



DePaul University
Via Sapientiae

College of Education Theses and Dissertations


College of Education

Spring 3-24-2016

Living Out Faith: Reflections on Motivation for Academic Achievement and Career Choice

Felicia D. Richardson-McGee
DePaul University, frichard@depaul.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://via.library.depaul.edu/soe_etd

 Part of the [Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Richardson-McGee, Felicia D., "Living Out Faith: Reflections on Motivation for Academic Achievement and Career Choice" (2016). *College of Education Theses and Dissertations*. 85.
https://via.library.depaul.edu/soe_etd/85

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Education at Via Sapientiae. It has been accepted for inclusion in College of Education Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Via Sapientiae. For more information, please contact digitalservices@depaul.edu.

DePaul University

College of Education

LIVING OUT FAITH:

REFLECTIONS on MOTIVATION for ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT and CAREER

CHOICE

**A Dissertation in
Educational Leadership**

by

Felicia Richardson-McGee

© 2016 Felicia Richardson-McGee

**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of**

Doctor of Education

March 2016

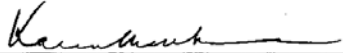
We approve the dissertation of Felicia Richardson-McGee.



Ronald Chennault
Associate Professor
DePaul University
Chair of Committee

17 March 2016

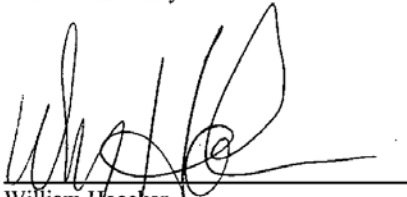
Date



Karen Monkman
Professor
DePaul University

17 March 2016

Date



William Hoecker
Clinical Assistant Faculty
DePaul University

3/17/16

Date

ABSTRACT

It has often been said that conversations concerning religion, sex and politics should be avoided in most, if not all social settings. In general, it was believed that discussions on these topics could lead to very heated and argumentative debates as the participants openly expressed their views on these subjects. Increasingly, however, religion has become a popular discussion topic in many areas, such as politics, health and medicine, and even the business world. This is likely because religion, for many, is an important part of daily life. It shapes how individuals see themselves and others in the world and may even help to guide life decisions.

Because of its importance in many people's lives, religion and faith and spirituality (which are often used interchangeably with religion), deserves further investigation. This study attempted to explore the relationship between faith and education as well as examined the possibility that one's faith may influence academic achievement and career choice. The research questions that guided this research were:

1. How is faith defined by individuals whose religious beliefs and practices differ across religious denominations?
2. How does one's conception of faith influence academic and career aspirations and/or choices?

This study utilized the research method of narrative inquiry and using three semi-structured interviews with participants from five different religious denominations namely, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu (Jain), Jewish and Muslim. The research results were examined through two lenses: Self-Determination Theory and The Theory of the "U". The four themes that emerged were Faith within the Family; Faith Choice; Faith with Academics and Career Choice; and Faith in Service to Others.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Dedications	vii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. POSITIONALITY	7
3. LITERATURE REVIEW	15
Basic Concepts: Religion, Faith and Spirituality	15
Progressive Period: History of Educators	20
Influences on Academic and Career Progression	28
Motivational Theories Past and Present	41
Faith Development and Career Choice	55
Summary	59
4. METHODOLOGY	62
Site and Participant Selection	63
Data Collection	67
Ethical Considerations	69
Data Analysis	71
5. ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS	75
Dechen	75
Naomi	79
Chandan Bala	83
Michael	88
Willie	93
Table 5.1: About the Participants	97
6. RESEARCH THEMES and ANALYSIS	98
Faith within the Family	98
Faith Choice	110
Faith in Academics and Careers	121
Faith in Service to Others	132
Summary	147
7. CONCLUSION	148
Limitations	149
Future Research	153
Final Thoughts	155
APPENDIX A: IRB Approval Letter	158
APPENDIX B: Interview Guide	160
APPENDIX C: Diagram - Theory of the “U”	161
REFERENCES	162

List of Tables

1. **Table 5.1: About the Participants** **97**

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge
Dr. Ronald Chennault,
Dr. Karen Monkman,
and Mr. William Hoecker,
my Dissertation Committee
for their patience, encouragement
and guidance through this
educational endeavor. It was
very much appreciated!

Dedications

To God be the Glory
for the completion
of my dissertation!

To my father Samuel:
May he now rest in Heaven! Thank
you dad for introducing me to God
and showing me how to live by faith.

To my mother Willie:
Who never let me forget that I
said that I would pursue a Doctorate
degree.

To my family
Rickey, Noelle and Nicole:
For whom I hope to have set the bar
for living your lives to Christ
as much as is humanly possible.

To my siblings and friends:
For the unwavering support,
love and inspiration that you gave me
to reach this educational goal.
Thank you so much!

1

Introduction

Matthew 17:20

*...If you have faith as small
As a mustard seed, you can say
to this mountain, "Move from here
to there" and it will move.
Nothing will be impossible for you.*

It has often been said that conversations concerning religion, sex and politics should be avoided in most, if not all social settings. In general, it was believed that discussions on these topics could lead to very heated and argumentative debates as the participants openly expressed their views on these subjects. Religion, in particular, surfaced during political campaigns, as politicians debated about family values and moral character. It has also become a topic of interest in the health care industry, as medical professionals debate whether religious belief may positively influence the healing process for many of their patients (Glazer, 2005, p.1). Even in the business world, amid competition and aggressive pursuits of high level positions, professionals and entrepreneurs it seems, are integrating faith experiences into their decisions regarding career choices (Hansen, 2002). Business professionals want to ensure that their quest for meaning and purpose in life are satisfied through the ultimate career choice; the job that promises to fulfill their inner passions and life ambitions (Trelfa, 2004 and 2005).

As I pondered all the disciplines where religion is now an acceptable discussion topic, I wondered whether religion had been seriously considered in research studies in education. And, as I considered the many diverse religious denominations that exist in the world today, and the diverse cultures of people around the world who have dedicated their lives to religious worship, I began to wonder why there was so little research on this topic. Religion, for many, is an

important part of daily life. It shapes how individuals see themselves and others in the world. Some may even believe that faithful practice of religion can help to guide life decisions as well as our faith choices. Often, acknowledgement of our faith can be important to defining who we are as individuals and what we believe our purpose and life meaning may be.

My quest to understand how our religious choice may influence the development of faith began with the work of James Fowler (1981). Fowler's work essentially laid the foundation for faith development research in the early 1980's, and has provided an opportunity to learn how he believed faith matures as we age. He described each developmental stage in great detail, so that the reader could logically comprehend the changes in behavior as faith developed from infancy into adulthood. Fowler's model and research technique did spark harsh criticism from other researchers, namely Streib (2001) and McDargh (2001). These researchers believed that Fowler's sequential and psychoanalytic model style failed to consider the life history and experiences of his sole participant, Mary, which Streib and McDargh believed was critical to any analysis of faith development. Further criticisms arose as it was determined that Fowler's model purposely omitted religion as a component of faith development, because he believed that religion and faith development were not always dependent upon one another.

After learning about Fowler's research, it seemed fitting that an opportunity existed to consider, or to attempt to understand, how researchers have analyzed various constructions of religion, as well as how they have interpreted its use in day-to-day life experiences. It is important to search the literature for an understanding of how researchers discussed terms such as religiosity, faith, and spirituality. Even though these terms are often used interchangeably, the literature indicates that there may be some differences between terms that must also be considered. Religiosity, for some researchers, can often be described in terms of religious

practice (attending church, praying, etc.). Faith, for others, can involve searching for life's meaning and purpose through inner reflection of self in relation to the world. Current literature indicates that some believe that this meaning can only be acknowledged and comprehended through one's religious faith, while others, like Fowler (1981), believe that religion plays no role in determining one's meaning or purpose in life. Similarly, spirituality, often used interchangeably with the word faith by many, seems to hint at a relationship with religion, but may rely more heavily on one's own ability to guide life decisions.

In order to explore a possible relationship between faith and education, it is important to examine the history of education. Jarad Stallones (2010) provides a rich history of education as it was during the Progressive Period (1850-1950). He uncovered the relationship that once existed between religion and education in schools during this time by examining the lives of Jerry Voorhis, Felix Adler, John Dewey, William Heard Kilpatrick, and John L. Childs, prominent educators during this period to determine if their individual religious experiences influenced the culture of the schools that they created.

Research devoted to motivation will also be considered, as I attempt to explore the factors that may influence why we are inspired to act, and what we are inspired to act upon. Educational studies that have focused on achievement and religion often focus on factors such as the school environment (religious schooling) and one's religious commitment (Jeynes, 1999, p. 459), the individual's involvement in and attendance at church (Regnerus and Elder, 2003, p. 633), and other external influences on motivation and achievement that influence our decision to act (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 39).

Many research studies, in an attempt to explain human behavior, have focused on the "what" aspect of motivation. What makes us do what we do? Motivational theories during the

period of 1950 - 2001 will be presented here to introduce the scientific thoughts of researchers from the Humanistic Period (1950's). The work of Weiner (2000) and Pajares (2001) will be presented in an attempt to explain the factors that were believed to inspire individuals to act, and to successfully achieve, or to fail when in pursuit of a goal. An attempt will also be made to introduce the notion that faith can also act as a motivator of our academic and career pursuits, and may be an influential factor in explaining "why" we do what we do. Ryan and Deci's (1981) Self Determination Theory (1985, p. 6) will provide a good research rationale for this discussion. These researchers believed that humans act "by choice, volition, intentionality or will; not drives." This is important because it speaks to a person's motivation. Since this research will explore faith as a possible motivator, it is important to know that one's faith may be a result of a personal choice that comes from deep within (volition and will), and if so, it is an intentional decision that is not driven by any outside influences. For this reason, I have chosen their work on the Theory of Self Determination as the lens through which my work will be examined. I believe that it may provide an opportunity for consideration of faith as a motivator for academic and career achievement.

Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers (2004) also help to explain the process by which an individual is motivated to act (Appendix C). The Theory of the "U" , the second lens through which my research will be examined, describes the process of decision making beginning with Sensing (at the top left of the U) then Presencing (at the bottom of the U) then Realizing (at the upper right of the U). As an individual moves through each phase of this decision making process, an inner form of knowing emerges where the individual realizes the action that must be taken. Stephen Covey (2004) writes about a similar form of knowing whereby the individual finds their "voice". The discovery of your voice is dependent upon four ingredients namely,

talent, passion, need and conscience. In essence, the discovery of your gift can motivate you to meet a need and inspire you to accomplish your dreams and aspirations. I believe that these theories are worth mentioning, because both theories describe the decision making process in a manner similar to the faith development discovery that I will explore in this paper. I am in agreement that faith development, like the theories of Deci and Ryan (1985; 2000), Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers (2004), and Covey (2004), can motivate individuals to discover meaning and purpose in life through academic and career choice.

Only a few researchers have considered religious belief, or faith as a possible motivator of academic achievement (Jeynes, 1999, p. 463) and career choice (Covey, 2004, p. 350). Jeynes' (1999 – 2003) research on Black and Hispanic students introduced the notion that religious commitment could have influence on academic achievement. His work attempts to make a distinction between religious schooling and religious commitment, and to re-establish the relationship between religion and education in a similar manner that this study will attempt to explore. Jeynes (1999-2003) also sheds light on the behaviors of religiously committed students such as having an academic work ethic, avoidance of bad behaviors that are deemed socially unacceptable, and the notion that these individuals may possess an innate locus of control that helps to guide their behavior.

My research will explore the possibility that a relationship exists between religion and education as it relates to motivation for academic achievement and career choice. Faith will be explored as a possible catalyst, or motivator in the pursuit of our inner gifts and how we may share these gifts with others. The two questions that will guide my research exploration are:

1. How is faith defined by individuals whose religious beliefs and practices differ across religious denominations?

2. How does one's conception of faith influence academic and career aspirations and/or choices?

I believe that these questions, answered by participants from different religious denominations will provide rich narratives and perspectives that will enlighten us as to how faith is perceived and understood through each individual's life experience. It will also provide information on why the individual chose the faith in which they practice, and whether or not they believe that their academic or career choice was motivated by their faith choice.

2

Positionality – Personal Reflections on Faith

Luke 1: 37

For with God nothing shall be impossible.

These questions were certainly inspired by my own quiet reflection on my faith development, my academic pursuits and achievements, my internal motivation to read, memorize, and comprehend biblical scriptures, as well as my career aspiration to open a charter school (preschool-kindergarten grades) in the community where I grew up. I believe that my faith development began in 1959, a few months after my birth, when my parents presented me for baptism at church. I was baptized as a Lutheran, the faith that I still practice today.

I believe too that my faith has been strengthened by the many challenges that I have faced over my fifty-five years of life. I can remember back as far as my kindergarten classroom, where I sat crying while sitting on a huge red circle, because I could not get my red rubber boots on my feet. My teacher, a stern African American woman, refused to let me leave the circle until I had successfully put both boots on, while my mother waited patiently at the classroom door. After several minutes of struggle, refusing to give up, I finally accomplished my goal, wiped my eyes, and left the red circle, heading for home while firmly holding my mother's hand. What an accomplishment! What is more amazing to me is that I remember it so vividly. As I look back at it now, in retrospect, it seems that this experience served to set the tone for how I have pursued many of my life goals today. It seems that I have always had an innate belief that I could accomplish any goal that I had set out to achieve if I held on to my faith and belief in God who sustains me while maintaining a spirit to never give up.

In retrospect, I can now see how my faith has carried me through so many experiences, some deeply painful, and others, tremendously joyful, but all counted as experiences that made me who I am, and what I have come to believe today. Often, people see individual accomplishments and achievements as a source of inner resilience, as individuals accomplish astonishing feats by overcoming challenges and obstacles using a high degree of inner strength and/or mental focus. I believe however, that resilience may be developed to help the individual resist temptations to quit before reaching a goal, but faith is the foundation upon which resilience is built, because it serves to motivate the individual to recognize and pursue inner passions that make goal achievement a reality. In other words, I offer the notion that faith is the internal belief system, a way of knowing that is based upon one's passion and religious belief that a goal will be attained. Resilience, on the other hand, is a behavior that may be developed as a result of faith, or other life experiences and emotions that help the individual to navigate through circumstances, obstacles, or impediments in order to reach goal achievement.

To focus only on learned behaviors (cognitive), or one's inner focus/control mechanism (resilience), or one's type of schooling (religious or not) is to limit the ability to learn how one's faith or religious belief can also motivate the successful achievement of one's inner passions and life choices. I know that my faith development and life experiences in public school provides a good example of the possibility that faith can motivate us academically and guide us in our career choices.

I attended public schools from kindergarten through the completion of my undergraduate studies in biological sciences. At the tender age of eleven, my parents made a decision that would have great impact on my life as I now understand it today. They decided that I would continue to attend public schools, while my younger sister would attend a private Lutheran

school. As I think about the decision that they made, I am almost positive that it was an economical one, for my constant thumb sucking had resulted in severely bucked teeth, for which braces was the only solution. I wore the braces for four years while attending public schooling and you can probably imagine the degree of ridicule that I endured, for it was not popular to wear braces in the seventies as it seems to be today. In fact, I was probably the only student in the school with braces during that time. My eighth grade graduation booklet is filled on every page with names such as “vampire” and “tinsel teeth”. I endured this ridicule (mostly by not smiling in public during those years) until the braces were removed the summer before I entered my freshman year in high school. I now believe that my parents decided that there was a long-term value in correcting my teeth than in paying for a private school education for me, but I count this as a part of my faith development. For despite the ridicule, I was academically sound, I was most often the teacher’s pet, and I was making “A’s and B’s” to the dismay of many of my classmates!

My masters degree, and the doctorate that I am currently pursuing on the other hand, have been in a private Catholic school setting. These diverse educational experiences have provided me with life experiences from both perspectives. As I look back at my teen years to present, I can see how my faith shaped who I am today. At age fifteen, I began to take an interest in religion. I volunteered to teach in the Sunday school, an involvement that I would maintain for almost thirty years. Over the years, I even became a Sunday school superintendent, a deacon board or church council member, a delegate to the Lutheran synod convention, and an assistant treasurer, assisting my father who was responsible for counting and depositing the Sunday church offerings. My involvement in church activities has developed over the years into a quest for the meaning and purpose of my life. Many of the decisions that I made in academia

and in my choice of career were based upon my faith and this is why I believe that it also exists for individuals who walk different faith paths. It will be interesting to hear the stories of participant challenges, failures, and successes from individuals who see the world through different religious lenses. I believe that this study will offer to the literature a new way of thinking about religion, motivation, and academic/career achievement.

As I expanded my thinking further, I began to ponder other questions such as: To what degree do learned experiences in the home and surrounding community, the location or type of schooling, participation or non-participation in church-related activities influence how an individual can understand faith? How do individuals ultimately construct, conceptualize, or become aware of the presence of their faith? What circumstance(s) or situation(s) motivate individuals to incorporate faith into their way of thinking and living? And how do they perceive its importance, or lack thereof, in their lives, behaviors, activities, failures, accomplishments and achievements, for example, in school, or at work? My assumption, as I alluded to previously, is that individuals may construct faith in different ways given their unique life experiences, their perception of the importance of faith in their lives, and the circumstances or situations through which they come to know of the existence of their faith.

Over the years, my faith has become incredibly strong, as there have been many experiences that I believe have guided me in this direction. As I completed my senior year of high school in 1977, each graduate was given a graduation book in which classmates, teachers, family members and friends signed for the graduates to keep as keepsakes for the future. I can remember saving the back cover for my father who always wanted to have the “final word” on his children’s educational achievements. But, on the inside of the front cover, I wrote a note of encouragement to myself that I would like to share here:

To myself:

I hope to go into the University of _____ with the same amount of strive that I leave _____ with. My dreams are to finish my college education with a Ph.D. in Medicine, and to be able to find work in the field of Dentistry, or Pediatrics. I am very happy that I have kept myself together enough to make it through this trial, but I mostly hope and pray to God that I can strive even harder and reach my goal. So, I bid you, Felicia, good luck! And congratulations! I've made my three wishes, where are my jeans?
(smile) From Felicia

After writing this note to myself, I was extremely proud, for I was graduating fifth in my high school class, and I was receiving a \$500.00 college scholarship for my academic achievement. I would go on to college and complete a Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences, but the achievement was overshadowed by my poor academic performance. I struggled from my sophomore year through my senior year, which by the way, would come six years later. I finished with a whopping "C" grade point average, and struggled with the realization that medical school was out of the question for me. And, to add insult to injury, I could not find a job for eight months after completion. I was devastated! I know now that this was a real test of my faith, of my willingness to keep trying to find my purpose in this life.

If it were not for my cousin, I would not be employed at the university where I have now worked for thirty-one years. She persuaded me to interview for a position that was open at that time, a receptionist position. I interviewed and landed the job. After passing probation, I decided to attend school again to pursue a masters degree. I still had a health care mindset, for I was planning to pursue a masters in health care administration. But after a lengthy discussion with my former boss about the pros and cons of the masters in health care, she persuaded me to pursue a masters in business administration, a far cry from the liberal arts education with which I

was comfortable. I took a few undergraduate Business courses, and then applied to the MBA program. I was accepted and a new life experience was about to begin.

As I pursued the requirements for my degree, I began to realize that I was starting to pray before midterms and finals, and before making many life decisions/choices. My faith was getting stronger and I was at the height of my church involvement. I was juggling school and many church obligations at the same time, and I was doing well academically once again. I finished the MBA degree, graduating “With Distinction”, the studious me was back! My significant other had been pursuing a vocational education as an electrician. It was a happy time, for we would both graduate in March and wait for our commencement ceremonies, his in March and mine in June.

To my astonishment, my faith was tested once more, as the unthinkable happened on May 21, 1990, three weeks before my graduation when my fiance suddenly died of a heart attack while jogging in the park. I was blown out of the water! I just knew that marriage would follow graduation, but more than that, I just knew that we were meant for each other. I cried, I prayed, I read my bible from front to back, searching for help with the grief, holding on to my faith all the while, but questioning why. It would take three years of “down to the core” grief, anger, pain and exhaustion before I would learn to stand on my faith. I believe in my heart of hearts that this experience really helped me to tune-up my faith, to understand and comprehend how one’s life can be changed in an instant, almost in a batting of an eye, at least, that is how it felt to me. It also helped me to find the courage to overcome the most incredibly painful experience, and to search wholeheartedly for a deeper understanding of my relationship with God. As I slowly learned to stand on my faith, and to believe not in what I could visibly see, but in what I could not see, I changed my place of worship, met the man who I would eventually

marry and start a family (two daughters, Noelle and Nicole). This was, and will always be, the most defining moment in my life. It is through this moment that I came to truly live out my faith, and to listen and follow the “still small voice” that was guiding me.

Now that my MBA education was completed, I began to feel an urge to venture out to work on my own, for over the years, I had been passed over for promotions and it would be almost twelve years before I was promoted to an assistant director position. All the while, I held on to my faith, working diligently at the tasks for which I was responsible. I began to feel that it was truly time to pursue other career opportunities, so I began to think about opening a school. The school would be opened in the community where I grew up, providing a good preschool through kindergarten education for the children in my home community. I felt then, and I still feel this today, that it is an opportunity for true service, giving back to the community from which I came. It is an opportunity to provide the children and their parents with educational choices, for if they are well prepared before entering kindergarten, they can be successful in future educational endeavors. I often think of my own college experience and how I performed so well in grammar and high school, but performed so poorly in undergraduate school. How could this happen?

I see now that something was missing. At the time I did not think that I was missing anything, for I was in advanced placement and honors classes, but all it actually meant was that I had to complete extra homework assignments. I realize now that I worked hard with what I was given, but it was not enough to compete with students from other schools who were better prepared. For this reason, I am really passionate about working from the ground floor to help students like me to close the achievement gap, to beat the odds, to do the unexpected. I feel that my life experiences have prepared me for this service opportunity, and I believe that this is the

reason why I never left academia, for if I had, I would not have had the opportunity to fulfill my aspiration of completing a Doctorate degree in education. I believe too, as I have completed my coursework and am moving forward toward my research that this is where the “still small voice,” better known as God through faith was leading me all along. Now, as director of advising services, I work to provide advising services for 2,000 graduate students. I have learned that what advisors do, and what they say, can have a great impact on the academic and professional lives of students.

3

Literature Review

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Basic Concepts: Religion, Faith and Spirituality

Terms such as religion and religiosity, faith and spirituality are often used interchangeably, but can have very different meanings. Just as the many religious denominations are distinct and unique, so too are the terms often associated with religion. The definitions presented here by various researchers will allow the reader to see how different each definition is and how each individual comprehends their definition based upon their own knowledge and life experience. This is exactly what I hope to achieve with this research; a different way of understanding how individuals acknowledge the role that faith plays in making life decisions and achieving aspirations.

Religion is defined in Webster's Dictionary as "a belief in a God or Gods". In Fowler's book on faith development (1981, p. 9), he quotes Wilfred Cantwell Smith who defined religion as:

A cumulative tradition as the various expressions of faith of people in the past; A cumulative tradition may be constituted by texts of scripture or law including narratives, myths, prophecies, accounts of revelation... it may include visual and other kinds of symbols, oral traditions, music, dance, ethical teachings, theologies, creeds, rites, liturgies, architecture and a host of other elements.

In recent literature, researchers have coined a new term that describes religion or religious practice as "religiosity". Religiosity, as defined by Lindner-Gunnoe and Moore

(2002, p. 613), is “the practice of being religious (e.g. attending religious services, praying, ascribing values to one’s religious beliefs).” Both definitions seem to be inclusive of all types of religious practices, but fail to consider circumstances where these practices may be applied to life experiences, mainly academic and career achievements. They seem to imply that religion only encompasses practices that are extrinsic to the individual’s faith development (behaviors that can be seen by others), but fail to explore the intrinsic development of faith that takes place innately, as the individual acknowledges the development of a religious belief, or faith’s presence within. Faith, according to Love (2003, p. 8):

Is a process of meaning making, which is the process of making sense out of the activities of life and seeking patterns, order, coherence, and relation among the disparate elements of human living. It is the process of discovering and creating connections among experiences and events.

Fowler (1981, p. 28), in his book entitled *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* offers the following definition for consideration:

Faith affects the shaping of our initiative and responses, our relationships and aspirations in everyday life, by enabling us to see them against a backdrop of a more comprehensive image of what constitutes true power, true value and the meaning of life.

Fowler’s definition of faith alludes to the ability of faith to motivate and inspire, to provide meaning and value to life, but as discussed previously, he also admits that there is not always a need for a connection between faith and religion for faith development to be achieved. He states that “faith is not always religious in its content or context” (Fowler, 1981, p. 4).

Spirituality, although different from faith, has been defined in several ways in literature too. Speck (2005, p.4) presents these definitions through the words of several researchers; Campbell (2003, p. 20), for example, defines spirituality as:

The place in our hearts that holds all of the questions about our purpose in the world and is reflected in our actions.

This definition of spirituality, like those offered previously for faith by Fowler and others, alludes to a pursuit of life meaning and purpose, but fails to explain the source of life's questions, or why these questions evolve in the first place.

Lewis and Geroy (2000, p. 684) define spirituality as:

The inner experience of the individual when he or she senses a beyond, especially as evidenced by the effect of this experience on his or her behavior when he or she actively attempts to harmonize his or her life with the beyond.

This definition can be interpreted as being very similar to the faith definitions offered by Fowler (1981) and Dantley (2005). It too hints of a religious root, an acknowledgement of a higher power, but once again differs from faith in the religious sense, because it seems to indicate that an individual can guide his/her own behavior as he/she attempts "to synchronize with the beyond."

Another definition of spirituality provided by Bento (2000, p. 653) clearly differentiates faith from spirituality as he defines spirituality as:

The experience of the transcendent, or the quality of transcendence, something that welcomes, but does not require, religious beliefs.

Here, unlike the other definitions, Bento openly professes his belief that spirituality does not require religion to exist within the individual. In other words, his definition does not straddle the fence; he boldly states his belief so that nothing is left to interpretation.

In an effort to lessen the confusion between terms and to clearly differentiate the meaning of faith and spirituality, Marler and Hadaway (2002) tried to assess what people meant when

they said they were “spiritual” or “religious”. What they discovered however, is that people often define themselves as both religious and spiritual.

Marler and Hadaway (2002, p. 289) began this study with the intent to explain the changes in religious trends that seemed prevalent between the years 1980 to 2000. They believed that society was changing from an institutional religious belief system (extrinsic dimension) to one dominated by “seekers” of spirituality (intrinsic dimension). Using a zero-sum approach, they prepared a survey that asked the participants to indicate whether they were spiritual and religious, spiritual or religious, or neither spiritual or religious. The zero-sum approach allowed researchers to assume that the sum of the responses between religion and spirituality would ultimately equal zero, because gains in “religious” responses would result in losses (in the same amount) in “spiritual” responses, thereby resulting in a zero sum (Marler and Hadaway, 2002, p. 290).

Using surveys that asked about each participant’s individual assessments about spirituality versus religion taken from baby boomer studies conducted by Roof (1993) (536 participants) and Zinnbauer (1997) (348 participants), an adult telephone poll conducted by the Princeton Religion Research Center (2000) (1,037 participants), as well as their own 1991 survey of adult American Protestants (2,012 participants), their research revealed that “spirituality was described in personal or experiential terms (based upon an individual’s personal ideals and experiences that made him/her feel spiritual or closer to God) , whereas “religiousness” included personal beliefs as well as institutional beliefs and practices (based upon information learned through religious doctrine and church participation)” (Roof, 1993 and 2000, p. 294).

The surveys for each study were structured so that the wording and samples used were different for each survey. Zinnbauer (1997), for example, conducted a study that sought to

research the participants by age group (baby boomers). He surveyed 348 Ohio and Pennsylvania residents from 11 religious (Christian and church-related) organizations. His survey questions differed in that he offered the participants a response option that included being religious and spiritual. This option was not available in the study conducted by Roof (1993). As a result, Marler and Hadaway (2000, p. 294) found that Zinnbauer's (1997) study determined that:

Those persons who identified themselves as spiritual, but not religious were less likely to hold traditional Christian beliefs and to attend worship services. They were more likely to be independent from others, claim an agnostic position, and see spirituality and religiousness as different and non-overlapping concepts.

However, he, like Marler and Hadaway (2000, p. 297) found that “being religious” or “being spiritual” was not a zero-sum proposition after all, because religion and spirituality are often perceived as distinct, but interdependent concepts. Marler and Hadaway (2000, p. 295) also conducted face-to-face interviews with 49 marginal Protestant participants in 1993. They found that 63% of the participants, if given the option to choose to be identified as religious or spiritual, would indicate that they were both. The researchers also indicated that many of the participants believed that a distinction could be made between spirituality and religion. Spirituality, according to the participants, is an internal belief system that builds moral character, while religion guides and strengthens character. So, the two are separate and distinct, but lead to the same purpose. When a respondent indicates that “they are less religious; they are simply spiritual by default” (Marler and Hadaway, 2000, p. 297).

I offer that the results of Marler and Hadaway's (2000) research has significance because it reveals that even though the terms faith and spirituality have very different meanings, and people know this to be true as shown in this study, the terms are still used interchangeably. This may be one of the reasons why studies on faith and spirituality are difficult to find in the

literature. Because the terms are often used interchangeably, and individuals have difficulty distinguishing between them when surveyed or interviewed, it may make evaluation of results difficult to measure, interpret, and to understand. This may also be the reason why the research focus has been on school attendance and other religious activities that provide results that are easier to measure and much easier to explain.

How then do we clearly differentiate between faith and spirituality within individuals? I believe that the best approach is to listen to the life experiences of participants whose beliefs and religious practices come from different denominations, and who can express in their own words what their religion means to them personally. We can also listen to their descriptions of how they first acknowledged the presence of faith in their lives, become educated about their religious practices, and explore how these practices and experiences may have influenced their life decisions or choices. This paper will attempt to explore these notions by taking an historical look at the first educational institutions to determine religion's influence on education during the Progressive Period.

Progressive Period: History of Educators

Although my attempts to find research that reveal a connection between religious belief and education seemed sparse at best, I was inspired to continue the pursuit of this topic when I learned that religion was very much a part of the first educational system in the mid-eighteen through mid-nineteen hundreds, the Progressive Period (1850-1950). In fact, the first schools were greatly influenced by the religious experiences of the educators during this period. Stallones (2010, p. xiii) described the Progressive Period as a time of great growth for Churches and schools. He stated that from 1850 to the First World War, "the number of churches per capita nearly doubled so that the ratio was one church for every 430 residents." He also

described this as a period of new ideas such as Darwin's Theory of Evolution, Scientific Geology that attempted to determine the age of the earth, and Scientific Psychology and Child Development that introduced new teaching methodologies that would dominate the church worldview and educational institutions during this period.

Schools also experienced an influx of new ideas as the school year and day were lengthened, as well as the grade levels that one could pursue. School enrollment grew nearly 300%. Enrollment increased from 57% of the population to 84% between 1870 and 1956. In addition, the theories of education that sparked public interest during this time such as scientific psychology, child development, and Montessori schools began to introduce into the school environment a new methodology, and a new way of teaching. Overall, Stallones (2010, p. xv) indicated that by "1916, 53% of the U.S. Population identified themselves as "religious adherents" and many educators pursued theories and reform with "a sense of mission" or an "evangelistic approach."

Stallones (2010) examined the lives of educators such as Jerry Voorhis, Felix Adler, John Dewey, William Heard Kilpatrick, and John L. Childs. He studied their lives in great detail and provided a rich narrative of each educator's early religious experiences. Using this information, he examined the structure and culture of each of the schools that the educators created, to determine the degree to which their religious experiences had influenced school culture. He categorized each educator in one of three categories namely, Integrators, Reinterpreters, or Deniers and I will discuss each category separately in pages to come.

Integrators are those who by intention, carry their religious experiences into adulthood and integrate them into their career in education. According to Stallone (2010) Jerry Voorhis and Felix Adler fit into this category. Reinterpreters redefine their earlier religious experiences

and reinterpret them in naturalistic terms, or modern non-religious terms, but do so with a “missionary zeal”. John Dewey fit into this category of educators. Finally, Deniers are educators whose religious experiences were profound during their youth, but in adulthood, they publicly rejected religion. William Heard Kilpatrick and John L. Childs fit into this category. Although these educators publicly rejected religion, Stallones (2010) indicates that they may have continued to participate in religious ceremonies in private.

Jerry Voorhis was born in Ottawa, Kansas and his family practiced the Episcopalian faith. His childhood understanding of his faith and Christianity through biblical scriptures led him to the belief, according to Stallone (2010, p. 13) that “in order to be truly Christian, one ought to be poor.” This was in direct conflict with the middle class upbringing that Voorhis had experienced throughout his lifetime. While attending Yale University, Voorhis joined the Young Men’s Christian Association where he developed a passion for issues of social justice. After considering foreign missionary work, being employed at a shipping and car company, Voorhis gained the desired teaching and administrative experiences that led to the creation of Voorhis Memorial School for Boys in 1927.

The school was created for homeless boys on a 150-acre ranch. Here Voorhis constructed the school, its philosophy and curriculum. Enrollments were very selective as he chose some of the students personally and others with the help of nominations from individuals and institutions. His heartfelt obligation to the poor became the motivation for selecting boys who lived in orphanages. Each applicant was screened for mental aptitude, emotional stability, and special talents or qualities that they possessed. Voorhis’ passion for social justice as learned from his religious experiences was threaded throughout the school building. He incorporated religion into the school curriculum and explained its presence with his understanding and

viewpoints of social justice. The school ultimately closed in 1928 due to an economic downturn and Voorhis' decision to resign from leadership to become involved in politics.

Felix Adler, like Voorhis, was also included in the Integrator group by Stallones (2010, p. 31). Adler was born in Alzey, Germany as a devout Jew who in his youth practiced the Jewish faith of his family. As he matured, he began to question his faith, ultimately rejecting it, and creating a new faith called Ethical Culture. Stallones (2010, p. 32) kept Adler in the Integrator category because he felt that "his educational philosophy and the institutions that developed were direct outgrowths of the new secular religion that he created."

Adler was specifically interested in reforming Judaism. As a minister, he changed the sanctuary, allowing men and women to worship together. He also changed the service to include more sermons and more frequent readings of the Torah. Stallones (2010, p. 34) writes that Adler believed in the creation of "an ethical society, based upon moral principles, not obedience to laws or adherence to doctrinal propositions." He believed that humankind should be morally perfect and religion was the way to obtain this perfection. Adler attended Columbia College and the University of Heidelberg where he received a Ph.D. in Semitics, and used the pulpit at Cornell University to further preach his ideas of reform in sermons. Adler's first school was the Free Kindergarten in 1878 for laborer's children, but was soon transformed into a school with a curriculum that would aid students to fulfill their "calling."

According to Stallones (2010, p. 45), Adler wanted students "to choose occupations based on their own interest and talents... and the good they could do for society." He also created the Workingman's School which in 1928 became the Ethical Culture Fieldston School located in Riverdale, New York. Ethics was threaded through the school curriculum and moral development of its students was the ultimate goal. In the end, the school would become an elite

college preparatory school where the children of affluent parents would attend to rigorously study morals and ethics from a critical perspective.

Stallones (2010) placed John Dewey in the Reinterpreter category, as one who converted his childhood religious ideologies into a new philosophy, or new meaning. John Dewey was born in Burlington, Vermont. He attended worship services at the First Congregational Church where he first acknowledged Christ as the leader of his faith. While attending the University of Vermont, Dewey became fascinated with the study of physiology. He gained an interest in other aspects of philosophy, such as morals, social and political philosophy. Mental philosophy really peaked Dewey's interest, as he read the works of T.H. Huxley on intuitionism, a new way of thinking about religion. Intuitionism followers, according to Stallones (2010, p. 64) believed that "moral right and wrong are self-evident through human intuition." While teaching at Oil City High School in Pennsylvania, Dewey would acknowledge a religious experience that allowed him to understand his faith like never before. He accepted a teaching position at Lake View Seminary where he often discussed the conflicts of scientific knowledge and religion with H.A.P. Torrey, a well-known metaphysicist.

Dewey was accepted into the Ph.D. program in philosophy at John Hopkins University. Here, he was introduced to George Sylvester Morris who believed in Hegelism. Hegelism, as described by Stallones (2010, p.66) was a school of thought that "reality was a unity, an organic mind, differentiated into many interrelated finite minds." Dewey's acceptance of this teaching would lead to the reinterpretation of traditional Christianity to one that incorporated Hegelian philosophy. At the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Dewey became acquainted with James Hayden Tufts, a graduate of the Yale Divinity School, and George Herbert Mead, a philosopher and the son of a Congregationalist minister. After many encounters with these men, Dewey

reinterpreted his Christian beliefs into a naturalistic psychology concept that “beings and their environments interact as an organic whole and not as things separate and distinct.” (Stallones, 2010, p. 66) This knowledge led to the “child-centered” philosophy of education for which Dewey is best known. In the end, Dewey rejected orthodox Christianity and left the First Congregational Church all together. He continued to believe in social and moral reform, but in a new way, a revised way that allowed him to derive a new meaning and way of living through his belief in natural psychology.

Finally, Stallones (2010) categorizes William Heard Kilpatrick and John Lawrence Childs as Deniers, individuals who abandoned their religious ideals for a period of time. William Heard Kilpatrick was born in White Plains, Georgia, the son of a Baptist minister. His mother had a great deal of influence upon his sensitivity toward others and development of moral character. His relationship with his father however was not so good. Stallones (2010, p. 81) indicated that the distance between he and his father “may have led to his eventual rejection of religion.” As a youth, Kilpatrick was very involved in religious practices, leading devotions with his family, reciting bible passages, serving as Sunday school superintendent, and attending church services on a regular basis. Two devastating events that happened in his life in 1886, sparked even more religious fervor in William; typhoid fever resulting in the death of two of his half-sisters and an earthquake that devastated Charleston, South Carolina.

During his college years at Mercer University, he read a book by Charles Darwin called *Descent of Man*. This book changed his devout religious mindset into one that focused solely on the theory of evolution. Stallones (2010, p. 84) quoted Kilpatrick as saying, “I now had no theology, but my social and moral life continued in exactly the same way.” Publicly, Kilpatrick practiced atheism, but would take part in religious services from time to time.

Kilpatrick was often thrilled when teachers seemed to care about the students in the classroom, so he became a teacher too. He taught mathematics, Latin and Greek. Later he would attend John Hopkins University to pursue a Ph.D. in mathematics, serve as principal of an elementary school, and later as university administrator and vice-president. Kilpatrick's enthusiasm and concept of mutual respect between teacher and student earned him special recognition from his students. A book by Charles De Garmo entitled *Interest and Effort* helped him to understand what really motivated students: "self-propelled interest" (Stallones, 2010, p. 86). During this time also, he became interested in Neo-Hegelism, similar to Dewey as it allowed him to hold on to his moral and ethical ideals without religion. Kilpatrick's loss of his first wife Marie and their son to tuberculosis, as well as university politics that forced his resignation, would ultimately confirm his atheist position as he stated, "I have definitely given up all religion in the revealed or theological sense. I see no God of any sort anywhere." William Heard Kilpatrick continued the rest of his life in this conflicted state, acknowledging religion then denying it, but his work always reflected the religious teaching of his youth; morals, ethics, and respect for others.

John Lawrence Childs is the final educator that was categorized as a Denier in Stallones (2010) book. Childs was born in Eau Claire, Wisconsin and grew in his youth to practice the Methodist religion. According to Stallones (2010, p. 100), "Methodism took pride in having contributed to prison reform, education reform and the abolition of slavery in the British Empire." Childs developed many of his ideals about morality and democracy from his religious and community environment. While attending the University of Wisconsin majoring in journalism, Childs was introduced to the work of Richard T. Ely, which greatly influenced his thinking toward economic relations.

He became actively involved in the Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.) in his senior year, while working as editor and chief of the university's newspaper called the *Daily Cardinal*. Within this religious organization, Childs was encouraged to become more socially conscious by the lectures presented by John R. Mott, one of the dominant figures in the Young Men's Christian Association. Through his involvement with the organization, he decided to become a missionary in China, and rose to co-presidency of the Y.M.C.A. His belief in Christianity continued to grow, as he began to use his status as editor and chief of the *Daily Cardinal* to advertise events and encourage students to become involved in the Y.M.C.A. While in China, Child's acknowledged his Christian faith as he wrote, "I, personally, had known times when God seemed to be 'nearer than breathing and closer than hands and feet.' ... and I felt that if I reached out I might touch his hand" (Stallones, 2010, p. 105). At times however, Childs would also show skepticism in his Christian beliefs as he confessed, "I was rather agnostic on the question of the virgin birth and the physical resurrection," and "I did not believe that the bible was infallible" (Stallones, 2010, p. 106).

Upon Childs' return to the United States in 1922, he attended the Union Theological Seminary and the Teachers College where he met William Heard Kilpatrick. This friendship introduced him to Experimentalism, a concept of John Dewey, which captured Childs' interest and led to his denial of Christianity once and for all. Upon completion of his masters degree, Childs returned to China with a new sense of purpose, one that relied upon human intellect and social reform. He began to publicly criticize all forms of religion through his writings, sermons, and speeches. His new found experimentalist philosophy motivated him to become involved in political action and labor union disputes. In the end, his passion was to create a democratic society that used human intellect to bring about social reform and moral behavior.

Stallones (2010) book provided a rich insight into the lives of these educators and how the religious experiences of their youth influenced them personally and socially. The work that he completed is very similar to the work that I would like to pursue. I would like my research to focus primarily on individuals who indicate that they are actively participating in their religion, but from different religious perspectives, not solely Christianity. I believe that the stories that will be heard will provide new knowledge about religion's role in motivating individuals to achieve and pursue careers of great passion. I believe too, that this research is relevant because it may help to shed a new light on the relationship between religion and education, and how one's religious experiences and beliefs may bring our educational and career aspirations to reality.

Influences on Academic and Career Progression

Prior studies on academic and career achievement have indicated that religious schooling may motivate individuals to achieve positive academic and career successes. Recent studies, however, have shed some light on the influence that one's religious commitment may also have on these outcomes (Jeynes, 1999, pg. 459). Jeynes work between the years 1999 -2003 focused solely on minority students (Hispanics and Blacks specifically), to study the levels of individual religious commitment and its effect on academic achievement. "Religious", in Jeynes' (1999) terminology, was similar to most research on this topic in that it focused only on Christian religious beliefs. He believed that researchers did this by "including a number of the most prominent Christian religions in their studies, or by defining more specifically which religion they chose to examine" (Jeynes, 1999, p. 460).

In 1999, Jeynes (1999, p. 460 - 463) believed that there was not much research on religious commitment and academic achievement because: "1) much of the research used small sample sizes and rarely used quantitative data and 2) it was very difficult for researchers to

define religious commitment, because religion was often narrowly defined in terms of Christianity which did not allow the consideration of other religions.”

Jeynes (2001, p. 32) also offered definitions for religious schooling and religious commitment. He defined religious schooling as “a private school sponsored by a religious group and designed to meet certain religious and educational goals.” He defined religious commitment as “the extent to which an individual considered him or herself religious, and the consistency with which an individual attended a church”. Jeynes’ definition of religious commitment also stressed the importance of religious worship and practice, but placed less emphasis on individual faith development. Jeynes (1999) admitted that prior to 1999 he too focused solely on religious schooling, because there was little to no research on religious commitment to consider at that time.

In 1999, Jeynes conducted a meta-analysis to research the effects of individual religious commitment on academic achievement. Focusing specifically on Hispanics and Black students, this study began with 24,599 eighth grade students from 1,052 schools who had participated in a study from 1988 to 1992 conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC). The participants responded to the National Educational Longitudinal Survey (NELS) and were administered achievement tests in math, reading, science and social studies designed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS).

The researchers followed these students for 2-year intervals (1990 and 1992). The purpose of the study was to compare the difference in academic achievement results between Hispanics and Blacks who were devoutly religious and those who were not. The researchers made adjustments in the student sample to compensate for students who may have dropped out of school, transferred to another school, or who for other reasons could not be included in the

sample. Variables for religious commitment and academic achievement were established through student self-descriptions of religious participation (all possible religions) and standardized test scores, specifically Item Response Theory (IRT) scores in the above mentioned subjects. Other variables such as socioeconomic status, type of school attended religious (private), or public (non-religious), and gender were also considered.

The results revealed that minority students who were devoutly religious had higher academic achievement than students who were less religious in all measures of math (+0.22****), reading (+0.21****), science (+0.21****), and social studies (+0.18****) (Jeynes, 1999, p. 469). The asterisks indicate that these betas for very religious were positively significant for the logistic regression analysis where ** $p < .01$ and **** $p < .0001$. After further research in a study that was conducted two years later, Jeynes concluded that “religious beliefs of students were just as important, and perhaps more important, than the educational institutions that these students attended” (Jeynes, 2001, p. 459).

Jeynes (2002, p. 31) did acknowledge in later research that “there were some reasons to think that the religious faith of students may affect their academic achievement in a positive way.” He believed that this factor had not been studied in great detail in the literature prior to his work in 1999, and this may represent a “gap” in the literature that should be explored further. He also acknowledged the problems associated with defining religion using Christian terminology and suggested that “a distinction should be made between religiosity and spirituality, or some other indicator of spiritual sensitivity which may either co-exist or exist separately in peoples’ lives (Jeynes, 2001, p. 31).

Another research study that focused on the influence of church attendance on schooling was one conducted by Regnerus and Elder (2003). This study examined the effects of church

attendance on a student's ability to "stay on track", or to make educational progress in high risk (poverty stricken) and low risk settings. The purpose of this study was to "explore whether religious involvement enabled youth in low-income neighborhoods (socio-economic disadvantage) to stay on track in school (avoid serious trouble and substance abuse, find employment, and start families despite the odds against success)" (Regnerus and Elder, 2003, p. 633). In essence, Regnerus and Elder (2003) wanted to examine the significance of religious influence (Catholic) on academic success amongst students who were believed to be advantaged (low risk) or disadvantaged youth (high risk).

The researchers stressed that the focus of this study was not about high grades and test scores, which is often associated with stellar academic achievement, but rather focused on whether religious influences could play a role in the positive behaviors associated with staying in school (making educational progress), and "making it" in life (family and career). Finally, "On-track" performance was measured by student completion of tasks that were thought to lead to academic progress. For example, "ease of homework completion coded 0 to 4, difficulty interacting with teachers (also coded 0 to 4), never expelled from school (coded 0 to 2), and experienced no unexcused absences from class (dichotomous)" (Regnerus and Elder, 2003, p. 637). Dichotomous results were achieved if the student experienced no unexcused absences and attended a Catholic school. Measures were standardized by creating identical metrics and deriving an overall score from the sum of the above-mentioned variables.

Regnerus and Elder (2003, p. 637) focused on behaviors and actions typically associated with "making it" in school such as:

Maintaining an adequate grade point average, keeping up with homework, maintaining progress through grades, getting along with classmates, avoiding disciplinary action and not skipping class. The key independent variables were religion, risk, protective factors and demographic characteristics. The

dependent variable was the student's ability to 'stay on track' (academic progress), not academic excellence.

Religiosity measures such as church attendance and self-rated importance of religion were examined together with Catholic schooling as a third measure. Catholicism was chosen because the participants were selected from schools in the Catholic educational system. In addition, Catholic schooling was thought during this time to lead to the most positive educational achievement outcomes. Risk was measured as a result of academic success despite neighborhood poverty (resilience), diminished resources, and social capital available to certain ethnic groups. It was believed that in the absence of institutions that provided needed social capital in disadvantaged neighborhoods, the church may help significantly to increase social and academic competence. The focus of the study was to determine whether one's religiosity could positively influence academic achievement given conditions of scarcity, disadvantage, and poverty.

The study used data on 9,667 adolescents in grades 7 – 12 taken from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health in 1994. Participants were selected from a list of 134 Catholic middle and high schools in 80 communities. In addition, approximately 200 students from each school, or over 80% of the participants were interviewed for 90 minutes at home regarding topics such as family, academics, and health. Data was provided by the Quality Education Database to determine if youth who were devoutly religious (attended church regularly and rated religion as very important), living in poverty stricken environments would be more academically successful than youth who were less religiously inclined. They also wanted to examine if religiosity influenced academic achievement (educational progress) more in high risk (fewer resources and social capital) or low-risk (more affluent environments) and finally, if

there is any difference in academic success amongst low and high risk groups with all measures of religiosity taken into consideration.

Participants from each school received a questionnaire that focused on religion, family background, socioeconomic status, academics and health to be completed in school. Youth were chosen from three neighborhood types, namely low, moderate and high poverty areas. The income measures included female-headed households, households with an annual income of \$15,000 or below, the rate of male unemployment, as well as individuals living below poverty status. Regenerus and Elder (2003, p. 639) wanted to examine religious influence in three ways: 1) Church attendance, 2) Student self-rated importance of religion, and 3) Participation in the Catholic education system. They examined youth at three levels (0 to 3) of church attendance (religiosity), namely low (never attends = 0), average (attends once per week) and high attendance (more than once per week). Risk factors involved living arrangements that were examined on a two-point scale, for example, 0 = 2 parents in the home and 1 indicated other family types.

Protective factors such as parental education were also measured on a two-point scale where 0 = either parent college-educated, and 1 = both with a college education or more. Financial status was measured on a two-point scale on the basis of whether the student's family was on public assistance and whether their bills could be paid (indicated as 0), and 1 indicated that neither of these situations existed. Finally, the demographic populations considered for this research were: African Americans, Hispanics, Asians and Native Americans. These groups were compared to White students who were omitted from the study. Regnerus and Elder (2003) indicated that the motivation for conducting this study was based upon the fact that there was

little to no research that tied religion in any way to educational outcomes other than the customary measures of grades and/or standardized test scores.

The results revealed that church attendance and “staying on track in school” was significant and positive (0.144 standard deviation) when a unit increase of church attendance occurred. A standard deviation of 0.144 indicates that for 68% of the participants in the data pool who attended church at least once per week, their ability to “stay on track” in school was positively influenced. The researchers believed that these results indicated:

1. Church attendance provided the individual with a means of integrating socially within a group of people whose presence served to reinforce positive behaviors and values similar to those required for achievement and goal setting in education.
2. This social interaction also provided a protective mechanism in high-risk communities that functioned to reinforce one’s work ethic, and behaviors such as staying out of trouble.
3. Commitment to church attendance required diligence and established a routine that was very similar to what was needed for doing well in school.
4. Private religiosity (faith) had little influence on achievement, but may indirectly influence it, but in a mediated fashion.

Overall, the researchers stated with confidence that “church attendance strengthened the educational progress among children in disadvantaged neighborhoods regardless of how the latter was measured” (Regnerus and Elder, 2003, p. 645). The relevance of this research lied in its attempt to establish a relationship between religion and education by focusing on the religious practice of church attendance and its influence on behaviors associated with making educational progress in school. However, it differs from what is proposed in this paper, because it, similar to studies before it, focused solely on church attendance but failed to acknowledge the notion that one’s faith may also inspire educational progress and academic achievement.

In addition, the researcher's evaluation of students in high risk settings may suggest to the reader that resilience, not faith, is the stronger influence on individual progression through schooling. This interpretation of the results insinuates that students in high risk situations simply develop a way of progressing in school by simply learning to deal with difficult circumstances that they face in their communities or environments. Regnerus and Elder (2003, p. 634) define resilience as a "manifested competence in the context of significant challenges in adaptation or development." This definition implies that there is an internal developmental process that takes place within each individual that allows success despite the odds, and/or circumstances that may arise. I believe that serious consideration should also be given to the possibility that faith can also inspire and motivate one to achieve despite the obstacles, and despite the odds.

Finally, some readers may also interpret the result of this study as the expected behavior outcome for individuals who have chosen to actively participate in religion, or religious practices. Fervent participation in religious practice is interpreted by some to be the result of conformity, or a desire within the individual to exhibit behaviors that are socially acceptable, or influenced by the power of the religious group. Religious practice, in my opinion is more the result of the individual's freedom to choose to participate and their own innate belief in a desired religion.

Jeynes (2002) supported this position as he offered another name for this inner strength development called a "locus of control". He cited the work of Garner and Cole (1986) who posited that individuals can develop an internal "locus of control". This internal locus of control is very different from the resilience that Regnerus and Elder (2003) referred to, because the definition of resilience that they offered appeared to be very dependent upon circumstances, or unexpected situations that the individual may have had to endure or overcome. The internal

locus of control described according to Jeynes (2002) however, seemed to have more to do with an individual's decision to participate, or not to participate in behaviors that could be interpreted as socially unacceptable in society (religious practices and beliefs) such as premarital sex, unplanned pregnancies, stealing, etc. Jeynes (2003, p. 47) concluded from the literature that "educational researchers have found a rather consistent relationship between possessing an internal locus of control and performing well in school." Jeynes (2002) did agree with Regnerus and Elder 's (2003) results on church attendance, for he believed that regular church attendance could help youth to establish a good work ethic, reinforce positive study habits and behaviors in school.

Loury (2004) studied religion's influence on academic achievement too. She focused her study on church attendance and other variables such as attitudes and behaviors, as well as some of the unobserved variables mentioned in the Regnerus and Elder (2003) study. She too focused on the family and its structure (one or two parents), parental education (college-educated or not), parental influence on church attendance and schooling, peer influence, availability of reading resources, community environment, and sibling education in an attempt to address any bias that may appear in her results.

The study was based on a sample of 12,686 individuals (ages 14 to 21). Data was taken from a 1979 National Longitudinal Study of 11,406 Youth (NLSY), and from data on 1,280 male and female older siblings serving in the military (taken from the Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT). The AFQT is a test that indicates possible careers that a youth could be suited for in the military. This test is usually administered during the high school years (3rd or 4th year) as students make the decision about whether to attend college, or to pursue a career. In addition, she included data on male and female older siblings, focusing on siblings who attended college

and those who dropped out of school. The focus on sibling education was done to account for the possibility of unobserved differences between and among siblings within the same family that may influence the number of years of schooling and ultimately bias the results.

The participants included adolescents who practiced Catholic and Protestant faiths prior to high school completion, as well as individuals who reported no church relationship at all. In 1993, fourteen years later, these same individuals and their siblings were measured for years of schooling. Information on religious denomination for the participants was gathered by merging NLSY data with county data (total adherents/total population) taken from a 1980 Survey of Churches and Church Membership (conducted by Glenmary Research Center). The following denominations were included in this study: Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Methodists. The AFQT data as well as the youth's educational aspirations were studied to identify college graduates or high school dropouts from the older sibling pool. After these individuals were identified, the researchers examined the influence of church attendance, attitudes and behaviors, as well as family background (mentioned above) on school retention (Loury, 2004).

The participants were interviewed annually between 1979 and 1994. In-person and telephone interviews were conducted to gather information about their views on schooling, work, and other life experiences. The participant pool consisted of 6,403 males and 6,283 females as follows "6,111 civilian youths ages 14 to 21 by December 1964, 5,295 Black, Hispanic, and non-Black, non-Hispanic disadvantaged youths in the same age category, and 1,280 youths in the military ages 17 to 21 as of December 1978" (NYSY, 1979, accessed January 13, 2012 at:

<http://www.bls.gov/nls/handbook/2005/nlshc3.pdf>).

Blacks (mostly of the Baptist faith) were omitted due to the fact that no data was available

on Black churches at the time of this study.

Loury (2004) stated that much of the research on church attendance and its effects on schooling had led to ambiguous results. She highlighted the study conducted by Evans, Oates and Schwab (1992) that suggested that youth who attended church services at least 4 times a month were less likely to drop out of school. Another study by Ribar (1994) showed that youth who attended church infrequently, as well as those who attended often were more likely to finish their high school years than youth who were not at either extreme. Loury (2004) stated that the problem with these studies was that the researchers had not considered that church attendance could be correlated with many unobserved variables such as parental influence on religion and academic aspirations, parental supervision of youth activities, and other non-religious attitudes and behaviors that may have been present in the home. In addition, other unobserved variables that could influence study results such as peer influence, the neighborhood in which the youth resides, and the youth's individual characteristics, thoughts, and expectations should have also been considered in order to avoid bias in the results. If unobserved variables are ignored, ambiguity will result, because the researcher cannot effectively isolate the effect of church attendance on schooling for the individuals in the participant pool.

Loury (2004), realized that bias is always a possibility, so she cited methods of eliminating the effects of these unobserved variables through the use of proxies (Ribar, 1994). Ribar (1994) used unobserved variables such as the presence of household newspapers or magazine subscriptions, or whether a family member possessed a library card to assess increases in schooling. Loury (2004) indicated that Ribar (2004) did not mean that having a magazine subscription, or a parent with a library card in the home increased the number of years of schooling 3.6 months to 6 months (0.3 or 0.5 years) respectively, but rather that the possession of

these items within the home encouraged youth to participate in activities or behaviors (reading, for example) that helped to increase schooling by these amounts. She added that including as many unobserved variables as possible could help to avoid criticism and bias in research results.

Finally, Loury (2004) cited Teachman (1987) and Krein and Beller (1988) whose work also studied proxies such as reference books and educational study space in the home as positive educational resources that could influence schooling. Loury did not believe that the use of these proxies, although helpful, could eliminate unobserved variable bias completely, but she believed that making an attempt to hold these variables constant would allow researchers the opportunity to isolate church attendance, as best as possible, and to assess its effects on schooling.

To avoid this type of bias, Loury (2004, pp. 120-121) did three things:

1. She included the number of older siblings by gender who attended college, as well as the older siblings who had dropped out of high school.
2. She also included AFQT scores, as well as the educational aspirations of the participants to reduce the effects of inter-sibling unobserved variables.
3. She estimated the effects of church attendance on schooling by using Two-stage least squares (2SLS) which allowed the exclusion of unobserved variables and captured the effects of exogenous variation in church attendance on individual schooling.

In other words, Loury (2004) eliminated the effects of unobserved variables that she believed would cause biased results by considering each unobserved variable in her participant pools. She incorporated all groups of older siblings, from those who attended college to those who dropped out, to ensure that the differences between siblings in the same household would also be taken into account. Individuals in military service were considered if they indicated that

they had educational aspirations in mind as they enlisted in the service and resided in the same household with siblings who either aspired to attend college, or who dropped out of college all together. In this way, Loury (2004) was able to consider all possible older sibling combinations in order to eliminate the possibility of inter-sibling bias. Finally, she held other unobserved variables constant, such as parent and peer influences so that she could isolate church attendance and examine only its influence on the individual's years of schooling.

After taking care to prevent possible bias, Loury's (2004, p. 120) results revealed that "children who attended church appeared to have different attitudes and behaviors than those who did not attend church." She also stated that these youth often exhibited "an aversion to criminal and destructive behaviors" that helped to increase schooling as participation in these negative activities could lead to a potential increase in absenteeism and a decrease in school attendance as a result (Loury, 2004, p. 120). Religious variables for denominations such as Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran and Catholic revealed more years of schooling than Baptists, other Protestant denominations (not identified in the article), as well as those who did not report a denomination. Schooling was raised by 0.016 years if an additional week of church attendance was experienced by the participant. In other words, if an individual attended church one additional week, schooling was increased by 5.8 days.

Non-religious variables such as parent's schooling and parent employment status also had a significant influence (approximately 10%) on offspring schooling, but more siblings reduced schooling overall. In other words, parents who attended college and were employed could possibly influence their child's decision to attend college or to become employed. This influence was measured at approximately 10% and also included individuals who had been matriculated into private schools (religious). Jeynes (2002, p. 42) supported this hypothesis, for he stated that

“students who attended religious schools often experienced an increase in academic progress from lower to higher grades of schooling with the highest advantages revealed in the high school years.” In regard to proxies such as possessing a library card, subscribing to newspapers or magazines, Loury (2004) agreed with Ribar (1994) that possessing these items merely helped to encourage behaviors that led to academic success and that careful consideration of possible unobserved variables could help to avoid bias in data results.

Finally, individual 1980 AFQT scores that measured possible career opportunities in the military and 1979 surveys of individual expectations of schooling revealed that years of schooling was increased by 0.2 years (approximately 2.5 months) when each additional older sibling attended college. Older siblings who dropped out of high school reduced years of schooling by 0.09 years (approximately 1 month). Educational achievement increased 0.36 years (approximately 4 months) when more schooling was expected by the individual.

Studies such as Regnerus and Elder (2003), Jeynes (2002) and Loury (2004), although focused upon church attendance only, do reveal that regular church attendance is positively correlated with academic and career achievement. Further research is needed however, to allow consideration of the influence that faith also has upon one’s academic and career pursuits. As previously mentioned, I believe that a research study of this kind will fill a gap in research that exists in current literature.

Motivational Theories Past and Present

Many researchers from the 20th century to present day have attempted to explain what motivates an individual to achieve goals. The question that still remains unanswered is why are we motivated to achieve goals? In order to explore faith as a possible motivator to this end, I believe that it is appropriate to look at motivational theories from a historical perspective to gain

an understanding of how motivational theories have developed over time, and how they may be examined and interpreted in current literature.

Motivational theories were developed as early as the 20th century in an attempt to determine what motivated individuals to act. In 1907 psychoanalysts, such as Sigmund Freud believed in the concept of the human consciousness (ego) and unconsciousness (superego). Psychoanalysts also believed that humans often repressed their desires to “seek pleasure and avoid pain” (Pajares, 2001). For many researchers of this time, Freud’s views seemed to focus solely on abnormalities in human behavior and as time progressed, more theories of motivation emerged for consideration.

Today, there are several theories of motivation that appear in the literature. I will focus on three of them, namely, Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, and Self Determination (Intrinsic and Extrinsic) theories in an attempt to address “why” people behave as they do. These theories, presented by Weiner (2000) and Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000), will be discussed in detail in an effort to explore whether faith may be one of many factors that can motivate one to achieve an academic goal or to make a meaningful career choice. In addition, the work of Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers (2004) and Stephen Covey (2004) will also help us to understand the decision-making process and how individuals come to this sense of knowing that inspires a decision to act.

Intrapersonal theory of motivation, as defined by Weiner (2000, p. 1) is the “subjective expectancy of future success and self-directed emotions related to self esteem, guilt, shame, etc.” He defined Interpersonal theory of motivation as “other-directed thoughts and feelings such as judgments made by others as to whether an individual was good or bad, moral or immoral, or the target of anger or sympathy” (Weiner 2000). Weiner (2000, p. 2) uses an Attributional approach

to explain what happens when an individual experiences a success or failure when attempting to reach a goal. He stated that in between the event that is attempted and the success or failure outcome, there is a period where the individual tries to understand what action (behavior) should be taken (attributional inferences). Intrapersonal theory of motivation, in this instance, is an individual's internal thoughts and feelings about the event outcome (feelings of shame, low or high self-esteem, etc.), so in essence the feelings are self-directed and internally motivated by the actor, or intrinsic in nature. Interpersonal theory of motivation, on the other hand, has to do with how others feelings or thoughts about the individual (anger, sympathy, or judgments about morality) may influence the individual's behavior. These thoughts and feelings are other-directed, or outside of the individual, or extrinsic in nature.

The individual is either motivated to behave (act) in a positive manner which can lead to goal success, or in a negative manner, leading to goal failure depending upon the way in which the feedback (cause of outcome) is perceived by the individual. Weiner applied this Attributional perspective to goal achievement expectations such as the success or failure of staying in school, or achieving within an academic environment. He believed that "academic achievement was influenced greatly by three factors, namely locus, controllability, and stability" (Weiner, 2000, p.4).

Weiner (2000) studied attributional effects upon students placed in a variety of emotional situations to determine how they would respond from an intrapersonal and interpersonal perspective. He believed that individuals were positively or negatively motivated by their history of success and/or failure in the past, by societal norms, and by comparing how others perform in their goal attempts (Weiner, 2000, p. 2). This article did not provide data on the number of students participating in any given study, but instead placed teachers and students in

different classroom scenarios to study motivational behaviors and the attributional inferences that followed these events.

For example, the first study conducted by Weiner and Kukla in 1970 (Weiner, 2000, p. 9) focused on this attributional perspective by evaluating pupil ability, effort, and exam performance. The ability of pupils was rated by the participant evaluators as high or low for both ability and effort, and exam performance was indicated as positive if performance was excellent and fair, and negative if performance was a moderate failure and a clear failure. The evaluators were instructed to indicate what the pupil would receive for their performance on a scale from most reward (+5) to most punishment (-5). The results revealed that those who demonstrated high effort, but low ability received scores that indicated the most praise and the least punishment. This rating occurred most often for those who may have worked very hard to overcome a handicap, for example. Pupils who were rated as having high ability, but failed the exam because of low effort were evaluated as deserving punishment. Weiner believed that the social context and the type of judge (whether educators or peers) should have been taken into consideration, for society's value system (belief in hard work ethic) will most often cause the evaluation of a pupil who has potential, but fails to achieve due to lack of effort to be judged more harshly than those who put forth the effort.

Weiner (2000, p. 4), defined locus as “the location of a cause which can be within (ability and effort) or outside (ease of task) of the actor.” He believed that success measures such as ability and effort were internal (within) the actor, whereas the ease of a task, or accepting help from others, and luck (chance) were subject to alteration and were therefore outside of the actor. Finally, Weiner (2000, p. 5) believed that the locus, whether internal or external, “influenced

feelings of pride in accomplishment and self-esteem, and that both of these feelings were internal requirements for success.”

In other words, locus had to do with the individual’s internal belief about the success or failure of attempting a task. For example, if an individual believed that he/she had the ability to accomplish a goal and made the decision to enter a science fair. If the student was willing to put in the effort, and believed that he/she had the ability to do well preparing and explaining the science fair project, then the locus was located internally, allowing the individual to sense a feeling of possible success. The student took pride in the project and internally, the student was motivated to act as his/her self-esteem increased, and the student exuded confidence in the successful outcome of the project. If however, the student believed that the task could not be accomplished successfully without the help of others, or he/she believed that a failure was forthcoming because he/she did not have the ability (know how) to accomplish the task alone, then the locus was located externally, because the outcome of the project was subject to chance (outside of the actor) and was dependent upon the ability and the effort that would be expended by others toward the project.

Another element of motivation that he mentioned was controllability. Weiner (2000) stated that “controllability referred to those causes that could be changed through effort and those that could not be willfully changed like luck for example. Controllability, according to Weiner (2000, p. 5), partners with locus as “two independent dimensions”, so that the cause of the event may be internal, but can also be uncontrollable.” He used someone’s height as an example. He stated that a person may not be selected for a basketball team because he/she did not meet the height requirement, simply was not tall enough. In this instance, non-acceptance on the team was a negative outcome, but was uncontrollable because the person’s height could not be

willfully changed. So, both locus and controllability worked together to produce an internal feeling about whether or not to act. Weiner (2000) believed that the two worked together in such a way that controllability could be influenced by locus which we will discuss in the next paragraph.

Locus is the degree to which one is motivated to expend energy, ability or effort to reach a desired goal. In addition, locus and controllability, according to Weiner (2000, p. 5) are “related to feeling states, or the value of achievement outcomes.” In other words, motivation is influenced by the individual’s expectation of achieving a certain outcome (success or failure) and the value (ease or difficulty) that is placed on achieving the outcome by the actor. He explained that if the individual believed that he/she had expended energy, or had made his/her best effort (locus) to achieve a goal, but in the end failed at it, then controllability often expressed itself as internal feelings of anger, guilt, shame, embarrassment, or humiliation. Weiner (2000) believed too that external pressure from peers, teachers, and family members could also influence controllability. If, for example, a child felt that a parent, a peer, or a teacher expects better grades than the student had achieved in school, then the student may have felt angry that so much was expected of him/her, or he/she may have felt ashamed, guilty, or embarrassed that they were not able to perform better in school.

Weiner (2000, p. 4) also introduced the concept of causal stability of motivation. He stated that “causal stability referred to the duration of a cause”, which could be constant as in math aptitude, or unstable as in chance situations. He also stated that some causes were subject to change, whereas others could not be changed by human will. Weiner believed that there were two factors that influenced stability, namely expectancy and value, and these two factors were the major determinants of motivation.

Expectancy as defined by Weiner is “the subjective likelihood of future success” where behavior is dependent upon one’s thoughts and feelings. Value, on the other hand, is “the emotional consequences of goal attainment or non-attainment such as joy and pride” (Weiner, 2000, p. 5). Expectancy, according to Weiner, is a stable outcome that can be anticipated again. For example, if one failed a test due to poor learning ability, then you may anticipate future failures if aptitude was the variable of focus. If, on the other hand, the variable of focus is unstable, such as poor performance due to poor study habits (subject to change) then one cannot anticipate future failures. The person may have performed better if he/she had prepared better for future tests. Weiner (2000) concluded that although aptitude and study habits are uncontrollable, aptitude was considered by many researchers to be stable (learned/knowledge) and internal (inside the actor), whereas study preparation was considered as unstable (subject to change based upon lack of preparation, or other circumstances that may arise) and external (outside of the actor) in this scenario.

In 1985 and 2000, Ryan and Deci introduced the Self-Determination Theory. This theory allowed researchers to focus even more on “why” people behave in the way that they do. Research prior to the work of Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000), such as Piaget’s (1952) work on Cognitive Development, Kohlberg’s (1969) work on moral development, and Loevinger’s (1976) work on Ego Development attempted to answer the “what” question, “what” makes people behave the way that they do? The Self-Determination Theory, according to Ryan and Deci (1985, p. 36) is:

An issue of choice and necessitates a theory built on volition, intentionality or will; not drives. It is a quality of human functioning that involves the experience of choice, an internal perceived locus of causality and giving up control.

Upon reading this description of self-determination, one could become confused by the mere contradiction of one being self-determined, but also giving up control. Ryan and Deci (1985) helped to diffuse this confusion by explaining their belief that self-determination and self-control are different terms with different meanings.

Self-control involves the ability of an individual to internally control the way in which external influences will be perceived, to control one's behavior in reaction to those external reinforcements, and to control the degree of self-reinforcements that are necessary to motivate behavior. Self-determination, also involves self-control to some degree, but the resultant behavior is very dependent upon the degree to which the individual feels that there is no external pressure to make a choice, or to behave in a certain way. In other words, the external influences are perceived as informational influences that help to stimulate positive intrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000) believed that the mere notion that one must perform self-control behavior undermined intrinsic motivation, because this behavior implied that the individual must feel pressure internally (self-inflicted) or externally (other-inflicted). Self-determination, on the other hand, allows the individual the freedom to choose a response and behavior without pressure of any kind.

Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers (2004) also provided an interesting way to understand the process of allowing oneself to relinquish control. In this collaborative book entitled *Presence: An Exploration of Profound Change in People, Organizations and Society*, the Theory of the "U" was introduced to describe how an individual could make the decision to "let go" of control. Three basic learning processes must be experienced in order to motivate an individual to act, namely Sensing, Presencing, and Realizing.

In the initial thought process, Sensing occurred as the individual observed the situation or

experience and attempted to rationalize what was happening at the present time while recalling what had happened in the past, essentially becoming “one with the world” (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers, 2004, p. 88). As the individual continued to move down the “U” and reached the bottom, he/she entered the Presencing phase where he/she “sees from the deepest source and became a vehicle for that source” (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers (2004, p. 89). In other words, the individual acknowledged that an inner knowing was emerging within that allowed the freedom to “let go” and relinquish control. Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers (2004, p. 90) described it as “seeing beyond external reality, seeing from within the source from which the future whole was emerging and imagining the highest future possibility”. Finally, the authors described the ascent up the right-side of the “U”, the final phase of the thought process called Realizing. During this phase, the individual realized a newness of thought that inspired action, but the action “came from a source that was deeper than the rational mind” (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers, 2004, p. 91). In other words, the action that was taken came from a deeper sense of “knowing”, knowing that it was the right action to take at that moment in time.

The work of Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000) and the writings of authors such as Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers (2004) are relevant because they provide a new way of thinking about “why” we are motivated to act and to achieve. These theories are quite similar to the work that I would like to pursue as I explore the relationship between religion (faith), education, and achievement from an academic and career perspective. I agree that making a faith decision, or choosing a religion to practice requires a thought process that is very similar to the theories proposed by Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000) and Senge, Scharmer, Jaworkski and Flowers (2004). To make a faith choice is to act based upon one’s personal belief system and to do so means that

one must let go of control. Letting go of control allows individual faith reflection and allows the individual to tap into the power that can guide life decisions.

I agree that some form of self-control is also needed in the decision-making process, because often external influences motivate an individual to act based upon how the experience is internalized. For example, friends, family, or even religious institutions may apply pressure on the individual to conform to behaviors that are acceptable within religious societies (congregations) or social groups. In these situations, the individual must exercise a degree of self-control in order to determine whether the internal or external pressures will influence his/her decision to act, or if the pressure provides positive information that can be internally useful in making the decision to participate in a certain religious environment. The motivation for making the choice will lie within the individual, and will be dependent upon the degree to which he/she has the freedom to choose how to respond, and whether or not an action or behavior is required. The ability to freely choose a faith or religion and the willingness to submit to this faith choice allows the individual to become self-determined, or intrinsically motivated to pursue the discovery of the meaning and purpose of life.

Ryan and Deci (1985, p. 11) believed that intrinsic motivation was an important behavior characteristic that encouraged individual self-determination. Intrinsic motivation is “an energy source central to the active nature of the organism”, and “all behaviors are not drive-based, nor are they a function of external controls”. One of the components of motivation that is needed for self-determination to take place is competence. Competence is believed to be specific to the individual and also serves as an energizer of internal behavior. Ryan and Deci (1985) believed that “intrinsic motivation was the innate, natural propensity to engage one’s interests and to exercise one’s capacities to seek and conquer optimal challenges” (Ryan and Deci, 1985, p. 39).

The notion that intrinsic needs such as competence and interest can naturally motivate individuals to pursue and achieve the attainment of goals is quite similar to the research that I am proposing in this paper; the notion that individuals can be internally motivated by faith to achieve in academic and career passions (pursuits) in a similar fashion that ultimately provides life fulfillment, meaning, and purpose.

Ryan and Deci (1985) also examined extrinsic motivation from an interpersonal context. The researchers attempted to describe perceptions and resultant behaviors based upon the individual's environment, the administration of performance-contingent rewards, and the positive and negative feedback received from others. Evaluations of behavior were determined from the perceiver's point of view in three ways:

1. How does the event affect the perceiver?
2. How does the perceiver experience the event?
3. Is the event internalized by the perceiver?

Studies by Ryan (1983) and Harackiewicz (1979) determined that when offering rewards (positive feedback) based upon performance to two groups of students, one group informed of performance standards and the other not informed, intrinsic motivation was often undermined. Participants who received the positive feedback reward indicated that they felt as if they were being controlled as they performed the task. These participants described this experience as "feeling pressured, tensed, and/or apprehensive" (Ryan and Deci, 1985, p. 89). The researchers determined that this outcome was due to the fact that the participants perceived the experience and the performance-contingent rewards (being told how well they were doing) as controlling rather than providing useful information that could be helpful in the decision-making process. Hence, the resultant action or behavior was not intrinsically motivated at all, but rather the result of extrinsic influences that reduced the individual's freedom to choose a behavior or action.

Ryan and Deci (2000) explained their position through the introduction of three causality orientations or behavior responses that lied on the self-determination continuum and influenced motivation:

1. Internal autonomy
2. Environmental influences on control
3. Impersonal orientation

The researchers believed that autonomy had to do with choice, and choice was not synonymous with decision. Choice related to a person's sense of freedom as they chose to act. In order for self-determination to be experienced, the individual had to feel free to make a choice, the choice had to be of interest to the individual, and had to be motivated by environmental influences that were considered informational, or perceived to add to existing knowledge in order to motivate the individual to act or to respond in some way.

An environmental influence on control had to do with external pressure to perform. Words expressed by others could cause the individual to experience guilt or shame if they were unsuccessful in achieving a goal. Because the individual felt pressured into action, the behavior or action could be seen as compliance, or maybe rebellion, depending on the perceiver's response and whether or not the perceiver sensed that the freedom to make the choice had been lost. In this instance, the person felt that there was no real sense of choice. This individual, according to Ryan and Deci (1985 p.157-158), had blocked their inner sense of awareness (cognitive consistency). When success is achieved in this manner, without an understanding of one's inner needs, intrinsic motivation is undermined and the resultant response is either egotistical or self-aggrandized.

Authority figures (employer or parents), friends or persons whose opinions you hold in high regard (teachers, etc.) may also undermine intrinsic motivation. Individuals who feel

pressured to do what is perceived or expected by others also feel a sense of being controlled. External influences like these may pressure the individual to act in a manner that is socially acceptable by the group, community, or society. In these instances, the reward may be to receive positive feedback, public recognition, and awards (medals, stars, prizes, etc.). The reward may also be to simply avoid the negative feelings that may surface if the individual does not comply with the group such as feelings of being threatened, guilt, and shame.

Impersonal Orientation is when the individual is unmotivated, or simply does not act at all. This orientation, according to Ryan and Deci (2000) leads to incompetence in dealing with both internal and external forces. This individual cannot deal with life's challenges at all. The behavior or action in this instance is erratic and non-intentional. The individual may also develop a passive-aggressive personality which may result in addictive behaviors, high levels of anxiety, low self-esteem, and failure to develop internal self-control mechanisms. The individual who lacks the competence to deal with life's challenges and has no interest in any activity, will not be motivated to act, but will experience feelings of being "helpless, overwhelmed, or at the other extreme, rage and act jealously" (Ryan and Deci, 1985, pp. 159- 160).

To measure the strength of an individual's propensity toward one of the three motivational orientations, Ryan and Deci (1985) constructed a motivation scale that allowed them to examine internal emotions, behaviors and attitudes. The scale was used to examine academic performance and career choice and measured the causality orientations from Intrinsic to Extrinsic to Impersonal. A study group consisting of 88 student participants who were selected from a personality course were asked to complete short answer questions, unstructured essay questions on class topics, and to rate the fairness of the two exams after receiving their grades.

The results revealed that there was a correlation between extrinsic rewards (grade expectations) and negative performance. Because the individual performed the activity in order to attain an external reward (control), it was very different from doing the activity for internal satisfaction (autonomous choice). According to Ryan and Deci (1985), the intrinsic motivation of the individual was undermined and less positive because interest, value and effort were diminished when performance was based upon the receipt of an expected reward. Covington and Mueller (2001, p. 158) agreed with this notion as they stated that “external motivators such as praise, gold stars, and reward systems could actually inhibit the learning process.” Internal satisfaction is successfully achieved when an individual is allowed the freedom to respond as needed (autonomy) to intrinsic or extrinsic influences based upon perception of the experience. Also, the individual must maintain interest in the action and I believe that interest is often maintained through passion, and the value that one places upon the action is inspired by faith and the pursuit of the meaning and purpose for one’s existence.

In summary, theories of motivation have provided a solid foundation upon which studies on achievement and goal attainment can be examined. In the early 20th century, Freud’s work focused narrowly on abnormalities in human behavior. As a result of his work, theories of motivation emerged such as the work of Weiner (2000) whose attribution perspective introduced the notion of interpersonal and intrapersonal response (behavior) results. The individual could be positively or negatively motivated to act based upon their perception of an experience, and whether the cause for action was located inside or outside of the actor. Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000) took intrinsic and extrinsic motivational theories to a new level with the introduction of the Self-Determination Theory.

This theory posited that motivation or action by an individual was possible when the individual decided to act autonomously, freely choosing an appropriate response without feeling a need to control the process, or to be controlled by influences that were extrinsic in origin. Finally, Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers (2004) explained the Theory of the “U”, from Sensing, to Presencing, to Realizing. Their work helped to explain the thought process that occurred when an individual made the decision to “let go” of control, reflected upon past experiences then discovered (Realizing) the purpose and meaning of life and the action that was needed to achieve it. This notion of the decision making process is very similar to what I am proposing in this paper in regard to faith development. I posit that academic and career choice decisions can be motivated or inspired by faith as we realize our “calling” or purpose in life. In the next section of this paper I will explore the notion of faith development as it relates to our “calling” or ultimate career choice.

Faith Development and Career Choice

Today, faith and religious beliefs are expressed very openly in many experiences such as health care, politics, education, and even in the highly competitive world of business. Hansen (2002, p. 1) confirmed this belief as he stated “a growing number of American businesses are embracing religious values” and “employees are increasingly expressing their religious views at work.” As individuals choose their careers, some may do so after serious reflection about their private passions and their quest for the discovery of meaning and purpose for living. Some express a desire to share, or give back to society, the God-given gifts that they possess as a service to others. Hansen (2002) also believed that religious diversity in the workplace could cause conflict and he asked if religious expression should be allowed in the work environment.

The answer to this question is deeply embedded within many debates about the pros and cons of its presence, but what we do know is that religion is increasingly becoming a means by which employees find “meaning and purpose in their lives” (Hansen, 2002, p.2).

Faith development, I posit, is also a means through which career choice can be achieved. Authors such as Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers (2004) and Covey (2004) write about determining career choice through the decision-making process and the discovery of your “voice”. Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers’ (2004) Theory of the “U” as mentioned in the section on motivation can be considered as a detailed description of what Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000) coin as self-determination. The authors describe this movement through the “U” in a similar fashion to the process of motivation whereby an individual is moved to act and how I perceive faith development to emerge as proposed in this paper. As the authors described the observation phase (Sensing), I began to realize that faith development could be described in a similar fashion. The deep reflection upon experiences of the past that occurs in the beginning phase of this process is very similar to the experience of faith acknowledgment that I would like to explore. As the individual continues to move down the “U”, suddenly a desire to “let go” or to release control to a power greater than self occurs. This shift in thinking called Presencing leads to a higher level of “knowing” or understanding of self. Finally, the individual reaches the Realizing phase in which motivation or inspiration fuels the desire to act in a manner that leads to fulfillment and satisfaction. I believe that the vivid description of the phases in the Theory of the “U” provide the potential for understanding the faith development process and the pursuit of one’s “calling” or life purpose.

The notion that faith, in the religious sense, can motivate our academic and career choices certainly encourages me to continue my pursuit of knowledge to this end. These authors also

agreed that further study of the faith development process or “shift” as they term it may be beneficial to future research as they stated:

Despite its importance, as far as we know there is relatively little written in spiritual or religious traditions about this shift as a collective phenomenon or about collectively cultivating the capacity for this shift” (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers, 2004, p. 14).

In addition, these authors agreed that understanding the phenomenon of Presencing must be considered from many religious perspectives as I too proposed in this paper. In *Presence*, Senge (2004, p. 14) and his co-authors applied the Theory of the “U” to different religions such as Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Taoism. They discovered similarities between their theory and many diverse religious practices. For example, in Christianity, the Theory of the “U” and the shift is synonymous with phases such as “grace”, “revelation”, or a connection to the “Holy Spirit”. In Taoist theory, the “U” is synonymous with “qing” (vital energy), “chi” (subtle life force”, and “shin” spiritual energy). For Buddhists, Hindus, and those who practice Islam, the Realization phase of the “U” manifests as ending the boundaries between self and world, a feeling of wholeness or oneness with the world, and an opening of the heart. As you can see through each of these examples, the Theory of the “U” can be recognized as experiences that occur in diverse religious denominations of faith, each described from a different perspective, but resulting in a similar state of knowing that is not under the individual’s control. The notion that researchers are seeking knowledge about this phenomenon from diverse religious perspectives encourages me to continue on my research journey and my quest to add new knowledge to the current body of literature.

Stephen Covey (2004, p. 5) also wrote about the notion of finding one’s meaning and purpose in life. In his book entitled, *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness* he described the process from decision to action as a way of “finding your voice”. Covey (2004) believed that

your “voice” is achieved when inner talents or natural gifts are discovered through reflection on the things that inspire or motivate you to use the gift to inspire others. He continued to explain that the gift should meet a real need in the world, and if it does, you will innately follow your conscious, or what some refer to as that “still, small voice” inside of you that gives the assurance of what is right, and prompts you to act on your “calling” and to create your “voice”.

Covey (2004, p. 21) believed that every individual yearned to discover this “voice” or “calling”, because to discover it, allows fulfillment and satisfaction in life. He explained that in order to understand this innate desire to discover one’s meaning and purpose in life, you must first understand human nature. He stated that humans are comprised of four dimensions, namely “body, heart, mind and spirit” which are basic dimensions for all of us, and they work together to motivate us to find our “voice”. In similar fashion to the work of Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000), Covey (2004, p. 44) agreed too that one must have freedom to choose your “voice”, because finding your “voice” unlocks the potential to act upon your passion, the heart and soul of motivation.

Covey (2004, p. 50) stated that humans possess four major Intelligences:

1. Mental Intelligence allows development of analytical skills, reason, abstract thinking, speech, visualization and comprehension.
2. Physical Intelligence operates bodily functions that require no conscious effort such as respiratory, circulatory and nervous systems.
3. Emotional Intelligence encourages self-knowledge, self-awareness, development of social skills, empathy and communication with others.
4. Spiritual Intelligence is central and most fundamental to humans as it guides the other three intelligences and exposes life’s meaning and purpose by connecting with the infinite.

Covey (2004, p. 348) believed that “Spiritual Intelligence” was most important in the search to find your “voice”. He stated that there were three ways that individuals could find their “voice” or “calling” when selecting a job or career:

1. Possess integrity that will allow you to be true to your highest values, convictions and conscious. He stressed that you must allow the connection with the infinite by “letting go” of the need to control the decision.
2. Discover your meaning and purpose in life by having a sense of contribution to people and causes.
3. Find your “voice” by aligning your work with your unique talents, gifts, and a sense of your true “calling”. Remember to inspire others to find their “voice” too.

The motivational and decision-making theories of Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000), Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers (2004), and Covey (2004) helps us to understand “why” we are inspired to search for life’s meaning and purpose and “why” we have the desire to act upon our passions. Faith development, lends itself to a similar thought or decision-making process when we acknowledge, believe and participate in a chosen religion. As we discover our gifts or passions in life through faith, a desire to pursue the meaning and purpose of our lives emerges within, and we are inspired, motivated if you will, to act upon our gifts and use them in service to others. It is the successful discovery of the gift and the ability to realize your dreams that gives our lives true meaning.

Summary

This exploration of faith development began with a need to address what I believe to be a gap in literature or research that fails to consider the influence of religious faith upon academic and

career ambitions/choice. The purpose of this research is to explore whether faith can serve to motivate the successful attainment of academic and career goals. The questions that guided this process of narrative inquiry are:

1. How is faith defined by individuals whose religious beliefs and practices differ across religious denominations?
2. How does one's conception of faith influence academic and career aspirations and/or choices?

We began with the work of Fowler (1981) whose detailed model of faith development laid the foundation of how individuals construct faith as they mature, but his model resisted the notion that a relationship between religion and faith was necessary for true faith development to occur. Critiques of his work, offered by Streib (2001) and McDargh (2001), shifted the focus from a psychoanalytical approach to one that gave consideration to life and social experiences. Jeynes (1999-2001) shed light on the fact that most studies seemed to focus more on the influence of religious schooling and its influence on academic and career achievement rather than religious commitment.

Lindner-Gunnoe and Moore (2002) and Marler and Hadaway (2002), Love (2001), and Speck (2005) made attempts to define and differentiate between relevant religious terms such as religiosity, faith, and spirituality. Stallones' (2010) provided an historical perspective of five of the educators whose schools flourished during the Progressive Period (1850 – 1950) as a means of describing the influence of religion on education in schools that were created during that time. Weiner (2000) and Pajares (2001) paved the way to our understanding of “what” makes people behave the way in which they do, whereas Ryan and Deci's (1985; 2000) work helped us to understand “why” people behave the way in which they do. Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, and Self-Determination theories of motivation helped us to understand how intrinsic and extrinsic

influences could affect our own perception of our life experiences. The way in which we perceive intrinsic or extrinsic influences could either motivate us to act or undermine motivation, causing us not to act at all. Finally, Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers (2004) and Covey (2004) vividly described the complexities of the decision-making process through the Theory of the “U” (from Sensing to Presencing to Realizing) and through the discovery of our “voice” or “calling” in life. It is through the discovery of our gifts that we are motivated to pursue our dreams and strive to give back what we were given.

I think that new theories of motivation will emerge in the future. I am hopeful that these theories will consider the influence that religion (faith) has on the individual and the achievement of educational and career aspirations. I believe that it will add value to our current body of knowledge and provide a greater understanding of “why” we behave the way in which we do.

4

Methodology

Psalm 32:8

*I will instruct thee and teach thee
in the way which thou shalt go:
I will guide thee with mine eye.*

For this research study, the methodology that was best suited was one of narrative inquiry. Narrative Inquiry “aims to understand how people structure the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives” (Schram, 2003, p.104). These events and actions are often described to others in the form of stories. Stories provide the individual with a unique opportunity to verbalize past, present and expected future experiences. Vivid descriptions of life experiences help individuals to explain events in such a way that others are able to comprehend and follow the internal construction process through which the individual conceptualizes the meaning and purpose of the experience (Seidman, 2006, p.9). It is through detailed descriptions, facial expressions, and mannerisms that one’s life story begins to unfold before others.

This study explored the possibility that one’s religious faith, or belief within, may influence the pursuit of meaning and purpose in life, namely through academic and career choices. Our quest to understand the meaning and purpose of our lives may be influenced by our faith beliefs and could possibly be an important tool that motivates us to desire to understand and pursue our passions. Seidman (2006, p. 51) stated that the role of the qualitative researcher is “to present the experience of the people he or she interviews in compelling enough detail and in sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects.” The process of narrative

inquiry was of great importance as I allowed each participant to tell his/her story in their own voice and provided a road map for the researcher as to how the individual internally constructed an experience or several experiences from a diverse religious perspective. And finally, this qualitative process allowed the researcher to examine, or explore the possibility that the pursuit of one's meaning and purpose in life may be motivated by faith and may come to fruition through means of academic and/or career choice. The research questions that guided this exploration were:

1. How is faith defined by individuals across different religious denominations?
2. How does one's conception of faith influence academic and career aspirations and/or choices

In the pages that follow, I will discuss the rationale for site and participant selection, method of data collection, ethical concerns, and data analysis and finally, limitations.

Site and Participant Selection

The data pool was originally sought amongst students who were currently enrolled at two campus locations of a university located in the Midwest region of Illinois. The potential participants were to be taken from a student database provided by the university ministry offices within the academic institution at both locations. The database contained information about each student's religious affiliation, age, gender, education, and work experience, information that is similarly acquired by other academic institutions of this kind.

Participants were asked to participate by means of a mass email that was drafted by the researcher and submitted to the university ministry staff for dissemination to students who were currently in databases at both campuses. The email introduced me as the researcher and the intent of the research as a means of exploring faith's influence on life choices. Each participant was

asked to contact the researcher after thoroughly reading the information sheet that was an attachment in the email. After the first email attempt generated no participant response, the researcher waited for three weeks and the email was sent a second time. The second email resulted in only two responses, one from a Jewish student and the other a Hindu [Jain] student. The researcher contacted three individuals via email within the religious community through recommendations from friends and relatives as well as acquaintances of the researcher. Through this process, three individuals from the Buddhist, Christian and Muslim religions were found. One of the three participants, the Christian, was an acquaintance of the researcher. As the participants contacted the researcher to indicate their willingness to participate in the research, they were asked about the selection criteria for the study (18-years or older, religious affiliation, active participant in religious activities and attendance), and to confirm once again their willingness to participate.

The ages of the participants was a very important criterion as I wanted to include college-age students or older individuals who would be considered as adults, could possibly have experienced the act of making a religious choice, and could have possibly had meaningful life experiences to share for this study. The ages of the participants selected for this study were between 27 years through 65 years as follows: Buddhist female (65 years), Christian female (58 years), Hindu [Jain] female (28 years), Jewish male (27 years) and Muslim male (54 years).

The selection criteria of religious affiliation and active participation within a religious denomination were also pertinent to this research because they served to focus this research on primarily on the notion that an individual's religious choice and active participation either within a place of worship, and/or active participation in traditional religious celebrations indicative of their choice of religion could possibly influence their academic and career ambitions/choices. It

seems fitting then that the selection of the participants for this research exploration should include only those individuals who have made a religious choice (selected a religious denomination) and who are active participants within their chosen religious setting, either through frequent attendance in their places of worship and/or frequent involvement in traditional religious celebrations, holidays and/or festivals as a means of demonstrating their religious participation/choice. Potential participants were asked to indicate their level of active participation in their religion and or religious practices in time increments (from daily to not at all).

The researcher believed that the only way to obtain this information was to ask the participants upon initial contact. The Buddhist participant indicated participation in retreats that lasted seven to ten days and she expressed that attendance at service on Sundays was difficult due to her profession as a nurse, but she meditates daily in the privacy of her own home. The Christian participant indicated participation at church at least six or more times per week for choir rehearsals, church meetings, and bible study. The Hindu participant, who is a member of the Jain religion, indicated that her participation was mostly during the festival, fasting, and traditional holiday times for her religion. She didn't visit the temple often; however, she does celebrate her birthday as well as the birthdays of her family members by visiting the temple. The Jewish participant, much like the Hindu participant, rarely visited the synagogue, but actively participated in the tradition of Passover (Pesach) and Shabbat dinners to celebrate this festive Jewish holiday. The Muslim participant indicated participation at the mosque of three or four times per month as well as active participation in celebrations such as the fasting period called Ramadan.

Finally, after a brief discussion about each participant's level of participation within their chosen religions, the researcher actively sought contact information (email and telephone number)

from each of the individuals who willingly agreed to participate in the study. Finally, the first of three, possibly four in-person semi-structured interviews was scheduled.

During the first interview, the participants were asked if they had read the Information Sheet. The researcher encouraged them to ask questions about the information contained in the sheet if they desired to do so. The researcher confirmed once again that the participants were willing to participate in this research endeavor. After ensuring that all questions had been answered to the participant's liking, and that the particulars of the study were fully understood, each participant signed the information sheet and submitted it to the researcher. The researcher informed each participant prior to each interview session that this study was voluntary and that there would be no penalty if he/she decided to discontinue in this research endeavor for any reason.

Non-religious individuals, or those who do not attend religious services and those who were not affiliated with any religion were excluded from this research study. This is a limitation, but the opportunity to explore the possibility that faith may motivate individuals to act upon academic and career goals is better achieved through the study of individuals who actively believe and participate in a religious context and/or environment. For this reason, individuals who were non-religious or were not affiliated with any religious denomination, and who did not attend religious services or participate during holidays and festivals of any kind were not sought out for participation in this research study.

Data Collection

Each individual who agreed to participate in this study was asked to schedule up to four one-hour qualitative (semi-structured) interviews with the researcher when convenient for them in similar fashion to Seidman's (2006) interview model of three parts using an interview guide. Each participant was informed that if a fourth meeting was needed for member checking, they would be contacted and asked to provide an opportunity for the researcher to meet and discuss the interpretation of the interviews after transcription. All interviews for each participant were to require no more than 8 weeks to complete unless the scheduling times and/or locations were inconvenient for the participants.

Each interview was scheduled conveniently for the participant in terms of time and in reserved library rooms at the two university campuses. Initially, the researcher thought that the interviews could be staggered, so that the first interview for the second participant would take place two weeks after the first interview of first participant and so on for all five participants. The researcher believed that this would allow adequate time for transcribing and reflection upon first participant's initial interview before interviewing the second participant for the first time. It was also believed that if the three interviews (four, if needed) were scheduled within two-week intervals, each participant would have completed all interview sessions within an eight-week time period. In actuality, the two-week interview schedule was true for only the Jewish participant. The schedule was altered for the remaining participants as follows: The Christian participant's interviews were conducted in 3-week intervals due to an unexpected death in the family. The Muslim participant's interviews were also conducted in 3-week intervals due to a scheduling conflict with his place of employment. The Hindu [Jain] participant's interviews were conducted in 1-week intervals due to convenience for the participant in terms of scheduling time and

interview location. Finally, the Buddhist participant's interviews were conducted in one 3-hour session for convenience in scheduling due to the participant's occupation as a nurse.

All of the participants were paid \$50 in total for all three interviews. Payments were made in the following manner: First interview (\$15), second interview (\$15) and third interview (\$20). The Buddhist participant was paid \$50.00 for one three-hour interview session. The participants were informed that if they withdrew their participation prior to the completion of all three interviews, then he/she would be paid the prorated fee for the interviews that had been completed.

All interviews were audio-taped using a cassette recorder and the researcher took memo notes during the interview to help highlight certain events or phrases of importance for transcription. The researcher recorded the date and time of each of the three interviews on a label for each participant on the cassette tape. Each participant provided a pseudonym that was common for their religion, or simply a preferred name of choice to help the researcher to maintain his/her anonymity throughout the research study. The Buddhist participant chose the pseudonym Dechen. The Christian participant chose the pseudonym Naomi. The Hindu [Jain] chose the pseudonym Chandan Bala. The Jewish participant chose the pseudonym Michael. Finally, the Muslim participant chose the pseudonym Willie. The researcher transcribed the interviews after each interview session with the participant had been completed to ensure that the meeting discussion was accurate and that no meanings and/or important statements or expressions were lost or overlooked because of a delay in the time of transcription.

The interview questions or guide (Appendix B) were open-ended which allowed the participants to tell their stories with as much detail as they were comfortable. The researcher listened without interrupting and only asked probing questions when items in the interview were not fully understood, or when more detail was desired. The first interview allowed the researcher

to begin by introducing herself to the participants in an effort to establish a rapport with each of them. The interview guide (Appendix B) consisted of questions that focused solely on the participant's life history such as childhood, family background, and religious history. The second set of interview questions focused on the participant's experiences and reflections upon faith development as well as their academic and career goals. The third interview session consisted of questions that focused on the participant's construction of the meaning and purpose of faith in their lives and how faith possibly influenced their choice of academics and/or career.

The interview guide (Appendix B) was solely used as a means of beginning the interview process and was not used in a rigid sense. When initial questions sparked rich responses, the researcher probed further to encourage the participant to elaborate on his/her story. There were instances when the researcher deviated from the interview guide, especially when the participant said something that was interesting or caused the conversation to turn in a different direction. Finally, after completion of the three semi-structured interview process, none of the participants required or needed a fourth interview for memo checking.

Ethical Considerations

Seidman (2006, pp. 112-113) believed that the most important criteria for research is that data should be managed to the best of the researcher's ability. He believed that researchers should be responsible at all times for the safety/confidentiality of participants, the safety/confidentiality and organization of research data, and accurate dissemination of the information that has been given to the researcher. He warned that researchers should "separate the interviews from the analysis and avoid any in-depth analysis of interview data until all interviews had been completed."

As I pondered how to approach this study and considered his warnings, I originally decided to omit Christians from the data pool because of my religious affiliation with, and active participation in the Lutheran Church environment for most of my life. At first, I believed that there would be a great potential for bias because of my knowledge of the Christian religion from a Lutheran perspective and my many years of active participation in church. However, since this study examined academic and career success from many religious perspectives, I retracted my initial beliefs and decided to include a Christian participant because I believed that it would be of great value to this research and also because the Christian religion has many denominations to consider. Each denomination has a unique set of practices that would allow the researcher to gain new knowledge about the Christian community overall. The researcher, as a Lutheran participant in the Christian church, may have constructed her Christian experience in one way whereas another Christian's perspective of Christianity (Baptist or Catholic for example) could differ greatly. Because of the diverse nature of the Christian community, and the potential to obtain so many diverse religious perspectives from selected participants, I decided to include Christians in the data pool, namely the Baptist participant Naomi. This participant selection allowed me to not only gather information that was pertinent to this research study (from a diverse religious perspective), but also to learn about the Baptist religion and practices. It also provided an opportunity for the researcher to understand how the Baptist (Christian) constructed meaning and purpose from her personal religious experiences.

Another important ethical consideration for research is consideration of the participant's time and willingness to participate in the study. Interviews for this study were conducted in reserved university meeting room at times that were convenient for the participants. The researcher contacted the participants mostly via email in order to provide the participant with the

information sheet and by telephone and email to schedule the initial meeting time. Upon arrival at the meeting location (reserved library rooms), each participant was asked if he/she understood the information sheet, and if he/she had any questions regarding the research or their involvement thereof. Each participant was given adequate time to read the information sheet again and was asked to sign a consent form indicating his/her willingness to participate in the study prior to the beginning of the first interview session. The participants were informed that the interviews would be recorded (cassette taped), analyzed, and used as part of the research data for my dissertation.

Participants were also asked to provide a pseudonym, or name by which the researcher could refer to them in conversation and/or in written form for the dissertation. The pseudonyms were mutually agreed upon by the participant and the researcher. This type of labeling ensured that the identities of all willing participants remained confidential. In addition, it also helped the researcher to maintain an orderly and accurate account of the recordings and written memos in a manner that protected the privacy and identity of all participants as well as the content of each interview session. All recordings or cassette tapes of each participant interview are currently maintained in a locked file cabinet drawer and will remain there for six months.

Data Analysis

The participants were asked to respond to personal questions concerning their religious beliefs, church participations, academic and career aspirations, as well as to reveal personal stories that they believed were faith-related, or may have helped them to describe their faith experiences, if any had occurred. I also informed them that this information would be used for research purposes only and could be published as a final work for my dissertation, but that any references to them individually would be through the use of the pseudonyms, ensuring that their privacy and confidentiality would be maintained. Finally, I provided my contact information

(telephone numbers and email) as well as relevant university contact names as referenced on the information sheet, should the participants need to contact me or the university representatives with any questions about the information form, and/or this research procedure in general.

Since each interview was recorded and transcribed word-for-word, the researcher listened to the cassette tape repeatedly and transcribed the conversations as accurately as possible. According to Seidman (2006, p. 78), “listening is the most important skill in interviewing.” It requires the interviewer to listen on three levels to hear what is being said by the participant, to find the participant’s inner voice, and to notice interview time and its impact on the interviewee’s energy level.

The potential for risk was minimal, as the participants were free to divulge information of their own choosing and were informed that they may decline to provide answers to any questions that made them feel uncomfortable during the interview sessions. As mentioned earlier, no member checking was necessary after all of the interviews were completed.

After gathering the interview data, I analyzed the content of the interviews to determine how each participant had constructed his/her religious experiences, if any, over time, and if these experiences (if any) had influenced their academic and/or career choices as they saw it. Each semi-structured interview was examined repeatedly and coded based upon meaningful connections, similarities, or differences that arose after transcribing and analyzing each interview session.

Coding, according to Seidman (2006), is “the process of noting what is interesting, labeling it, and putting it into appropriate files or categories (classifying it).” After each interview was audio-taped, it was transcribed word-for-word. The researcher analyzed the transcription and coded them by first highlighting statements of interest, or themes that opened or surfaced while

reading and making notes of each individual transcript. This transcript review and highlighting of passages were labeled with the number 1. The highlighted passages were read a second time to see if a new meaning emerged. This second coding process reduced the amount of data for analysis and allowed the researcher to discover similarities or differences that came to light. This review of the transcript a second time was labeled with the number 2. Finally, the researcher examined the coding for a third time and attempted to understand the highlighted versions of the two previous coding opportunities in an attempt to find if more emerging themes and/or connections existed and if the researcher understood and had conceptualized the coding in the same manner, or if anything had changed as a result of this construction process. Seidman (2006) advised the researcher to trust in his/her ability to interpret the themes and warned against forcing passages into preconceived categories, but rather allow the words of the participants to speak for themselves. He stated that “There is no substitute for total immersion in the data. You have done the interviewing, studied the transcripts, and read the related literature; you have mentally wrestled with the data, and now you need to analyze them” (Seidman, 2006, p. 128).

The coding for this study was examined through the concept of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci, 1985) that involved making a choice through one’s own volition or intention. Also, the researcher attempted to make connections between participants’ conceptualization as to how they may or may not have been moving through the “U” within the faith development process as explained by Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers (2004) as Sensing (observation phase), Presencing (reflection phase) and Realizing (action phase). Finally, the researcher examined the participant’s understanding of where they were in the process of finding their ultimate purpose, or finding their “voice” (Covey, 2004) through their academic and/or career choices.

The themes that seemed to occur most often or seemed to emerge from the interviews were: Faith within the Family; Faith Choice; Faith in Academics and Careers; and finally, Faith in Service to Others.

5

About the Participants

Psalm 37:18

*The Lord knoweth the days
of the upright: and their
Inheritance shall be forever.*

It is only fitting in the process of narrative inquiry to provide some biographical information on the participants who shared their life experiences and academic and career aspirations for this research endeavor. A summary of participant biographies have been provided at the end of this chapter (Table 5.1). As I mentioned earlier, Seidman (2006, p. 51) states:

The role of the researcher is to present the experience of the people he or she interviews in compelling enough detail and in sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issue it reflects.

In the next sections, I will attempt to do this by introducing the participants in alphabetical order by religion and allowing them in their own words to provide vivid descriptions of their life experiences over time. In this way, the reader can come to know and understand how each participant perceived their own faith development through their life experiences and how these faith perceptions may have influenced their lives and future academic and career aspirations.

Dechen

Dechen is a 65-year old female whose religion of choice is Buddhism. She was initially raised in a Catholic religious community environment in the mid-west. She attended college during the civil rights movement in the late 60's and participated in several of the marches. As

she explained it, the Catholic churches in her community were affiliated with the Benedictine monastery as opposed to the Diocesan monastery that was more common back then. Dechen was the eldest of five siblings and she described her family situation as follows:

Uhm, my parents had a, I was the oldest, the girl and I have, I had four brothers. Ahh, the committed brother, had yeah, so I had uhm ahh my brother was maybe 21 months younger than me. Then there was another brother that was maybe a year or so uhm younger than him. That particular brother was born uhm with uhm we used to call it retarded, but now we call it cognitively disabled with a uhm a seizure disorder that was uncontrolled. And, uhm so that uhm that shaped my life a lot just those circumstances that I'm talking about.

Dechen was very excited to describe her Catholic experience as a child:

Ok. So uhm, oh ok let me say a little bit more about the Catholic church, because uhm that was like a huge part of my growing up and becoming a spiritual, kind of spiritual being. And ahh it was the old Catholic ahh where you had the mass in Latin, all the feast days of the Saints, you know seventh and eighth grade you sang in the choir uhm for all the ahh uhm masses for ahh people, funeral masses you know, no matter what was going on, you were pulled out of school and sang for the funeral masses you know.

In high school she became very fascinated with science which inspired her to pursue an undergraduate degree in psychology with a minor in philosophy. She continued her education by obtaining a masters in nursing which led to her current profession. She explained why she didn't choose her first career interest, the medical technology field:

Ahh so, the first time I had science was ahh you know a summer class uhm before ahh I started out as a freshman in high school and I just loved it. I was like "wow, I just love this science!" I was going to become a medical technologist, but then I didn't like the fact that I was going to be sitting in a room without a lot of people. I would just be kind of by myself you know I wanted more social, more social interaction.

Dechen has had many careers in the nursing field. She has worked as a psychiatric nurse, pediatric nurse, open heart surgical nurse, hospice nurse, and now a school nurse. She felt nursing was the career that she was meant to do:

I was very into uhm helping people. I felt that was my thing to do you know to help people and uhm that was what came from originally I think came from my family uhm and my brother being so disabled and I was just a little kid, like three years older and I'm feeding him breakfast and I'm helping care for him and that kind of thing. That was just kind of a natural thing for me. And I just uhm, you know decided that's kind of what I should do.

Dechen married in the Catholic Church in 1972 and divorced for the first time in 1976.

She described the first incident that led to her ultimate departure from the Catholic Church:

So, I had been married in the Catholic church about 1972 which was right before I started, right about the time I started my undergraduate nursing. I had been married in the church and then ahh four years later divorced. So now, that kind of changed things because in the Catholic church if you're divorced uhm you can't participate so much. And not that I was going to to ahh, not that I was going to mass every Sunday, that was not true, but still it really affected me.

Dechen described another incident that she considered to be the "last straw" and explained why she severed her ties completely with the Catholic Church:

So anyway kind of late twenties, uhm I, one of the people who, ahh this woman who I knew her and her husband, she's about 5 years older than I was and she uhm developed this uhm, I have to think about it for one minute, as you get older it's harder to remember this stuff, but, it was this blood incompatibility, this RH factor incompatibility when you ahh have children. And uhm, at that time, they did not have, now they have you know shots they can give you to counteract it. And ahh, so she was told by her doctor that she couldn't get pregnant again or she could die. And ahh and ahh and the priest told her she couldn't use birth control. Ok. So, you know being a young, I was aghast at that. I was really ahh felt

like how compassionate is that? What is that about? So umm that kind of did it for me in terms of, I mean I had up until that point in terms of the Catholic church, you know I'd had my period of you know really just believing everything that they said and you know being a good Catholic girl and all that kind of stuff.

Dechen still tried to attend mass periodically, but felt that there was no longer a connection to the Catholic Church. She decided to give the "spirituality stuff" a rest and just focus on work. She married for the second time and after having difficulty getting pregnant, she adopted two sons. Her husband was raised Lutheran, so she attended a Lutheran Church near her home and even had her sons baptized in the Lutheran faith. The Pastor of the church preached great sermons, but soon left only to be replaced with another Pastor whom Dechen did not find as interesting. So, she began reading books to find her spirituality again and stumbled upon a book on Tibetan Buddhism and shared the reason why she joined the Buddhist religion:

So, I read that book. It was about Tibetan Buddhism. And I was like "this makes sense to me." I can relate to this. This is about umm compassion, having compassion for people and it you know, helping people. It just kind of resonated and made sense with me. So, after reading that book umm I started looking for a teacher. Cuz in ahh Buddhism ahh you need to find a Guru. Guru is another word for teacher.

Dechen has been practicing Buddhism since 1996. She has attended seven to ten day retreats since that time to learn the teachings of the Buddha. She is also participating in a lay program for chaplains from diverse religious denominations that is offered through an Episcopal Church. She believes that her love for philosophy and psychology prepared her well for the Buddhist religion:

Ahh, so umm the my interest in philosophy was really when I got into Buddhism was cuz I really like philosophy and psychology and science. There's a lot of philosophy and psychology and science in Buddhism and so all of those

ahh things that I liked were there you know and I really liked the ahh and I also liked the organization. It's very organized.

Finally, Dechen shared what Buddhism is all about:

The whole point is becoming enlightened so that you can really know ahh what's important in order to help other people. And you can help lead other people then to enlighten and that's the whole point. Ok? So, it's really about helping people come out of their own suffering.

Naomi

Naomi is a 58-year old female who is Christian and practices the Baptist religion. Naomi attends church "maybe six or more" times per week and is an avid member of her church. Naomi described herself as:

I love people, so I have a tendency to want to help people all the time. I enjoy conversing with people, meeting people. I like to travel, I like to have fun. I am a little spon-tane-eous (stretched word out). Am I talking too fast? All right. I am a little spontaneous.

Naomi described her faith and belief in God as very strong:

And, I am ahh, strong in my faith. I believe in God. And I associate my beliefs into everything that I do. Whether its work, church, ahh even pleasure and I try to talk about God to people that I meet. And introduce Him to those that may not know Him very well. So, I could say that I am a pretty decent person.

For Naomi, the Baptist Church was a tradition in her family. She explained how she became connected to the Baptist religion:

Well, my grandparents, grandfather was a Baptist minister. And the church that I am in right now is a church that he founded. And my grandmother, my maternal grandmother attended a Baptist church and she always talked about the Baptist church. So, my family is basically Baptist. Everybody went to a Baptist church. So, I've never gone to any other, I've visited other churches, but as far as just being raised under a

Baptist ahh roof, uhm I just became Baptist and that's pretty much all I know.

Naomi is the eldest of seven children. She has four sisters and two brothers. She talked about her family life and what it was like to be the oldest of such a large family:

Uhm, (smack lips) as a child, I found myself having a lot of responsibility because I had so many siblings. So, I felt that I didn't have a lot of time to myself, because I was always responsible for other people. So, I feel like, I, I've spent my entire life having to look out for people and do things for people. But, so, I guess this is why I am such a "Help Me Today" (with emphasis), because that's what I spent my life doing.

Naomi described what it was like growing up as a child in a single-parent household:

But uhm, growing up at my house, so my mom was divorced. Uhm my father left us when we were young, so I tended to worry a lot as a child. Worry about my mother, worry about our house, and our circumstances and instead of just being a kid. I just had, felt like I had so much pressure, and so much responsibility looking out for my siblings. And I don't feel like I could really live freely, because I had so much responsibility.

Naomi talked about being responsible for her sister who is hearing impaired and the impact that this had on her feelings about her life at that time:

I have a sister that is hearing impaired. That was the most challenging thing that I've ever had to do in my entire life is be responsible for her. I was always responsible for her because she couldn't talk and I had to take her pretty much everywhere I went and watch out for her all the time and wait on school buses. And as a kid, I wasn't really that happy as a child, because I was a little disturbed by our circumstances and I was the one who was really closest to my dad.

Naomi was baptized in the Baptist church at the age of twelve and is still a very active member in her church. She described her involvement in great detail:

Well, I sing in the choir. I was once president of the choir at one time. I was secretary of the choir. Uhm, I am a member of the executive board. I am the secretary of, church clerk. And

that is pretty much, then I just participate in various programs, chair programs that we may have like uhm, I've chaired family and friends programs, I've chaired the church anniversary program and whatever duties I'm assigned (laughs). Pretty much, but that's pretty much it. So, I do play a big role in church.

Naomi described how her mother was a great influence in her life and how she instilled certain values in the hearts of her children, especially the girls:

Uhm, she did the best she could. My mother was, had a sophomore, high school education, but she was a stickler, a stickler for education and she stressed the importance of education. And she always talked about how she wanted us to be more, more independent, wanted us to get an education so that we can take care of ourselves, mainly she instilled in me and the girls that she wanted us to get an education so that we would never have to rely on a *man* to take care of us.

Naomi did what her mom suggested, she educated herself. Naomi has an associate degree in business administration and a bachelor of science degree in sociology. This academic quest took almost eight years to complete because she had attended a non-accredited school unknowingly and the credits did not transfer to the four-year institution that she had planned to attend. In essence, she had to start all over. In addition, she found out that she was expecting a child and had to also be a mom during the time that she was pursuing her degree.

Naomi described a period in her life when she struggled with finding her identity. She decided that it was more important to establish a relationship with her father who had left her family when she was a youngster:

And, my whole, most of my life, my, one of my main things was that I was gonna go and find him and see him again and be with him again. So, that was one of the things I thought about every year of my life until I turned, I think it was, I wanna say 28, in my late twenties when I did find him and was able to rekindle our relationship. So, that was one of the main things that I accomplished in my life that I was proud of, because that was on my list of things to do.

As a child, Naomi wanted to be a professional dancer and later a nurse. Today, she is an Assistant Director of Advising at a university. She describes how she wants to help people and how her current job allows her to do that:

Well, right now I am uhm academic advisor and I pretty much advise students, assist 'em with educational goals, help them on the path to graduation which is their ultimate goal. Make sure that they are enrolled in the appropriate classes. So, each student is different, and I find that I love it because I love talking to people. So, that's my thing.

Naomi wants to retire soon, but plans to volunteer her time giving spiritual guidance.

Naomi married, but five years later separated from her spouse. She explains why she feels that giving spiritual guidance is what she is meant to do:

Well, now uhm, I am looking forward to retirement (laughs), but not retiring where I don't do anything. I'm looking for a retirement where I can still be a help mate to other people. I still want to do something in that field where I can spend time with those less fortunate, maybe women who are battered or women who just need spiritual guidance, or kids that need, anybody, teens that needs spiritual guidance. So, I think I've learned enough and gathered enough information to be able to share and encourage other women to ahh to go to school and to follow their dreams, to develop their own aspirations So, I think I would spend the majority of my time doing that.

Finally, Naomi described what the Baptist religion is all about and why it is so important to her now:

Uhm, well from studying the bible and learning what's right and what's wrong. Ahh, and learning about God, and who He is and what He stands for, and just believing in that (emphasis on last word) helped to shape me into the person that I am. And so, I practice that, take that everywhere pretty much I go, even in my work. It gives you that, that upbringing and just teaches you to be ahh, a good individual. And, I think love is the key to, you know, opening your heart and that's what God, God loved the whole world that He gave His only begotten son that whoever believed in Him should have everlasting life. So, my goal is to

have everlasting life, so I'm going to carry myself as if my work is toward having everlasting life.

Chandan Bala

Chandan Bala is a recently married 28-year old female student at a university in the Midwest. She is a member of the Jain religion, one of the sects of the Hindu religion.

Chandan Bala was born and lived much of her childhood in a very small town in India. She has two siblings; one brother and one sister. She describes her family:

And ahh like my family background, my, my family's like it's one of a very well-known and very good has good status in the society. We have like group of, a social group or society like ahh it's that come from different you know neighbor ahh towns and cities and all the people belonging to the same religion, following the same questions and all. So, we have that society and my family is well-known and it's ahh very privileged in that way. Ahh and my, so even even financially, we were like, uhm we were very comfortable with our living. And ahh, uhm it was always a very good atmosphere in my family. Ahh, parents always considered our needs, whatever for or for our environment, for our living, and for the education.

Chandan Bala, upon first meeting, seemed shy and introverted, but after talking with her for a while, I came to understand that she possessed a very strong inner spirit. She spoke about the stereotypes that women faced in India:

Ahh, I mean in India or in like some specific like, there are certain you know stereotypes of people getting married at a certain age or ahh, like not in our place or society. Ahh, so, they have they don't allow women to like you know ahh go for studies of for like upper studies and they just get married like within the age. So, I'm I'm privileged that ahh I got to get education and I ahh for whatever like you know there were no restrictions on what I wanted in that area of getting education and uhm ahh not getting married in that age (laughs), the pressure of not getting married at that age.

Chandan Bala explained that she was born into the Jain religion which has a list of 40 or more rituals that one must do to be an avid follower of the religion. She stated that she values the rituals and traditions, but does not visit the temple often. She only visits the temple to celebrate certain Jain holidays and family birthdays.

Ok. So, Jain are like they are ahh very you know they have so many so many rituals in their own way. Ahh it's a list, list of rituals, do 40 and it's like they are like endless and I am not that follower of all the rituals, but yeah, once in a while I do go to temple. And yeah, I, I, I like to go to the temple when I, my, when it's my, when I have my birthday or my any birthday in my family like close my father's or mother's ahh like you know? Or people used to go daily, but I'm not the daily temple goer, but yeah once in a while or there are certain events that happens I do go to them, but now since I'm in U.S.A. it's like ahh very very rare.

Chandan Bala described how her family has practiced the Jain religion

And then so I know in my family, like people I mean I mean ahh so all the like my aunts and like uncles start their days going to the temple early morning praying then they start their day. Ahh. As I told, we are, I mean it is written like you know after a certain time like when ahh the morning start like sunrise after for example it's 6:40 for this date or or or 7:40am for this date. Ahh and then after praying or doing their job they used to eat early before sunrise and there are like you know ahh certain ahh rituals like I told about meditations so there is ahh 48 minutes of you can just ahh read about religion or so for ten minutes you are to sit in one place and read about religion or do meditation or as I told the Mantras that is the mantra for our religion.

She also shared how she came to know the Jain religion personally through the religious stories that she learned in lectures at a young age:

So, you know in religion ahh before I failed to mention there are these sayings like you know which we call them as a Guru, the picture of religion and ahh so ahh evenly in mostly of those cities are religious. They have this ashram that they live to stay and ahh there is another important aspect in our religion so those Saints walk barefoot they don't wear any footwear. Sometimes they do wear handmade cloth or just to sleep on say, but they

don't wear actual footwear. They don't use any kind of electric items, no fans, no air conditioning. Their rooms are just like open, there are rooms for ventilation; they use the doors and the natural air. And ahh, they they do read and ahh much more about the religion and the values of our religion and through also like whenever they are taken out like one hour in a lecture kind of lecture and so people gather in that room and ahh they listen to whatever they have knowledge about our religion. That is one thing. Those are just the stories and they just share how the way of living. And people ahh go there they start from the basic from like as we as we do like in school from nursery to college.

So ahh, you know like summer vacation, we used to go to my maternal side of the family and there ahh there is one lady who used to conduct those kind of like you know sessions and I really had a very good time. I mean the way she did I really enjoyed that that type of learning in my childhood I started doing that. I learned some of my books and rituals. Then after that I grew up, ahh I didn't I didn't keep practicing those things more. But yeah, I did a little part of in my time.

Chandan Bala expressed the fact that she respects all religions and has visited other religious venues such as the Catholic Church:

I mean I go, I can go to the temple or I can go to the church. I don't, I of course I don't learn about Christianity as like you know or Islam religion or other Hindu religion but ahh I just like to give respect to that ahh whatever the place. I like to give respect to all the parts of religion. Yeah. Yeah. I, I like to light the candle. I mean I don't, I might not know the reason behind it, but I do like to do that like you know. And for any other religion I like to I might not know the reason exactly or why they are doing or what are their beliefs completely, but yeah I do respect that. Ahh. Yeah so, I am as I told I am not completely the Jain follower, but I respect, I just respect every religion not only mine but every religion yeah. And, that comes I don't know from religion or from my family or from my thinking but it is there.

Chandan Bala has a bachelor degree in engineering and a master in information technology from India and is currently pursuing a master degree in communication technology. While in school in India, Chandan Bala worked for two years and she described the type of work that she was doing:

So, I was, I was a teacher (laughs). Yeah. I used to teach, so for two years I teach students. Ahh related to my field like whatever the study that I did in the ahh engineering like. I, I was an IT student. I did my my bachelors in IT and a masters in communication technology. So, all I took were IT subjects that I used to teach and labs. I was a tutor in fact like for one year and I was teaching college students like you know, all the bachelors students.

Chandan Bala aspires to be a good human being and to work professionally in the corporate world so that she can give back to society, to women and children specifically:

Yeah. I mean I do have a rough idea of what I wanted for my life. Ahh. It's like I live being a good human as ahh personally, and professionally I always wanted to see me as working I mean ahh doing something that ahh that you know ahh so whatever time I'm helpful in that work that will be like fruitful rather than just sitting and doing at home. And, I always wanted to be a part of ahh like working in any corporate or mainstream or a firm so that I get the full exposure of what I have learned and how in the real market it is applying. Yeah. And also, I have, I want to ahh give my part to the society like you know the service kind of thing in the future. Just like you know ahh any ahh small group I can meet reach to for example to educate like ahh ahh ahh those students or those people who cannot afford going school ahh provide something for them.

Chandan Bala explained that Communications Technology was not her initial choice for academics and career:

So, like ahh in India we have like you know this system, so after ahh 12th grade like you know we have to make a big career, like we have to go to the college. So, what college? And it it always be I mean the selection happens on the basis of merit. So, and ahh luckily or unluckily, I mean luckily because I know I'm here and right now I'm enjoying this this period, but at that time unluckily I scored very low, because 12th grade it's like ahh big, big ahh year in student life like you know. It's ahh ahh everything is totally different there. So, it's like ahh and surprisingly I scored low in that grade so I had only one option left in front of me (laughs) and so in that way I previously I was not like ahh I was not much

into computers and all that world. But then, then now I know that was something it was like you know a good decision, or a good turn of my life that I'm this way now, because now I'm I'm enjoying it yeah. So yeah, even I believe that nature has played its part to like you know ahh place me in that proper position at my given in my life like you know yeah.

Finally, Chandan Bala shared what the Hindu [Jain] religion is all about and why it is an important part of her life:

Ahh ahh I mean there are like you know certain religious, I mean so like in Jain they I mean it is all about non-violence. Yeah. As as I told, Jain has like it's there's various rituals that one has to follow which I don't, but ahh there are some values that the religion has which I respect a lot like you know. So it teach, I mean through those rituals teaches us ahh simple or good living for life like I told you know. Yeah so, they do they ahh they read out of the mantra for a straight 48 hours whatever the person wants in that 48 hours. So, I mean although I believe that is like for that moment to disconnect from all the social, ahh materialistic pleasure and just to focus within yourself and to connect with yourself. I really think it always ahh to avoid the materialistic of to another ahh, when or after the materialistic state other than to focus on what is important for our life and the ultimate goal of one's being is to achieve the eternal like you know freedom which we say Moksha in our language.

Michael

Michael is a 27-year old student who is studying to become a lawyer at a University located in the mid-west. He was born into the religion of Judaism, but adds that he has a unique background in that he was baptized as a Catholic and attended Catholic schools too:

Sure, So, I have a very uhm unique situation. Uhm, I ahh was ahh, both of my parents were Jewish. Uhm, my mother converted to Catholicism uhm, when I was, I don't even know at what age. I think at four years old I was baptized Catholic. I went to Catholic Catholic school my whole life, because of my mom. I mean even my university, undergrad and and technically graduate school are Catholic, but mostly you know my my ahh elementary, middle school, preschool, high school were all Catholic. When I was in ahh middle school I think around 7th grade, my mom said, and we used to go to church with my mom, and I was baptized, I was, I had took communion, but I was a little kid; I didn't really know the difference you know.

Michael is the youngest of four children in his family. He has two brothers and a sister.

He talked about his family and the day that his mother converted back to Judaism:

I'm the youngest of four. I, so my older brothers are adopted uhm and then ahh me and my sister came along (laughs) ahh unexpectedly ahh and I'm the youngest. My dad you know still practiced Judaism. Uhm, ahh but he was not very observant. Uhm, and I would also go to the synagogue with my dad at times. Uhm, ahh and we'd still always celebrate Passover you know. Uhm, and then I was about yeah 7th grade, uhm, my mom had said, sat us down, I guess my dad had known that she was returning to Judaism that it felt right and so she was going back to Judaism. Everything Catholicism (laughs). Uhm and ahh so, so yeah so that that that happened uhm you know. And my, and and now my parents are very, much more, they're more observant than they ever were, I wouldn't say that they're very observant. Uhm, my dad was from a much more observant family than my mother, my mother is from kind of a strange family, but they're Jewish. But she was raised a bit different than my dad was. He was from a more-stricter Jewish home on the East coast.

Michael explained why he believed that his diverse religious experience may have caused him to have doubts about his religion. At times, he struggles with believing in God and when he practiced Catholicism, he would often take communion, and say prayers that he believed were really just a routine:

I went to high school, even still I you know, but I sort of did, have doubts, but at the same time at that age I just don't know you know if I cared or really knew. Uhm, and so then I, I basically took communion I think until, through freshman year of high school, high school. I did, kinda just did it because everyone else did it you know. And, I mean now, to be honest, it's not, it's not a secret, but a lot of my friends don't even know that I was baptized. I just don't, I just sometimes I'm afraid to tell them I mean I'm you know, I'm not ashamed of any of my background, but I am very weird. Sure. I mean, I do pray. Ahh very quickly before I go to bed. I think to be completely honest, it's probably out of a routine. I'm not sure how much it it does for me, but I just have always done it. (Laughs) It's what I do.

Michael made the decision in high school to stop practicing Catholicism and to observe Judaism. He described how he made the decision to stop his participation in Catholicism and how he felt about his decision:

My friends ahh I met in high school and what not ahh but I made the choice after freshman year like I didn't, I didn't think I should any more ahh, to to do that. And so ahh then I you know and everybody always knew ahh that I was you know Jewish as well, because they they just did. Uhm, and so, so I was the Jewish kid in a Catholic school, but ahh I mean I always had a lot of friends and getting along with everybody you know, even the priest and my high school was always very nice to me and accommodating with you know ahh very big guy. And so, so basically after that I didn't, you know, I didn't start to even consider myself Catholic anymore.

Michael talked about his low level of participation in Judaism and how he understands the religion and the history of Judaism as a family tradition. Michael was selected to participate

in this study because he met the criterion of participating in religious festivals, holidays and other celebrations.

Sure, so, so uhm, I know we discussed this a little bit. So, I, I uhm there's different levels of observance uhm and I'm not very observant at all, but I'm you know Judaism is not just a, to me it's not just a religion, it's it's more than that. I was born Jewish. My ancestors were Jewish. I have a Jewish, you know I have a Hebrew name. Uhm, uhm, I'm admitting, I'm guessing has been passed down, parts of it but you know for generations. And so, for me I, I, I don't go to synagogue regularly. Uhm, you know sometimes I don't know even if I believe in God, but I consider myself Jewish. Uhm, I think it is you know a part of my identity yeah you know, I, when people say how do you prefer? You know, what's your identity? I say I'm, you know Jewish American. And, I guess you know I, I do celebrate, there are certain holidays that I like to celebrate. Uhm, and the Passover is my favorite holiday. Uhm, much of that is cuz you know it's from you know the story and the food, and it's the tradition. Uhm, but I do, I, you know I, I, I am very culturally Jewish. I really like the culture of you know and but I'm, I'm not very observant.

Michael shed light on a recent article that he read about Judaism as an ethnicity. He had been in a discussion with a friend about the subject and wanted to share his experience as a Jew in society:

I mean I, I you know I'm like I said that you know being Jewish is you know who I am. Just like somebody is Puerto Rican you know or African American. And just so you know you identify with that and that's who you are and you might not think every every minute, you know I'm I'm Jewish. But, but, it's just who you are. And, I mean it doesn't, you know it's ahh and too in a way it's kinda like and lots of people debate this uhm even Jews. Ahh you know is it an ethnicity? Is it or just a religion? Is it a people? And that's, you know I don't know if it's ever one answer and I have heard different things from different people. They say different things you know.

Hey, I don't know if I'm going off subject now, but I know I have, I have a friend in law school and we discussed, ahh and well this is a discussion amongst Jews you know whether Jews are White and we kinda laugh about it. Me and him kinda laugh about this and I actually read an article recently I think it

was in December, ahh somebody posted something on their Facebook was a, as a response to an article that was from I think December ahh in the *New York Times* or something about you know Jews being White (laughs). And I mean physically, I look White. Uhm, going down the street no one would say, even I don't even, nothing to signify, maybe someone would say that I'm Jewish, but cuz there are physical characteristics that can be you know that people would be like "yeah, they kinda look Jewish", uhm but that's not always the case. I mean my grandmother's was, her whole head was blonde (laughs). You know, but a lot of people say brunette, you know, you know or it's larger noses, or or curly hair. And I, I do put that I am White, but it is something that this article is interesting.

Michael double majored at his undergraduate college in sociology and Spanish. He is currently in law school with interests in public service, specifically international, and or immigration law. He aspires to work in foreign relations and has worked abroad as an intern as a Spanish teacher. He plans to enter the JAG corps in the military to help soldiers who may be in need of legal assistance. At the university he attends, he has organized Shabbat dinners during Passover and started a Jewish club to get Jewish students on campus to know one another:

Right. It's a military commitment. It's not like having a job with, any job and saying give your two-weeks-notice and leaving you know. And that's why you know I say four years is what I'm guaranteeing myself because maybe after four years I say I loved my experience but I am gonna move on. Maybe I say I absolutely love it here. This is a career; this is the job that I never thought that I'd love it so much and I want to stay at least another four years. Uhm, you know so I'm, I am very open with certain things I mean I've focused in international law. And part of me still does want to, if not with the Spanish-speaking community, with something international you know uhm doing something international or doing something with you know foreign relations. And part of me would love to do that as well, doing something, going to D.C. even and working with some organizations that deal with you know international law. Uhm. That could be something that's interesting too. And I'm pretty you know I guess I'm pretty open you know which is a little scary but you know that I don't know but, uhm cuz I'm entering a job right now that I don't foresee as a career career, uhm and so you know and then and then in a number of years, in five years

I'm gonna be potentially looking for something something else but uhm, I hope by that time I have you know, more established and doing what I want to do.

Uhm and I was involved here as an undergrad and that's something that ahh I try to at least, even if I don't really care about Shabbat dinner, that you know I've tried to get people to have a Shabbat dinner because I want them to feel like that they have a community.

Finally, Michael shared a story about his grandfather and why Judaism is important to him:

But, uhm you know so it's it's it's you know that's a little off topic, but uhm you know but a number of years ago, you know the the *Time* article I read was during Ferguson time and how *Jews should be aligning with you know those supporting you* know the protestors because not you know Jews were standing you know side to side with Blacks during the Civil Rights Movement. Because even in those days they were you know it may not have been as obvious that one person is black and one person is Jewish, but they were faced, faced discrimination both of them. And you know ahh, that would never, should never, should never have been tolerated then, but wouldn't be tolerated now. And uhm, I mean you know I know my grandfather used to get sent home in Philadelphia on Good Friday because his boss didn't want to be next to a Jew who killed you know Jews killed Jesus on during you know Good Friday.

I'm culturally Jewish is what I kinda consider myself. Ahh you know sometimes I don't know what I believe, but uhm you know being Jewish is not just a religion, it was something that was, I was born into. Ahh, there is a lot of tradition. Ahh and you know I mean the values, the value system that that I think you know is in Judaism ahh is something we were kinda raised with. Uhm, but I'm, I'm, I'm proud to be Jewish. And, I think I don't know if you know where that comes from exactly. If that comes from (pause) you know having your people being oppressed for many years kinda almost you know makes you proud to be in that group that you know even if I don't believe in the you know in the same beliefs that my parents do or my grandparents did.

Willie

Willie is a 54-year old male who is a member of the Nation of Islam (Muslim). Willie was not always a Muslim however, for he was born into a family whose religious tradition was to participate in the Church of God In Christ (COGIC) from age 12 to about 21 years of age. He describes his family:

Ahh, four brothers, older brothers and one older sister younger, and one younger sister. I was ahh, raised as a, in a sanctified church and ahh went to a Baptist church also. That would be, sanctified would be Church of God In Christ (COGIC). I would say probably about 12 all the way up to about late, ahh, middle to about 21 somewhere in that range yeah.

Willie described his childhood and what type of person he is now:

Uhm, childhood, was I was quiet, uhm very studious and uhm love man. Ahh, that's that's about it really just quiet and shy. Uhm, well, in terms of, easy going, uhm, try to be very helpful uhm, with assisting others, believe in giving a lot of service and uhm pretty even tempered.

Willie described how he decided to leave the Church of God In Christ, a family religious practice, to become a Muslim in the Nation of Islam:

A good friend of mine, he uhm, he had went out, he had went out to the mosque and he heard ahh, the minister speaking and so we would always go out partying Saturday night and I know that Sundays we didn't really go to church or anything, but all of a sudden he's, he would always get up no matter how late we were out, we'd be out like six in the morning. He still would, he still would make it to the ahh, to the mosque. He would go out and he would be changed, he would come back and he would be calm and he would be a little different. We knew that it was something different about him because he never really (laughs) followed any religion. And when he came back and he'd start talking about Islam and you know, we saw a change in him, so it drew my interest. Ahh, just, just uhm the knowledge that he came back, the information that he shared. And, and I just saw the change in his demeanor, so a lot of patience.

Willie described his level of participation in the Nation of Islam as going to the mosque three or four times a month and shared what his level of involvement consisted of during the services:

Uhm, at least I go to service about 3, 4 times a month. Ok. This is, this is we have ahh, the men, all the men that belong to Islam are called Fruit of Islam. During the service, oftentimes I may have an assignment, I may have a post. And and, my post could be as, could be like it was when you first come in. I could be on the search procedure. I could be on the search team. I could be outside in the parking lot. And, I can be in different places. I could be inside. Even inside, we have men posted inside where we're standing to just make sure there's always order.

Willie grew up in a city in the mid-west and educated himself by obtaining a bachelor of business administration in accounting and a master in physical education. He had aspirations of becoming a professional basketball player, but his aspiration did not come to fruition, and he spoke about how and why he spent fifteen years teaching physical education (elementary and high school levels) and almost thirty years coaching basketball at the elementary level in the public school system. In the future, he would like to coach at the college level:

Ok. I ahh, I started as you know ahh as most little children do, little kids do, I was just athletic. I loved sports. I loved baseball, football, basketball, hockey and running track. Those types of things I loved doing. And uhm, because of the area, the community I lived in, basketball was pretty dominant, that was pretty much the dominant sport. So, by us growing up under, I had four brothers and they were pretty good in basketball; I would always watch them play. So, as I started growing, they started teaching me or having me play a little bit with them, the older guys. And so, I enjoyed that and then it kinda pushed me to become, they pushed for me to become a basketball player. Well, they really influenced, see, they really didn't have to do anything other than just uhm be there, cuz I just looked up to them, so that was, that was my desire.

Ok. Ahh, high school ahh, well I decided to play basketball. I stopped all the sports when I went, attended high school and I decided to just play basketball. From there I went to college I wanted to be a basketball player. Uhm, the way I set up my life is I didn't, wasn't going to let anything get in the way of me being a professional basketball player. All I wanted to do was play basketball.

Uhm, I went to college and played on the basketball team with the second leading scorer and leading rebounder on the team. From there, I left and went to another college and played one year there, but financially I wasn't able to afford it. You know I was promised a scholarship, but when I got there it was more so, it was more so granted aid, so it wasn't a full scholarship like it is today. So, that's basically what happened and once I found that out, I was very disappointed because it wasn't a scholarship. And it was just economically, it was, it was kinda ahh, it was, it was tough for me and my family, because I was, came from a one parent household. I uhm was offered a, a coaching job as a student assistant to finish my degree. But, once I got there and I started coaching, my ideas about uhm, what I wanted to do started changing. I thought about I wanted to be a coach.

Finally Willie shares what the Nation of Islam is about and why it is important for him to be a Muslim:

Ahh. Well, in the beginning I was always a believer in God. Ahh, from the start, just coming up through through my parents, mainly through my mother, and going to church. Uhm in the church ahh I had I had a difficult time ahh in Christianity because ahh just ahh when, the way I was taught that Jesus and God was one in the same and and I couldn't see it in the physical sense that they could not they cannot be the same in the physical sense and but yet uhm and then I couldn't under, I didn't understand about uhm how ahh Jesus being the spiritual son, I understood that part the spiritual son, but I couldn't understand the biological son because I didn't believe that, I believe that no man, no woman can become pregnant without the (clearing throat) without the evidence of a man, the sperm of a male. So, that mathematically I had a problem with that and Islam answered that and so, we're ahh taught we're uhm that uhm when we study the Bible and the Quràn especially, we study a lot in the Bible. Most people don't believe that we study the Bible (laughs), they think that we only believe or study the u Quràn. The Quràn is the holy

book of scriptures for the Muslims.

But, particularly in the Islamic faith under the uhm, the Honorable Elijah Mohammed it ahh, it promotes unity among Blacks. And, that was our big concern that was one of the biggest concerns that I had, that, you know, our condition as a people. And once he you know, he talked about it, and he shared information about the lack of love for self and kind. That's the biggest issue of Mohammed. Knowledge of self, and the lack of love for self and kind, and the inability to unite.

TABLE 5.1: About the Participants

PSEUDONYM	AGE (YRS.)	RELIGION (FAMILY)	RELIGION (CHOSEN)	ACADEMICS (EDUCATION)	PRESENT CAREER
<i>DECHEN</i>	65	<i>CATHOLIC</i>	<i>BUDDHISM (TIBETAN)</i>	<i>B.S. PSYCHOLOGY & M.S. PSYCHIATRIC NURSING</i>	<i>HOSPICE NURSE</i>
<i>NAOMI</i>	58	<i>BAPTIST</i>	<i>CHRISTIAN (BAPTIST)</i>	<i>B.S. SOCIOLOGY</i>	<i>UNIVERSITY ADVISOR</i>
<i>CHANDAN BALA</i>	28	<i>HINDU (JAIN)</i>	<i>HINDU (JAIN)</i>	<i>B.S. ENGINEERING & M.S. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IN-PROGRESS)</i>	<i>CURRENT STUDENT</i>
<i>MICHAEL</i>	27	<i>CATHOLIC & JEWISH</i>	<i>JEWISH (REFORMED)</i>	<i>B.S. SOCIOLOGY & SPANISH & JD – LAW (IN-PROGRESS)</i>	<i>CURRENT STUDENT</i>
<i>WILLIE</i>	54	<i>(COGIC) CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST</i>	<i>NATION OF ISLAM (MUSLIM)</i>	<i>BBA ACCOUNTING & MS PHYSICAL ED</i>	<i>BASKETBALL COACH</i>

Research Themes and Analysis

Matthew 7:7

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

As mentioned previously, Schram (2003, p. 104) stated that the narrative inquiry process “aims to understand how people structure the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives.” This study examined how five participants from diverse religious denominations made sense of the events and actions in their lives as it pertained to their faith and its influence on their academic and career pursuits. After coding the interviews, or as Seidman (2006, p. 128) stated “labeling” them and “putting them into appropriate categories”, the researcher was able to discern four emergent themes: 1) Faith within the Family; 2) Faith Choice; 3) Faith in Academics and Careers; and 4) Faith in Service to Others.

Faith within the Family

Hebrews 11:6

He that cometh to God must Believe that he is, and that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

As I listened intently during the first interview for each participant, I noticed that a distinct pattern was evolving as each participant spoke fondly about their family’s religious traditions. Each individual indicated that they were born into a faith tradition that had existed for many years. The key to understanding how individuals construct their religious experiences can be discovered through vivid descriptions of how the participants worship within their religions and/or places of worship. By this I mean through the participant’s descriptions of what actually

goes on in the church, the temple, the mosque, or the synagogue. Each participant was asked to describe how they worship in a way that would allow the reader to experience what it is like to be a member of their faith, the faith that is practiced by their families. In order to enlighten the reader as to what is meant by faith within the family from the participant's perspective, excerpts from the interviews will be presented as participant stories. These stories, as narrated by the participants in their own words, will shed some light on the experiences within their places of worship and within their homes/family as well as the perceptions of these experiences through the eyes of the participants. It is important to keep in mind that two of the five participants in this study ventured away from their family's religious traditions and instead decided to become a member of a different religious denomination (Buddhist and Muslim). The Jewish participant practiced Catholicism for a few years and then returned to Judaism, only participating in traditional Jewish festivals, holidays and celebrations. In these instances, the participants were asked to describe both religious experiences in terms of similarities and differences, and what made them choose the faith that they now practice.

Dechen

Dechen, as mentioned earlier, was originally a Catholic who later became a Tibetan Buddhist. For this reason, she will describe her Catholic Church worship traditions and then what occurs during the Buddhist service. She recalls her Catholic worship experience by means of her schooling:

It's all Gregorian chant, it was just gorgeous music. Uhm, and ahh, all the uhm Saints days and we did uhm the litanies to the Saints and things like that. You know uhm they have you know like uhm old reps you know of course we did them in Latin and they would like say the different names of Mary and then you would like say (said prayer) and the priest would be up there you know and he'd be saying all that and you would be doing a procession through the

cemetery in the back of the church with you know somebody would have and it was you know (says prayer) please pray for us or pray for us or whatever. Uhm, so and we did, we went to mass every day when we were in school. So, the first thing we did when we got to school was go to mass and then so going to mass like, you know you're going to mass six days a week you know Saturday was the only day you didn't go to mass (laughs). And uhm, ahh school with the nuns and the priests teaching at the school.

Dechen described her experience in the temple and how she practices Buddhism at home:

Well, the first one I went to was like this (motions hand over her head) whew, it just went over my head. I didn't know what he (leader) was talking about really. I don't, I mean I, looking back on it, but I had no idea what he was like really and maybe and probably the second one too (visit to the temple). Uhm, But, it was a very, it was a profound experience being there! Uhm. I walked into, so they had a uhm temple and temple is a loose word it's you know it was like a a summer house that they had built because the Dalai Lama had come there, come to the U.S for the very first time and that's one of the places he went. But ahh so the first time I walked into that temple it was like buzzing for me, the place was buzzy. You know like you walk in there and it's like (makes buzzing sound), it was like buzzing. I don't know how else to ahh. Like all, it seemed like all the atoms were like moving. I had never had that experience. And ahh, it was very ahh you know I had never had that experience before. And so, in the beginning I'm centering myself or whatever. I'm gonna focus on this. And then I start the practices which you know kind of always start with (starts saying prayer) that kind of a thing is probably at the beginning of about every one of these practices. Uhm. They are all being said you know, may I develop uhm you know wisdom and compassion? I mean that stuff is all at the beginning of every one of these practices. So, there's a there's a kind of an outline for each for these practices, that they all ok, yeah those practices this is what ok uhm and in fact there's a way to take oh anyway, so then your position, body, and mind, the supreme field of merit is dependent upon the deity, the meditational deity you're working with. It's what you're envisioning and so that's you know you're concentrating on that and you're making a visualization in your head ok?

So, there's kinda this ahh ceremony, it's called the refuge ceremony where you take refuge. It's really kinda like ok I'm going to you know be a Buddhist and follow the path of the Buddha, that kinda thing. And so, in Christianity, you might think of it as baptism or something like that, but you just, it's just vow taking. (Laughs) I have a I have a daily practice that I do. I have a daily practice ahh it's a Vajrayana, it's a Vajrayana practice. It's a Tantric practice, but I so I have uhm gotten empowerments or ahh for these meditational deities and I do and I do their practice uhm every day.

Dechen has described the different experiences that she had while first practicing Catholicism and now Buddhism. For her, Catholicism seemed quite ritualistic with prayers in Latin and memorization of all the Christian behaviors, practices, and prayers that she had learned as a child. None of these Christian experiences helped her to make a connection between what she practiced during the worship service and how it applied to her life. Buddhism, on the other hand, seems to provide that connection. It is more than memorization of behaviors, practices, and prayers for Dechen; it is a connection of her mind, body and soul to a meditational deity that empowers her through her own thoughts about her life and its purpose.

Naomi

Naomi described the Baptist church service and then explained her experience growing up in the Baptist church and what life was like at home within the family:

Well, ahh, there is Sunday school and then there's the main worship service. There, uhm they have, they open the service with a devotional, uhm, we call it "Praise and Worship". Where you sing songs of praise, and you have prayer and you read a scripture from the bible. That focuses the service. Then you have the choir singing which ministers in music to the congregation and is supposed to get people, people's mind in the mindset of getting ready to receive the word from the minister. Then you have the minister who gives the word, who elaborates on the scriptures and talks about a specific subject and is supposed to feed you for the week in ministry. Then after that there is a collection of course and then we open our doors of the church for anybody that would like to become a member of the church. And after that, we go home.

The Baptist ahh, religion, we believe in the bible and ahh more so study from the King James version of the bible and then now when I first started church years, years, years ago, I was caught up in the gospel of the church more so. The Sunday school, the bible, of course I

learned the books of the bible, I learned the verses and things like that, but I really, but the the ministry, the ministers and the preaching I rarely listened to. Because the Baptist ministers did more humming and singing during the sermon than they did talking and teaching the sermon. So, I was never interested in the sermon (laughs). I know that sounds funny. So, I never was interested, unless it was something they said from the bible that I recognized. Then I, they would get my attention. So, it wasn't until I became an adult and started studying more and learning more did I start to to listen, really listen and hear between all that singing and humming.

Chandan Bala

Chandan Bala talked about the Hindu [Jain] temple and the traditional worship practice that takes place in the temple and privately within her home:

So when I enter in my temple ahh so we have the God idol made of marble. Like you know and it's just a marble like white plain idol like you know but it's it's shiny idol, ahh so much of sparks, shininess. So once we, we have to follow like you know once we enter we we read out about what I will say something kind of ahh phrases. Then there is like so there is a door, two doors once we enter into the temple and there is but another door, a room where the idols are kept. So, when we do Puja like you know so we are allowed to touch God wearing certain kind of neat clothes ahh like you know very much new, newer clothes which we don't wear you know a lot. Puja, P-u-j-a. That is the term that we use in substitute of prayer. But I mean but Puja now like a plethora or group of things to worship a God. Um Hmm. In fact, we offer flowers, fruit, ahh wheat I mean there are so many things we do in that for Puja. When we we we think we want to do Puja, we get on to those clothes, we do carry the food and sweets, and the rice. So we, there's a sandal we rub the ahh sandal and ahh and ahh there is a I know the Hindu term, but I'm not, I mean I'm not getting the English right away. I mean I know it's like so we mix the sandal and then one item that I'm not recalling right now and we made a paste and we used to apply to our God for ahh different regions of its parts like you know. Hands, legs and ahh certain spots like head, chest ahh kind of so there are nine different regions

to which we do touch and apply that sandal. Those are the areas that we focus on to do or gain certain of strength while applying there. And then ahh after coming back to that ahh general room, we do like you know we carry the fruit and the paste and then we have another kind or set of rituals to perform in that area. But when we just want to just pray ahh we just go in our regular clothes, we can go in our regular clothes.

Chandan Bala described the small temple that her father has in their home and how the Jain religion is practiced within the family:

Yeah, so like in my family ahh we have a small temple at our own home. Like we do I mean yeah so we in the morning, my papa light ahh the ahh ahh it's not a candle, but it's like a small lighting, ahh that is a small bowl and it is connected to this stand and there is a cotton that is pouring. No, not candle, but it's a different; it's a kind of wetter oil. It will yeah, it will just show a flame. Ahh yeah. So, the cotton is dipped in there and kept in that small stand. And ahh, papa lit and again that small stick that you mentioned (incense). Yeah and there are

certain like you know ahh daily routines, prayers or phrases and things that you just speak. So, there are like nine like I told about those mantras, there are nine you know and so it depends on the individual how they want to pray at home, but yeah.

And ahh there are 5 days where we don't ahh where we don't ahh eat green vegetables not underground food. I mean I know therefore as it is not permitted, I mean it's not advisable to eat but like, no green vegetables we only eat pole fish ahh on those five particular days. Ahh, and ahh people try to do as many rituals on those days because I don't know exactly the reason, but those days are considered very pious in nature.

Michael

Michael stated that he would have to try to recall what occurred in the synagogue, because he is a "Reform Jew" and "Reform Jews" do not visit the synagogue on a regular basis like the traditional Orthodox Jews. Instead, they choose to participate only during special celebrations and festivals such as Shabbat dinners during the time of Passover. Michael, like

Dechen, began his religious journey as a Catholic, so he felt inspired to shed some light on the differences between Catholicism and Judaism:

I'll search all my past. Uhm, Ahh, you know so this, you know, it's different for different people. You know that uhm Orthodox Jews will go (to the synagogue). It's very, our lifestyles are very different. Uhm, and ahh for me when I have gone (to the synagogue) uhm it's ahh ahh I feel really bad reading it (Hebrew) and I don't speak it. And a lot of Jews don't you know, even my dad you know doesn't speak it, you know some words, but it's usually prayers and he can read it. Uhm, but you know I ahh a lot of it is in Hebrew. Uhm, you know more, more you know that we say reform it is ahh like I consider myself reform. Uhm, there's not as much Hebrew. Most Jews don't, don't understand certain translations, but you know I don't speak, I don't know Hebrew. You know it's like having a mass in Latin. You understand certain things, but it's a lot in there you have no clue what is being said, but you just do it, because it's what you do you know.

And so, you know if you ever go to a Friday night service, there's some prayers you know, there's wine, ahh there's usually someone you know talking kinda like a homily. Uhm, and ahh so that you know if it's a holiday, it might be a little different, it might be more tradition and things, but uhm for the most part I, you know it's, it has a routine I think, seeing that you know I've I've gone to mass more than I've ever gone to the synagogue in my life, you know I haven't been there in a month.

Even going to Catholic school I was used to going to mass once a month, a school mass. And then I enjoyed the homily. I still you know would, but uhm you know regardless if I believe in something. I've only gone to mass a few times since I graduated high school. It doesn't do much for me besides sitting there. You

know it depends, you know I don't think sitting, sitting in the synagogue does much more for me either. You know I don't enjoy the prayer part, I enjoy the sermon, uhm cuz the prayer part doesn't really do too much for me. You know, my thing you know reciting a prayer Judaism or Christianity is not something that I you know for me is something you know that gives me any form of solace. And so you know there is a routine that it's very repetitive and yeah, so yeah (laughs), it, it, just really changes. I mean a Friday night can be you know like it, it can be a little bit longer. If you want a Friday night or a Saturday morning, I typically, when I've gone to services it'll be on a Friday night. They'll have uhm you know uhm the

20's and 30's Shabbat dinners which that's more common. If I wanted to have a Shabbat dinner, we wouldn't even, even if we said a prayer over the wine and the bread, we don't even do that in a synagogue, we do that, you know, at somebody's house.

Michael shared what he believed to be the differences between Catholicism and Judaism:

I mean what, it is so much hard, I can almost compare it to ahh Catholicism sometimes. Uhm, you know I think that they were very similar, there are some similarities. They were the same religion at some point. It's the same God as there is in Islam. Uhm, for them Jews are still waiting for the Messiah to come, he never came. Ahh, as opposed to Christians, Jesus was the first coming and they are waiting for him to return. In Judaism, that that hasn't happened yet. Ahh, right. There is, I mean you can look it up better you know even. But to the Jews, it is not something even you know most people wouldn't even be able to tell you what the differences are, but that there are certain things that the Messiah is supposed to possess and Jesus to them did not. So I mean, that they're like, but they believe in the same God, and I mean the you know the Ten Commandments, or the Old Testament.

Finally, Michael shared how Judaism was practiced within the family:

I went to Catholic Catholic school my whole life, because of my mom. Uhm, I think my dad didn't really care. My dad you know still practiced Judaism. Uhm, ahh but he was not very observant. Uhm, and so my sister, me and my sister and one brother kinda started to go, we were in Catholic school. Uhm, and I would also go to the synagogue with my dad at times. Uhm, ahh and we'd still always celebrate Passover you know. Our Passover was always interesting though. Uhm and that's a very you know thing, a big thing for our, for the Sabbath, would be lighting candles, breaking you know eating bread which is the hollow bread and a braided bread and then drinking wine. And it's kind of a prayer for all of those. And that's you know the main things when people think of like of like of Shabbat services.

Willie

Willie, who is a member of the Nation of Islam, was originally a member of the Church of God In Christ (COGIC) denomination. He explained his experiences in the mosque and how different it was from the COGIC church that he used to attend with family:

Well, the first, the first thing when I got to the mosque of course being in at the mosque there everyone was black, but it you know everyone is usually black in a Christian church too, with the churches that we attend. So, that wasn't a big deal, but it was, the one thing I that noticed right away is, is uhm, the seating. You had the, the females on one side and the males on the other side. There was a separation of the two. That was the first thing and then there was uhm, one (number one) you would have one person that came that was introductory (first person to speak to the audience), did the prayer, talked about Islam, talked about the Nation of Islam. Then the second person would talk about a few things maybe uhm and then they would bring on the keynote speaker whoever that may be. And so, I just, I just saw the structure and then uhm I was just so shocked that uhm that when you come to a place like this that, that you had to be separated, that two people had to be separated, I had never seen anything like that. And then, so before that is there was a search procedure. So, that way, there was no weapons could be allowed in the place. And I was like well, uhm most, a lot of people, I would say most, but a lot of people have apprehension about being searched, but there was not, there was nothing, it was like search me I don't care, weapons, never did, never will. So, it, I didn't have a hang up. I didn't mind being searched and I felt that it was good, because that way you didn't have to worry about any guns, any weapons in there for the most part, because you were, everyone was searched that came in. So, that was security.

Willie shared what he believed was the difference between the Church of God in Christ and the Nation of Islam:

Well, the major difference was the explanation of God. That was the major difference. Uhm. Because in Islam uhm, we are taught that God is a man. And it made, it made simple, it was simple math and it made it very easy to follow understanding, because the foundation is that if God made a man, based on what we're taught in the book, uhm that He created man in His own image and in His likeness. So, that made sense to me, for us to look, when we look for God, to look for God as a man. These are the words in the, in the, in the bible which is a book that we read also. But that verified what we believed, so we would go through the bible then we

would go through the scriptures and these scriptures are in there, but when I was in the Christian church nobody really put any emphasis on putting it all together.

You know, most people in in the faith of Christianity believe that that uhm as long as you do good here, service others, believe in God and then confess that Jesus is your Savior then you'll go to heaven. But, we believe that that there's a hereafter. There is life, we believe that there is life after we leave here, but no one has been able to tell us what that life is. Cuz the only ones that talk to us are the living, the dead do not talk to us. And then, we also believe in mathematics that once a person dies in the physical sense they do not come back. Now the spirit of God leaves in that person and the spirit of God may bring you another like that one, but that that that uhm flesh is once it's gone, it's gone, it never returns. It goes in the ground. Due to the flesh is what you know we are we are basically from the earth and that's where we have to stay. So, when we live on the earth, we are born on the earth, we live on the earth and when we die we go right back into the earth. So, you know ahh and life is just a matter of ahh, ahh, just everything's basically recycle. I can't think of the proper word right now, but it's ahh, it's a mathematical formula and that's the one thing about Islam, is Islam is mathematics, mathematics is Islam. [If a situation does not lead to a rational answer, it is not possible or it did not happen that way].

That's what we're taught. If it doesn't add up it didn't happen, or it didn't happen that way. So, we ahh we look at things in that in that order. And that ahh, we believe that heaven and hell is two conditions of the mind, because when you speak with people if they're struggling they'll tell you in a minute, "how's everything going?" "I am catching hell." Or, "it's been hell" or "I'm in hell", some form of hell. And, we know that hell is something to where it's it's a state of confusion. The hell that we've been taught in other faiths is that hell is a place that you go when you die. And then they say you're it's you know it's hot, the devil is there and and you burn forever. Nothing burns forever. If it's burning, it's going to go out. So, that's not mathematically possible. That's the way that we believe.

Finally, Willie shared how he practices Islam in his home (within the family):

So, we have to fast during the month of Ramadan and then we have ahh, you have other fasts that your local mosque may do. In the nation we have ahh, which we'll call the Nation of Islam. Ahh. And, we have uhm, we'll have prayer, I mean we'll have ahh fasting like the last Thursday of each month, Thursday through Sunday for like three days. Ramadan usually, it rotates, it's usually, it varies this time of year. It's on the Arabic calendar. I don't have the exact next month that it will be at this time. I haven't really looked it up. And then you know fasting for us would be sunrise to sunset. So that means you can't eat or drink during those hours, during the daylight hours.

And you have to abstain, no food and you work, you work very hard, you strive to have no arguments during that time, ahh no sexual intercourse with your spouse during that time. Let's see, that's basically it. And then of course you have to pray you know 5 to 7 times. Often times during Ramadan you would probably pray a lot more than the 5, than the required prayers. Probably would do additional prayers or longer prayers.

Analysis: Faith within the Family

As I read the excerpts from these interviews, it became clear to me that faith is very important to life experience for these participants. Faith was valued very highly within the structure of these families, and some of them had families who practiced a chosen faith that had been passed through many generations, from one generation to the next. Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000) presented the notion that in order for an individual to act there must be three criteria; interest or intrigue; the individual must become competent or gain some competence about the action under consideration; and finally, the decision must be autonomously made with no external pressure to act.

The excerpts presented here do indicate that each participant met two of the three criteria for action with no question, as all of the participants expressed an interest in their faith of choice. In addition, each of them indicated in some way that they wanted to learn more about their faith, the values associated with it, as well as its importance to the culture of their families. Three of the five participants indicated that they felt that they were "born into the family religion" as if it were an identity. Even in the two instances where the participants left the family's faith tradition, initially, even they were faithful and fervent participants in the family's faith practice, and seemed to have no reluctance to participate. Each of them indicated that they had learned all of the behaviors, prayers, and practices that were necessary to worship within the family's traditional religious environment with ease which meets the second condition of motivation to

action [Competence]. Even those who have since chosen to attend their place of worship without regularity and in some cases, not at all, still believe that they know and have innately held on to the values that are traditional and/or indicative of their faith.

This indicates to me that family, or those who are in your circle of close or intimate friends and acquaintances that you consider as family, can have some influence on how you see the world and your place in it. This mere fact then brings into question whether or not the third criterion posed by Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000) can hold true in this instance [no external influence] as a person makes a faith choice. The notion that one will act autonomously with no external pressure when making a faith choice may come into question if the excerpts are examined closely.

The participants in this study who chose to remain in their family's faith tradition indicated that they had done so without any question. Naomi indicated that she never even questioned being a Baptist, because her grandfather was the founder of her church. So, she simply followed the tradition that had been in place in her family for many generations. Chandan Bala, who admits that she rarely visits the temple, has innately held on to the Hindu [Jain] religious values, practices and traditions since her youth. Michael, who practiced Christianity during his teenage years, and returned to Judaism as an adult, rarely attends the synagogue, but maintains that he is proud to be Jewish and to participate in the Shabbat dinners that are a traditional Jewish custom.

This behavior strongly indicates to me that the external influence of family and the learned traditional practice behaviors can influence the individual decision-making process in some way. However, given that this influence does exist within the family structure, I still maintain that Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000) were correct in the notion that an individual can act in

a self-determined way, and make this decision on their own, in an autonomous fashion as they decide to act. The decision to practice a chosen religion (act) lies within the decision-maker alone. The decision to learn the behaviors, prayers, and practices (rituals) that are indicative of the chosen faith of interest is one that is made only after careful consideration of the acknowledgment by, and the experiences of, the individual who is making the faith choice.

Faith Choice

As mentioned previously, The Self-Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci, 1985, p. 36) stated that:

An issue of choice necessitates a theory built on volition, intentionality or will; not drives. It is a quality of human functioning that involves the experience of choice, an internal perceived locus of causality and giving up control.

Ryan and Deci (1985, p. 39) continued on to say that another condition to making a choice was that any external influences that might interfere with the decision-making process must be deemed by the individual to be informational and there must be no pressure to make the choice. In order for intrinsic motivation to take place, the individual must be in some way interested in the choice and willing to put forth the effort to “seek and conquer optimal challenges.”

The selection of a religious preference and discovering one’s faith can follow a similar pattern. As an individual acknowledges the presence of faith, or an innate interest in a particular religion, the information gathering process can begin. A visit to the place of worship is in order so that one can begin to experience what goes on that place. External influences may be family members, or particular people in the place of worship whose behavior sparks interest; or it may be the worship leader, or a friend or family member who has extended an invitation to visit the

place of worship, but has applied no pressure to attend; so it's just an invitation to come and have the experience. After accepting the invitation, those who are contemplating becoming a part of this religious experience are now interested in the message. Learning the religious values and deciding whether or not this faith choice is a good fit, seems logical now. If this faith choice does fit, now, the individual can begin to identify with the people in the place of worship by being present within the community of believers, sharing and innately believing in the values that they are learning as they acknowledge and further develop their faith.

The participants in this study were asked to define the word "faith" as it pertained to their religious beliefs in an attempt to help others to understand, through their own words, how they identified, discovered, constructed, or mentally processed their unique faith experiences. In the next few pages, each participant will answer this question in their own words, and using excerpts from the interviews, I will present the participant's accounts of how they personally discovered and accepted their faith of choice.

Dechen

Dechen defined faith in the following manner:

It's a belief, it's really a belief to me, I think it's really a belief in a particular set of principles and so my faith is really, but faith for me is also speaks about spirituality kind of in general you know. What is your faith? What is your belief? What do you believe in? So, I would say my you know faith is Buddhism, but it's also that's my belief, those that's my belief system.

Dechen goes on to say that one of her teachers told the Buddhist community,

Don't take anything on faith. Uhm. You listen to the teachings. You uhm use it in your life and see if it works for you. And then ahh that's becomes a part of your practice or whatever.

Dechen summarized what she believes Buddhism has done for her life and how she identifies with the religion:

Oh, well. Well it's shaped everything. It's shaped ahh my thoughts about who I am, who other people are, uhm about uhm religion in general ahh I don't know exactly how to answer the question (laughs), but it's it's been it's like it's like everything to me, because it has provided me with a path, a spiritual path. This is my spiritual path. So, uhm this is you know when I look when I look at other spiritual paths, I'm like nope that's not going to work for me. This is this is what this is for me. This has helped, this has been helpful to me you know. Yeah.

Naomi

Naomi defined faith in the following manner:

Faith, faith is something that I believe in that I know that I can't see, but I can feel in my Heart. And that, Uhm, I can kinda visualize in my mind. That may happen if I feel that I believe in it strongly enough. It can be just that powerful that it can happen. And uhm, so I believe with more so with my heart and soul. That's how I describe faith.

Naomi identified with the Baptist religion as a means of evaluating her life and observing how faith has manifested within it. This interview was conducted just after Naomi's father had passed away:

So, faith in in my church is taught that we're believers and it's through the word of God, you know which is our the bible that we use and we apply that to our lives and in the bible it talks about faith. And it's what you hope for, because you can't see it. So, it's instilled in us I would say pretty much.

Well, uhm sometimes as a human you expect things to happen right right now. And we're like the right now generation. You know we're in the times where things need to happen right now. If it doesn't happen right now then it kinds seems to kinda tarnish your faith a little bit. And when something happens that's beyond your control like when you lose a loved one. Uhm, the bible tells us, in the bible you're just supposed to have faith no matter what and no matter how long it takes for God. And God is going to grant you what he thinks you should have in His own time. So, that's the biblical way. You should always pray and ask God for what you want, and thank Him, not only just ask Him for things, but thank Him for the things that He's done. That's when I started to ahh develop faith, because I saw how no matter how bad our circumstances were. No matter how bad our circumstances were, uhm God would always bring us out. I could see things happening. You know, so that's when I started to experience faith. So, then it's not until you go to the bible study, it's not until you really get into Sunday school, and you really start developing your own relationship with God that you understand why you are in the church. Now, you are not in the church anymore, the church is in you.

Chandan Bala

Chandan Bala defined faith in this way:

So, I guess uhm faith is believing in some like you know ahh ahh something any like you know connection with nature or anything that we are not going I mean fall or like we are now given a stance or a positive power to be there for you. Yeah.

Chandan Bala identified with the Jain faith through her belief in the 24 Deities and the Saints:

Faith. Ok so uhm. Ahh whatever I have heard from my like you know Deities

or the Saints. They always told like uhm do do uhm share yourself completely to the God and let Him guide like you know ahh you throughout your journey. I mean ahh if like you have like you know uhm if you feel strongly that ahh whatever ahh the word that you are praying uhm ahh ahh feeling strongly about Him and then just completely follow his path and he will guide you to the right path and I mean ahh as I told in the previous interviews like you know the ultimate aim is everything about like going ahh there that one spot ahh to liberate ourselves and achieve the eternal liberation. So, it's everything we want like you know, ahh yeah faith in Him, believe in Him so yeah.

Yeah. Ahh I explained last interview as I don't follow or I don't like you know to continuously pray. I might live that path but that is subconsciously, ahh but faith as I told I know I'm I'm not believer of that idol like you know going to the temple and believing the idol that is there, but I do believe in uhm ahh the natural like you know the the I do believe in nature actually, the universe and I know that there is a strong power that is governing and if someone is saying it is Darwin, I don't know what is that? Because I have not explored myself so it is just that I am said that it is shared, but that is not what I have experienced. But I know there is some power in who is guiding the whole universe. And ahh so, I have faith in that. I, I, I totally believe like that whatever you think, whatever you connect yourself, and whatever the strong connection you have with the universe ahh it's what's taking you forward like you know.

Michael

Michael defined faith as:

Hmm, ahh, I would define it as how you believe in something, uhm, whatever that might be and uhm, and I, I it's different from religion. Uhm, but I guess I would define it as having, believing in something greater. Uhm, I don't know, that's how I would define it I guess.

Michael is the participant who sometimes had difficulty believing in the existence of God (earlier on page 98), but he definitely identifies himself as Jewish (ethnicity), and often participates in the Jewish tradition of Passover for example. Michael expressed his thoughts about his Jewish heritage and how he believed that one's level of observance could determine the degree to which others in the Jewish community view participation/belief in Judaism. Finally, Michael explained what he meant when he said that he doesn't believe in God sometimes:

I am solidly Jewish. I mean, you know I am born into it in a way. It's I you know it's it is you know uhm that my lineage can be traced back to many centuries to potential, the fact that if you DNA test my blood it's gonna show that I'm Jewish. Just like you know somebody can show that they are from a certain area of the world. It would show that I'm Jewish, but Catholic probably wouldn't be tested, they could say oh, you're Irish. You know I'm not saying that that is the biggest difference, but ahh you know, uhm you know I think, ahh so I am I am solidly Jewish. What I believe is you know regardless if I say that I don't believe in God, I'm still Jewish.

I mean, well I think it's a level of observance. I mean I don't think it's being fully Jewish or not being fully Jewish, you know it's your level of observance. I think it's the best way to look at it. Uhm ahh and I think there's a you know a big part of me believes that there is nothing else out there. Ahh. It's an opinion, but I mean for me part of me does believe you know that even if I do feel there's really nothing else out there you know we die and that's it. I think it's a lot of unknown. Which I think there's always unknown. There's not really to say that there is somebody, you know another something else greater than us. And, sometimes I think that no, that we are, that there is nothing else greater than us and that you know this is this is it. I think it's one of those, you know the difficulty of science versus religion. My view is that humans evolved from from other species ahh, that that was part of God's plan. But the other part of me says, you know, no, it is just evolution, there is no God. You know, but, you know, that is something that I will probably wrestle with most you know most of my life. I think it just depends on how you live your life and what kind of person you are regardless of your beliefs in in a higher power.

Willie

Willie defined faith in the following manner:

Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence unseen. It means that you, to have faith is that you just basically believe that something is going to happen and you may not have all the evidence available to you so you have to just kind of lean on, on something internally that you believe is going to happen at a given period of time. So it's it's like a lot of times it's based in the absence of knowledge of knowing about it, but you still believe it's going to happen for you usually in your favor.

Willie talked about his experience and what influenced him to join the Nation of Islam:

Ok. Well, I've been, I've been, I've been going out since '85. Ahh, so, what's that? 30 years? Ahh, it'll be ahh, and I joined in '88. I made, I actually made the commitment to be in June of '88. 1988. Yeah. That's three years. The three year gap I was, I was making excuses as to not uhm not joining, because what I heard was truthful, but I couldn't believe it. I just couldn't believe that this knowledge was out here, because I had a, I had a Christian foundation in a sanctified church. And so, I was like, I was like I would had an allegiance to that and of course, allegiance with my family and and this was something new.

And when you talk about you know joining the ahh mosque or being a Muslim, back then it was really, it was really numbers were very small. So, you would be, you would have to be out there on ahh you know, pretty much on an island. And in our community I grew up in, the first person that that decided to be a Muslim that we knew of was my friend Roger. And so, you know by us being very, very close friends, he went and then I, I went. He joined right away and I was coaching basketball and at that particular time, I couldn't make the commitment, because I knew I was going out of town and so, I was like, "no, I can't join this yet, because I won't be able to be fully committed. I didn't know that I could still join and still perform the duties that I had, but it was it was kind of difficult, so I made a choice to study more, wait and uhm and uhm join later. And so, I was going out, I went to a lot of the meetings. I was doing a lot and finally it hit me. One brother told me he say he told us that he say "Well, I'mma say this to all of you that are that are on the fence about coming into the Nation of Islam. He said "this is where it is." He said "If you're dirty. If you play outside all day and you're dirty, he say the only way that you can get cleaned up is you gotta jump in the tub and start scrubbing." So, I made all these excuses. I was like well, I still drink a little, I might go out and get a few drinks, I never was a heavy drinker, but I might get a mixed drink at the parties and of course, you know drink is not allowed. So then, I was uhm uhm, the other thing was I wasn't married and I knew I would have sex without being married, so, that was another hang up. So, I was like naw I can't do this yet. So, I was constantly making excuses. But then once he said that that uhm, everybody in here we all struggling with something, so we all have not ahh fully, we're not sinless, so we all have things that we do. So, he said that the best thing to do is come in and get with people who are trying to do, trying to live upright, so he was like "just get in the mosque, come on into the and join the Nation and start scrubbing." And and, once he said that, then I had no more excuses. Well, one of the things I saw was ahh of course lack for love, lack of love for self and kind. So, it was more so when I got there and they started talking about ahh ahh self-improvement, started talking about black unity, and talking about what we need to do for our community, that's what I, that's what kinda, that's what really ahh set it apart. Because they had ahh an economic plan, a blue print.

Analysis: Faith Choice

The excerpts revealed that each participant had given considerable thought to their unique definition of the word “faith”. Equally, as notable, each of them expressed the importance of the value of their faith choices and how it was very important to maintain these values over their entire life and over the lives of generations to come. Each participant was very proud to be a member of their religion and/or chosen faith, whether they chose it because the family practiced it, or whether they opted to make a different faith choice. Either way, the faith choice once made was firm and the participants seemed to envision the faith choice as an innate part of them. As Naomi stated, “you’re no longer in the church, but the church is in you.”

The faith choice, in some instances, was influenced to some extent by family or close friends, but it seemed that their decision to choose a faith was not only based on this influence alone. It seemed that each of them told a story about how they gained knowledge and competency about their faith choices; how they were motivated to become a member of the faith by something or someone that was either intriguing or very interesting to them from the very beginning. As a result of their understanding of the faith and its values, the meanings of these learned faith values, and the stories and lessons that seemed to resonate within their own life experiences, allowed them to begin the process of acknowledging their faith and internalizing these values and beliefs in their own minds, hearts, and souls. They were able now to become one with the faith, or self-identify with it. As Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000) posited, each participant was able to obtain knowledge about and interest in the faith of choice. After careful consideration of each unique life experience and acknowledgment of a connection between these experiences and a faith of choice, each participant was then self-determined to make the decision [faith choice], but in an autonomous manner, and on their own accord.

I am presenting a condensed version of the participant's faith definitions for further analysis. I would like to reiterate that each participant was asked to define the meaning of the word "faith" as they understood it. This question was posed to each participant in an attempt to understand what each participant believed faith to be and how he/she believed it manifested within their lives as individuals. Finally, I believe that each faith definition was constructed by each participant based upon their unique perceptions/constructions of their personal lives and religious experiences.

- Dechen

It's a belief, it's really a belief to me, I think it's really a belief in a particular set of principles, but faith for me is also speaks about spirituality kind of in general you know.

- Naomi

Faith, faith is something that I believe in that I know that I can't see, but I can feel in my heart. And uhm, so I believe with more so, with my heart and soul.

- Chandan Bala

So, I guess uhm faith is believing in some like you know ahh ahh something any like you know connection with nature or anything that we are not going I mean fall or like we are now given a stance or a positive power to be there for you.

- Michael

I would define it as how you believe in something, uhm, whatever that might be and uhm, and I, I it's different from religion. Uhm, but I guess I would define it as having, believing in something greater.

- Willie

Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence unseen.

It means that you, to have faith is that you just basically believe that something is going to happen and you may not have all the evidence available to you so you have to just kind of lean on, on something internally that you believe is going to happen at a given period of time.

My understanding, from the definitions provided by the participants, is that most of them, with the exception of Dechen (does not believe that there is a God), and Michael (who has a struggle believing in God) believe that faith is an inner belief, or innate or deep sense of knowing that a higher power exists. This higher power, according to three of the five participants, is a helper, a leader, and a guide through life experiences. But, even though Dechen does not believe in the existence of God, she does believe however, that one's beliefs and principles can provide guidance through spiritual journeys. In addition, Michael, although he struggles with belief in God, provided a definition that alludes to the presence of a higher power too. I admit that even I found his definition surprising, because he seemed to go back and forth as to whether he believed in the existence of God, but I believe too that his definition of faith could have been influenced by his early exposure to the practices of Catholicism during his teenage years.

In essence, I learned that these definitions, as unique as they are, all seem to indicate that each definition was constructed out of each individual life and religious experience, and was based upon an inner belief in what the word meant personally for each of them. This relationship with a higher power, if any existed for the individual, was believed to be guiding many, if not all, life decisions and experiences. In addition, for three of the five participants, these definitions express a strong belief that faith development also involves relinquishing control to a higher power, or deity, in an attempt to obtain needed or sought after guidance, and that this guidance could be obtained from the higher power through continuous prayer and meditation.

Finally, as mentioned in the previous section of the theme: Faith within the Family, faith, as described by the participants, seemed to be a very important part of living. Participant definitions confirm that each of them believe that prayer to a higher power, or deity works and is an important element in life. It is also apparent that Senge (2004) and his colleagues were correct in their notion that there is a journey that we take through life that encourages us, if we are willing, to examine our past and present experiences (Sensing), and piques our interest so much so that we are inspired to acknowledge that a higher power exists that will lead us and guide us through our life experiences (Presencing). Our willingness to accept first the presence of faith, then the values and practices associated with it, ultimately helps us to decide without question upon the faith that we will practice.

Through their stories, the participants confirmed how each of them decided upon their faith of choice. And, it did not seem to matter whether the participant made the faith choice based upon intrigue or interest, or whether or not he/she became interested in it by means of family tradition, or by an invitation from close friends or acquaintances. What mattered most was that the decision was ultimately made by the individual, of their own volition, and was based upon the participant's acknowledgment of the need for and the presence of faith in their lives, and/or an innate knowing that the faith of choice would in some way lead them to find their life's purpose.

Faith in Academics and Careers

Covey (2004, p. 348) wrote about “Spiritual Intelligence” or a person’s ability to find their “voice” or “calling”. He stated that an individual could find his/her “voice or calling” by letting go of control, by discovering life’s meaning and purpose by aligning his/her work with the talents that one possesses, and finally, by giving these gift(s) back to society. He also stated that once one finds a “voice”, it must also be used to inspire others to find a “voice” too. This section entitled Faith in Academics and Careers portrays each participant’s pursuit of a “calling” or a “voice” as a possible means of determining whether or not faith had any influence in the academic or career decisions of the participants. Each participant will describe through the interview excerpts how they discovered what they believed to be their “calling” or “voice” through their academic or career pursuits.

Dechen

Dechen explained that her “calling” was nursing because she felt that she was to help others, especially her brother who was cognitively disabled when she was younger and presently, her ailing mother-in-law and her husband who is paraplegic. She also described how she first became interested in the sciences as a high school student and later in college:

I started studying sciences like biology and chemistry at that school and there’s a little Asian nun, Chinese nun who taught, I forget her name, but anyway. Uhm, so I really, really liked that.

Dechen also described her interest as it developed in college:

I read a book uhm my freshman year called *Psychology and Religion*, I forget who wrote it. Uhm, and I was just fascinated by this whole idea of Psychology which I had never really read much about before. And uhm so uhm, I changed my major to Psychology and uhm and minored in

philosophy. That was I feel, I feel like that was the Jesuit mistake was to like you know introduce me to Philosophy, because that started me thinking about things as opposed to up to this point you know everything that was told to me I had believed it. And I didn't question. And uhm I was you know very ahh, I was very spiritual being and then when the Philosophy and the Science came together it was I found it, it was just like really very interesting to me.

It also, you know, it kind of went along with the whole Christian thing of ahh helping people and there was a self-sacrificing piece there that that that ahh which later I decided wasn't that healthy. So, so I went to nursing school and uhm I really liked uhm pediatrics and so my first job out of nursing school was in the infant-toddler unit. I was there for three years. And then I moved to the open heart surgical unit, because I wanted to be a real nurse and work in an intensive care unit. And ahh so that's what I did. Then ahh a lot of people that I was working with, we were kind of all thinking the same thing, we wanted to go to graduate school. And, I was very interested, I you know had this undergraduate degree in Psych, I was very interested in Psych and I started to get my master in psychiatric nursing. Uhm, I really felt that ahh these patients that I was taking care Of. No one was really addressing their psychological needs you know. And, they were just kind of like there and not like we had a lot of opportunities, but sometimes we did.

Finally, Dechen revealed how she constructed, or mentally processed her choice to become a nurse and how she believed that this decision aligned with Buddhism, her faith of choice since the year 1996:

Well, I think because you know nursing helping is really helping other people. And so, I think from the beginning you know I was that was what I wanted to do. Now, also ahh thinking about that what was open to women at that time. Things have changed tremendously since the late 60's, but you know when you were a women in the late 60's a lot of women were going into teaching and nursing and I certainly had uhm knew people in my community who were women, who were nurses. So, you know there were who were moms of children you know friends of mine in elementary school. So, I think that affected me too. And, my grandmother had been ahh like an LPN, like a nurse ok and took care of people.

And so, I had that and I was kind of like, but also it fit in well you know with my view of myself and the world in terms of you know being a caretaker, helping people and whatever you know. And it's still I mean Buddhism doesn't change that that's still, in fact uhm in Buddhism there's a saying about called the Dharma. The teachings are the Dharma and then Buddhists said that Dharma is the medicine. And the Sun God, and that's the community of people, are the nurses and uhm the Buddha is like the doctor you know who prescribes the medicine.

Naomi

Naomi described how she first had aspirations to be a dancer and then a nurse. She worked in various positions starting in retail and then in university offices such as the Registrar's Office and presently she works as an Assistant Director of Advising also at a university. She explained how she believed faith played a part in her education and career:

My dream job was I wanted to be a professional dancer, but of course my mother said "No" to that because that was just too deep and nobody does that. So, I couldn't be get the permit, I couldn't be the professional dancer I wanted to be. So, I wanted to be a nurse (laughs) ha but because of my fears that changed (laughed) ha ha ha, I couldn't be a nurse. I was too afraid of blood and doctors. So, I said ok, I like, love to help people. I knew that I wanted to help people. Because I am a helpful person and I love people, so I knew that I wanted to do that. And, I could talk. So put those two together. I figure I could tell people what to do very well having the experience of bossing siblings my entire life. So, having said that, this is was the perfect job. I love my job you know and I learn so much from students. And, that's what I really take away with uhm with advising. Not only am I teaching, I'm learning. And, you learn something every day. You should learn something every day. Something every day. I honestly believe that.

Well, given the ahh subject of what this is about, about faith and ahh how my faith plays a part in my educational career and my job. Uhm, I could say that growing up I am, was a strong believer in in faith and I, one of my favorite ahh

scriptures is Hebrews 11 and 1 that “Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen, so just looking, listening to that, we know we can’t see faith and we really can’t feel faith, but we can believe in faith and just have it and just watch it happen. It’s just one of those things that happen, you know it’s just, it’s nothing that you can touch, but just know that if you have it, you can get it. And then, one of my favorite quotes, I wrote it down from ahh Dr. Martin Luther King, it’s “Faith is taking the first step even when you can’t see the whole staircase.” So, until you make that first climb, ahh, until you believe that you can, you can look at the stairs all day long, but if you never step up, you’ll never know what’s at the top waiting on you. So, that’s how I visualize faith, because when I decided to take on, the higher up you go in the professional ladder, it’s really hard and lonely at the top in a sense and the higher you go up, the more the demands, the more people you come across that’s going to try to break you down or challenge you or may not see eye-to-eye with what you believe in.

Uhm, but you have to be strong enough in your faith to believe that the man upstairs is the one who has the upper hand and He’s the one that controls all of these people below, so I cannot let them persuade me from my faith and what I believe in and I have to strongly believe in myself. And, I prayed all the time. And, just asked God, well ok, if I can’t do a certain thing well, help me to do it. Help me to become a better public speaker. Help me to, to lead a meeting. Help me to be a better leader and I just saw those things miraculously happen. So, scripture reading and anything devotional that I can find, any devotional music I can listen to, to keep me uplifted and to keep, keep the, the devil out as we say (laugh). So, I really believe that it’s important and it does play a part in your climb to education, your, in anything you do, any walk of life. Everybody should have a, some type of spiritual foundation if they want to ahh make it in this world. So, that is ahh, my spiel.

Chandan Bala

Since Chandan Bala is a current student who is pursuing a master of communication technology degree, the excerpts taken from her interviews will focus on her academic experiences and her future employment desires since she is not yet employed. In India, she worked for two years as an Engineering teacher, but has elected to stop working in order to focus

on her studies. Earlier, she spoke about nature guiding her to her present academic pursuit in computers because she did not perform well on her 12th grade exams in India. Chandan Bala mentioned that she often thinks about her purpose in life and ponders about her future, but she did not believe that the decisions that she made were based solely on her religion. First, she explained what she meant when she said that nature had placed her in the computer field:

So, I mean ahh I believe in like you know ahh many of the times I just think like why I'm here? Or, what good can be ahh come after this? But, or sometimes I haven't worked for something and still I have received back like you know ahh in a form of success or like whatever. So, ahh sometimes I just believe that there is some fate like you know ahh that is helping me ahh I mean it's not due to my hard work there is some kind of pull that is helping me to reach there. So, yeah. I mean ahh that year I feel I was so down and I had only that option too. Because I, ok so it was 100% paid, but yeah I was so sure that I don't want to do this, this, this, this, this. So, the only option and I know I didn't want to go into computers, but it wasn't like strong that I don't want to go go like you know it was like given a chance ahh ahh yeah maybe, like it was like that ahh because I hadn't learned that data or that world of computers. So, I said ok I can try and then because I know like I don't want to do this, this, this, this, this,

I was ok then I can try this. So, it was like that, but I mean then now I can see like it it it turned out best for me (laughs). So yeah, I mean, ahh I, I wanted to go into like medical stream, but then it required very much higher grade points. But then, now as I considered myself as a doctor, I know I can't see like an even a stitch of like ahh someone is stitching to another person, I can't see that like I am so sensitive in that way like ahh so I guess this is what turned out best for me and yeah. So, it was like I hadn't work towards it, but I got it and now I am happy that I am in this world so yeah, it's like that.

I ask basically frequently to me, "Is this something that I am born to do like you know?" Ahh, ahh my nature or the person that I am I like to be financially independent like you know. Ahh. It's not because, it's good to have that like you know, I like to be financially independent ahh whether I use that money or not that is irrespective of what I like. And ahh second I told, as I told I like to give back to the society or to do something that my soul satisfies. Ahh. I don't know why but since

my childhood I have that like you know to do something for people. I don't know why, but this has to be independent financially (her goal to help others become financially independent), to be a career-oriented woman (help women be career-oriented) and then to do something for people. These are the three basic then I'm I'm, yeah so these are the reasons that are actually guiding my career, so because of that I was, I took engineering because I know like I would be working like you know, I will get a good job and I would be financially independent.

Chandan Bala was asked about her faith and the use of prayer in the Hindu [Jain] religious practice and while making important life decisions. She responded by describing the mental process that she worked through in order to make her life decisions and how her faith helped her when she grieved the loss of her mother in her teenage years:

Yeah, so yeah. I do pray when I start a new thing or when I get something, but it is not because of it's it's just the way of my thanks to the nature or law. But, it's not like ahh it's like ahh partial like you know it's not because ahh I believe so strongly it's just the way I'm happy to it from. I, I always like to have that feeling of gratefulness. So, I mean that is a mixture of, I'm not totally, I cannot say that I'm, all of my decisions are 100% based on religion, but I cannot ignore that they are not like you know? I, I think like for this moment, but it's not ahh I know like the person, I can understand like what you are asking, I have known people who take decisions based on their religious beliefs and all, yeah but I just take the value, I keep, I try to keep that in me, but none of my decisions have been thoroughly based on that.

Yeah. So, ahh uhm I know some people ahh who go whenever they have the difficulties like you know in their lives. They go to the temple and they try start praying to God. I don't have fear in that like you know. I just don't visit God whenever I'm low. I do it at other times. Uhm, uhm seriously so I mean I lost my mother when I was ahh 16, 17. At that time I just ahh use that platform to talk with my mom ahh through my God. Like you know I used to ahh go to the temple and talk to my mom and ahh ahh through the God I know she might be listening. But I mean now now I am a big girl, I know we can say that. I don't go to that is the reason like you know, I don't go to these to sit there just to uhm... that is a constant ahh whenever I get there, whenever ahh I get a day or time or like whenever I'm travelling then during the difficult parts, I connect with myself ahh I just, ahh it's like it's whenever I go into the temple I go with the

intention I am just ahh to just keep myself like you know ahh ahh clearer within whenever I only, only that intention.

Michael

Michael is a student who is currently pursuing a law degree at a university in the Midwest. He has worked internships and studied abroad, but is not presently working so that he can focus solely on his studies. For this reason, the excerpts presented from his interviews will focus mostly on his academic pursuits. Michael, during the first interview, spoke in detail about his aspiration of joining the military as a career after he completed law school. Also in the first interview, as previously mentioned, he indicated that sometimes he does not believe in God and that prayer “really does nothing for him”. However, by the third interview, it seemed that he began to consider the notion that faith may have played a part in his decision to pursue a career in public service through his pursuit of a law school education:

So, I'm a student. Uhm ahh, I worked, I, I, I was abroad for two years between college and law school. Uhm, where I ahh was ahh assistant teacher in a foreign language, just trying to learn, learn the language basically. That's why I went over there. Uhm, ahh it was also kinda to take a break from school. Ahh, and now I'm a law student, so you know I found, I found jobs kinda part-time jobs while I've, while I've you know been in school and in Law, worked on internships. Uhm, as of now I, I plan to do ahh practice law ahh in the military, to start my career in the military. So, uhm it's call the JAG corps. I don't know if you ever? It's uhm, people, the most familiar people people is the Tom Cruise movie where he and Jack Nicholson where he says “you can't handle the truth!” He's a military lawyer. Uhm, that's Navy. That's a little bit different. And, you're in the military, but I mean you do a number of things, not just criminal, but the administrative law you'll do, and then contracts, you help soldiers with their own personal ahh issues you know landlord issues and things like that when they don't, you know they can't afford an attorney.

Uhm, I don't exactly know where that came from. I've always

been interested you know in potentially serving in the military in one capacity. Uhm. I always wanted to work in the field as ahh public servant. I mean, public service is very wide, wide-ranging. Ahh, some people you know could, would not consider military life public service, but I, I consider government work public service. I mean, you know what what exactly I've said is that I want to focus in international law a little bit in in law school. And uhm there is a component to that in the JAG corps. It's not you know, I may never actually practice you know ahh I'm, this is a four-year commitment [enlisting in the military] and as of now I only plan to do four years of full-time and then look for some other job. Uhm, it's a great place to start your career.

Sure. I mean I guess you know, I don't know if I, it's hard to say if it's faith or if it's just that I feel that it's right. But those two can I think ahh be the same, one in the same. You know I mean if I choose not to do something or to do something it might be because you know I want to work in public service you know and so I think helping others is important regardless of faith, but that also aligns with faith as well. Ahh you know and so for me it's something that you know I, I do things I guess whether or not I was inspired by faith, I don't know, but uhm you know I, I do things that are probably very, I hope to be very much along the same lines.

Michael was then asked how he knew public service was what he should pursue and what made him come to this decision. He spoke about why public service is important to him:

Uhm, I think that you know for me public service is important. I want to work in public service which is a very broad area. Uhm, I'd like to start my public service career in the military. That being, you know, yes, there's a level of wanting to serve my country. There's a level of I do hope I am doing some good ahh you know.

Uhm. You know I can't say if it's faith or God you know. Uhm, I think it's you know I like the feeling of helping others. Uhm, and yes, you could argue you know that being a lawyer in the military is not helping anybody, but I disagree with that. Uhm, and I think you know everybody plays a piece in something and I like to think that I'm you know and for whatever time that I'm playing a piece in something that is helping others. Ahh, it's just a feeling inside of, I like knowing that I'm doing something that is helping others.

It's it's really hard, because I don't need any more education than

that. Uhm, and that does make it hard, but at the same time I, I know deep down that I won't be completely satisfied. And yes, I want money and I don't have to worry about money, but uhm, ahh I know I wouldn't be satisfied in a career that makes me unhappy and I think not working public service ahh for an extended period of time at least would make me pretty unhappy. And, I think I like the feeling of helping others. Uhm, but I think you know being able to get experience you know is something that I would like and more personal and even would make me want to stay in public service because I think it's something that you know I, I know is important.

Willie

Willie pursued and obtained a bachelor degree in accounting and a master degree in physical education. He worked as a physical education teacher at the elementary and high school levels and he is currently coaching youth who want to learn to play the game of basketball. Willie now aspires to be a coach. Although he doesn't mention praying before academic or career decisions specifically in his narrative, he does allude to the fact that his religion requires that he pray before making important decisions. Willie has indicated that being a member of the Nation of Islam requires that you pray five times before making important decisions. This could lead one to believe that his career aspiration to be a coach, or in the coaching environment for over 20 years, may have required that he pray before making the decision to leave basketball as a player to launch a coaching career. He described his aspiration to become a basketball coach and the role that his Muslim faith played in making this important life decision:

Well, I see myself ahh working ahh in the area of education, ahh either teaching ahh or coach, coaching practically both. I've taught and coached for years, for over 20 years. So, I'm aspiring to continue teaching and coaching uhm, but I would like to do it at the college level. And at the college level, because you have a lot more free, freedom and the pay is much better. It's less responsibility, because it's more accountability on the young men, on the student athlete than it is in high school. And the, at the high school level, you to basically to make, earn a decent living,

you have to do both. And, that's really two jobs. Cuz, when you're working with high school students, it's a lot of time that you put in dealing with their personal issues, especially if you work in the inner cities, like I did, some of the, some of the under-privileged schools where it was oftentimes they would miss school, because you know ahh just didn't have the money for transportation or you know or a lot of different issues. So, it's, it's a lot tougher at that level. So, I would aspire to be back at the college level. And then that would, possibly professional, but mainly college, college was the best. I enjoyed college, coaching college ahh more so than any level.

Ahh. It (faith) has a very uhm important ahh meaning and it's usually a process. Usually before any big decisions, I usually pray and ahh I seek assistance through patience and prayer ahh before I make that decision. Ahh, so usually if it's a major decision, and I have time, I'll usually pray, study, talk with ahh key family members, and then you know and get input and then make a decision from there. Because in our religion we're taught ahh to think 5 times or to pray. To let God come into your thoughts so you just won't make a decision based on emotions. Ahh so we try and practice to rise above emotions into the thinking of God. And we believe that if God made man in his own image then that means that before we make rash decisions, we should consider him. Because we're taught that if he created the man then that means he created the brain that we have. So, we should always go back to our source, which is the originator, which is God. So, we try and connect with the source in all the major decisions. It's usually ahh, it, some people would say it's not God it's just the fact that you studied, and you evaluated the situation. You came up with the best conclusion. But, we believe that ahh through God, you will make that best decision, ahh you'll make a better decision, or a wise decision.

Analysis: Faith in Academics and Careers

The theme, Faith in Academics and Careers, is most important to this research exploration because it tells us what the research actually means and what value it adds to current research. In other words, why does it matter? It matters, because it allowed for the exploration of the possibility that faith may in some way influence one's academic or career choices. In addition, it allowed me (the researcher), as well as the reader, to attempt to understand each participant's perception of why they chose the academic or career aspiration that they were pursuing, or planned to pursue in the future. It also revealed the reasons why each participant believed that they had chosen their specific academic or career path. It was important to

understand whether or not faith had any influence on their decision-making processes, or not.

The participants also revealed if they had discovered their unique “calling”, or “gift”, and if this discovery could in some way be perceived as a means of satisfying their search for meaning and purpose in their lives. In other words, this theme revealed the possibility that there may be a relationship between their perceptions of what it meant to have faith, and whether or not their faith beliefs, had in any way influenced their present or future academic and/or career choices.

The participants told their faith stories as they believed them to occur, described how they believed that they had discovered their “gifts”, and how they planned to share their gift with others within society. Each participant, after a thorough explanation of how the Theory of the “U” would be examined in this study, offered to tell the researcher where they would place themselves on the path of the “U”, or to explain how he/she believed that each had traveled from Sensing to Presencing to Realizing, from faith acknowledgement to submission to, or acceptance of, guidance from a higher power to selfless service to others.

The participants revealed how they used their faith, if they did at all, to make decisions regarding academics and career choice. The Buddhist (Dechen), the Christian (Naomi) and the Muslim (Willie) either prayed or meditated before making important life decisions. They believed too that their faith meant everything to them in life. The Jewish participant (Michael) and the Hindu [Jain] participant (Chanda Bala), however, did not believe that prayer before making decisions was a necessity, but neither of them could deny that their religion may have had some influence on their academic/career choices.

Finally, this theme was of great importance to this research because I learned that others do practice their faith in a similar fashion as I do to make important life decisions. I learned also, that life is a journey. It’s a different journey for each of us; a journey that inspires or motivates

us to examine and re-examine our lives and the paths that we take and the decisions that we make, as we progress through our individual life experiences, whether those experiences are bad or good (challenges and successes). These life experiences however, help us to discover our “gifts”, develop our life plans, shape how we see the world, and decide whether or not we want to share our gifts with others. This study focused on individuals in academia because I wanted to know if faith had played any role in the academic and/or career decisions for these participants. I also wanted to know whether or not they had discovered their “gifts”, how they found them, and if they planned to use them as a means of giving back to society in a same way that I had envisioned sharing my gift. I believe too, based upon the findings from these five participants, that through our life experiences (disappointments, challenges, successes, and failures), we do find our “gift”, but only if we are looking for it, or are in some way acknowledging, or tapping into our inner belief systems and that still small voice (faith), that tells us that this is our “gift” and it is something that we are good at, will satisfy a need in the world, and that it should be fully exploited and willingly shared with others.

Faith in Service to Others

This section, Faith as Service to Others, attempted to explore how each participant mentally processed his/her own faith development and how each individual believed that he/she could give their talents or gifts in service to others in society. Through the lens of the Theory of the “U” (Appendix C) as presented by Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers (2004) who posited that as individuals go through life they move through three essential phases from Sensing to Presencing to Realizing in the shape of a “U. This section will focus specifically on the Realizing Phase (third phase) as I envisioned phases 1 and 2 as being explained by The Self-Determination Theory posited by Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000). In the Realizing Phase of the

Theory of the “U”, as posited by Senge and his colleagues (2004), an individual will act in a manner that compels him/her to ultimately give back to society and/or to the community at large because it seems at the time the “right” thing to do. The individual will share his/her gift in a selfless manner, putting the needs of others before his/her own.

I believe that one can be motivated or inspired in much the same way to acknowledge or to choose a religious faith/religious denomination. Faith development may require a very similar process. As an individual considers a faith choice, he/she may also be encouraged to consider experiences of the past as well as thoughts about present and future possibilities or ways in which one can share “gifts” or talents in a meaningful and purposeful way. This section, using excerpts from the participant interviews, gave the participants an opportunity to describe, in their own words, the life experiences that may have influenced the discovery of their specific “gifts”.

As I described this research study to the participants, I also explained the Theory of the “U” and what it meant within the context of this research. Each participant freely began to talk about their journey along the “U” and where they would position themselves at present in their life’s journey. Finally, each of the participants talked about how they planned to share their perceived “gift(s)” with others as the Realizing phase speaks to this form of action as an individual reaches this phase.

Dechen

Dechen stated that nursing was what she was meant to do, as she said it, she “had an aptitude for it”. She believed that being a Buddhist has helped her to develop the patience and compassion that was needed for her to remain in the nursing field for all these years. She talked about the need to have the “gift” of patience and compassion to be a nurse and to care for people who are ill. At present, she has joined a lay chaplain program, a program that will last for two

years. In this program she will learn to understand the needs of patients who are in hospice care. She talked about the values that Buddhism has taught her and the importance of incorporating these values in what she is learning in the lay chaplaincy program. She also talked about what she is learning and how it is helping her to cope with the challenges that she faces daily as she cares for her husband and mother-in-law at home as well as her other patients who are in need of hospice care. Finally, after a brief discussion about the Theory of the “U”, she talked about where she would place herself on the “U” and gave some final thoughts on giving back to society or community at large:

So they just started a lay chaplaincy program uhm and I started that. I was accepted and started that in the winter, at the winter retreat, end of January and ahh that’s going to go for two years. And then ahh and then that led me to the training program at uhm hospice, so now I’m seeing, ahh a volunteer hospice you know seeing people in the hospice.

So then ahh you reflect on your qualities as a student ok? What are you here for? What do you want? That kind of thing. Then it’s then it talks about then it starts talking about, ahh this is in terms of uhm understanding how to uhm like do the practice; create a sacred environment; position body and mind; This is about doing the practice. And so then in terms of thinking about uhm what to meditate on, human life, embrace human life. Think about what a precious opportunity this is. Understand its value. Appreciate its rarity. Think about death. Oh oh! That’s coming! When is that gonna come? Who knows? We don’t know that. Everything is impermanent. We don’t know when that’s gonna happen. Realize that death’s time is uncertain. What happens a after death? It’s all about getting rid of the negative stuff you do and increasing the positive stuff you do. Then you take refuge. I’m gonna ok, I’ve got all of this stuff and I’m going to follow this path. You know what I’m saying? Then they talk about positive actions bring positive results and negative actions bring negative consequences. Recognize suffering. What’s the cause of suffering? And to seek with ration. And then you talk about everything’s empty and there’s this there’s this ahh concept in Buddhism that we call emptiness. In English we call it emptiness. And then sometimes they call it wisdom. Uhm and it’s this whole idea that nothing exists inherently, meaning everything is going to change.

Ok. So, we also, we change, we're changing all the time. They say that every so many years all of your cells change, you know because they are all dividing and all dying and that kind of stuff uhm anyway. That's what they're talking about this emptiness. Emptiness is a huge, you cannot get enlightened without understanding this. Ok? And they say enlightenment is like having, going in two ways, one is emptiness, wisdom and one is compassion. I mean you have to have compassion too, because you have to once you get this wisdom what are you going to do? You have to ahh use it to the benefit of everyone including yourself. And wish that everyone be free from the suffering. You expand your scope. You uhm cherish others. You foster love. You ripen your compassion. You commit wholeheartedly to aspire toward enlightenment. And ahh this great mind, this Bodhi mind, the mind of compassion. You perfect generosity, this is morality or ahh morality, patience, and this is more patience like, this is not like waiting for something, this is like not being angry, not being hateful. Then you persevere then you this is the path of accumulation. So now you have, this is all the positive stuff, the positive stuff you are accumulating merit. Then you're using your concentration, you're using concentration during this whole piece, but now you're perfecting it. Then that completes what they call the path of action. You're engaging wisdom, you are perfecting wisdom, now this is completing the path of seeing. And uhm, holding your vows of commitment, then there is this generation of completion stage. Reach the path of believing and the ultimate union of wisdom and compassion. That's it in a nut shell (laughs).

Dechen realizes that the Buddhist and lay chaplain training has helped her as she continues to care for her husband who is paraplegic and her mother-in-law who is ill too:

Uhm I have at home I have tremendous ahh challenges, my husband is quadriplegic. And we had to sell our house and uhm he's a psychiatrist, he's working very part time, but he has a full-time, he has a caregiver. Actually more than a full a full-time caregiver meaning you know like 8 hours a day or something, but he has somebody who has to come in at night. I have my two boys who are 23 and 25 uhm. We live with his mother in their house, because we had to sell our house. So, uhm his mom's been really sick. Uhm. We've tremendous bills because of his uhm quadriplegia, even though he's on disability. This happened in 2008. So, a lot of stuff to think about you know. Like ahh it can be kind of overwhelming so sometimes I just kind of hang out in school nursing and ok this is I can do this, you know. I know how to do this as opposed to doing something else you know. We'll see what happens. I don't know what's gonna happen.

Ok. Ok. So, the thing that's driving that is that uhm I'm pretty committed to the Tibetan Buddhist thing. And uhm and I know that uhm I'm 65. I don't know how long I'm gonna live. And it's kind of like well if you're gonna do it, you better do it now because you're not going to be around forever. And uhm if you you know this may be the only opportunity that you have. And in it's interesting this whole Chaplaincy thing right now cuz we just started it, getting into this hospice thing. And that's one of the that's one of the meditations, you know face the inevitability of death, realize death's time is uncertain, on one hand wonder what happens after death. Right now, it's it's all about death, and it's not, and at home there's a lot about death going on there too. There's a lot of impermanence and that kind of thing. So uhm and it's the gift that keeps on giving (laughs). You know what I'm saying (laughs)? So, you know things are just. You know I you know it's like they're very sick, both of them are on oxygen at night. Uhm. His mom was just in the hospital. You know so, I feel like right now I'm just in this huge premeditation about death and life and uhm the preciousness of human life. So, that's what I'm doing (laughs).

Well, I'm still at the bottom of it. (laughs) I'm still at the bottom of the "U". Ok. So, I call it a ladder. But when you are on this ladder, you're doing stuff, you're doing all sorts of this stuff all at the same time. Ok, so ahh so cuz a lot of this is learning stuff, so I don't know if I could you know because I'd really like to say that I have committed wholeheartedly, but you know like you know it's tough, it's tough. You don't know it's tough. Part of, part, part of me has probably committed wholeheartedly, but then there is probably another part of my vow I'm not so sure, you know what I'm saying? We, we are pretty complicated beings you know and ahh I'm like still I have you know Buddhism is not ahh the practice of Buddhism is not really supported much in our culture. Because ahh one of the things that you're really trying to do is ahh there's this whole thing this whole idea of no self. That's part of the ahh wisdom, emptiness thing. Ok? So, our culture is really into the self you know. I mean there's even a magazine called "Self". You know what I'm saying?

Naomi

Naomi aspired to be a dancer or to work as a nurse, but in her present position as an Academic Advisor she feels that her "calling" or "voice" could be found by using her

“gift” as a means of giving consulting advice to young girls, teenagers, or women who wanted a career or an education or something that really interested them, but who were afraid to do it. She also talked about the experience that helped her to find her “gift”, how her faith has played a role in shaping her “gift”, and finally, she too offered her thoughts on where she would place herself on the “U”:

Well, now uhm, I am looking forward to retirement (laugh), but not retiring where I don't do anything. I'm looking for a retirement where I can still be a help mate to other people. I still want to do something in that field where I can spend time with those less fortunate, maybe women who are battered or women who just need spiritual guidance, or kids that need, anybody, teens that needs spiritual guidance. Looking to volunteer my time, spending my time just staying busy and being ahh, preoccupied. Uhm, I'm always, I'm just a busy body and you know, I just like doing things and doing, doing for others without running myself ragged. But, I am looking forward to just doing some things I wanna do for me, traveling a little more, finding some time to relax, do yoga stuff that that I really have time for. Things like that. So, that's what I'm pretty much looking forward to now. I don't have, I don't want to, there's not another career that I'd want to start at this point in time. Uhm, if there is, I mean I would like to do some consulting.

Consulting in uhm, just giving advice, uhm, to maybe young girls. Mostly, young teenagers and young women who are are lost and that need, want to go to college, or, and just afraid to go to college. Even adult women who have worked their entire lives and taking care of families and are now afraid to go to college.

Naomi described the experience that helped her to find her “gift” to give to others and how her Christian faith has played a role in it:

That's a good question. Well, I know coming up you know I've always been in church. Like I had mentioned before and you just go along. And, and I love church, but now as I've gotten older and had had some experiences in my life that really opened my eyes and ears and how to ahh what it's really all about. I take it a lot more seriously.

I'm hearing more. You know, I'm, I'm doing more and I'm understanding a little more as far as the valuables concerned, ahh just having the Holy Spirit, praying and seeking and waiting for His answer. Uhm, I really, I think what really was a life-changing moment for me was when I was going through the separation from my marriage. And, that was like an awakening in in my life. Things were going well, you know, I was taking so much for granted and I was going to church and I was happy. And I just don't know if, how serious I was and that, or how much I really, really, really, really knew that God was really real. Because the first question I had was, "why would this happen to me?" (Laughs) And why not it happened to me? So but, I thought about that and I, and I, I was real, I was a little upset about it. I, I couldn't believe that it happened to me, but it, it made me listen to things more, listen to people more, listen to ministers more, captured my attention everywhere. It was a question that made me look at myself, re-examine myself. And I said, "am I a believer, do I really, really believe?"

So, to make a long story short, I can really, like let's say for instance that there was a woman who has gone through a divorce and thought that she was at the end of her rope and that life was over and there's nothing you can do on your own and so forth. I think I could really talk to her about that, because that was one of the biggest uhm challenges and life changing moments of my life that really... That really opened my mind, my heart, my soul and really made me get a closer relationship with God going through that. And, a lot of times you go through, as kids you go to church and they say we really don't understand now. But, a lot of times until you have experiences, you really don't know what life is all about, or you really can't associate what you've learned in religion and how it affects you and how your faith plays a part in it. Uhm, you never know when you are going to need to use those different things.

Finally, Naomi reflected upon her experience and shared where she believes that she would place herself on the "U":

So, that was my journey in my relationship with Him and I'm still ahh growing in Christ. Because I feel like even though at this age, I should already know all, I should already know a lot more than I know now. And now I am at the age where you don't remember or retain a lot, so remembering scriptures is hard, because at this age you know you have to go back and reread and read and read and you

still can't remember, but as a kid I could recite it all, all the books of the bible and all that. But now, I'm like, I can't even hardly remember. And know, so I think it is important to instill it in kids when they're young, so cuz the bible do say "train up a child in the way it should go and they shouldn't depart ahh from it." So I really truly believe in that.

Chandan Bala

Chandan Bala has aspirations to work empowering women and children to seek a desired education as well as a career. She shared an experience that she had while participating in an 8-day fast that is a ritual in the Jain religion. She also shared thoughts about her religious journey ("U") and her experience in this research interview process:

Yeah so, like ahh I wasn't standard 8. And, ahh ahh so for (laughs) one two days, for first two days I was like bored much of the time. I was like roaming around for job and school, second day I didn't, but then from third day I was ahh totally on bed (laughs), fourth day I was on bed (laughs). Yeah, because ahh ahh it is so like you know trying four days like much of much of strength is required, I mean much of the will power is required to like you know to tell yourself that you can pass your day without having anything, because for two days you already haven't ate anything. And you might feel internally so weak because you haven't had anything. And ahh, I don't know how it works for you, but like ahh for many people like just eating, or sorry drinking water. I mean you can eat whenever you feel hungry, or I'm sorry, you can drink whenever you feel hungry. Because to someone who don't like water and like yeah. So, third day was like yeah. Four, six and seven like yeah last few days were normal. I mean I can't dance and all, but I can I was comfortable walking in my home, talking to the people, three and fourth day I remember I didn't talk to anybody, I was like oh hmm hmm giving this and that and I just thought my actions. I, I didn't have any energy, but I tried for like it it happens you know for that one week for so Every yearly it that comes that day like you know to for ahh that fasting date. So, for three years, two years I tried doing first day fast and I ahh examined and no my God (laughs) and then third year I like wanted to do it, so I was so strong (laughs).

Chandan Bala was asked if she was seeking eternal bliss and she responded in a manner that explained where she thought that she would be placed on the "U":

I mean I ahh ahh right now I might now be but I guess that is again like you know that I've said like there might be. Because I know I mean I have been saying that it takes a lot of years, or one year, I mean sorry, uhm life, life. Uhm there might be like many lives you have to follow to achieve eternal bliss. And there might be one life is enough to do all the necessary things. I'm not sure if I'm doing everything right in my life, so I yeah. I'm not ahh, I'm not sure (laughs) I mean if I, I will be reaching there, but yeah. I mean, I, I, I'm just trying to do good internally. And it's I mean that is only it's like it's not ahh that we can do like try it's like it's constantly we have to remind ourselves. There are some negative feelings for some fear of life it just gets in your like you know different phases of life gives you different feelings and different thoughts so every time you have to remind yourself what is good for you actually. Ahh what way you want to like live life, so yeah I am trying to focus like just trying to be good human yeah.

Roughly, roughly, I, I, I like ahh I do things, I will do, I am strong with work in education like you know. So, something ahh education and also I cannot say families, but I also like to do like you know something for women and I am very much a women than men type like you know (laughs). Ahh I'm not like feminist, heavens, I don't hate men, but it's like ahh ahh to give a platform like you know? To women. Yeah. Yeah. So, and I like to see like you know, I don't, I like to see equality. Yeah, so for that reason, I'd like to do something ahh do with women and education ahh for like children like who are not ahh ahh they want to study, but they don't have proper resources to go through that. So, I'm not sure like it's just a rough thought, but I'm not sure what what I'm going to do. Yeah.

Right now I'm just following like you know education and then getting job and like you know but so the same question that I keep asking is "what is my purpose?" I know I want to do this, but how and when? I don't know, because I find that maybe that is one of the reasons that I want to be financially independent, because ahh to do something you should be balanced by that you know. I can't ahh let live my whole life then start doing serving, that is just not how it works. So, ahh so after periods when I get to like you know financially independent then I start doing something, I'm not sure what that something good is gonna be. I know I want to balance my life when I go through and ahh I'm not sure right now that I'm, right now where I am is my whatever my career ops, or best career option for me, but I'm enjoying a portion of it, then I will search something that my soul satisfied well, let's see (laughs) Yeah.

Finally, Chandan Bala also wanted to share her thoughts on the research process overall:

Ok, so my experience after talking to you, firstly ahh it helped me.

Ahh because you know these are the things that we don't talk or say to ourselves on a daily purpose. Ahh, some things that also remind me of ahh the values that I talked about of my own religion, my old spiritual family and in that way it was like you know ahh I guess now onwards I will be more like ahh into it like you know. It is good to remind yourself now and then because I mean right now job and study and all and ahh we are trying to follow the actual course. So ahh this helped me again to struggle and like you know right now I can tell you like within with me. And ahh the whole experience of interview, I mean ahh since you also said that you also wanted to do something for children in same education, so it's like ahh I really feel like you know ahh happy or like what I can say like good good about you're your thoughts and beliefs and like you know. And ahh maybe I might not be the like you know the proper religion like ritual follower, but I don't like you know whatever the values between you can like take all the positives from whatever religion, they they because that that religion we already have the purpose is one, the God is like one person who has followed something like you know for doing something good so and I mean just to grab something and we can and I think it will be better for our own life, not for others, for our own life. So, ahh as the whole experience of interview it's helped me. Again some of the questions I haven't asked and you know and some of the values that I have talked and I mean while talking I got to know more about it, so yeah. I mean final comments ahh yeah and it's just religion is there to ahh show you the proper parts, so if you balance yourself and like you know take that with you, it will be.. I mean I don't I don't ahh I don't like people blindly following any religion and forget that you know. So in religion it's ahh they are told like to do do good good for the people, but like when you are calling it religion and you are forgetting the people then it's not too good. Like you know whatever the value it is teaching, but you're just following the rituals, but you're not following truly what is told then that is not the proper way to do. For me, that's my point of view. I'm I'm not saying that I do completely ahh, but I want to and I want to try.

Michael

Michael openly shared the mental process that he went through as he selected the military as a possibility for his career in public service. He also talked about his desire to work helping to provide legal assistance to individuals in the military and the Latino population (immigrants) who may need it:

Sure. Uhm. You know I can't say you know the moment I said all I wanted to do, I wanna, I didn't come into law school, I knew what the JAG corps was, military law before law school. But I you know and it had crossed my mind before, but it was never something that I came in here and actually it was a while where I said oh no I definitely don't want to do it. Cuz it was honestly not until my interview for an internship my second year of law school that speaking to somebody that I got actually very excited. And I was like, "Oh wow, this is like really great!" Cuz, I remember going into the interview thinking, "eh you know maybe I don't, but he actually got me very excited and he you know told me that I was a great candidate and that kind of got me excited, but before then I was very much you know ahh into my internship this past summer that really, I really enjoyed my time there. I said well ok, take you know for me it's a great place to start your career. I don't see myself in there, as of now I don't see myself in there for longer than you know full-time than more than four years. Uhm, I think that you know for me public service is important. I want to work in public service which is a very broad area. Uhm, I'd like to start my public service career in the military. That being you know, yes, there's a level of wanting to serve my country. There's a level of I do hope I am doing some good ahh you know.

Uhm, and so that I think you know it does come as public service and that's for me some people might disagree or agree, that it's a different form of public service, but to me it is public service and I think helping, while it's helping our troops, helping our government and for me I guess even if I'm a little lawyer in the military helping the U.S. government you know that at least for me and I'd like to think that our government can do a lot of good for the people. And so, I'd like to do something you know funding permitting if I can you know work with the Latino population because I feel like well there's a lot of oppressed groups ahh in our country. I feel like that they are very much ahh you know a lot of them come here, especially the ones that are coming here ahh you know ahh alone or through the borders, you know they have very you know tough, difficult times and difficult lives and I'd love to be able to help them.

Willie

Willie spoke candidly about the teachings of the Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan and the wisdom that he has imparted to the members of the Nation of Islam in regard to the Black community. Willie shared what he has learned since joining the Nation of Islam and why

strengthening the Black community is important to him. Finally, Willie shared his understanding of the Muslim faith and offered his thoughts on the faith journey (The “U”):

The people. Ahh just coming in and you know and uhm being ahh a black man in America, just being black in America, we see a whole lot in our own community. One of the things that we see among each other is the lack of love for self and kind. Uhm, basically coming up when you’re young, you see a lot, we saw it it was pretty, I would say in the 60’s and 70’s there was a lot of love for for the black community. Especially in the black churches, but all of a sudden we started growing out of that and probably in the 80’s, we started moving away from that and we started basically putting our emphasis on on financial gain. And in the black community coming up it wasn’t, it financial gain was always, you know that was always something we desired, but we had so much love and respect for each other that we would always help our fellow man.

So, when I got to the mosque I start seeing this same spirit, and it was even stronger because of the, you know the way they treated each person that came through the door. When they, when they greeted you and the words that they greeted you with “As-Salaam-Alaikum” which means “peace be unto you.” And it’s the same words that Jesus used every time he spoke to his disciples. So, I looked at that foundation. I didn’t think about nothing else but ahh love for and love for life and love for my people. So, when I got to the mosque, to the Final Call, it was like this is what I’ve been looking for, somebody that’s gonna take the banner up and help change the black community because I saw it falling.

Finally, Willie offered some thoughts on the faith journey:

Ok. Ahh. Really, I believe that most people as we get older, ahh we usually get stronger in our faith. Because, as you get older, things change in your body physically. And usually, you have different ailments and illnesses, different you know in terms of ailments and sicknesses and you start really pulling and reaching, because you know that at some point you’re gonna die. And and you know that’s part of the process of life. So, as you go, you know we’re we’re pretty much all, I’m not going to say everyone, but most of us that follow any religious faith, we think about life after death, or we thinking about heaven. So, that means that what we think to some degree is, so we’re all taught, or we all mainly believe that at some point that uhm that it’s gonna be life after death. So, if it’s life after death or the hereafter, or heaven

then that means that in order to get there, you know what must you do to get there? What are the, what's the process? Or what steps do you have to take? The only thing we know is what we've been reading and that's where faith come in. So, we just, we ahh, we we follow the principle that is that in order to get into heaven and you wanna have life after death, then you must do good while you're living. Cuz, those are the only guarantees you have, cuz we're taught that after you're dead, that's it.

So, it's more like, it's more like you just have to believe. And it, it just comes back to the faith. And it's usually whatever your principles are, your guiding principles and most of them are is that God is good, so we should be good. God wants you to do good so we should do good. So you have God, and you have a whole lot of different people that have lived, that that ahh have done good to the, for the advancement of of of mankind. So, you and you look at those people and you say well, you know if, what mark can I leave on this planet? I may not be, I may not be talking about thousands or millions, but at least I can have an impact on my family, on my children, on my wife, on my grandchildren. So, as my time on earth, so that's usually what uhm as we get wiser, I think or we get older, we start really pulling up faith. Wait! A lot of us ahh, oftentimes us, we whenever we ahh have near death experiences, ahh we have illnesses that you can't control, and you can't change and that's it, that's a part of you now. Ahh. So, if you just study, if you study life and you study yourself, then you'll, I, I believe you'll have ahh ahh deeper understanding of God.

Analysis: Faith in Service to Others

The theme, Faith in Service to Others, is an important research finding because I believe that it speaks directly to the fact that individuals within their lifetime will search for the meaning and purpose of their lives. And, in this search for life's meaning and purpose, there will be many life experiences (good or bad), many discoveries (faith and "gifts"), many life decisions to be made (academic and career) and ultimately, what action will be taken to fulfill and obtain the meaning and purpose of life (to share the "gift" or not). I believe that finding one's gift and sharing it with others brings a great sense of fulfillment and satisfaction to the individual personally. Discovering what one is "good at" and having a deep sense of knowing that this unique "gift" will not only fulfill a need to society, but will also provide a meaning and purpose

to the individual personally. The excerpts taken from the five participants in this study revealed that this is possible; each one of them had a desire to give back to society using their unique “gift”, giving a “voice” to a specific population of others within society for whom their “gift” would meet the greatest need.

Each participant indicated that they would have placed themselves at the bottom of the “U” (Presencing Phase) at this time in their lives. They all aspired to reach the “Realizing” phase that would allow them to become “selfless” and seek to serve others first before serving themselves. The interview excerpts confirmed that individuals often search for meaning and purpose in their lives. Finally, to further stress this point, I would like to present the participant interviews in summary as they explain the discovery of their “gifts”, how they came to know what their unique “gift” was, whether it was influenced by their faith journey or not, and how they planned to share it to give “voice” to others.

Dechen believed that she was naturally inclined to become a nurse because she had cared for her mentally challenged brother at a younger age. She talked about meditation and the Buddhist faith as providing a means receive direction in her life. She is currently in a Lay Chaplaincy program that will help her to continue to learn how to deal with patients who are in hospice care, as well as to care for her mother-in-law and husband who are currently ill within her home. She believed that Buddhism was everything in her life and that it has given her the peace that she longed for in her religious experiences.

Naomi participated almost daily in her place of worship. She prayed before making major decisions and felt that her life experience as a single mother and divorcee is what led to her passion to help other women and teens by empowering them to pursue an education and/or career choice in which they could be successful. Naomi stated that she could not live without her

faith and that she is proactively reading, studying and applying what she has learned from the bible in her daily living.

Chandan Bala expressed that she is not an avid temple goer, but that she believed in “being good” or “doing good” for others. Although she did not believe that her decisions were based upon her faith, she couldn’t rule out that some of them might have been. She expressed that she strives to maintain the values of the Hindu religion that were instilled in her through the practices and stories that she learned as a child. She believed that holding on to the values of the Hindu religion is enough to satisfy her belief that she is an active participant in her faith. She felt that her academic and career choice (technology) was guided by “nature” as her options for education and career were limited due to poor testing results in her country, India. She explained that “nature” actually placed her in the best possible career position even though she wanted to pursue a medical career. Through this experience, she too would like to empower women and children to pursue their educational and career aspirations. Since she was always empowered by her family to pursue her dreams, she would like to pass this “gift” on to others.

Michael admitted that he sometimes had difficulty believing in God and was not/is not a devout Jew by any means, but professed to hold on to Jewish traditions and values through celebrations such as Shabbat dinners. Michael, although he had left Christianity to participate in Judaism, did not believe that prayer did anything for him as he stated during the first and second interviews. However, by the third interview session, he was not so sure that faith had not played a role in his ambition to become a lawyer. He plans to use his law education in the military or in working with Spanish-speaking immigrants who may need assistance entering into the U.S. He has a passion for public service and plans to use his knowledge and skills in law to fill the gap for people who are in need of legal services in the military or internationally.

Finally, Willie always knew that he would be in close proximity to a basketball court, but his passion was discovered after first loving the game of baseball. He pursued and obtained a degree in Accounting, but never used it, as he became a physical education teacher and is now coaching teens, teaching them the fundamentals of basketball with aspirations of coaching at the college level someday. Willie's faith as a member of the Nation of Islam taught him to pray at least five times before making major decisions and he practiced this each time that he was faced with a big decision. As a Black Muslim, he has a passion to empower the African American community to "love self and kind", a value that is also taught by the Honorable Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam.

Summary

From these participants, I learned that many, if not all of us will take a journey through life. We will make decisions based on our life experiences, whether they are positive or negative, but it is guaranteed that we will take something away from, or learn something during the journey. Some of us will use faith as a means of making sense of our experiences and finding our unique "gifts", because for some, this will be important to our search for life's meaning and purpose. For those who choose this route, faith serves as a leader, a guide if you will, to what we will do in the future in our academic or career pursuits. Once we find our "gift", inspired by an innate sense of knowing that this is the "right" thing to do, or is something that we do so well, we often develop a sense that this "gift" can meet the needs of others and we will work to give to others so that we can feel fulfilled or satisfied in life. This is why this research is important, because finding what we are "meant to do" while we are here on earth is necessary in order to extend goodwill and service to others who may need it.

7

Conclusion

Psalm 37:4-6

Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; Trust in Him and He will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.

The process of Narrative Inquiry provided a means for which this research endeavor could come to fruition. This exploration was first contemplated through my own religious experiences and the inquiry as to whether others also used faith as a means of attaining academic goals, or when making desired career decisions/choices. The research questions that guided this endeavor were:

- 1) **How is faith defined by individuals whose religious beliefs and practices differ across religious denominations?**
- 2) **How does one's conception of faith influence academic and career aspirations and/or choices?**

Five willing participants from different denominations (Buddhist, Christian, Hindu [Jain], Jewish and Muslim) volunteered to participate in three semi-structured research interviews to explore the possibility that faith may be a motivator for academic achievement and career choice. The participants who met the criterion for this study differed in the fact that their level of worship, or participation in their faith of choice, seemed to vary by age or generation. For example, Dechen, Naomi and Willie (older at ages 54 to 65) regularly participated in their religious worship either daily or weekly, but Chandan Bala and Michael (younger ages 27 and

28) participated only during festival and holiday times, but have still managed to maintain the values that were learned in their respective religions at a young age.

Using a semi-structured interview process as described by Seidman (2006), the participants were asked to talk about their life histories, academic and career pursuits, and the meaning and purpose of their choices as they perceived them. In addition, the lens through which the research results were evaluated was two-fold: Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000) Self Determination Theory and Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers (2004) The Theory of the “U”. Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000) proposed that one is motivated to act or behave in a certain way when there is an interest in the action; the action is informational; and when the individual perceived that he/she had developed a level of competence that inspired action with no external pressure. Senge (2004) and his colleagues proposed that an individual is often inspired to act as they progress in a U-shaped fashion through three stages (Sensing, Presencing and Realizing (Appendix C). Here the individual ponders past and present experiences, progresses to relinquishing control to and accepting guidance from a higher power, to finally reaching a rationalization that allowed for self-less thinking, a higher mental state that allowed the individual to place the needs of others before self. Individuals who reached the Realizing position on the “U” are: Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mother Teresa, as well as countless others who also sacrificed their needs in order to give back to society.

Limitations

No research that is “worth its salt” however, can be conducted without considering that there are limitations. This study is no different in that regard and this one, like many others, was far from perfect. There were four limitations that could have influenced the research findings as follows:

The first limitation was that the selection criteria may have been a deterrent to possible participant solicitation. It seemed that the criteria of frequent worship was perceived by those surveyed to mean frequent visits to a place of worship, so those individuals who did not frequent a place of worship, simply did not respond. In fact, even amongst the participants who were selected to participate in this study, there appeared to be a difference in how each individual perceived what was meant by frequency of religious participation and this perception seemed to differ by age. Participants who were fifty years of age or older seemed to perceive frequency of religious participation to mean actual frequency of attendance at their place of worship. The younger participants, the thirty years and under group, perceived frequency of attendance to mean active participation in festivals and/or celebrations that were traditional within their religious experiences, but not attending/visiting their place of worship frequently, for example, one per week.

A second limitation could have been that the participants would be reluctant to disclose information about their religious experiences with the researcher, someone who they did not know personally, or in the case of the Christian, someone with whom the individual was acquainted, but did not want to disclose personal information. In this instance, the researcher was able to establish a good rapport early in the process that encouraged each participant to share intimate details about their religious experiences and to feel comfortable doing it. Religion and beliefs therein are usually private matters, mostly kept in the innermost workings of the individual. The key to researcher success in this type of interview process was the participant's willingness to share their innermost thoughts and feelings about their religion and life experiences in a meaningful way. The researcher listened carefully and took notes as accurately as possible in order to capture those moments during the interview when the participant placed

emphasis upon an event, exuded a passionate expression, exhibited an emotional investment in an experience, or when there was an inflection in the participant's tone of voice. It was during these true depictions and personal descriptions of their experiences that the researcher was careful not to interject, interrupt, or make any assumptions about the nature of the discussion, but merely listened patiently so that the participant's "voice" (Covey, 2004) could be truly conveyed and accurately heard by the researcher.

The potential for bias was the third limitation. As a Christian believer myself, I believe that I am and will always be open to other religious perspectives. During the narrative inquiry process, I resisted the temptation to judge or to show any form of disagreement with any and all religious beliefs and practices that may have differed from my own. Instead, I approached the process as a learning experience, an opportunity to learn about other's religious experiences in a way that I had not done before. In this way, I was able to simply focus on hearing the stories, the experiences and verbal representations of their lives through the words of the participants as they presented them. After each interview, I also transcribed the words of the participants as accurately as possible based only upon what was said in the interviews, recorded on cassette tapes, and taken from my memo notes I had written. It was important to transcribe all of this information with as little bias as possible. As I mentioned earlier, a fourth interview was not needed since the member checking process took place during the interviews as I consistently asked for clarification and sought mutual understanding when the participant's said or revealed something that I could have misinterpreted or misunderstood.

The fourth and final limitation may have been the fact that this process of selection excluded those who were not affiliated with any particular religion, and/or who did not actively participate in a religious service. By excluding this group of prospective participants, the study

failed to gather information from individuals who could have been motivated through means other than religion (atheists and agnostics, etc.). This method of selection, by intention, omitted a group of individuals who could have been motivated to pursue life's meaning and purpose through their academic and career choices too, but without the religious acknowledgment or influence in their lives. I acknowledge the exclusion of this population or group of potential participants in this research study, but the intention of this research was to maintain the focus on motivation as it pertained to religious faith in academic and career choice. Therefore, in this regard, I argue that it was necessary and pertinent that this research focus solely upon those individuals who had a chosen religious affiliation, and/or who were active participants within their chosen religious denominations and religious activities.

I learned so much from this research opportunity. I learned first about the different religions and worship practices, information that I did not know before. I also had the opportunity to hear and understand the life experiences of these participants, hear how they mentally processed these experiences to understand their own life's meaning and purpose. I was able to hear how their experiences were either influenced by their faith development, their families and friends, by their disappointments and successes, and even if faith played no role in their academic or career decisions, or pursuit of life's meaning and purpose at all. I did learn however, that people do think about these things (finding meaning, purpose and "gifts"), and that people do want to help to fulfill a need in society with their "gifts". They want to give back and participate in some way by using what they are "good at", exploiting it to the fullest to help others and to "feel good" or satisfied with themselves that their lives had meaning. I also learned that faith is an important part of the life process to many who choose to acknowledge its presence, succumb to its leadership and guidance, and use it to achieve their life's goal or

mission. For this reason, I believe faith will remain an important part of the lives for future generations. The way in which it is delivered (marketed) and practiced may change, but the way that people are inspired or motivated by it will remain the same, because humans will always search for the meaning of why they are here on earth, and will always search for what they are meant to do while they are here.

I believe that this research, conducted from different religious perspectives will help to fill a gap in current literature that fails to consider one's faith as a motivator for academic achievement and career choice. Faith can influence academic and career choices within individuals who are motivated through the acknowledgment of its presence. Individuals, who successfully discover their "gift" and its meaning and purpose, can and will, through their religious beliefs give generously of this "gift" in selfless service to others.

Future Research

Future research opportunities may include a closer look into the changing dynamic of religious worship between generations. The younger individuals (ages 27 and 28 years) in this study seemed to be moving away from the traditional worship practices of regular visits to churches, temples, synagogues, or mosques. They participated only in festivals and/or celebrations, but not the regular worship services that their elders and family members participated in in days of old. A longitudinal study may be needed to determine what effect this change in worship behavior will have on religion in the future. It might also consider how worship services may change to accommodate the less frequent observance of younger members and how traditional religious values will change or passed on to future generations as a result.

Another research possibility would be to explore further the connection between religion and religious choice. Another longitudinal study may be needed to explore the difference in faith development between those who feel that they are “born into” a religion, meaning they simply continue in the religious tradition that their family follows, or they were baptized as an infant and had no religious choice. In addition, research could be conducted to examine the difference in faith development amongst those who had the opportunity to decide when they would be baptized and chose to remain in the religion that was practiced traditionally in the family, as opposed to those who chose after baptism in the family’s religious tradition, to leave and to accept the traditions of another religion that was not the traditional religious practice of the family. This research may allow the researcher to explore answers to questions such as: How is faith influenced by having an opportunity to choose your religion? What is the impact on faith development if an individual does not have a choice? What are the external influences for those who choose to remain in the traditional religion of the family? And those who choose to leave and practice another religion, what impact does this have on their faith development? How will this effect an individual’s construction or mental process of their faith/faith development/beliefs over their lifetime?

A final future research proposal may be to conduct a longitudinal study that follows individuals as they travel through the “U”, from Sensing to Realizing. This study could explore a group of individuals as they reached each phase along the “U” and follow them over a certain period of time to determine what type of individual actually reaches the Realizing phase. What qualities must one have to reach the Realizing phase? Why do some reach it and others do not? The participants could describe how they discovered their “calling” and in what manner they plan to give back to society or to whom are they planning to give “voice” or to benefit. In other

words, this type of qualitative study could also follow a group of individuals over a specified period of time (years) to determine the qualities that an individual should possess in order to reach the Realizing phase and to begin to act upon the discovery of their life's meaning and purpose ("gift") in a way that gives "voice" to others and gives back to society in a selfless manner.

Final Thoughts

This research exploration allowed the participants through interviews/stories to describe their thoughts or give testimonials about each phase of their path along the "U" and share their thoughts/experiences about their personal journeys. It also provided a way for the reader to understand why individuals are motivated to seek certain levels of meaning and purpose and why they are inspired to act upon their innate faith beliefs, or are motivated to exploit their "gifts" to the fullest in an attempt to help others.

It began as an exploration of whether faith could serve as one of the possible motivations for academic and career achievement. The notion that this was a possible research choice grew out of my own faith and life experiences, and the question as to whether others used faith as a guide to making life decisions on academics and career choices as a means of finding the meaning and purpose in life. After finding five participants from different religious denominations (Buddhist, Christian, Hindu [Jain], Jewish, and Muslim), four themes emerged from the qualitative interviews: Faith within the Family; Faith Choice; Faith in Academics and Careers; and finally, Faith in Service to Others.

The theme Faith within the Family taught us that families have faith traditions, some of which were passed from one generation to another. It also taught us that faith is very important to life experience. Ryan and Deci (1985; 2000) were fairly accurate when they said a decision to

act required piquing one's interest and gaining competence about the action under consideration. The final condition however, acting autonomously with no external pressure, seemed questionable due to the fact that there are many influences amongst family and friends that may influence the action.

The theme Faith Choice taught us that the word "faith" and how we define it has value and that value is maintained over the lives of many generations. Faith is important, because it speaks to who you are innately, as an individual, and what your inner beliefs may be. We learned too that life experiences, family and friends, and faith acknowledgment all play a role in inspiring choice and developing the value system that we come to cherish and hold on to for the rest of our lives and into future generations. With all of this information, a faith choice can be made and our definition of the word "faith" can be constructed.

The theme Faith in Academics and Careers is and was the basis for this research. It allowed for the exploration of the possibility that faith may influence academic and/or career choices. It allowed us to learn and understand why the participants in this study chose their academic and/or career aspirations and what they planned for the future. It allowed the participants to discover their "gifts" or "calling" as they searched also for the meaning and purpose of their lives. It allowed us to travel along the three stages of the "U" proposed by Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers (2004), from Sensing to Presencing to Realizing to ultimately lead us to our final theme: Faith in Service to Others.

The theme Faith in Service to Others taught us that people really do want to give back in some way to society. Each individual who discovered his/her "gift" wanted to give back to society in a way that was meaningful and fulfilled a purpose. Giving back according to Covey (2004) meant giving a "voice" to that group of people in society who would benefit the most.

Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers (2004) called this final stage along the “U” Realizing. At this stage, the individual realizes that what they have to give society is more meaningful and helpful to others, so they give it back with no thought of keeping it for themselves; a selfless act indeed!

Finally, I conclude this research opportunity with the final thought that the resultant themes truly allowed the reader to become familiar with, and knowledgeable about, the religious practices of the five participants, and the traditional religious practices within their families, and within their places of worship (temple, mosque, synagogue, or church). It equally allowed each participant to present in vivid detail his/her mental processes as to how they selected their religions of choice, and what it meant for them to be a member of their chosen religions. Each participant also walked the reader through their life experiences, as well as their understanding of how they discovered their unique “gift” and “voice” as they journeyed through their lives and pursued a chosen academic or career goal. In other words, they described their journeys, or explorations, as well as how they mentally processed these life experiences and gathered information from them in an attempt to understand what meaning and purpose it would hold for their lives. And finally, after discovering their “gifts”, each participant shared their plans for giving their “gifts” to others with the intent of inspiring others to also have a “voice”. This was truly a great learning experience for me and I hope for you as well.

APPENDIX A: IRB Approval Letter

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY



Office of Research Services
Institutional Review Board
1 East Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, Illinois 60604-2201
312-362-7593
Fax: 312-362-7574

Research Involving Human Subjects

NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

To: Felicia Richardson-McGee, MBA, Staff, Business

Date: July 24, 2014

Re: Research Protocol # FR061714BUS
"Living Out Faith: Reflections on Motivation for Academic Achievement and Career Choice"

Please review the following important information about the review of your proposed research activity.

Review Details

This submission is an initial submission.

Your research project meets the criteria for Exempt review under 45 CFR 46.101 under the following category:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Approval Details

Your research was originally reviewed on June 19, 2014 and revisions were requested. The revisions you submitted on July 23, 2014 were reviewed and approved on July 24, 2014.

Number of approved participants: 10 Total

You should not exceed this total number of subjects without prospectively submitting an amendment to the IRB requesting an increase in subject number.

Funding Source: 1) None

Approved Performance sites: 1) DePaul University

Reminders

- Under DePaul's current institutional policy governing human research, research projects that meet the criteria for an exemption determination may receive administrative review by the Office of Research Services Research Protections staff. Once projects are determined to be exempt, the researcher is free

to begin the work and is not required to submit an annual update (continuing review). As your project has been determined to be exempt, your primary obligation moving forward is to resubmit your research materials for review and classification/approval when making changes to the research, but before the changes are implemented in the research. **All changes to the research must be reviewed and approved by the IRB or Office of Research Services staff.** Changes requiring approval include, but are not limited to, changes in the design or focus of the research project, revisions to the information sheet for participants, addition of new measures or instruments, increasing the subject number, and any change to the research that might alter the exemption status (either add additional exemption categories or make the research no longer eligible for an exemption determination).

- **Once the project is complete, you should submit a final closure report to the IRB.**

The Office of Research Services would like to thank you for your efforts and cooperation and wishes you the best of luck on your research. If you have any questions, please contact me by telephone at (312) 362-6168, or by email at jbloom8@depaul.edu.

For the Board,



Jessica Bloom, MPH
Research Protections Coordinator
Office of Research Services

Cc: Ronald Chennault, PhD., Faculty, College of Education
Sue Fogel, LRB Chair, College of Business

APPENDIX B: Interview Guide

Life History

1. Tell me about you.
 - a. Your childhood
 - b. Your family background
 - c. Your education
2. Tell me about your work experience. Talk about your aspirations for the future?
3. Describe how you came to be a _____.(religion)
4. Describe your worship practices and beliefs.
5. Describe your level of personal involvement, if any, in religious/worship activities. How has this involvement helped to shape your beliefs about your religion?

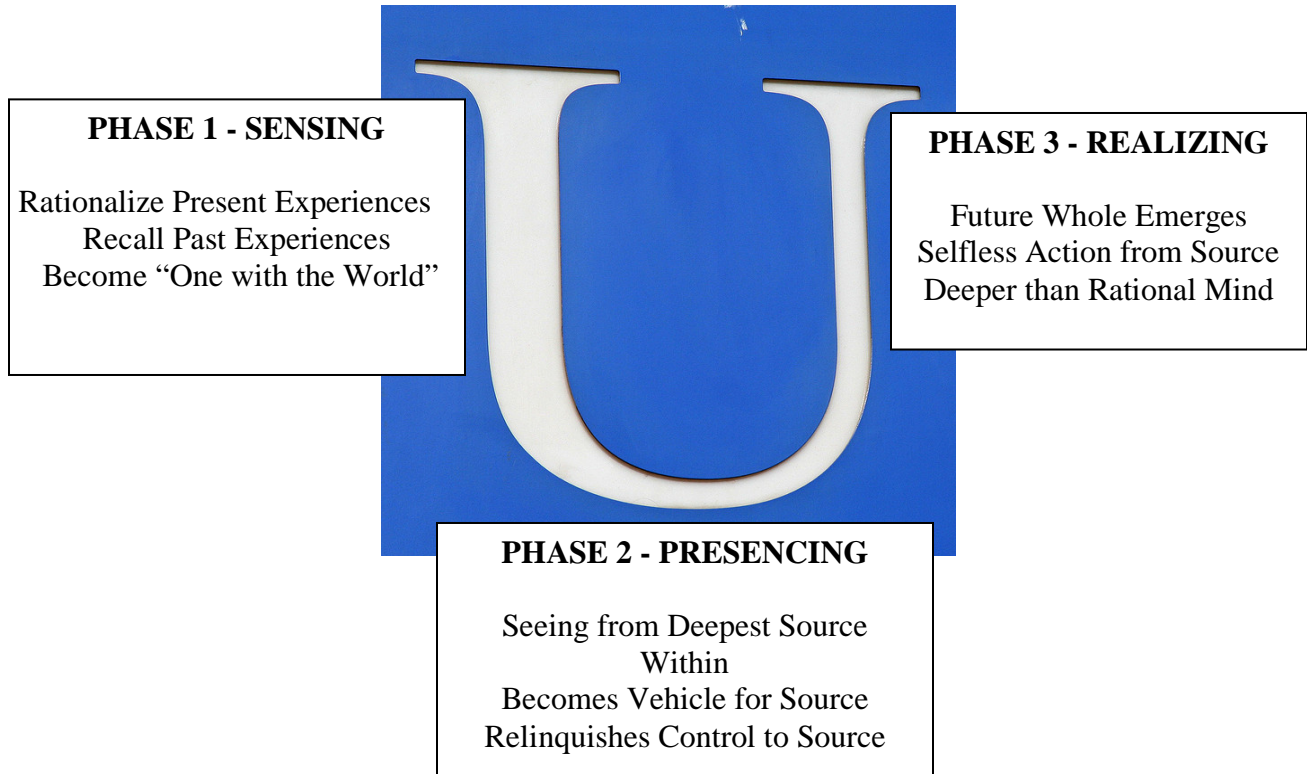
Faith Development

1. How do you define faith?
2. How is faith defined in your religion?
3. Describe the similarities and/or differences between your definition and that of your church, if any exist. Discuss the similarities and differences.
4. Describe an experience/situation in which you first became aware of, or acknowledged the presence of your faith.
5. Describe how you processed this experience.

Meaning and Purpose

1. What does it mean to you to be a _____?
2. What role, if any does faith play in your life decisions/choices? If faith plays a role in your decisions, what do you believe that this means for you personally?
3. You mentioned in our first interview that you aspired to be _____. Tell me about your thought process. How did you first come to know that this is what you wanted to do?
4. Talk about your plan for ultimately achieving your aspiration. How do/did you know that this is/was the educational or career path that you should follow? Explain to me how you plan to reach your goal.
5. Describe how you arrived at this conclusion? What influenced your decision? What did you consider before making this decision?

APPENDIX C: THEORY OF THE “U”
Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers (2004)



REFERENCES

- Covey, Stephen (2004). *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness*, New York, NY: Free Press, 2004.
- Covington, Martin V. and Mueller, Kimberly J. (2001). Intrinsic Versus Extrinsic Motivation: "Approach and Avoidance Motivation." *Educational Psychology Review* 13(2): 157-176.
- Dantley, Michael (January-February 2005). "Faith-based leadership: ancient rhythms or new management." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 18(1): 3-19.
- Elliot, Andrew J. and Covington, Martin V. (2001). "Approach and Avoidance Motivation." *Educational Psychology Review* 12(2): 73-92.
- Elliot, Andrew J. and Thrash, Todd M. (2001). "Achievement Goals and the Hierarchical Model of Achievement Motivation." *Educational Psychology Review* 13(2): 139 -156.
- Fowler, James W. (1981). *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, New York: HarperCollins, 1981.
- Glazer, Sarah (January 2005). "Prayer and Healing: Can spirituality influence health?" *CQ Researcher* 15(2): 1-38.
- Hansen, Brian (August 2002). "Religion in the Workplace: Should employers allow more religious expression?" *CQ Researcher* 12(28): 1-35.
- Jeynes, William H. (January 2003). "The Effects of Black and Hispanic 12th Graders Living in Intact Families and Being Religious on Their Academic Achievement." *Urban Education* 38(1): 35-57.
- Jeynes, William H. (November 2003). "The Effects of Religious Commitment on the Academic Achievement of Urban and Other Children." *Education and Urban Society* 36(1): 44-62.
- Jeynes, William H. (November 2002). "A Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Attending Religious Schools and Religiosity on Black and Hispanic Academic Achievement." *Education and Urban Society* 35(1): 27-49.
- Jeynes, William H. (2001). "Religious Commitment and Adolescent Behavior." *Journal of interdisciplinary Studies* 13(1): 31-50.
- Kliebard, Herbert M., *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958*, Routledge And Kegan, Paul, Boston, London and Henley, 1986.

REFERENCES

- Lindner – Gunnoe, Marjorie and Moore, Kristin A. (2002). “Predictors of Religiosity Among Youth Aged 17 – 22: A Longitudinal Study of the National Survey of Children.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41(4): 613-622.
- Loury, Linda D. (March 2004). “Does Church Attendance Really Increase Schooling?” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43(1): 119-127.
- Love, Patrick G. (Fall 2001). “Spirituality and Student Development: Theoretical Connections.” *New Direction for Student Services* (95): 7-16.
- Marler, Penny L. and Hadaway, C. K. (2002). ““Being Religious” or “Being Spiritual” in America: A Zero-Sum Proposition?” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41(2): 289-300.
- McDargh, J. (2001). “Faith Development Theory and the Postmodern Problem of Foundations.” *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 11(3): 185-199.
- NLSY (1979). <http://www.bls.gov/nls/handbook/2005/nlshc3.pdf>. Accessed January 13, 2012 from the United States Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- Pajares, Frank (Sept./Oct. 2001). “Toward a Positive Psychology of Academic Motivation.” *The Journal of Educational Research* 95(1): 27-35.
- Regnerus, Mark D. and Elder, Jr., Glen H. (2003). “Staying on Track in School: Religious Influences in High-and Low-Risk Settings.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42(4): 633-649.
- Roof, W.C. (1993). “A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journey of the Baby Boom Generation. San Francisco, CA: Harper – Collins, 1993.
- Ryan, Richard M. and Deci, Edward L. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum. 1985.
- Ryan, Richard M. and Deci, Edward L. (2000). “Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being.” *American Psychologist* 55(1): 68-78.
- Sander, William (Fall 1999). “Private Schools and Public School Achievement.” *The Journal of Human Resources* 34(4): 697-709.
- Sander, William K. and Krautmann, Anthony C. (1995). “Catholic Schools, Dropout Rates and Educational Attainment.” *Economic Inquiry* XXXII: 217-233.

REFERENCES

- Schram, Thomas H., *Conceptualizing and Proposing Qualitative Research*, Pearson Education, Inc., Merrill Prentice Hall, 2003 and 2006.
- Senge, Peter, Scharmer, C. Otto, Jaworski, Joseph and Flowers, Betty Sue (2004). *Presence: An Exploration of Profound Change in People, Organizations, and Society*, Society for Organizational Learning, Inc., 2004.
- Sharot, Stephen (2002). "Beyond Christianity: A Critique of the Rational Choice Theory of Religion from a Weberian and Comparative Religions Perspective." *Sociology of Religion* 63(4): 427-454.
- Speck, Bruce W. (2005). "What Is Spirituality?" *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* (104): 3-13.
- Stallones, Jared R. (2010). *Conflict and Resolution: Progressive Educators and the Question of Religion*, Charlotte, N.C., Information Age Publishing, Inc., 2010.
- Streib, Heinz (2001). "Faith Development Theory Revisited: The Religious Styles Perspective." *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 11(3): 143-158.
- Tollefson, Nona (2000). "Classroom Applications of Cognitive Theories of Motivation." *Educational Psychology Review* 12(1): 63-83.
- Trelfa, Jo (2004 and May, 2005). "Faith in Reflective Practice." *Reflective Practice* 6(2): 205-212.
- Weiner, Bernard (2000). "Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Theories of Motivation from an Attributional Perspective." *Educational Psychology Review* 12(1): 1-14.
- Zinnbauer, Brian J., Pargamentt, Kenneth I., Cole, Brenda, Rye, Mark S., Butter, Eric M., Belavich, Timothy G., Hipp, Kathleen M., Scott, Allie B., and Kadar, Jill L. (1997). "Religion and Spirituality: Unfuzzifying the Fuzzy." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36 (4): 549-564.