experiences…I began to wonder if (I could be successful) as a superintendent. I accepted a superintendent's position a few years later in a small rural school district.

<u>Robert</u>

During August 1995…a student was late to class because she said her locker was broken.…I'm thinking how this can be since I personally changed all of the combinations.…they were all in perfect working order. As I was yelling, a sea of innocent adolescent faces had turned into a sea of horrified expressions. I further complicated matters by challenging her to prove to the class and myself that her locker was indeed broken.…To my amazement…her locker would not open…Almost immediately several others students had the courage to report that their lockers were just as broken. Then it hit me.…I had responded in anger just as my father had done so many times with me as a child. Yet, there I stood, a spitting image of an angry, bitter man, thinking this was the one thing I had sworn to never to do. I had suffered so many times, so many brutal physical and mental attacks due to his reoccurring forgetful drunken ways.

1998-1999 was full of many disappointments, illnesses, and disasters. The new administrator came in like a refreshing breath of fresh air, only to leave a stale taste in my mouth. In March I had my gall bladder removed.…I did not return to work until May. My time off left me feeling totally disconnected from the students I had come to love.

My 40th birthday was just a few short months away. In August 1999, I entered the doctorate cohort program at the University of Oklahoma. At the same time…I found myself leaving the large suburban school district to accept a position of high school principal at…a small rural school district.

Unfortunately, my happiness was short-lived…the district could no longer afford to pay for a superintendent and a principal….Mr. Smith was going to recommend that they combine the position of superintendent and principal to save administrative costs…he was going to recommend that they riff my position effective July 1, 2003….the school board met…accepted Mr. Smith's recommendations; he resigned, I was riffed.

During March I received a phone call from Superintendent Jones from the Greater Valley School District to set up an interview (he was retiring) at the end of the month….I told Mr. Jones I would be more than happy to accept the position…. I finally had a new home….I was going to be the next superintendent at the Greater Valley School District.

Spiritual Journey

The literature indicates that spirituality is defined by an individual's experiences. Lerner (2000) describes spirituality as a lived experience, a set of practices and a consciousness. The literature states that spirituality is much like a journey to discovery who we are. Many people are increasingly embarking upon a spiritual journey, seeking to discover their true selves, searching for a higher purpose and meaning to their lives (J. A. Conger, 1994). Teasdale (1999) maintains that life is a spiritual journey, each individual must take the journey alone. Assagioli (1965) concurs that man's spiritual development is a journey, an adventure full of surprises, difficulties and even dangers. Delbecq (1999) describes the calling as a "voice" full of rage that adds vitality and purpose to the journey. The journey is a calling to service, not simply a career, but a spiritual journey that allows and encourages the individual to bring the "private life of spirit" to the

"public life" of work (Delbecq, 1999). Several authors e.g., (S. Covey, 1989; Mitroff et al., 1994; Peck, 1993; Roof, 1993) refer to the spiritual journey as a process of focusing within, in order to gain an awareness of Self. The spiritual journey represents the quest to unite one's inner and outer world, to provide meaning and purpose to one's life. The search, and consequent realization, provides an individual with sense of alignment and order. Bolman and Deal (1995) state that today's leaders need to look inward towards a spiritual journey. Robert Coles (1990) wants to know at what age do we start wondering about it all, about the nature of the journey and the final destination.

Mike

My belief system says it's all about the journey. If you do the journey well, you will end up where you're supposed to be. It's not so much where you're at, but what direction you're going. The man a foot from hell headed to heaven is a whole lot better off than the man a foot from heaven, heading to hell.

Robert

This is my story, full of its ups and downs and the resulting experiences that were obtained as a result of having the courage and faith to continue the journey. During this journey, I sustained my inquisitiveness and observed perceptions from various different viewpoints. It has been an incredible journey, but all journeys have a fair share of roadblocks, detours, and potholes. I started on this journey without a map, not really knowing where I was going. Occasionally I would seek advice, get some direction, doing so I discovered the traffic jams and potholes on the road of life where fewer and further apart. Little did I know at that time that my quest would become a vital part of a life-long journey. I did not set out on this

life-long journey thinking I would become a superintendent of a small rural

school district leading by spiritual faith, but yet, here I am. I learned very early in

life that when I went to God in prayer, life was less complicated and stressful. I

was so intrigued by it that it became a personal quest to discover its meaning.

While I do not know how long I will be at Mayberry, I do understand my spiritual

journey is far from being over as the final chapter of my life is yet to be written.

Spiritual Values and Perceptions

Unfortunately, we need more than a moral purpose to help us make a difference

and more than choosing the correct career path. In this study, the co-researchers profess

to be spiritually led. Spirituality is a process of living out one's set of deeply held

personal values (Block, 1993). The literature indicates that spirituality is defined by an

individual's values and perceptions. Spirituality incorporates the individual's specific

values giving individuals the courage to look within and trust (Krippen & Welch, 1992).

Spirituality permeates the very core of our human being, affecting the way one perceives

the world, the way one feels about the world. Spiritual individuals make decisions based

on their perceptions and sensations. Helminiak (1996) averts that spirituality involves

daily focusing one's energy optimally.

Covey (2004; 1984) asserts that leaders must help people experience feelings of

worth having intrinsic value, utterly separate from any association to others. The essence

of spirituality exists within an individual's character and values (Hall & Thompson,

1980; Yukl, 1994). Dreher (1996) believes that all spiritual people are a part of something

grand. Killen and de Beer (2002) reflect on questions of meaning and value in a society

that is on the verge of a new millennium, faced with personal, social, geographical, and

environmental choices and challenges not even imagined thirty years ago. Killen and de Beer also believe that the consequences of our reflection on questions of meaning and value are momentous.

Mark

I look at everything as a positive; I didn't allow myself to grieve on the negative. If you're not true at home, you're not going to be true at work or anywhere else. I practice that by setting the example. My dad would always say you're only as good as your name, who you are, and then you lay down your head at night and go to asleep. I spell out exactly what I believe in – faith and life. I've got to live it everyday, 24 hours a day and that includes my time working at school. I believe that if I am to be successful I have to be sincere. The students have picked up on this right away. Possibly the best explanation of who I am that I can give someone who has never met me is, 'I am the man in the mirror looking back at whom I am and lays his head down on the pillow and has to go to sleep with whom I am. To do that, I have to live according to God's direction that is revealed to me through prayer and the Bible.'

Mike

I was raised in a sphere that believed there was more to life than the physical, temporal, and worldly areas that we experience through our senses; there was a heaven to gain, a hell to shun, a God that was good, and a devil that wasn't. I live my belief system at home, as well as in public. I am what I am. We live in a world where the end justifies the means.

<u>Robert</u>

I want to start by saying I am here because I am supposed to be here; it is meant to be. Absolutely everything happens for a reason. Today I know the outcome of every decision has a 50% chance of success. Because of the strength of my spiritual faith I no longer needlessly worry about outcomes. It would seem that not a day has gone by since my arrival that someone has not expressed his or her appreciation for my spiritual leadership. I do struggle with my newfound confidence when I am sick and when I have not had a lot of rest. When I am physically weak, my abilities to focus during theological reflection are affected and my stress levels increase accordingly. I have developed a strong sense of efficacy as I have found and maintained a positive attitude towards my responsibilities and myself; something I thought I had lost when I stopped teaching to become an administrator.

<u>Trust Relationships</u>

The literature suggests that trust is a vital component of spirituality. Woolfe (2002) states that if you haven't earned people's trust by keeping your word, people won't follow you too far. Woolfe asserts that leaders (superintendents) exercise integrity and honesty when the group culture supports these behaviors. Conger (1988) states that one can build trust by being sincere and committed. Evans (2000) connects the morals of trust and loyalty with a leader's facility to formulate change. Evans further states that trust is the essential link between leader and led. Trust is vital to people's job satisfactions, loyalty is vital to followership. According to Evans, trust is especially

important to schools that offer few extrinsic motivators. Trust is as fragile as it is precious; once damaged, it is nearly impossible to repair (Evans, 2000).

Spirituality gives individuals courage to look within and trust (Krippen & Welch, 1992). Kaplan (1997) points out that trust occurs when people are convinced that the leader means what he or she says because every statement is backed by a record of performance. According to Cherry (1983), trust and sincerity are the cornerstones of change. Cherry states that students learn at a very young age to mistrust adults because of what is modeled at home, on television, and at the school where they attend. Cherry further states that educators must be extremely careful not to make promises they cannot keep, and they must keep the promises they make. Cherry continues by stating if unforeseen circumstance prevents one from keeping the promise, acknowledge it and apologize for it, making sure you impart sincerity and honesty to sustain and increase mutual trust.

<div align="center">Mark</div>

I have to be true to the students, be trusted as one who knows what's best for the students. I'd tell them the truth, because they asked. We must be true to them because they're going to learn by our actions and by our decisions. So based on the first ethic – be true to yourself. I believe that if I am to be successful I have to be sincere.

<div align="center">Mike</div>

Nobody has ever said, well I can't believe you because you're a Christian. But I have had people say, I can believe you because I know how you live your life, and that you believe. I have heard people say, 'I trust you basically because of who

<div align="center">198</div>

you are and what you believe.' I've never had anyone come up and say, 'I can't

trust you because you're religious.' Furthermore when they decide that I am for

real then they have a good idea of who I am so they trust me. I have had teachers

come and talk to me about some incredible things that I didn't know if I should

even be listening to. I'm thinking, 'I'm here as an administrator, not as counselor,

and you're telling me some pretty private stuff here.' I've had teachers come to

me to talk out about certain things with a need for it not to go any further. They

come to me because they trust me and they know they can talk to me.

<div align="center">Robert</div>

I made a decree to each of my students. I told them I would never knowingly or

intentionally lie to them. I would always tell the truth and give as much

information as I legally could. I would open up a doorway of trust between the

students and myself and expect them to be able to walk through it as well.

Prayer Life

The literature verifies that prayer is characterized as one of the center elements of

spirituality. Prayer life is essential; nothing significant will happen apart from God

(Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001). Researchers have found prayer to be a mechanism to help

individuals cope with physical and mental conditions, traumas, and crises (Lindgren &

Coursey, 1995; McCullough, 1995). Poloma and Pendleton (1991) reveal that individuals

who pray have a sense of well-being and life satisfaction. Richards and Bergin (1997)

affirm that people believe prayer helps them physically and psychologically. A 1993

Gallup survey reveals that 90% of Americans pray at least occasionally. A later poll on

American prayer indicates that 87% believe God answers prayers (Woodward, 1997). In

that same poll, 75% report they ask for strength to overcome weaknesses. Blackaby &

Blackaby (2001) state that more than any other single thing leaders do, it is their prayer

life that determines their effectiveness. Blackaby and Blackaby further state that a leader

who is a person of prayer can affect even unbelieving employees. Glickman (1998)

contends that prayer or meditation provides time to pause and think about the world and

where our life fits, acknowledging that most of us, whether we are deeply religious or

spiritual or not, seek such times. In the right setting leaders feel comfortable enough to

ask their employees if they might have the liberty to pray for them. It is an remarkable

event when a secular organization led by a Christian leader will diligently pray for his or

her employee (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001).

<div align="center">Mark</div>

Before I made the change from principal to superintendent, I prayed to the Lord to

seek guidance as to where He needed me to go. They were women from the

community who were moms of students that had gotten together every morning

for 10-15 minutes to pray for the school and to ask God to send them a Christian

superintendent. I know it was God that brought me here as an answer to their

prayers as well as my own. Through the years I have discovered that there is a

correlation between my effectiveness as a superintendent and my spirituality and

prayer. When someone's in disagreement I actually ask the Lord to open my eyes

to see if they're wrong, to confirm my beliefs, or to see if I am wrong.

My employees and I often have prayer times at work. My secretaries and I

will pray every time we hear of a teacher or a student in need. We often join

hands together in a room and pray for the teachers and students. I pray about

<div align="center">200</div>

things that I can change, and leave the rest of it up to God. I make every effort to go to God with all decisions; however, when I catch myself not doing it I merely stop at that point and get to the prayer before continuing any thinking about that decision. Quite often I find myself just stepping outside of my building where my office is located to get personal with the Lord. There were times that I perceived that God did not answer certain prayers because of the outcome. I often want the answers today, thinking I will get them today. I believe you can change any situation through prayer.

<div align="center">Mike</div>

I pray for the wisdom to know what to do or what to say when an angry parent walks into my office or when various factions of the school compete for limited resources or something comes at me that I'm not sure about. Here I lean on my faith and I pray a lot that I will do what is right, what is best for the kids, that parents and staff will understand, and that the answer I give will be the right answer. There are times when - probably there should be more times - but there are times when I just say to God, if you want me here, then I'm here. And if you don't, I'm not; and that's your choice. I talk to God everyday and certainly every week. I have a prayer time on Saturdays when I certainly ask for wisdom. Some of my staff has come by my office and asked me to pray for somebody or pray for them.

<div align="center">Robert</div>

(At first) I wasn't a very religious person and I did not lead a prayerful life. I did not begin a prayerful commitment until after my arrival at Leo Francis where I

was surrounded by extraordinary role models that provided Bible scriptures and inspirational words of encouragement. Somehow the discussion turned to religion and whether or not I prayed for guidance. They encouraged me to pray on a regular basis. I wanted to believe that God, because of prayer, would relocate me and I would become happy again. I continued my employment search looking for an opening somewhere else and of course, the prayers.

I asked a local church parishioner to have her church pray for me and the heavy burden that was placed upon my shoulders. One of the newest members of this group told me that I had been on the prayer list at his church for several weeks. I expressed my gratitude… for their prayers and confidence.

Upon my arrival at Greater Valley, members of my new staff, the kitchen workers in particular, asked if I was a God fearing man. When I replied yes they told me that I was an answer to their prayers. They indicated they wanted a superintendent that was a Christian who cared about the students more than anything else.

After this era, my time devoted to prayer has become routine. I pray upon waking, during the day, and before going to sleep. The more I pray, the better my life becomes. The more I talk to my staff about prayer and God's spiritual intervention, the easier my job becomes. There are days I get too busy to pray. I notice that these days seem longer; events do not go as smooth as those days I prayed. On a prayerful day, regardless of the event, the outcome is always peaceful and conclusive. What a difference prayer has made in my life! It taken

me a while to discover that when I go to God in prayer, life is less complicated and stressful.

Spirituality in the Workplace

Ashmos and Duchon (200) define workplace spirituality as recognizing that employees have an inner life that is nourished by meaningful work. Gibbons (2000) explains that workplace spirituality is considered a highly personal and philosophical construct that acknowledges a sense of wholeness, connectedness at work, and deeper values. Neal (1997) states that spirituality in the workplace refers to an individual's attempts to live his or her values more fully in the workplace. Individuals are desiring to bring spirituality into all significant facets of their lives including work (Cacioppe, 2000). Influential leaders have begun to acknowledge the significance of the workplace by endorsing spiritual growth (Shellenbarger, 2000). Hendricks and Ludeman (1996) contend that in the 21st century, leaders' stance on their spiritual practices will become synonymous with survival in the workplace.

Mark

If you're not true at home, you're not going to be true at work or anywhere else. It has been easy for me to confidently continue my spirituality at work. It hasn't mattered where I was in my career, whether I was a teacher or a principal or any other place where I began a career; I would make what I call an accountability statement of my faith. I spell out exactly what I believe in – faith and life. I've got to live it everyday, 24 hours a day and that includes my time working at school. The students have picked up on this right away. There's no telling how many times that I have had school counselors come to me with questions of faith

203

seeking knowledge as how to not be [passed by the road of time]. My employees and I often have prayer times at work. My secretaries and I will pray every time we hear of a teacher or a student in need. We often join hands together in a room and pray for the teachers and students. I have prepared myself for the day when I will quit my job if it comes between what I believe in as a Christian. I don't want to see myself compromised in my faith when it comes to that.

<center>Mike</center>

I am what I am. I've found that only a few of my staff members really don't want to hear anything about my spirituality. There are those that are ambivalent. If it was up to them, it would never come up. The majority of my staff has some kind of religious spiritual connection. They like the fact that their leader is spiritual, that it is a plus, and not a minus. It has never hurt me with my staff. In fact some of my staff have come by my office and asked me to pray for somebody or pray for them. They have also come by to discuss various religious topics. I would probably say that my teacher aides have come to me for spiritual guidance more than anybody else.

I've had at least two very spiritual secretaries that were really on the same level as me. They could have been part of my family; come into my home, been Aunt Mary or whoever, and they wouldn't have changed a lick. I mean, we were on the same page. I've had a couple of secretaries that were of other Christian faiths or backgrounds and were not practicing. They had a lot of questions for me about why I was as active as I was and took some of the stands I took. I had a couple of secretaries that had very little spiritual interest at all. They were good

secretaries and good workers. They did what they did and that was fine too. We would have discussions about football and horses. I would talk about religion in a real non-threatening way; it is just a part of my life. I'm really open with my staff and they're real open with me and if I do something they don't like, they'll tell me, and that's fine, that's the way I want it to be. I don't want them to be afraid to talk to me.

I think if they didn't want me to talk to them about spirituality they would tell me that I'm way off base. I think if I was offending them that they say they would rather I not talk about that anymore, but I've never had anybody say that. I'm not preaching at them, I'm just sharing experiences. It's a big part of my life, so I talk about at times. Sometimes my staff will ask, 'Well what's that all about?' I may go into a little more detail with them then if they ask me any questions about it.

<u>Robert</u>

Upon my arrival at Greater Valley, members of my new staff, the kitchen workers in particular, asked if I was a God fearing man. When I replied yes they told me that I was an answer to their prayers. They indicated they wanted a superintendent that was a Christian who cared about the students more than anything else.

Mayberry is an organization that many employees practice spirituality in the workplace. At the conclusion of the annual Thanksgiving lunch, I was determined to be the last person to eat. As I fixed my plate, I noticed the cafeteria had become silent. As I walked in, every head turned toward me. I sat down and was told, 'We wanted to wait for you to say the blessing.' It was one of the most

memorable and honorable requests I have ever been asked to do in my entire

educational career. At no time before now have I ever felt more like a spiritual

leader than I did at that moment.

<u>Proselytizing Risks</u>

The literature suggests that leaders shouldn't force their beliefs on their staff

Blackaby (2001), however, educators typically share their beliefs through their behaviors,

such as discussions with other teachers and curriculum considerations (Witcher et al.,

2001). There is a very fine line between stating opinion and proselytizing in any faith or

belief system and as such, is easily crossed. One must look at the intent of the person

making the statement because re-claiming one's cultural, gender, and other characteristics

of identity moves one towards authenticity. The Supreme Court has held that the state

may, through public schools, accommodate religion whenever it is constitutionally

permissible. Whitehead (1994) states that teachers can talk about religious issues with

their students on an individual basis, but the student has to initiate the topic. Teachers

have more leeway to discuss religion with other teachers during "contract time."

<div align="center">Mark</div>

I have never pushed anything on the students. I never said they had to pray or had

to believe as I did. Students took advantage of opportunities when we were alone.

They would ask me questions about being a teacher and my activities. I told them

I'm a father and I'm a Christian and I go to a Christian church. They would ask

me, 'How does a person go to heaven?' I'd tell them the truth, because they

asked. I wouldn't tell them to believe what I believe; I just tell them what I

believe. I don't believe I have crossed any lines. I just speak to my students and

occasionally realize that some of the students were [aloof]. I use common sense through prayer, not forcing issues on anyone. Of course the Bible also directs me to be true to those that are lead by me. I'm required to abide by their policies, and that's why again, I don't really embrace them when it comes to spiritual things like prayer.

I have prepared myself for the day when I will quit my job if it comes between what I believe in as a Christian. I don't want to see myself compromised in my faith when it comes to that. It's God first, family second, and job third, however, they all need to flow mutually. I believe we are responsible for forming the hearts, souls, and minds of every student in our school community. We must be true to them because they're going to learn by our actions and by our decisions. So based on the first ethic – be true to yourself – again what I'm saying is that if it comes to the point where I have to give up my job to be true to my Christian faith, I've got to be prepared for that.

<u>Mike</u>

I'm not talking about teaching Christianity or the Bible. I'm saying there's a spiritual side to us and that has to be taken into account. It has to be addressed if we are going to do all for the child that we can and if we're going to be all that we can be. I don't stand up at teachers meetings and say, 'Take your Bibles and turn to John 3 as we will discuss being born again.' I present myself as a Christian and a believer that lives by a certain set of principles.

I wanted to share my experience with others as I tried to understand their

perceptions. It was not my intent to proselytize anyone beliefs towards my own.

Limitations, Social Significance, and Implications

Limitations

This study has several limiting factors. A limitation of qualitative research is the

interviewing skills of the researcher, the participant's readiness to be candid and the

ability to encapsulate the extensive meaning and essence of the experiences and

perceptions within the confines of written text. It cannot totally articulate the

accurateness of experience and perception from one human being to another. I chose the

heuristic method because heuristic research generates elaborate descriptions of

experience based on thorough and comprehensive narratives from co-researchers.

The sample size is small in order to make the volume of data accumulated from

the interviews manageable. Enlarging the sample size would make available quantitative

data that could be scrutinized statistically to acquire connective and prognostic data on

how spirituality influences the leadership activities of rural school superintendents. The

three co-researchers in the sample, including the primary researcher, are Caucasian males

who have one to four years of experience as a superintendent of a rural public school

district with a collective student body varying from 450 to 1200 students. All the co-

researches identified themselves as spiritual superintendents following a Baptist Christian

doctrine. One cannot be expected to presume the findings of this study to generally apply

to every superintendent because the sample was limited.

The main limitation of this design is that internal validity could not be controlled. Therefore, the findings generated from this study cannot be causally interpreted. The conclusions are only suggestive and not definitive. There was a high degree of subjectivity both on the researcher's part and the very nature of the topic itself. As the co-researchers shared their individual stories and personal definitions of spirituality, it became clear that no one definition could or should be extracted from the data. Co-researchers were invited to describe their own personal spirituality within the context of their own personal experiences.

Future research could include a quantitative study with a larger representation of both male and female superintendents professing to believe in dissimilar religions. Exploring the leadership experiences and perceptions of spirituality's influence on leadership activities at varied levels of administration and at various times during a career could provide valuable information about factors that might enhance or hinder the activities of leadership of rural school superintendents. Truthfulness and recollection are other limitations as I have no way to authenticate the co-researchers' level of truthfulness or recollection. While I believe they were evoking events to the best of their ability, they may have sheltered some things or sincerely forgot some of the experiences as they actually occurred.

One other possible limitation of this study is that I was familiar with both of the co-researchers causing bias, however, because of the experiences and perceptions of spirituality that have been shared throughout a span of eight years and the trust that has developed as a result, I believe the co-researchers were more able to share their innermost

feelings with me as compared to a stranger. An unbiased researcher, unfamiliar with the co-researchers, could produce entirely different results.

<u>Social Significance</u>

The role of spirituality is purposely separated from public schools sites. Spirituality is a subject that is persistently shirked in nearly all educational settings. Glickman (1998) believes that individuals do not leave their convictions and beliefs at the door of the schoolhouse, school board office, or state policymaking committee meeting. The significance of this study indicates that school superintendents need spirituality to rise above sectarian boundaries in order to change the sterile bureaucracies into communities of meaning (Bolman & Deal, 1995).

Dantley (2005) states that critical spirituality will allow superintendents to question the resolute bias of American influences to preserve the status quo while supporting imperialism and individualism. According to Dantley (2005) superintendents who utilize critical spirituality embark upon activities that will lead to noticeable variations in the ways their school districts engage issues of race, class, gender, and other indicators of difference.

As soon as transformative action changes the learning communities mind-set concerning student achievement and academic success, instructional leadership will be recognized by disconcerting teachers as a way to enhance students' academic achievement. This will help alleviate organizations where administrators and teachers work independently of one another (Weick, 1976). According to Florio-Ruane (2001) cultural imagination will connect individuals to their cultural histories by restructuring these histories through discussions regarding moment-to-moment engagements. This

allows the superintendent to help them discover new meanings about their and other's cultural lives.

The yearning for personal significance shared with a deep personal spiritual experience has resulted in people desiring to bring spirituality into all significant facets of their lives. Those educational leaders who are open to a spiritual path are learning to develop their personal spirituality and to think more deeply about the impact they are having on their school districts and society. Spiritual leadership provides administrators with the wisdom to recognize and to reach toward noble goals. School districts could benefit from a greater understanding of how profound values influence performance at work. Conversation about spirituality in relation to work might persuade more individuals to examine their spirituality, and that may lead to wider benefits in education and in society as a whole. My hope is that my study will become a resource for those who wish to become superintendents.

Bolman and Deal (1995), among others, have discussed the role of spirituality in leadership development. Educators are beginning to break the silence about the connection between spirituality and education and about its role in educational reform efforts. If spirituality is to become the next innovation in leadership thinking, clarifying the sensitive, cognitive, and motivational underpinnings of spirituality will do a great service (Klenke, 2003). If the integration of leadership and spirituality can be achieved, it may provide many solutions for a society currently turning to spirit. This calls for multidisciplinary research in both the quantitative and qualitative traditions and begs for collaboration with practitioners. If successful educational leaders of the 21st century are indeed spiritual leaders, paradigms of spirituality must be reflected in the work of

leadership scholars, practitioners, and educators. When spirituality is integral to the fabric of a community, it makes sense that educators might attend to it. At present, however, spirituality, like leadership, remains mysterious and elusive in many aspects.

There is an equally powerful connection between the spiritual nourishment of educators and students and the quality of a school's teaching and learning. The depth of one's spirituality—attention to balance, an authentic self, optimism and hopefulness—is enhanced by the experiences described here, and that school leaders have the opportunity to affirm and value these experiences. Indeed the future may reveal that attention to the spirit of education in the training of educational administrators and in schools and classrooms may be a significant factor in students' and educators' growth and well-being. The ultimate challenge is to combine academic rigor and exciting, successful teaching and leadership within a school culture that nurtures the spirit (McGreevy & Copley, 1998).

This study offers educational administration programs an assessment from the field, from those who need well-defined skills on a daily basis. The information gathered from the interviews is presented and remains available to those who design such programs, without contact with those who discuss the issues and without resentment toward those in higher education. The consequences of this study could inform current practitioners about the constant confrontations of the role and disclose spiritual initiatives designed to enhance educational leadership to help good administrators become great.

This study provides the co-researchers the opportunity to have their voices heard and acknowledged by those who construct and administer preparation curriculum for educational administration. This study also holds significance for the co-researchers as it

provides opportunities to develop exclusive networks through a straightforward and open dialogue about leadership and spirituality, its complexities. Contributing superintendents benefit from the dialogue by observing the similarities of spiritual leadership experiences with their colleagues.

<u>Implications</u>

Spirituality has a tendency to concentrate on discovering the meaning in life, or meaning-making, and personal perceptions. Spirituality is about moving towards one's deepest spirit, or a more authentic identity. Re-claiming one's cultural, gender, and other aspects of identity moves one towards authenticity. Dantley (2005) states that coming to grips with identity is an extremely spiritual endeavor dealing with the truth about oneself and by sacrificing the comforts of one's ego. Identity involves the integration of one's past, present, and the future into a unified whole.

Dantley (2005) states that critical spirituality supports a superintendent's individual sense of being and purpose while questioning the social and political contexts he or she must deal with on a daily basis. Superintendents will see themselves as initiators of discourse and deliberation intending to initiate new projects that ensure cultural diversity in curricula and new classroom practices that align what happens in schools to the social and political dynamics of the school community. Spirituality allows superintendents to lead in a resounding way situating themselves apart away others, disclosing their integrity and morality (Blanchard & Peal, 1988; Bolman & Deal, 1991; Fairholm, 1998).

This study informs the reader of a clear distinction between spirituality and religion and why it is important to disaffiliate the two from each other. Teasdale (1999)

affirms that spirituality draws one into the depths of his or her being, facing weaknesses, and with ultimate mystery. Spirituality describes attitudes, beliefs, and practices that animate or inform people's lives and help them to reach out towards supersensible realities. Soder (2002) states that spirituality is critical not as a way to escape but as a way to engage ourselves intelligently, effectively and ethically. Haynes (1999) cautions that one should keep in mind that what one individual might call a spiritual view of the world may be seen by other individuals as a religious worldview. While spirituality can expressed though religion, it transcends dogma, ceremonies, doctrine, and institutions (Sermabekian, 1994). Conversely, religion is characterized by structured communities of faith, beleaguered with power relations, politics, and division that typically have a formal belief system or written creed and codes of regulatory behavior designed to nurture a sense of spirituality within their membership (Tisdell, 2005). According to Tisdell, religion is a human institution preaching a particular message about what constitutes "salvation," or a "correct" way to live.

It is possible that one might think this dissertation is an attempt to proselytize, trying to convert individuals from their religious convictions to that of my own; however, this is not my intention at all. I believe that all religions are valid paths to spirituality and follow their own version of the "golden rule." To be true to ones core beliefs regardless if someone is Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Moslem, Traditional Jew, Pagan or any other "religion" that involves a Deity or Deities, one must deem that distinct system as the "the only way." Otherwise, the person would not be secure in their faith and would be inconsistent. I believe all religions demand faithfulness and loyalty insisting that their followers believe that their way is the only way. Many people, including myself, feel an

inner need to proclaim our core beliefs to the world and in some instances are instructed to by the very system we believe in, anything less would could a violation of the system we support.

Though the disparity between spirituality and religion is explained, the lines can become blurred, and the two are utilized interchangeably at times. For instance, all three of the superintendents consider the reading of scriptures to be spiritual rather than religious. One of the superintendent's definitions of spirituality describes a "belief in God," which falls under the religious umbrella. This points out the difference in theorizing and the actual practice.

Whenever spirituality or religions are discussed within the walls of a school, educators run the risk of violating someone's constitutional rights protected by the First Amendment. Great care must be taken when this type of discourse is permitted within a school system. Educators, especially superintendents must make sure that religious celebration, display, or performances include recognition of the cultural identities of the school system celebrating the individuality of the members of the cultural community.

Superintendents that ignore the culture of the community run the risk of being tomorrow morning's newspaper headline as was the case for a local suburban superintendent who decided to have a nativity display removed that had been a part of the annual children's performance, after seeking counsel about its legal ramifications. The nativity scene was removed in spite of the fact that other religious artifacts and symbols were left alone. This caused the community to flare-up and rally together to have the nativity scene put back in its traditional place. The superintendent was forced to readdress the issue and institute new polices to the affect. Unfortunately, this may have caused

irreversible damaged to the superintendent as the community's opinion and support has likely changed.

Superintendents that profess to be influenced by their spirituality should exercise extreme caution when dealing with students, teachers, and parents. Unlike urban and suburban districts, most rural communities have strong local religious groups affiliated to a local church. A spiritual superintendent must not let his spiritual beliefs interfere with his obligation to uphold the rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States.

Perhaps Superintendent Mark said it best, "I don't want to see myself compromised in my faith when it comes to that. It's God first, family second, and job third, however, they all need to flow mutually." If came down to deciding between what he believes and what his school board asks him to do, if it went against his belief system, he stated that he would not hesitate to quit. Mark's stance in this matter is very similar to former President Jimmy Carter's situation. President Carter indicated that he was disappointed, felt excluded by the adoption of polices, and an increasingly rigid SBC creed, including some provisions that violated the basic premises of his Christian faith. He decided that, after 65 years, he could no longer be associated with the Southern Baptist Convention. All leaders must make tough decisions, some are greatly influenced by their spirituality.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

This study offers to current superintendents and persons wishing to become superintendents another leadership practice, that being spiritual leadership. It offers perspectives on both the challenges and rewards of the position. This research study uses the informal interview format, which facilitates an effortless and peaceful discourse

between co-researchers and the primary researcher. In the process of investigating the question: "How do rural school superintendents' perceptions of spirituality influence their leadership activities?" the study goes outside the constraints of the research question. This research study incorporates a qualitative in-depth investigation of the topic with the co-researchers interviewed. While this study contributes to a better understanding of the perceptions and influences that spirituality has on the leadership activities of rural school superintendents, its population is a select group of rural superintendents who professed to be led by spirituality.

Future Research

It would be interesting and beneficial to the educational leadership community, to conduct a parallel study, using similar methodologies, to investigate the experiences and perceptions of spirituality's influence on the leadership activities of urban or suburban school superintendents, and to determine whether the results of this study are applicable to superintendents of different race, gender, age, and with different styles and philosophies.

It seems that this research study could also add to the existing body of knowledge by focusing specifically on particular issues, such as, "the constitution and spirituality," or "experiences and perceptions of being led by spiritual superintendents." Sustained research into how spirituality supports transformation at all levels, including how educational leaders can work with this constituent, is essential to engender a more knowledgeable awareness of how spirituality influence individuals and school organizations.

Educational leadership has been the subject of numerous books and articles, studies, and classroom discussions. As the United States moves into the Twenty-first Century, unconventional programs will have an essential responsibility in how education meets the requirements of both students and staff members. Spiritual leadership is a model of effectual leadership in public schools that can propel educational leaders into the Twenty-first Century piloting the way in educational excellence. Undergraduate and graduate coursework, national conferences, and statewide conventions that discuss the distinctive challenges of educational leadership must be designed with special emphasis on spirituality and spiritual leadership.

Higher Education Coursework

Tisdell (2005) acknowledges "most students both graduate and undergraduate, are hungry to engage and combine the multiple ways they make meaning with critical analysis in the higher education classroom" (p. 17). hooks (2003) maintains that an important goal of higher education is to build a teaching community where students need to know each other and work with one another (Tisdell, 2005). Tisdell describes what should be included in a higher education classroom:

> Teachers and students – need to engage in exploring the world of ideas from multiple perspectives….while it is important to read and absorb course material, it is also important to encourage learners to work collaboratively on some projects. Such collaborative work serves three purposes: (1) it connects learners with each other and with real communities; (2) it relates theory to real-life practice; (3) it encourages the embodiment and modeling of ideas in cognitive, affective, and

218

cultural imaginative ways to the entire class….These multiple components create

a more holistic approach to learning, which is more likely to be transformational.

Further, spiritual experiences are those that get at the wholeness and

interconnectedness of all things. Thus, creating learning experiences that are

communal, collaborative, and incorporate multiple knowledge production

processes where the knowledge of members of all cultural groups in the class is

honored and celebrated is more holistic. (p. 17)

> There is a place for some consideration of spirituality in higher
>
> education….Clearly conflict is unavoidable in these discussions. But teaching for
>
> social justice that engages the cultural imagination can also engage people's
>
> creativity, and often their spirituality as well, which often unites groups and builds
>
> classroom community….While there are always limits to the extent to which any
>
> higher education experience can be transformative, by continuing to draw on
>
> different modes of knowledge production to inform educational work, including
>
> the cultural imagination, there is more of a chance for learning to be
>
> transformative and culturally responsive….This greater authenticity that some call
>
> "spiritual" is expressed in the individual and collective work of the classroom
>
> community of a multicultural group of learners….Indeed, these out of nowhere
>
> experiences that relate to spirituality for many people happen by surprise, even in
>
> higher education. (p. 18)

The literature confirms that higher education is placing an emphasis on making meaning

in the classroom, establishing communities, and helping individuals recognize and

acknowledge multiple perspectives. Specific graduate level courses that provide spiritual

leadership theory and practice should be developed to enhance and improve educational leadership, thus creating a new community of educational leaders. The curriculum should include conversations and exercises to increase attention to personal meaning, transformative leadership, recognition of intuition, an inward focus, potential for self-discovery, reflective analysis, and personal reinvention.

National Conferences

America's fundamental obligation to uphold the rights of religious freedom for all of its citizens has allowed an unprecedented expansion of religious and spiritual diversity throughout the country. Many educators are asking the question, "Does spirituality have a place in public educational communities?" As a direct result of this expansion, the challenges faced by both secular and faith-based institutions are compelling educators to address the new spiritual pluralism. Through keynote presentations, plenary and breakout sessions, conferences should be made available to all educational leaders to contemplate the implications of this significant and timely topic. These conferences should provide more than the empirical research to authenticate the model of spiritual leadership, but proffer a spiritual experience in terms of self-knowing and self-confidence. A thorough search of the Internet produced five national conferences that are associated with spirituality. A brief description of each conference is included in the following paragraphs.

The Spirituality, Leadership and Management (SLaM) Network is a member based global network dedicated to the evolution of human consciousness. SLaM is focused on down to earth, practical ways of improving how to lead and manage organizations, communities and the natural world to facilitate this evolutionary process.

SLaM provides research regarding spirituality, leadership, and management to public educators through consulting and community based learning groups. SLaM publishes a regular newsletter and an academically reviewed journal supporting their belief that an awareness of the spiritual nature of human beings is essential to good leadership and management. This consideration of both tangible and intangible aspects of being is becoming popularly known as the Integral approach, named after Integral Theory, developed by Ken Wilber. SLaM is not a religion or a belief system, their network is open to people from all beliefs and from all spiritual paths.

The International Leadership Association (ILA) is another global network for all those who practice, study, and teach leadership. The ILA promotes a deeper understanding of leadership knowledge and practices for the greater good of individuals and communities worldwide. ILA leadership training brings together corporate, civic, and community leaders along with scholars, educators, consultants, and grant makers. Group collaboration provides opportunities to share innovative leadership strategies and resources from around the world. Discussion includes the exploration and examination of the art and science of leadership, various experiences from new forms of leadership education and training, identifying new paths for leadership research and experimentation, and the future of leadership studies as an emerging discipline.

The Association for Spirit at Work (ASW) is an international organization that supports spirituality and faith in workplace communities. The mission of the ASW is to provide community, information, and education, for those who are integrating their work and their spirituality and for those who are called to support societal transformation through organizational development and change. ASW serves as a clearinghouse of

information through conferences, workshops, related organizations, and published resources. Their goal is to bring people together who have a passion for the field and who want to make a difference.

Spirit in Business Conferences are intended for CEOs, senior executives, chief ethics officers, professionals, and other decision makers. The events are structured to integrate the wisdom and knowledge of all participants. Training includes the introduction and utilization of the interactive dialogue process. They also provide inspiration and tools for everyday use.

The American Youth Foundation (AYF) inspires people to discover and develop their personal best, to seek balance in mental, physical, social, and spiritual living, and to make a positive difference in their communities and in the wider world. AYF develops leadership in not only young people, but also the adults and institutions that serve them.

Statewide Conventions

Adequate funding can limit one's ability to travel extensively to national conferences. Statewide organizations can provide cost-effective administrative training programs through the state department of education, state school board associations, and state administrator associations. These organizations must provide the skills necessary to ensure the longevity, effectiveness, and stress reduction of our school's future leaders.

<div align="center">Reflective Summary</div>

So what? What have I learned from the experience that has taken over eight years to accomplish? What significance does it hold me as an administrative leader? Does my spirituality really influence the way I think, act, or react? I do know this:

I know there is no clear and unequivocal understanding as to what distinguishes leaders from nonleaders and what distinguishes effective leaders from ineffective leaders (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1991). After a thorough literature review I discovered that I was a voracious consumer of leadership theories (Burns, 1978). After I had swallowed as much theory as I could stomach, I discovered it doesn't matter how much leadership experience I have, but what I do with those experiences and the acquired knowledge that counts (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995).

I discovered that honesty was the most frequently cited trait of a good leader (Woolfe, 2002). Apparently, it doesn't matter how noble or worthwhile my efforts are; if I don't earned people's trust by constantly keeping my word and being true to my values, people won't follow me (Woolfe, 2002). I believe that, over the long term, the more I practice honesty, the more successful I will be (Woolfe, 2002).

People will not follow me if they think I am dishonest; I cannot expect honest followers if I model dishonesty. The higher I go, the more visible my integrity or lack of it becomes and in times of crises, adversity, and temptation, my integrity becomes more evident to those around me. My integrity is exhibited in actions, not pronouncements of my intentions (Woolfe, 2002).

Because I have integrated values into my leadership practice, some might describe me as charismatic (Kouzes & Posner, 1993). As a result, people from the community have responded to me and to the ideas and values that I stand for with

unusual commitment and effort. (Sergiovanni, 2001). As a rule of thumb, I lead by example in order to enhance enthusiasm (Clark & Clark, 1994).

Everyone needs a purpose, including me; because work without a purpose can become mindless, heartless drudgery (Woolfe, 2002). My moral purpose is to make a difference in the lives of students (Fullan, 2001). I know I cannot assume students have learned; I must seek out verification of student performance (Pellicer & Anderson, 1995).

My philosophy of education is based on my philosophy of life. What I believe about myself, about others, and about life has infused and determined my philosophy of education (Morrison, 2001). Everyday I make an effort to reveal my beliefs through my behaviors (Witcher et al., 2001). Because I truly believe in my purpose, I don't have to look for a back door (or a side door) to make my escape when the going gets rough (Woolfe, 2002). I realize that very few great purposes are ever accomplished without obstacles or oppositions (Woolfe, 2002). Basically, it is my values that really matter, they make me think so that I can feel reasonably secure that I am on the right track (Newman, 1994). I know that when I can connect my moral purpose with trust and loyalty I am more able to formulate change.

Trust is the essential link I must have with my staff, it is vital for job satisfaction and loyalty. Trust is doubly important because I cannot provide extrinsic motivators such as money, status, or power. I have come to realize that trust is as fragile as it is precious; once damaged, it is nearly impossible to repair (Evans, 2000).

One of my greatest responsibilities is to provide the school district a shared vision that conveys the interests, values, and aspirations of the total organization and a plan for realizing that vision (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Bennis, 1993; Senge, 1994). Vision tells me where I am going, or where I want to go (Nanus, 1992). Vision is the key to effective leadership that takes into account the legitimate interests of all the people involved (Kotter, 1988). I must develop a vision that embraces the goals and objectives of my school system (Konnert & Augenstein, 1990).

I know that when discussing the rights of religious people, it must not be forgotten that the rights of students, faculty members, administrators, and non-students are at stake as well. A clear sequence of Supreme Court cases has upheld the rights of such people. Teaching religion in public schools is entirely permissible, after all, we are religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being. Teachers, as I have come to learn, can talk about religious issues with their students on an individual basis. Teachers are permitted to talk about such issues while at school as long as it is not during their instructional time (Whitehead, 1994).

During the course of this study, I have become acutely aware of the differences between religion and spirituality. I have discovered that religion is a product of a certain time and place involving a group of people; when seeking to obtain a goal, religious people follow a prescribed code of conduct to obtain the goal; religion is a system of thought, a set of beliefs, and rituals. Spirituality, however, is more concerned with obtaining the goal than the path to the goal;

spirituality is personal but contains elements that are common to all religions (Hawley, 1993). The key difference between religion and spirituality is that religion is more concerned with outward appearance (Linnenberg, 1997).

It is difficult to describe exactly what a rural school is (Jacob-Timm, 1995). Rural schools can differ across the country because of their demographic characteristics (Reschly & Connolly, 1990). My rural school is not only the social hub, but also contributes to the sense of survival of the adults in the culture. (Beeson & Strange, 2000). My rural school has close relationships between students and teachers, multi-grade classrooms, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, interdisciplinary studies, and intimate links between the community and the school (Sher, 1991). We, unfortunately, have our fair share of special problems that are unique and not shared by our larger urban and suburban counterparts.

Along the way I discovered a mechanism to help me handle job related stress and loneliness. Spirituality gives me the courage to look within and trust (Krippen & Welch, 1992). Spirituality is a way of life, I do not just think about it, I feel it, I sense it, and I live it. Spirituality permeates to the very core of my being, affecting the way I perceive the world, the way I feel about the world, and the choices I make based on my perceptions and sensations. My spiritual development has been a long and arduous journey, an adventure through strange lands full of surprises, difficulties and even dangers (Assagioli, 1965).

I do not leave my personal convictions and religious beliefs behind when I enter the schoolhouse (Glickman, 1998). Because of job related stress I have found that prayer is essential (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001). Prayer gives me an

amplified sense of well-being and life satisfaction (Paloma & Pendleton, 1991).

More than any other single thing I do, it is my prayer life that determines my

effectiveness (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001).

I know that my staff has an inner life that is nourished by meaningful work

that takes place in the context of community (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).

Workplace spirituality involves an endeavor to discover how to develop a

relationship with my staff that is associated with work (Mitroff and Denton,

1999). People aspire to realize a connectedness to their work and believe that it is

more valuable than getting their paycheck. The intent of spirituality in work is

perceived as being able to accomplish one's full potential and to have an

optimistic outlook and interactions with the world (Hawley, 1993). My staff has

never been afraid to express themselves spiritually for fear of offending peers and

the administration (Lewis & Geroy, 2000).

Spiritual leadership involves many of the same principles as general

leadership, yet has distinctive qualities that must be understood and practiced if I

am to be successful (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001). Spiritual leadership has helped

me engage in the special processes of building community, encouraging personal

wholeness, engaging in stewardship, and creating a higher moral standard. One

does not become a spiritual leader by merely filling an office, taking course work

in the subject, or resolving in one's own will to do this task (Sanders,1994)

I became spiritual because of unique life experiences. These experiences

are significantly influencing the type of leader I am becoming. I grew up in a

dysfunctional home, I maintained a close relationship with my mother while

maintaining a distant relationship with my father (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001). I don't believe that I ever won the approval of my abusive father. All of my life I have attempted to win the devotion of large groups of people to strive for greatness as a means of enhancing my battered self-esteem (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001).

I believe that spirituality should be taught in public colleges and universities. With the exclusion of adult religious education, spirituality has traditionally been given little consideration in conventional academia for adult education and that is a shame (Tisdell, 2001). Little is known about the affects of spirituality and its influence on administrative activities (Hawley, 1993; Heider, 1985; Herman, 1994; Jones, 1995).

It is tough to talk to people about religion and public schools, as it often takes place at a high decibel level. In a political season, there is heightened public discourse concerning religion as it relates to the processes of public education. People try to compromise their convictions, but it seems to be a retreat from core values and beliefs. Conflict between spiritual and secular individuals can actually be beneficial, with each challenging the other to become better than they currently are; or it may be detrimental, when one corrupts the other and makes it worse, (Cline, 2005).

The decision making process, whether secular or spiritual, ultimately depends on the value and belief system of the administrator. He or she is solely responsible for his or her own actions. Spiritual superintendents either live out on the edge, constantly professing their spirituality or quietly lead by example,

walking the walk; both can achieve the same results. However, living on the edge puts one closer to falling off. It is a personal preference as to what degree an individual will exude their spirituality.

I work in a rural community that has traditional values such as discipline, hard work, and family. Rural communities are safe and connected to nature (Herzog & Pittman, 1995). Rural communities are conservative, parochial, and resistant to change. Some rural communities are not adjacent to a metropolitan area; the result is a declining enrollment (Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999). Rural life represents traditional American values, but is behind the times; rural life is more relaxed and slower than city life, but harder and more grueling; rural life is friendly, but intolerant of outsiders and difference; and rural life is richer in community life, but epitomized by individuals struggling independently to make ends meet. ("New report examines perception of rural America," 2002)

Being a rural superintendent is not so much doing, but being who I am, what I believe, and the communication I share with others that matter. I have to be adept at all trades (Lochry, 1998). I am some times seen bigger than life. I have to be an even better role model than my teachers are. I have no one to talk to expect my wife. When my dog, D.D. was alive, she was always at the door to provide a warm and friendly greeting. I could talk to her and she would never complain or interrupt me. I miss my dog (Lochry, 1998).

This study is the product of my passionate interest in the question, "How do rural school superintendents' perceptions of spirituality influence their leadership activities?" It was discovering my spirituality that pulled me through the most difficult times of my

life and yet rewarded me for the many successes and friendships that have occurred along this fantastic journey. This question holds great significance for me, because I believe that spirituality influences my leadership activities as a rural school superintendent. Because of self-searching and interviews with my co-researchers, I have achieved a richer appreciation of my inquiry and my personal experiences and perceptions. Reflecting on my life experiences and perceptions has helped me acknowledge the relationships that exist between my personal and professional development and my leadership activities.

> Leadership development is synonymous with personal development. As leaders grow personally, they increase their capacity to lead. As they increase their capacity to lead, they enlarge the capacity of their organization to grow. Therefore, the best thing leaders can do for their organization is to grow personally. (Blackaby, 2001, p.31)

We can lead others only as far along the path as we ourselves have traveled. Simply showing the way is not enough. If we are not walking, then no one can be following, and we are not leading anyone (Sanders, 1994).

> We are confident that you are meant for better things, things that come with salvation. For God is not unfair. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him by caring for other Christians, as you still do. Our great desire is that you will keep right on loving others as long as life lasts, in order to make certain that what you hope for comes true. Then you will not become spiritually dull and indifferent. Instead, you will follow the example of those who are going to inherit God's promises because of their faith and patience. (Hebrews 6: 9-12, NLV)

At its core, spiritual leadership is "theological"; it relies on the promises of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual leaders believe they are called to participate in the work that God is doing in the world. In the immortal words of the Blues Brother, "We are on a mission from God."

Groeschel (1983) states that spiritual development is based on Christian understandings regarding how an individual relates to a willingness to respond to God and self-truth. Within the Christian perspective, spirituality is "our response to God's call to a relationship with himself, a call we experience as a yearning for self-transcendence and surrender" (Benner, 1988). Jesus told his disciples, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you" (Sanders, 1994, p. 22). The Bible tells us in Ephesians 1:11 that it is through Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for.

My daughter Rachel found the following poem that I have selected to close my reflective summary with, still another indication that I have made a difference in her life too!

When I say..."I am a Christian," I'm not shouting "I'm clean livin'."

I'm whispering, "I was lost, now I'm found and I'm forgiven."

When I say..."I am a Christian," I don't speak of this with pride.

I'm confessing that I stumble and need Christ to be my guide.

When I say..."I am a Christian," I'm not trying to be strong.

I'm professing that I'm weak and need His strength to carry on.

When I say..."I am a Christian," I'm not bragging of success.

I'm admitting I have failed and need God to clean my mess.

When I say..."I am a Christian," I still feel the sting of pain.

I have my share of heartaches so I call upon His name.

When I say..."I am a Christian" I'm not holier than thou,

I'm just a simple sinner who received God's good grace, somehow.

By Maya Angelou

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Appendix A

Telephone Script to Recruit Co-researchers

Rural School Superintendents' Spiritual Journeys

Hello, Mr. or Ms. _____ my name is Robert Moody. I am a doctoral student at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma. I am calling you to request your participation in my dissertation study entitled "New Rural School Superintendents' Spiritual Journeys." I was given your name by

_____as a possible participant in my research. You were selected because you are a rural school superintendent with less than four years of experience and have been recognized by your peers as a Christian spiritual leader.

If you decide to partake in my study, you will be asked to participate in two interview sessions that will last 1-1/2 hours. With your permission, these interviews will be audio taped to insure that the information is gathered accurately. The findings from this study will provide information to help you understand the real meaning of spiritual leadership as it reveals itself in your experience with no cost to you other than the time it takes for the interviews. You will be asked to remember specific events in your professional life in which you experienced spirituality. I am seeking accurate descriptions of what these experiences were like for you—your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, as well as situations, events, places, and people connected with your experience. You may also wish to share personal logs or journals or other ways in which you have recorded your experience—for example, in letters, news articles, poems, or artwork.

The risks of this study are that these events may include personal and sensitive information revealed through your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related to their

spirituality. Some of these feelings and memories may be unpleasant and cause you to feel uncomfortable. Every precaution will be taken to watch for and prevent any additional stress and discomfort. Since your participation is voluntary, you can refuse to participate with no penalty and withdraw at any time. All information, including transcripts of interviews and audio tapes, will be kept in a locked file cabinet. The records will be destroyed at the conclusion of the investigation. A pseudonym will be given to you and your current setting so real names and locations will not be known.

If you have any questions about this project, please call me at (405) 867-5302 after 4:00 PM or send an e-mail to rmoody1659@yahoo.com. You may also contact the faculty sponsor, Dr. Jeff Maiden, at (405) 325-1524 at College of Education at the University of Oklahoma. Questions about your rights as a research participant or concerns about the study can be directed to the Institutional Review Board at the University of Oklahoma at (405) 325-8110.

If you are willing to be interviewed, I would like to set up at time we can get together for the first interview. If you need more time to make this decision when may I call you back?

Interview consent: YES ☐   NO ☐   Date of call-back _____/____/_____

Date of interview ___/___/_____   Time ____:___

Location_____

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form
For research being conducted under the auspicious of
The University of Oklahoma, Norman Campus

Rural School Superintendents' Spiritual Journeys

Robert A. Moody, Principal Investigator   Dr. Jeff Maiden, Faculty Sponsor

This document is an individual's consent for participation in the study entitled,

"Rural School Superintendents' Spiritual Journeys" being conducted as part of a doctoral

dissertation by the principal investigator, Robert A. Moody, under the auspices of the

Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership Policy Studies at the University of

Oklahoma, Norman Campus. The purpose of this study is to investigate how

superintendents perceive and describe their spiritual leadership experiences.

If you decide to participate in this project, you will be asked to participate in two

interview sessions that will last 1-1/2 hours. These interviews will be audio taped to

insure that the information is gathered as accurately as possible. The findings from this

project will provide information to help you understand the real meaning of spirituality as

it reveals itself in your experience with no cost to you other than the time it takes for the

interviews. You will be asked to remember specific episodes or events in your

professional life in which you experienced spirituality. I am seeking accurate, vivid, and

comprehensive portrayals of what these experiences were like for you—your thoughts,

feelings, and behaviors, as well as situations, events, places, and people connected with

your experience. You may also wish to share personal logs or journals or other ways in

which you have recorded your experience—for example, in letters, news articles, poems,

or artwork. The risks of this study are that these experiences may include personal and

sensitive information revealed through your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related to your spirituality. Some of these feelings and memories may be unpleasant and cause you to feel uncomfortable. Every precaution will be taken to watch for and prevent any additional stress and discomfort.

Your involvement in this study is strictly voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may withdraw at any time. To participate you must be 18 years of age or older. All information from this project, including transcripts of interviews and audio tapes, will be kept in a locked file cabinet by the principal investigator, and will remain confidential within the limits of the law. The records will be destroyed at the conclusion of the investigation. A pseudonym will be given for you and your current setting so real names and locations will not be known. The findings of this study will be presented without identifiable information to ensure confidentiality. Your name will not be linked with your responses unless you specifically agree to be identified.

As a participant, you will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have any questions about this project, please call me at (405) 867-5302 or send an e-mail to rmoody1659@yahoo.com. You may also contact the faculty sponsor, Dr. Jeff Maiden, at (405) 325-1524 in the College of Education at the University of Oklahoma. Questions about your rights as a research participant or concerns should be directed to the Institutional Review Board at the University of Oklahoma-Norman Campus at (405) 325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Robert Moody

Doctoral Student, Educational Leadership Policy Studies

CONSENT STATEMENTS:

I hereby agree to participate in the above-described research. I understand my

participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of

benefits.

_____	_____
Signature	Date

I give permission to audio tape my interview.

_____	_____
Signature	Date

I consent to the use of my name when recording findings and
that I may be quoted directly.

_____	_____
Signature	Date

Appendix C

Interview Guide

Before beginning the interview:

- Discuss the purpose of the study.
- Confirm the length of the interview (90 minutes).
- Discuss the tape recorder. Explain how to pause or turn it off at any time the participant feels uncomfortable.
- Discuss confidentiality. Ask the participant to select a pseudonym.
- Inform the participant about the reception of written transcripts for verification.
- Ask if the participant has any questions before the interview begins.

First Interview

1. Tell me about your previous career path(s).
2. Why did you decide to become an educator? At what age? Was there a single life changing event that helped you make the decision? What subject(s) and grade level(s) did you teach?
3. Why did you decide to become a superintendent? At what age? Was there a single life changing event that helped you make the decision?
4. Tell me about your most satisfying experience(s) as a superintendent. Why?
5. Tell me about your least satisfying experience(s) as a superintendent. Why?
6. What does the term "spirituality" mean to you?
7. Can you recall the event(s) that made you aware of your own spirituality?
8. Which religious doctrine do you follow?
9. How do you practice spirituality at home?
10. How do you take your spirituality to work?
11. How does spirituality affect your personal and professional life as a superintendent?
12. How do you use spirituality to handle job-related stress?
13. Can you give a few examples of issues, programs, and/or activities that are guided by your spirituality?
14. How does your spirituality affect you decision-making process?
15. What recommendations would you make to other practitioners about spirituality?
16. Are there any questions that you wish I had asked you?

Interview Guide

Before beginning the second interview:

- Tell the participant that the purpose of the second interview is to expound points made in the initial interview and to distinguish the ideas that emerged from the first interview.

263

- Review previous interview transcripts to check for meaning and clarification.
- Be prepared for spirited spontaneous dialogue during the reviewing process.

Second Interview

1. Do you want to clarify or translate differently any of the information you provided during the initial interview?
2. Did you recall any other additional information that you wanted to add?
3. Have there ever been times when you wanted to leave the superintendency? Why?
4. What factors make you job worth while?
5. What would you change about your job if you could?