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Soul-full Teaching

Gary F. Schneider

To the University Council:

The Dissertation Committee for Gary F. Schneider certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

SOUL-FULL TEACHING

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James I. Penrod, Ed.D., Major Professor

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Katrina Meyer, Ph.D.

_____
Patricia Murrell, Ed.D.

_____
Brooks Ramsey, D. Min.

Accepted for the Council:

_____
 Karen D. Weddle-West, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Graduate Programs

SOUL-FULL TEACHING

by

Gary F. Schneider

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Dedication

With tremendous gratitude, I wish to dedicate this work to my wife, Paula, who lovingly supported the idea of me returning to the classroom and who, consistently, has supported and encouraged me in the various initiatives that were necessary for the attainment of this degree.

Since education always is about the future, I also dedicate this work to my grandchildren, Sarah Harget and Will Amrhein. My hope is that they will build on the foundation that has been provided them and continue to grow in the special gifts that both education and spirituality will bring to them throughout their lives.

Acknowledgements

The list of people to whom I am grateful as I complete this degree process is lengthy. First and foremost are my parents, Clarence and Leona Schneider, who took education and spirituality seriously and helped me develop a love for both of those areas in my life. I am grateful, as well, that each of my sisters and my brother took those areas of their lives seriously and encouraged in me the value of education and development of a well-rounded spirituality. And I am grateful for my nieces and nephews who have been life-giving to me in so many ways throughout these many years.

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Abstract

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The study is a qualitative research study done with the purpose of exploring how seven teachers at a mid-southern, state-supported, urban research university perceive their spirituality to inform their teaching philosophy. The researcher discusses the increased attention noted in educational literature, in recent years, with respect to the relationship between the spirituality of teachers and the ways in which they think about, and engage in, teaching. The heart of the study is based in his exploration of these concerns with seven teachers in higher education in regard to six areas of inquiry: What do these teachers in higher education think about their spirituality and/or religion? What do these teachers in higher education think about the processes of teaching and learning? How do spirituality and teaching come together in the cognitive processes, the affective experiences, and the actions—that is, in the person—of each of the participants? What are the perceptions of these teachers with respect to the factors that have enabled them to reach, or not to reach, their students in ways that promote growth and development? What kinds of experiences have manifested these learning and developmental exchanges? And what can be learned about the connections between spirituality and teaching based on the perceptions and experiences of these seven teachers in higher education? The researcher details the unique story of each professor with respect to these six questions and summarizes the common perspectives of the participants in regard to these concerns. He concludes that the experiences and perspectives of these seven participants indicate that spirituality is an important frame of reference through which some teachers see, experience, and interact with the world, which, in turn, informs their teaching. This type

and degree of influence differs from one person to the next, but the composite picture presented in the stories of these seven professors attests to the fact that spirituality does inform the teaching of some teachers in higher education. The researcher concludes by suggesting that the institution of higher education would do well to find ways of building on this important resource in its midst.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction to Study

Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique;
good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.
(Palmer, 1998, p. 10)

Dr. Q. came sauntering down the hallway. As usual, she was engaged in banter with

a number of people along the way, interspersing her remarks with an infectious laugh.

"This is someone who really enjoys what she is doing," I thought. I asked Dr. Q. if she

would let me interview her about the connections between her teaching and who she is as

a person. She agreed and, as we talked, I repeatedly was moved by her words and the

generosity of her spirit:

> My job is to make sure people are with me during the lecture….that
> accountability to the students makes me more conscious of my interactions both
> in the classroom, and with students one-on-one, and outside of the classroom….I
> have to stop and think about other people instead of just speeding forward with
> whatever it is I'm thinking about or want to talk about. It's the stopping myself to
> be conscious of it that's the problem for me….well, one good thing it does is it
> makes me more patient….That's something that I think is really good for me as a
> person.
>   I think the substance of what I talk about in class lends itself to helping
> people work through understanding their personal stuff on many topics….I teach
> social work and I talk a lot about human service programs because I know about
> them. In talking about public housing, people either think, "We're doing a crappy
> job and we need to be doing better for these folks," or they think, "These folks
> aren't doing anything for themselves; why do we need it?" Trying to create
> classroom discussions that will bring them back from judging who the people are,
> and thinking of why do we care about this as a problem: Why does it matter that
> people are poor? What if we just left them alone, didn't help them at all, what
> would happen? Are there other issues that would be a problem to us as a society?
> Why do we have government? And are there moral issues that you're concerned
> about if we just leave people alone to wither in their own problems? … To get
> them to think broader about how it fits into the big picture, and to take them away
> from the things that are easy to have any kind of judgment about gives them a
> new framework for looking at it, which I think helps them move somewhere with
> that stuff.
>   I think that teaching in a social work program is the perfect job for me, which
> is funny because I don't have any degrees in this discipline. I didn't have a lot of

teaching experience coming into this job, but I've done policy research and I care passionately about people being involved in citizenry. I think forcing us to work together and talk together, even when we disagree with people, is the best thing we can do in the world. So I thrive on putting myself in situations where it's not a whole bunch of people who agree on a topic. And I like trying to think of where the common ground is, and how to kind of create that common ground, whatever it is….And so, working with these graduate students to have these conversations about what the role is of people leading our government and nonprofits is the conversation that I care the most about, because I think these are the folks who have in their hands the tools to help make their city and their world a better place in some way….Teaching in this program fits where my personality is, with what I care about, what I want to learn about, and what I talk about….And that's why I'm good in the teaching role; because it's … it is just my core, who I am. (Dr. Q., personal communication, June 29, 2007)

Statement of the Problem

The interview with Dr. Q. was a powerful testament to what I already had been thinking: perhaps a good topic for my dissertation could be something related to how spirituality impacts teaching. Repeatedly, throughout the interview, I was moved by her sincerity, her openness, and her dedication to her students. In teaching, Dr. Q. seemed to have found a way to use her identity to connect with her students in meaningful ways, and a way of being in which she felt challenged to live more deeply into the integrity of who she understands herself to be. Somewhere beneath that probity and dedication it seemed there pulsed a deep, impelling spirituality.

Although the interview with Dr. Q. was brief, it seemed to me that the story she told was not unlike the stories of many others who have chosen education as their vocation, their calling, their way of service to others—their way of bringing together their desire to give to others and their own need for personal and spiritual growth (Garcia, 2000; Intrator, 2005; Intrator & Scribner, 2003). Being fairly new to the experience of classroom teaching, I wanted to understand these stories more. How do teachers make sense of their experiences as educators? How do they think about that role in relation to

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what they do in their classrooms and how they relate to their students? How do the particular academic disciplines in which they teach provide a forum to communicate what they believe and what they value? How have their experiences in the field of education shaped their own lives, their beliefs, their ways of understanding and relating to the world? And, specific to the population among whom I teach, how do teachers in higher education think about the roles they play, the methods they use, and the philosophies they employ, in their efforts to educate students?

Those are big questions that do not lend themselves well to neatly packaged answers. To complicate the mix a bit further, it seemed to me that what I had identified in Dr. Q. as a deep spirituality was an inseparable component of the identity and integrity that she brought to being a teacher. This was a mix I wanted to explore further. Undoubtedly some of my interest in this topic grew out of my own frames of reference, but it seemed clear to me that the relationship between spirituality and good teaching was larger than my own perceptions and certainly was worthy of closer examination. Although I felt sure there were plenty of teachers who would not identify spirituality as a primary source for how they think about their teaching, I was equally sure there must be plenty of teachers who would make such a connection and, perhaps, would even value the opportunity to explore and to talk about this relationship.

My own questions were several. How do teachers in this latter group conceptualize spirituality, and how do these concepts shape their thoughts and actions in regard to what, how, and whom they teach? What role does spirituality play in how these teachers think about their own lives, and how do these reflections translate into their pedagogy? In what ways have these teachers' experiences in the classroom had an impact on what they

believe; how has their spirituality changed; and what effects have those changes prompted in the ways in which they interact with their students? To what system(s) of values do these teachers subscribe, and how is that important to the choices they make about what they do in the classroom? Should spirituality even be acknowledged as pertinent to teaching (a question that might be raised by some people, particularly, in regard to public educational settings)? If one's answer to that last question was "Yes," how should that relationship be honored and nourished within the educational system; and if the answer was "No," how can the system afford to ignore a referential frame which many teachers would consider seminal to their perception of their own lives and the world in which we live? In this study, I wanted to explore these questions, seeking to learn how teachers in higher education think about their teaching; more directly, to explore how seven teachers in higher education perceive their spirituality to inform their teaching philosophy.

Contextual Background for the Study

American society--the world as a whole--is changing rapidly. Diversity, globalization, the impact of information technology, ever new ways of communicating and relating, shifting borders, allegiances, and perceptions—the burgeoning list of changes is, itself, in rapid flux. People struggle to keep pace, but often at a disadvantage to the processes themselves (Toffler, 1971). In the midst of such change, old ways of understanding--old ways of making sense of things--sometimes fall short or, at least, call for reinvestigation and realignment in those acts of translation and commitment. This is true for the most mundane of concerns as well as for the highest forms of scholarship. Higher education, historically a key vessel of scholarship, has not escaped these

evolutionary processes. In addition to requisite changes in how higher education relates to society and the world of which it is part, there also are powerful changes within the institution and within the populations that comprise that institution. Perhaps equally important, there are continual changes in how and what we understand about those populations and the dynamics that shape, sustain, and unite that populace within the institution of higher learning.

Much has been written in recent years about the learning community within higher education. Some of this literature has been directed to the processes of learning; for example, learner-centered education (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Dolence, 2003), andragogy (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999), and the impact of information technology on teaching/learning processes (Ayers, 2004; Laurillard, 2002; Rickard & Oblinger 2003). Other literature has been directed to changes within the learners themselves. This literature has focused on characteristics of particular learner groups; for example adult learners (Merriam, 2001; Rachal, 2002), non-traditional students (Kasworm, 2003; Lundberg, 2003), "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001, ¶ 5), a term used to describe students who have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using various forms of information technology, and "millenials" (Oblinger, 2003, ¶ 2), a term used to describe students who have moved into young adulthood within the past decade. Brown (2000), Frand (2000), Hartman, Moskal, and Dziuban (2005), and Clayton-Pederson and O'Neill (2005) are other resources that have been helpful for better understanding the characteristics of today's young adults and the educational ramifications related to the changes observed among these students.

One other significant change noted in recent literature has been the interest expressed by increasing numbers of students regarding issues related to religion and/or spirituality (Johnson, Kristeller, & Sheets, 2004; Lindholm, 2006). There likely are innumerable reasons for the expression of this interest, but it is notable that it comes in concert with voices from the teaching side of the classroom, also calling for a renewal of attention to values and spirituality as a foundation of the educative process (Astin, 2002; Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2006; Palmer, 1998).

Parker Palmer, whose words introduced this chapter, has written frequently over the past 25 years on the importance of the renewal of education via the renewal of those who are doing the educating. Palmer's writing has been popular among many in the field of education, so as to spawn a nation-wide program of renewal based on the precepts about which he writes. That program is entitled the Center for Courage and Renewal, and it seems worth noting the subtext on the title of the center's webpage: "Reconnecting who you are with what you do" (Couragerenewal, n.d.). Helping teachers re-connect with themselves and with the values and dreams they brought to the vocation of being a teacher have been key aspects of this process of renewal. Though not all, many of these teachers have spoken of these values and dreams as constitutive of a spirituality that helps to shape how they teach.

Purpose of the Study

Although most of those who have participated in the programs of the Center for Courage and Renewal have been teachers in elementary and secondary education, it seems probable that, for many who teach in higher education, there would be a similar desire to explore the ways in which their spirituality impacts their teaching—and, for

many, their personal renewal as a teacher may deepen in the exploration of this relationship. Beyond the private interests of these individuals, as well, it seems that it would be in the best interests of higher education to know more about, and to build upon, these connections. As an example of the impact of such a renewal program, readers might look to Richland College of the Dallas County Community College District in Dallas, Texas, which has implemented such a renewal program for its staff (Garcia, 2000). With that kind of renewal in mind for higher education overall, the purpose of this study was to explore how seven teachers at a mid-southern, state-supported, urban research university perceive their spirituality to inform their teaching philosophy.

Terminology

Words, and the ways in which we use them, often shape the ways in which we think about reality (Denzin, 2003b). Therefore it is important to clarify the terms I have used in identifying the purpose of this research: by *teacher*, I mean a full-time faculty or staff member who teaches at least one course per semester at the university (undergraduate or graduate) level; by *mid-southern*, I mean an area in the southern half of the central United States; by *state-supported*, I mean a public institution that is not affiliated with any religious organization; by *urban*, I mean a city of more than 500,000 people; and by *research university*, I mean a school designated in a recent version of the Carnegie classification system as a university with high research activity (Carnegie Foundation, 2006).

Since this study is to be situated upon the concepts of spirituality and teaching philosophy, it is essential to clarify in a bit more detail how I intend those terms, as well. By *teaching philosophy*, I have followed Chism (1998) in her definition, "how teachers

think learning occurs, how they think they can intervene in this process, what chief goals they have for students, and what actions they take to implement their intentions" (Components of the Statement section, ¶ 1). Thus, in carrying out this study, I was interested in what teachers do, but I was more interested in how they think about what they do (and refrain from doing) in responding to the needs of their students.

In using the term *spirituality*, I have employed the word in a very broad manner, similar to Astin's (2002) use of the term,

> [T]he values that we hold most dear, our sense of who we are and where we come from, our beliefs about why we are here -- the meaning and purpose that we see in our work and our life -- and our sense of connectedness to each other. (¶ 3)

I opted to use this expansive definition of spirituality due to the realization that concepts related to spirituality have become very fluid in the past several years. People are interpreting their experiences, and expressing their thoughts, about these matters in ways that often do not fit readily into traditional spiritual images and phraseology. In laying the groundwork for this study, I wanted to be sensitive to the reality that some prospective participants might take umbrage at use of the term spirituality (preferring, instead, to discuss these concepts within the framework of religion rather than spirituality) (J. Blanusa, personal communication, December 15, 2007), while others may have felt more comfortable discussing these concerns apart from any explicit spiritual or religious connotations at all. If any of the prospective participants should have exhibited either of those lines of thought (or anywhere between these positions), I felt their experiences still could be served fairly within Astin's definition (as noted above).

In any study, it is important to have a framework with a working set of definitions from which one operates. Nonetheless, in constructing this study, I was very much aware that, no matter how I may have understood the concept of spirituality, the measure of the term for this study, largely, would be in how each of the participants understood the concept in relation to the questions that I would pose to them.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The questions articulated above are broad in scope and do not lend themselves readily to integral measures of differentiation. Hence, as I began to plan for conducting a research study that might provide some meaningful and reasoned response to these concerns, I opted to design a descriptive qualitative research study. In differentiating between qualitative and quantitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (2003) indicated,

> Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. (p. 13)

This type of research (qualitative) seemed well suited to securing the type of information I was seeking in response to the questions expressed above.

One of the major differences between quantitative and qualitative research is the scope of their respective methods. Whereas quantitative research most often is built on large samples that generate results that might be applied broadly, qualitative research focuses on a much smaller number of participants with the explicit intent of achieving results characterized by depth rather than breadth (Bhattacharya, 2007a). The participants in this study were seven teachers who were purposively selected from the faculty roster (graduate and undergraduate) at the designated university. While my goal in working

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with these seven teachers was to achieve depth, I also attempted to capture a diversity of thought and experience by recruiting participants from different academic disciplines and from various religious traditions. In doing so, I hoped I would be able to capture a mixture of cognitive and experiential frameworks that, when taken together, would fashion a meaningful response to the questions on which this study was based.

In order that this study would be more than just my own synthesis of what these teachers reported to me, my goal was to facilitate a constructivist process in which the participants and I were engaged in learning, even as we produced the data on which the study was based (Crotty, 2003). That statement implies three facts that were critical to the theoretical framework of the study: (a) The investment of time and energy that was necessary for such a study suggested the importance of recruiting participants who, themselves, were interested in exploring the connections between their spirituality and their philosophy about teaching; (b) As the study progressed and I attempted to make sense of the data in my formulation of the findings, I, too, became a participant in the study; and (c) The knowledge that was sought in this process was not out there waiting to be grasped, but rather was constructed from within the interaction of the participants and me as we explored these concerns together.

Some readers may be surprised at my generous use of first person pronouns in writing about a study such as this one. This form of presentation is intentional on my part, consistent with another important difference between quantitative and qualitative research. While quantitative researchers generally attempt to stand outside of their studies in their efforts to be objective, the qualitative researcher should always be in the midst of that which is to be studied (Bhattacharya, 2007a). Therefore, considerations given to the

presentation of qualitative research are as much a part of the theoretical framework as are

sample size and methods of data collection.

I opted for use of first person pronouns, also, in keeping with the observations of

Parker Palmer who has repudiated the objectification of learners that so frequently occurs

in contemporary systems of education. Palmer (1999) described the following scene as an

example of how pervasive this bias against the subjective has become in education:

> At the first class, I assigned my students some brief autobiographical essays to connect with the core concepts of our distinguished text…. At the end of the first session, a young man came up to me, and he said, "Dr. Palmer, in these autobiographical papers that you want us to write, is it okay to use the word *I*?" It was a tense moment: I knew that I might crush his spirit if even my body language said, "What a stupid question!" So I said, "Of course, it is. I invite you to use the word *I*. I don't know how you would be able to fulfill the assignment if you didn't. But help me understand why you needed to ask that question." And he said, "Because I'm a ___ major, and every time I use the word *I* in a paper, I'm downgraded one full grade."
>   This dismissal of the subjective self goes on all the time in higher education. Recovering the sacred is one path towards recovering the inwardness without which education as transformation cannot happen. (pp. 26-27)

In his writing, Palmer consistently upholds the importance of the subjective and,

insightfully, applies this stance to issues regarding teaching, learning, and knowing. In his

1998 book, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*,

he addressed the damaging effects of separating knowledge from the one who knows:

> The mode of knowing that dominates education creates disconnections between teachers, their subjects, and their students because it is rooted in fear. This mode, called *objectivism*, portrays truth as something we can achieve only by disconnecting ourselves, physically and emotionally, from the thing we want to know. (p. 51)

He continued,

> But an even more telling case can be made against this mode of knowing: it fails to give a faithful account of how knowing actually happens, even at the heart of science itself…. Knowing of any sort is relational, animated by a desire to come

into deeper community with what we know…. At its deepest reaches, knowing is always communal. (p. 56)

And in still another setting, Palmer (1993b) addressed this concern in the context of its ramifications for the ways in which our society (as well as we as individuals) relates to the broader world:

> [T]hat is how objectivism teaches us to think about everything. It teaches us to think at arm's length, it teaches us to imagine realities "out there" that have nothing to do with realities in here (¶ 26)….
>
> We talk about ourselves being "in possession" of great knowledge. I would like to turn that around and suggest that we "are possessed" by our knowledge in a way not unlike the way the ancients talked about demon possession. We are driven to unethical acts by an epistemology that has fundamentally deformed our relation to each other and our relation to the world. (¶ 29)

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study began with my own interest in the topic. As indicated earlier in this chapter, I was motivated by wanting to understand better why teachers do what they do: What aspects of their own experiences, their own ways of understanding themselves and the world, their own belief and value systems, have shaped the choices that they make in how they relate with their students? What do they believe about why we are here, and how has that belief translated into the meaning and purpose they assign to their engagement with their students? In the words of the old song, "What's it all about?", and how have these educators given shape to their commitment to helping learners find meaningful answers to that question? By engaging these seven faculty members in conversation regarding their experiences of spirituality and teaching, I wanted to better understand their thoughts about the ways in which their spirituality contributes to the educational process. I hoped that by conducting this study, I would become more informed about the educational and pedagogical ramifications that may be

consequent to these choices and that these realizations would help shape my own role as an educator.

A study such as this, of course, should do more than satisfy my own curiosity and professional interests, and I believe it does. Judging from the amount of literature that is being published regarding this and similar topics, it appears that many educators across the nation—in fact, the globe—are interested in exploring the connections between spirituality and good teaching. The widespread interest that this topic attracts (as well as the immediacy of the Internet) was impressed upon me when one of the first responses I received to some of my preliminary requests for information was from a professor in Australia.

One of the main objectives of this study was to add to that body of literature a detailed qualitative account of these connections as perceived and acted upon by the seven teachers who were selected to participate in this study. As interest in spirituality has become increasingly prevalent in so many arenas of modern life, it seems important that higher education keep pace. By exploring these issues closely with the participants in this study, and by crafting a synthesis of their responses, I hope I have constructed a meaningful argument for increased attention to these issues among those who are shaping higher education. In reading the results of this study, those who are interested in improving higher education should have a better understanding of some of the vital factors that impinge upon the professional decisions being made by skilled faculty leaders. Thus, I believe this information could be helpful, not just for teachers themselves, but in guiding the decision processes of university leadership regarding curriculum planning and professional development.

Ultimately, the purpose and the objectives of this study were met best by securing rich, descriptive answers to the research questions that guided the study. These were:

1. What did these teachers in higher education think about their spirituality and/or religion?

2. What did these teachers in higher education think about the processes of teaching and learning?

3. How have spirituality and teaching come together in the cognitive processes, the affective experiences, and the actions—that is, in the person—of each of the participants?

4. What were the perceptions of these teachers with respect to the factors that have enabled them to reach, or not to reach, their students in ways that promote growth and development?

5. What kinds of experiences have manifested these learning and developmental exchanges?

6. What can be learned about the connections between spirituality and teaching based on the perceptions and experiences of these seven teachers in higher education?

Putting substantive flesh to the skeletal framework provided by these six questions was the charge to the participants and to me as we engaged in our mutual processes of constructing knowledge.

Structural Considerations

Some readers may express concern that the size of the sample for this study was too small and too provincial to be able to generalize anything to a larger population. That criticism most certainly would be true if those readers wanted to make an extrapolation of

information that would be statistically applicable to other populations. The information provided by a qualitative study such as this one, however, is not intended to be statistically generalizable (Ellis & Bochner, 2003; Maxwell, 2005). Rather the goal was for both the participants and me to be able to move into the data deeply enough so as to be able to construct new knowledge, and if we did this in an effective manner, readers should be able to extract pieces of information that may be transferable to other settings and situations.

The distinction between results that are generalizable and those that are transferable is a key difference between the types of information secured via quantitative and qualitative research (Bhattacharya, 2007a). Instead of the immediate applicability associated with the term, *generalizable*, the term, *transferable*, is used more to connote information that is adaptable to other situations and experiences—a focused presentation from which other people can select, in choosing which insights and experiences of these seven teachers give meaning to their own deliberations, their own lives. Thus, my main objective in this study was to strive for depth of understanding relative to the perceptions and experiences of the participants (individually and collectively) and, then, to tell their stories well. If I was able to accomplish that objective, I believe that the story will be one from which people can borrow to better understand these issues and their pertinence to sound educational practice.

Significance of the Study

To a significant degree, the effectiveness of this study depended upon my ability to help the participants delve into their thoughts and their experiences in ways that evoked new configurations in relation to how they perceived their professional role, their system

of beliefs, and the world at large. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) refer to this component of qualitative research as "*bricolage* … a pieced-together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation" (p. 5). It was this piecing-together that provided the creative moment in the interaction between the participants and me. Some readers might be inclined to diminish this process by labeling it mere philosophical speculation. I would agree that there was a philosophical component that lay within our charge to construct knowledge. However, I would suggest that if the participants and I were successful in this process, the appropriate goal of our coming together was situated not in speculation, but in a call subsumed in the etymology of the word, *philosophy*: "the love of wisdom" (Webster, 1988, p. 882). Achieving a deeper *wisdom*--a deeper "[u]nderstanding of what is true, right or lasting" (p. 1323)--was our challenge in committing ourselves to the constructivist process that stood at the heart of this research study.

Many voices in today's field of education are calling teachers to shift their attention from striving for an increase in their students' knowledge (at least knowledge in the sense of possessing more information) to an increase in their students' wisdom (Astin, 2002; Chickering et al., 2006; Palmer, 1998). With that shift in mind, I have carried my etymological delineation one step further by citing an editorial comment from the same dictionary that was used above, following its definition of the word *educate*:

> It has often been said that *educate* means "to draw out" a person's talents as opposed to putting in knowledge or instruction. This is an interesting idea, but it is not quite true in terms of the etymology of the word. *Educate* comes from Latin *educare*, "to educate," which is derived from a specialized use of Latin *educere* (from *e-*, "out," and *ducere*, "to lead) meaning "to assist at the birth of a child." (Webster, 1988, p. 418)

What a powerful--and for many, what a spiritual--image that derivation suggests for anyone who would be called a teacher; to assist in the birthing of something that is entirely new; bringing into being knowledge that grows from what has been, but in this process of birth comes to have a life, a meaning, all its own. This was the commission, the call, for those who chose to participate in this study: to commit to a mutual process of exploration and disclosure that challenged us to draw from our lives in such a manner as to create a deeper understanding of what is true, right, and lasting. If we were successful in constructing that understanding, I believe we can be a part of helping higher education achieve its promise.

Scope and Limitations

In a previous paragraph, I addressed what many would consider to be the chief limitation of this study: the size and provincialism of the sample population. Obviously, even if I was able to construct a study that is highly transferable (in the qualitative sense, as explained above), some value remains in attending to that criticism. The participants for this study were limited in number and all were selected from one institution of higher learning. Those who read this study will need to keep that consideration in mind as they would the scope and limitations of any study. Information, by its very nature, always is limited. The key element for readers to recall, again, will be that qualitative research is not intended to produce results that are duplicative, but rather to generate results that communicate a rich, descriptive story powerfully and with integrity (Bhattacharya, 2007a). In other words, the success of this research largely will depend upon how well I listened to the participants and how well I have given voice to the many layers of their stories.

As in any study, the crucial question related to the goal of communicating such a story was how much is enough information to produce powerful and integral results. As will be outlined in chapter 3, I gathered data via multiple sources of information, but what helped determine that enough is enough? The factors that helped me to make that determination included the following: (a) discernment that enough information had been gathered to enable the participants and me to move to levels of understanding that we believed were deeper than in our initial processing of the data; (b) this discernment balanced against conscious awareness that, while I hoped to tell the story fully, this study did not have to be, nor could it be, the definitive work on spirituality and teaching; (c) finite limits of time and energy--both my own and that of the participants--that could be given to any one project; (d) finite limits of insight and understanding of which we were capable at this point in time; (e) feedback from others who helped guide the process of this study—namely a peer consultant, and the chairperson and other members of my dissertation committee; and (f) time constraints relative to bringing closure to the degree process in which I was engaged. As I have moved forward on this study, the fact of which I have needed to be most aware was that I could tell only a part of the story, which, when joined with other stories, might make a contribution to the human community becoming more educated and whole.

Perhaps the greatest factor to be considered in attending to the scope and limitations of this study were my own subjectivities in carrying out this research. By subjectivities, I mean my preconceptions and beliefs as those relate both to spirituality and to teaching (Bhattacharya, 2007a). The interest I had in each of those subjects is what led me to this topic, but I had to be careful that my frames of reference did not keep me from hearing

the participants' stories or from telling their stories honestly and completely. Communicating with the participants throughout all phases of the research, consulting with the chair of my committee regarding what I was learning as I proceeded, and meeting with a peer for consultation, were three ways in which I tried to remain consciously aware of the impact that my subjectivities could have on my interpretation and presentation of the data. These subjectivities will be addressed in greater detail in chapter 3.

Organization of the Study

My intention in this chapter has been to provide an introduction and an overview to this study. Employing the framework suggested by Bhattacharya (2007b), the remainder of this paper will be organized in the following manner:

- *Chapter 2* provides a review of literature (substantive, not methodological) that is pertinent to this topic. This presentation includes attention to issues such as what previous writers have said about this topic, the impact that these previous writings have exerted in shaping the conversation within the field of higher education today, what is known and what needs further exploration or clarification, and the place or role of this study in helping to fill the gaps within the present literature on this topic;

- *Chapter 3* presents the methodology that I employed in carrying out this research. This presentation includes attention to issues such as the selection of an epistemology and theoretical framework that are in alignment with the purpose of this study; a review of literature that was used in constructing the methodology; a more detailed presentation of the subjectivities I bring to doing this study; the

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research design, including my selection of participants, data collection procedures, attention to reciprocity and ethical concerns; data analysis; and issues pertinent to the trustworthiness and rigor of the study;

- *Chapter 4* is used to present the findings of the study. In light of the volume of material provided by the seven participants in this study, this chapter is divided into seven sub-sections necessary to capture the amount and diversity of information that constituted the data repository. Attention is given to theoretical and individual substantive constructs. The critical concerns that guided my writing of this chapter were: (a) to tell the stories of the participants faithfully and well; and (b) to demonstrate that the participants and I were able to achieve a deep level of analysis with respect to what we learned.

- *Chapter 5* is used to present my conclusions as well as the implications that I perceive in linking the data to the purpose and the questions on which this research was constructed. Attention is given to how well the study met my objectives and my desire to add to the academic discussion of issues that are addressed in this study, as well as to how well I was able to fill some of the gaps that I identified in the literature. I also discuss in more detail the limitations that deflected or impeded my purpose, and the possibilities for further research that might extend or deepen this conversation. Finally, in concluding this study, I speak to why this topic is of importance to the future of higher education and provide suggestions with respect to that future.

Concluding Remarks

In 1959, Claire Selltiz and her colleagues noted, "social research is a continuing search for truth in which tentative answers lead to a refinement of the questions to which they apply" (Selltiz, Jahoda, Deutsch, & Cook, 1959, p. 23). This study was intended to be part of that search for truth, attempting to refine the questions that might help higher education further the purpose of sound moral reasoning and the building of character among its teachers, its administrators, and its students.

Various theoreticians have used different frameworks and terminology to speak to the issues that pertain to the substance of this study. Palmer (1998) writes about spirituality, Bolman and Deal (1995) about soul, Chickering et al. (2006) about authenticity, and Astin (2002) about values; but a common thread that runs throughout each of these presentations is the importance of re-establishing the role of education in fostering sound moral reasoning and building character among the students it serves.

Bolman and Deal (1995), in their book, *Leading with Soul*, discuss the importance of leaders re-connecting with that which is of seminal importance in life--in the language of Bolman and Deal, "reclaiming their souls" (p. 37)--as a foundation from which their acts of leadership must emanate. In that same sense, I believe that Palmer's (1998) call for good teaching to be rooted in the identity and integrity of the teacher could be interpreted as a call for educators to teach with soul. Thus, this study will attempt to portray the *soul-full* journeys of seven teachers in higher education as they reflect upon their experiences of teaching.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.
(Yeats, n.d. ¶ 1)

In their book, *Leading with Soul*, Bolman and Deal (1995) attempted to redefine the concepts that underlie sound leadership, particularly as exercised in the workplace. The core of that redefinition was rooted in the authors' testament that good leadership is grounded more in the personhood and value system of the leader than in sheer technical knowledge or expertise:

> Perhaps we lost our way when we forgot that the heart of leadership lies in the hearts of leaders. We fooled ourselves, thinking that sheer bravado and or sophisticated analytic techniques could respond to our deepest concerns. We lost touch with a most precious human gift—our spirit.
> To recapture spirit, we need to relearn how to lead with soul….Leading with soul returns us to ancient spiritual basics—reclaiming the enduring human capacity that gives our lives passion and purpose. (p. 6)

Bolman and Deal used the remainder of their text to construct a fable to portray the course of disconnection and alienation that haunts many well-intentioned people on many levels, and the processes of discovery and recovery that can help to reestablish one's place in the workplace, family, society, and (most importantly) within oneself.

A Call for the Renewal of Higher Education

In the field of higher education, there have been similar voices calling for a redefinition of what it means to educate. In her opening remarks for the 1998 national gathering entitled, *EDUCATION as Transformation: Religious Pluralism, Spirituality, and Higher Education*, Diane Chapman Walsh, the president of Wellesley College, stated,

> We seek to envision a whole new place—and space and role—for spirituality in higher education, not as an isolated enterprise on the margins of the academy, not as a new form of institutional repression and social control, but as an essential element of the larger task of reorienting our institutions to respond more adequately to the challenges the world presents us now: challenges to our teaching, to our learning, to our leading, to our lives. (Walsh, 2000, p. 1)

Two years later, several leaders in the field of higher education drafted and signed a position statement adducing action with respect to similar concerns. The opening statement of that document was, "We, the undersigned, believe that higher education offers a unique opportunity for students, faculty, and staff to pursue deeper questions of authenticity and identity, of meaning and purpose, of spirit and spirituality" (Astin et al., 2002, ¶ 1), and later in that same document, the authors wrote, "[W]e believe that our most important contributions to our students, our institutions, our communities, and our nation, flow more from who we are and how we live, than from what we know and preach" (Conflicting Paradigms section, ¶ 2).

Historical Development

One of the ironies of the discussion that surrounds the recent calls for attention to spirituality in higher education is that many academicians have been resistant to such initiatives, seemingly on the grounds of protecting the institution from the corruption of religious influence—this in spite of the fact that much of the early history of formal education developed as a direct result of the efforts of religious organizations. The monasteries of the Middle Ages, the great universities of medieval Europe, and the early American institutions of higher learning all had significant backing of religious organizations that supported learning as a means of building a society and countering forces that were dangerous to the overall culture (Altbach, 2001). Many of the earliest institutions of higher learning in America were established by religious groups and the

influence of those origins endured long after those organizations ceded physical (and

fiscal) control of the institutions (Thelin, 2004). Only with the impact of modernity and

an emphasis on rational empiricism did the centrality of religion in higher education

begin to wane, but once that shift began to occur, the decline was rapid and steep. Much

of the 20th century was characterized by an increased emphasis on scientific rationalism,

secular humanism, and objectivitism in American education, leading Walsh (2000) to

observe,

> But most [universities] did sever themselves almost entirely from their religious
> roots, did split the head from the heart. This split occurred gradually and without
> much fanfare, first to accommodate science, later diversity. Both of these stories
> were played out against a backdrop of industrialization, cultural modernization,
> and professionalization of American society.
>
> Out of these forces emerged our secular national educational culture, which
> gradually eclipsed religious, *and* spiritual, perspectives almost completely in the
> academy with notable exceptions in colleges with especially strong
> denominational ties. Professional scholars felt acutely the need to be autonomous
> and free to pursue their causal claims wherever they might lead, to seek truth
> through confirmation rather than revelation….
>
> But higher education paid dearly for its freedom from these institutional
> constraints. The price was a great suspicion not only of organized religion, but
> more broadly of the spiritual dimension to teaching, learning, and knowing. We
> developed a great fear of granting that we have a place of knowing that comes
> directly from the heart and the soul. (pp. 10-11)

Steven Glazer (1999), in *The Heart of Learning*, made a similar observation regarding

our national educational culture:

> A great irony is that while spiritual indoctrination, in particular, has been banned
> from our classrooms, indoctrination and imposition continue unimpeded. Students
> aren't indoctrinated into religious liturgy but instead into dualism, scientism, and
> most especially consumerism. We have been indoctrinated into a severely limited,
> materially biased worldview.
>
> Rather than learning to nurture and preserve spirit, we learn to manipulate the
> world: to earn, store, and protect wealth. Rather than learning to be sensitive—
> understand and attend to the needs of others—we learn to want, rationalize, and
> do for ourselves. With the rise of a kind of "economic individualism" as our basic
> sense of identity has come the centralization of wealth and power, the loss of the
> commons, and the ravishing [*sic*] of the planet. The fact is, within our schools and

culture, identity is being imposed: not spiritual identity but material identity. (pp. 79-80)

Moving Beyond Objectivism

In recent educational history, it appears that the pendulum has begun to swing back again, perhaps moving toward a balance in the various emphases within education and increasing our overall understanding of knowledge and learning. Arthur Chickering, one of the leaders in higher education in the late 20th, and into the early 21st, century (and one of the authors of the position statement noted earlier), wrote poignantly of the metamorphosis in his own thinking regarding these changes. The quotation that follows is an abridged version of a fairly lengthy presentation of this development in Chickering's (2006) life, included here as an example of how thinking with respect to this topic is changing for many who are invested in strengthening higher education:

> Until I reached about age fifty, I was strongly anchored in rational empiricism. I thought of myself, and in many ways I was, the stereotypical "rational man."...My professional work built on those strengths. It was firmly anchored in my own empirical research and in comprehensive knowledge of pertinent prior and ongoing work by others….In short, I was a good product of, and exemplar of, the Age of Reason. I clearly remember assuming that as reason and research liberated our minds, cultural transformation toward peace, equality, and prosperity would surely follow.
>
> But for me, and for many others, that faith, hope, and promise has waned during the past thirty years. Our cultural transformation, at least in terms of things I value, seems to be on an accelerating downward curve. "Rational man" continues to kill, and to exploit the poor, the "underdeveloped", the less powerful and well organized….Rational man seems bent on using the explosion of new technologies for managing machines and for manipulating information and communication as means to diminish our democracy, deplete and desecrate our environments, and exploit any globally available sources of cheap labor….Thus for me, "rational empiricism" though necessary, is no longer sufficient as a way of knowing, a way of thinking, or a way of being. My soul, the animating force that gives me purpose and meaning, needs to be rooted in something more than simple rationality. (pp. 12-15)

Building on that concern, Chickering collaborated with two colleagues, Jon Dalton and Liesa Stamm, in writing, *Encouraging Authenticity and Spirituality in Higher Education* (2006). In calling for a change in American higher education, they wrote,

> [This book] argues that our almost exclusive emphasis on rational empiricism needs to be balanced by similar concern for other ways of knowing, being, and doing….We also believe that it is important for us to recover our own sense of calling, to recapture our sense of the values and purpose that brought us to our various roles and responsibilities. (p. *xiii*)

The two themes expressed in those remarks lay the foundation for the rest of their text: (a) the need to rediscover and recommit to human aspects of education beyond just technical know-how; and (b) the call to root this recommitment in the values and the personhood of those who are teachers within the system of higher education.

Two other notable educators who signed the position statement mentioned above were Alexander and Helen Astin. A few years earlier, they (as directors of the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles) had conducted a series of dialogues to explore opinions of faculty, students, and educational leaders regarding these types of concerns within higher education. In situating the background for their studies, they observed:

> A movement is emerging in higher education in which many academics find themselves actively searching for meaning and trying to discover ways to make their lives and their institutions more whole. This quest reflects a growing concern with recovering spirituality and meaning in American society more generally. Because of the broad, formative roles that colleges and universities play in our society, higher education represents a critical focal point for responding to this quest….
> *How* one defines his or her spirituality or, if you prefer, sense of meaning and purpose in life, is not the issue. The important point is that academia has for far too long encouraged us to lead fragmented and inauthentic lives, where we act either as if we are *not* spiritual beings, or as if our spiritual side is irrelevant to our vocation or work. Under these conditions, our work becomes divorced from our most deeply felt values, and we hesitate to discuss issues of meaning, purpose, authenticity, wholeness, and fragmentation with our colleagues. At the same time,

we likewise discourage our students from engaging these same issues among themselves and with us. (Astin & Astin, 1999, pp. 1-2)

The sentiment expressed in that last paragraph seems to be the issue that fuels this concern: That the degree of fragmentation and falsity many teachers in higher education experience in their personal and professional identities impedes and corrupts the educational process by which they relate to their students.

Parker Palmer's (1993a) awareness of that kind of fragmentation in his life as an educator led him to write,

> In my own life, the dimensions of that violence eventually became clear. I was distanced and alienated from the world around me; too many parts of it became pawns in my game, valued only for how they might help me win. I worked toward shaping that world in my own image. Sometimes I succeeded—but the results were only temporarily pleasing, since the image in which I was shaping things was that of a distorted, driven self. Sometimes I failed, since the world does not always yield—then the results were anger and even more violent efforts at compelling the world to change. The ultimate outcome for me was growing weariness, withdrawal, and cynicism. What else could result from a way of knowing and living driven mainly by the need for power and deficient in the capacity to love? (p. 4)

And in observing similar patterns in the lives of those with whom he worked, Palmer wrote,

> I call the pain that permeates education "the pain of disconnection". Everywhere I go, I meet faculty who feel disconnected from their colleagues, from their students, and from their own hearts. Most of us go into teaching, not for fame or fortune, but because of a passion to connect. We feel deep kinship with some subject; we want to bring students into that relationship, to link them with the knowledge that is so life-giving to us; we want to work in community with colleagues who share our values and our vocation. But when institutional conditions create more combat than community, when the life of the mind alienates more than it connects, the heart goes out of things, and there is little left to sustain us. (p. *x*)

Too many teachers have experienced the disconnection that is portrayed in those comments. This anomie appears to have become the impetus for a renewal of attention

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concerning: (a) the role and place of spirituality within higher education; and (b) a broader conversation regarding the role and place of higher education within our society. Expanding those horizons a bit further, my review of the topical literature gave me hope that this discussion also may evoke meaningful dialogue concerning: (c) what constitutes meaningful, transformative spirituality; and (d) the role and place of such spirituality in fostering the development of the human community. Thus, attention to this concern in higher education could exercise a vital role in nurturing significant change among the individuals within its span of influence but also an essential function in the transformation of our society as a whole.

The Importance of Spirituality to Higher Education

In addressing the need for teachers in higher education to connect with students in more meaningful ways, Walsh (1999) stated,

> I do know, however -- we all do -- that disaffected, dispirited, and alienated faculty are unlikely to be teaching well, unlikely to be providing our students the inspiration and guidance they need at a time in world history when we need them to be inspired….If the task of a college or university professor is, as I would submit, to inspire students with a love of learning that will companion (maybe even bedevil) them throughout their lives … then surely we want faculty who are themselves on fire with a passion for their work. (¶ 3-4)

My desire to better understand this kind of fire is the factor that inspired the study being described here, particularly as related to the lives of those who choose to accept that mission within higher education. While attention increasingly has been given to this phenomenon over the past 10 to 15 years (as described above), the majority of that work has tended to focus on the needs, attitudes, and experiences of students who are engaged as learners in higher education (Johnson, Kristeller, & Sheets, 2004; Lindholm, 2006). Numerous sources of educational research (and the consequent literature) have articulated

the significant impact that faculty have on multiple realms of students' experiences and attitudes, yet until very recently, there has been little empirical exploration of the impact that faculty have in responding to the spiritual needs of students. Over the past 5 years, the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), with the assistance of the Templeton Foundation, has taken the leadership in attempting to fill some of that void with three studies: the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey*; *Spirituality in Higher Education: A National Study of College Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose*; and *Spirituality and the Professoriate: A National Study of Faculty Attitudes, Experiences, and Behaviors* (HERI, n.d.).

For over 40 years (since 1966), HERI has administered to incoming college freshmen a rather comprehensive research instrument. This tool, entitled the *Cooperative Institutional Research Program* (CIRP) survey, has been used to collect a wealth of demographic information regarding college students in America. In 2003, with the intent of focusing more explicitly on issues related to religion and spirituality, HERI conducted a longitudinal follow-up of students who had taken the CIRP survey in the year 2000. This follow-up survey was entitled the *College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey* (CSBV), and it was administered to approximately 3,700 third-year college students at 46 diverse four-year colleges and universities (Lindholm, 2006). The CSBV survey demonstrated that while there had been a decline in interest in religion among college students, significant numbers of third-year college students still indicated concern for the spiritual dimensions of their lives. The results of the CSBV indicated that, "77% [of those surveyed] agree that 'we are all spiritual beings'; 71% 'gain spiritual strength by trusting in a higher power; and 58% indicate that 'integrating spirituality into their lives is ' very

important' or 'essential'" (Lindholm, 2006, p. 83). In further describing the outcomes of this study, Lindholm stated,

> Regardless of their faith, or lack thereof, students tended to view spirituality as an integral, "every day" part of one's life that encompasses "emotional feelings" and an "individual connection" to "an intangible something larger than yourself" a "power beyond man [*sic*]. Religion on the other hand, was commonly perceived as focusing more on "group concerns" and "doctrinal points" and conjured up for many students the image of a place where people may go to worship on a regular, or occasional, basis. Nearly all participants across institutional types agreed with the sentiment that people can be spiritual without considering themselves religious. (p. 85)

In regard to students' developmental processes in their college years, Lindholm (2006) observed: that a substantial number of third-year college students, "felt that their spiritual and religious beliefs have helped them develop their identity (73%), while two-thirds said that their beliefs give meaning and purpose to their lives (67%)" (p. 87); "[T]here also was a recurrent theme of wanting to 'figure out' personal perspectives in relative independence of any proscribed set of beliefs" (p. 87); "Some of the students … interviewed were also struggling with reconciling the teachings of their religion with their own evolution of beliefs" (p. 88); "A related struggle for many students [was] reconciling a perceived conflict between personal needs and faith expectation" (p. 88); and "With respect to long-range spiritual goals, most interview participants aspired to establishing a more readily accessible connection with their spirituality and to building lives in which they balance well their multiple, and sometimes seemingly conflicting, roles and responsibilities" (p. 90).

Finally, Lindholm (2006) reported that the results of the CSBV survey indicate that the response of universities and colleges to these students' needs (as measured by the opinions of the student population) has not been strong:

> [M]ore than half (56%) say that their professors never provide opportunities to discuss the meaning and purpose of life. Similarly, nearly two-thirds (62%) say that their professors never encourage discussions of spiritual or religious matters. Moreover, while 39% say their religious or spiritual beliefs have been strengthened by "new ideas encountered in class", 53% report that their classroom experiences have had no impact on this dimension of their lives. Overall, just 55% are satisfied with how their college experience has provided "opportunities for religious/spiritual reflection." (p. 97)

Four years later, the CSBV was used by HERI as a pilot study for the development of another instrument, entitled *Spirituality in Higher Education: A National Study of College Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose* (Students' Search, n.d.). This research tool was a more comprehensive questionnaire than the CSBV and was administered to 112,000 incoming freshmen in the fall of 2004 at 236 institutions, after which a follow-up study was administered to 15,000 of those students in the spring of 2007 in an attempt to measure changes in the students' spiritual development (Students' Search, n.d.). The results of that follow-up survey have not yet been distributed to the public. As a correlate to the student surveys, the *Spirituality and the Professoriate: A National Study of Faculty Attitudes, Experiences, and Behaviors* survey was administered to 65,000 college and university faculty members at 511 institutions during the 2004-05 academic year, and those results have been published (Astin, 2006, ¶ 2).

The faculty survey demonstrated that a substantial majority of higher education faculty considered themselves to be spiritual persons (80%) and more than two-thirds expressed an interest in "developing a meaningful philosophy of life" (Astin et al., n.d., Findings section, ¶ 1). Over two-thirds (70%) of the faculty described themselves as religious "to a great extent", but over one-tenth (13%) indicated that they were not religious at all (Astin et al., n.d., Findings section, ¶1). Despite the high numbers of faculty who indicated a high affinity for spiritual and/or religious concepts with respect to

their own lives, those percentages decreased significantly when applied to their opinions about bringing these issues into the classroom. When asked if colleges should concern themselves with "facilitating students' spiritual development", only 30% agreed (Astin et al., n.d., Findings section, ¶ 2).

Astin (2006) noted that in constructing this survey, HERI developed a spirituality scale intended to help differentiate the responses of those who consider spirituality important from those who do not. He stated that those faculty who scored high on this scale were much more likely to display a positive outlook about their work and their life (59% as compared to 36% for those who scored low on the spirituality scale) (¶ 10). Lindholm and Astin (2006) added to that observation,

> [T]he study's findings suggest that spiritual faculty are more likely than their non-spiritual counterparts to exhibit characteristics that resonate well with the public's ever evolving expectations for higher education….Generally speaking, faculty who are spiritual view the importance of students' personal development to be equal to that of intellectual and career development. In other words, they have a more holistic view of undergraduate education as it pertains to student development. (p. 82)

Astin (2006) also noted that those who scored high on the spirituality scale were more likely to "support the use of 'student-centered' pedagogical approaches (cooperative learning, group projects, and reflective writing) and that they also place[d] a premium on enhancing students' Civic-Minded Values (community service, citizenship)" (¶ 11). In regard to these pedagogical considerations, Lindholm and Astin (2006) stated,

> One challenge that faculty face in facilitating less well-studied and understood aspects of student development is in identifying the pedagogical tools that are most useful in achieving desired outcomes. A related challenge for faculty is developing the personal expertise to use these potentially new teaching and evaluations methods effectively. (p. 83)

The same authors in a later article used the phraseology of Robertson (2005, p. 181) to comment on the changes these forms of education will mean, not just for students, but for teachers as well:

> Implementing student-centered pedagogies means more, however, than simply introducing new teaching methods that portray an increased emphasis on student's interests, backgrounds, and learning styles. Such pedagogical methods also imply a fundamental shift in the role of teachers, whereby they no longer see themselves solely— or even primarily—as "disseminators of knowledge" but rather "construe themselves to be facilitators of student learning." (Lindholm & Astin, 2008, p. 188)

In discussing their conclusions regarding the faculty survey, Lindholm and Astin (2008) indicated, "Findings for the present study reinforce the notion that the teaching methods faculty elect to use reflect who they are and what they believe" (p. 198). They went on to state that this is an important finding because "faculty attitudes and behaviors are known to have important consequences for student development…. As the primary adult agents of socialization in the college environment, faculty have the ability to impact student experiences and outcomes both positively and negatively" (p. 199). With an eye toward the broader role that faculty play within the structures of higher education, Lindholm and Astin opined that,

> [T]he values and beliefs of college and university faculty represent the fundamental standards by which institutional decisions are made and priorities are set. Consequently, faculty play a central role in shaping both the culture and the climate of their institutions. By extension, their values lie at the heart of higher education's capacity to change. (p. 199)

While the HERI studies provide an invaluable contribution to any discussion of the place of spirituality in higher education, and while the investigators have done a remarkable job of gathering a huge amount of pertinent information, I believe the studies are limited in one significant aspect by their primary format, that being the use primarily

of quantitative measures to evaluate concepts such as spirituality, purpose, and meaning. Quantitative measures can make a significant contribution to the discussion of these concepts, especially by operationalizing the terms being used, but in that specificity, this form of measurement also necessarily limits the discussion by constraining the ways in which respondents can reply. As skilled as the investigators were in the construction of these instruments, the fixed regimen of questions posed, and the options available to participants in responding to those questions, could not possibly cover the gamut of human experience embraced in terms like spirituality, authenticity, and soul. Hence, I chose to use qualitative research as the method for this study, hoping to provide a forum in which the participants would be able to speak expansively about how they apply these constructs in giving meaning to their choices and their acts as teachers in higher education. Qualitative research has its own limits in its ability to fully tell any story, but its constraints are different than those posed by quantitative measures, and thus, it is worth employing as another lens through which to view the questions being raised in the unfolding discussion about the place of spirituality in higher education.

A Call for Transformation

In his 1994 book, *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*, Robert Kegan (whose work will be addressed in more detail later in this chapter) stated that education and learning are about more than the accumulation of information. True learning occurs via *transformation*. The visual image that Kegan used to communicate this concept was that of the human mind as a receptacle. In this image, however, learning is not attained via pouring more and more information into a rigid container; rather the receptacle itself is changed in the process of learning. In other words, as transformation

occurs in our learning, the nature and form of our minds change as we make choices about the information that we imbibe. Kegan, in describing this process in regard to an example in his book (thus, his use solely of male pronouns), stated that transformative learning occurs when a person changes "not just the way he behaves, not just the way he feels, but the way he knows—not just what he knows but the *way* he knows" (p. 17). In a later book, Kegan and his colleague, Lisa Lahey (2001), extended this concept beyond the individual to organizational transformation. With that in mind, I believe it is important to note that while this study attended to the transformative processes that have shaped the spirituality and teaching philosophies of seven specific teachers, it is grounded in the broader transformation that is occurring within the institution of higher education itself.

In demonstrating how difficult conversation about these issues can be on today's college campus, Walsh (2000) cited the example of her own campus in the late 1990s, when the Dean of Religious and Spiritual Life, Victor Kazanjian, attempted to initiate a discussion with the faculty regarding the spiritual dimensions of their work. Initially, "he was stymied by what felt like an insurmountable gulf between the language of the academy—cool, distancing, objectifying, critical, assertive, authoritative (loud often), and the personal, sometimes tentative and halting, inchoate (and often quiet) language of the spirit" (p. 11). That response, however, was completely reversed when the dean invited students to identify specific "moments of meaning" (p. 11) in their learning experiences and then invited the respective professors associated with those incidents to join a discussion concerning how such meaning-full moments related to teaching and learning.

Of the 59 faculty the dean originally had invited to join the discussions of spirituality, 55 presented and shared generously in the ensuing discussions of meaning-making.

That scenario portrays some of the difficulties that might have impeded this study. Although I initially was cautious about considering spirituality as a viable topic for a dissertation in a public higher education setting, I was encouraged by my exploration of reading materials regarding this subject, and I was heartened that the institution of higher education may provide a broad, inclusive backdrop for exploring these issues in a way not encumbered by religiosity and parochialism. As suggested earlier, definitions of the concepts around which this study were designed can be elusive. The topic of spirituality is a difficult one to discuss because the term's meaning can be vague and so often is conditioned by experiences and pre-conceptions that can make discourse awkward and disjointed. The same might be said for other terms that often are aligned with the concept of spirituality—terms such as: authenticity, meaning, integrity, identity, calling, and purpose. And the value-component that is inherent in such terms raises concerns about which (and whose) values are to be promulgated (Colby, 2000). These are legitimate concerns; ones to which we must attend if there is any hope of promoting honest discourse.

That caution being noted, however, there still is a need to communicate about such principles and to do so with as much clarity as possible if higher education hopes to respond to the needs of the human community. In chapter 1, I employed a broad definition of the term, spirituality, provided by Astin as related to the studies that the Higher Education Research Institute conducted among students and faculty members involved in post-secondary education. That definition, I believe, is a good one in helping

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to alleviate fears regarding proselytism or the imposition of particular religious constructs or doctrinal tenets, but there is value in looking at the various ways in which other academicians have chosen to speak about this concern.

One of the strongest proponents for reestablishing the place of spirituality in higher education has been Parker Palmer. Most of his books and articles are not long, but they are well-stated and consistent in their advocacy on this issue. Palmer asserts various descriptions of what he means in raising this concern. In one of his early works, he opined, "[E]very mode of education, no matter what its name, is a mode of soul-making….all forms of teaching and learning are forms of spiritual formation, or deformation" (Palmer, 1993b, ¶ 5), and in a piece done at about that same time,

> [W]e soon see that our response to any given moment depends primarily on what is happening inside of us—and on how we diagnose what is happening inside our students—and only secondarily on the methods at our command. Good teaching depends less on technique than it does on the human condition of the teacher, and only by knowing the truth of our own condition can we hope to know the true condition of our students. (1994, Human Condition section, ¶ 1)

It is this interior condition that Palmer identifies as one's spirituality, and he situates that condition in relation to how one extends one's life to the human community. In his book, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, Palmer (1998) wrote,

> Good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness….The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts—meaning heart in its ancient sense, as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self. (p. 11)

He expressed similar sentiments in a later piece, "Spirituality is the eternal human yearning to be connected with something larger than our own egos" (Palmer, 2003, p.

377). In that article, he went on to discuss a "pedagogy of the soul" (p. 382) that helps

people "rejoin 'soul and role'" (p. 382) in the choices they make about their engagement

with the world.

Chickering et al. (2006), in crafting their text, were careful to demonstrate respect for

those whose humanistic orientations make them cautious of religious language.

Nonetheless, they acknowledged the work of Teasdale (1999) whose definition of

spirituality helped inform their own thinking. Teasdale made the following distinctions in

his use of the words *religion* and *spirituality*:

> Being religious connotes belonging to and practicing a religious tradition. Being
> spiritual suggests a personal commitment to a process of inner development that
> engages us in our totality. Religion, of course, is one way many people are
> spiritual. Often, when authentic faith embodies an individual's spirituality the
> religious and the spiritual will coincide. Still, not every religious person is
> spiritual (although they ought to be) and not every spiritual person is religious.
> Spirituality is a way of life that affects and includes every moment of existence. It
> is at once a contemplative attitude, a disposition to a life of depth, and the search
> for ultimate meaning, direction, and belonging. The spiritual person is committed
> to growth as an essential ongoing life goal. To be spiritual requires us to stand on
> our own two feet while being nurtured and supported by our tradition, if we are
> fortunate enough to have one. (pp. 17-18)

Chickering et al. (2006) capitalized on the delineations provided by Teasdale to situate

their own understanding of the key terms that they used in addressing this concern,

spirituality and *authenticity*:

> These definitions of spirituality and authenticity imply that these domains
> intimately interact with other major vectors of human development: integrity,
> identity, autonomy and interdependence, meaning and purpose. Striving for
> integrity—for a life where word and deed, word and word, deed and deed, are
> consistent with a personally owned value structure, over time and across varied
> contexts—is critical for spiritual integrity and growth … Our interdependencies
> depend on our capacity to identify with something larger than our own self-
> interest. Ultimately, it is our character, our purposes, and the values inherent in
> the way we live these out in our daily lives, that express our spirituality as "a way
> of life that affects and includes every moment of existence." (p. 9)

Other educational leaders have weighed in on this issue, asserting their own

emphases in how they define the term spirituality. Lindholm and Astin (2006) in writing

about the results of the study that was done by the Higher Education Research Institute,

described the term in this manner:

> At its core, spirituality involves the internal process of seeking personal
> authenticity, genuineness, and wholeness; transcending one's locus of centricity;
> developing a greater sense of connectedness to self and others through
> relationships and community; deriving meaning, purpose, and direction in life;
> being open to exploring a relationship with a higher power that transcends human
> existence and human knowing; and valuing the sacred. (p. 65)

And Kazanjian (1998), as a result of his interactions with the students and faculty at

Wellesley College (described by Walsh earlier in this chapter), "settled on a definition of

spirituality in education as that which animates the mind and body, giving meaning,

purpose, and context to thought, word, and action—or more simply, the meaning-making

aspect of learning" (¶ 4).

Love and Talbot (1999), in *Defining Spiritual Development: A Missing

Consideration for Student Affairs*, synthesized a number of definitions of spirituality

taken from the literature of theology, social science, and other helping fields (for

example, nursing, counseling, social work). In that synthesis they asserted that

spirituality: (a) is an internal process of seeking personal authenticity, genuineness, and

wholeness as an aspect of identity development; (b) is the process of continually

transcending one's current locus of centricity (for example, egocentricity); (c) is the

development of a greater connectedness to self and others through relationships and

union with community; (d) is the process of deriving meaning, purpose, and direction in

one's life; and (e) involves an increasing openness to exploring a relationship with an

intangible and pervasive power or essence or center of value that exists beyond human existence and rational human knowing (pp. 364-367).

Finally, Carney Strange (2000), who worked with the Campus Study Group on Spiritual Growth at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) stated, "Our focus is not on any particular religious belief or faith system, but rather with the nature of spiritual questions served by them. We understand spirituality as an ongoing process of meaning making about the whole of life and its relationship to ultimate purposes" (The Case of Bowling Green State section, ¶ 1). Strange went on to explicate the concept of spirituality by listing the types of questions the committee used to assess the spiritual needs of their students. These questions were logged under one of three broad headings:

- *Questions of self-definition and understanding*: Of what worth and value am I? How can I be a better person? What are my hopes and fears? What is real, authentic, true, and genuine in my life? What inspires me? How do I experience pain, loss, and suffering? What creates a sense of balance and wholeness in my life? What is sacred? How do I experience silence, peace, and tranquility?

- *Concerns about relationships with others*: To whom and to what do I belong, am attached, or connected? How do I experience community in life? What does it mean to be faithful? How have I experienced love and intimacy? How have I experienced forgiveness? How have I experienced justice and mercy?

- *Fundamental questions of purpose and direction*: Are there greater purposes in life? What compels and orients me in life? Where is my journey or path leading? For what or whom would I be willing to die? Who and what guides me? To whom and to what am I committed in life? Whom and what do I serve? What does it

mean to live a good and moral life? What do I reflect upon and imagine? Is there

life beyond death? What creates a sense of awe and mystery for me? (The Case of

Bowling Green State section, ¶ 4)

The questions used by the BGSU study group demonstrate the range, the direction,

and the importance of the types of concerns that theoreticians attach to the subject of this

study. Similarly, Walsh (1999), after identifying numerous academicians who are shaping

the field of education today, averred:

> Each of these works is a very different analysis; each has its own distinct
> perspective, its own point of departure, sets its own intellectual task. Yet, when
> they are taken together, what is striking is that each in its own way is doing one of
> two things, sometimes both: either arguing back to first principles -- digging
> under the surface of convocation rhetoric to deeper questions of purpose and
> meaning -- and/or rediscovering how profoundly the professor's inner life -- the
> professor's identity, integrity, and engagement -- color and shape the learning
> encounter. (Finding Coherence, Meaning, and Purpose section, ¶8)

These concepts are the core of what I wanted to address with the participants in this

study—how the inner life of these teachers has nurtured the connection they experience

with their students in the processes of learning, how they perceive these connections to

have created experiences of meaning and transformation in the lives of their students, and

how these experiences of transformation have fed their own sense of meaning with

respect to the ways in which they serve the human community.

Frameworks for Meaning-Making

Numerous frames of reference may be helpful in making sense of what I learn in

studying the teachers who will participate in this study. It is hard to know which of these

will be most pertinent until I have heard the participants tell their stories and we have had

multiple opportunities to talk about the meanings they attach to those stories. As

indicated earlier, it is important that I have a framework that establishes boundaries for

the study, but much of the information gathered in the course of doing the research will depend on the concepts that the participants bring to this process. In the terminology of Peter Senge, the *mental models* that shape the beliefs and attitudes of these teachers will play a huge role in how they think about teaching and spirituality, in how they have constructed the materials for their courses, in what methods they use to engage their students in learning, in how they hear the questions that I pose, in how they think about their responses to those questions, and in how they relate with me in the process of these dialogues (Senge, 1990, pp. 174-204).

Senge (1990) used the term, mental models, to connote the preconceptions, assumptions, and filters through which people experience and view the world. Most people are aware of some of the mental models that shape their worldview, but many of these preconceptions, assumptions, and filters operate powerfully on sub-conscious levels unless brought to the surface in some kind of process of self-exploration and disclosure. In this study, it was important that these models--my own and those of the participants-- be addressed, but not with the intent of diminishing or eliminating them (as might be the goal in some forms of research). Rather, in moving more deeply into an understanding of our mental models, as related to teaching and spirituality, the participants and I were able to engage in the construction of new knowledge.

Parker Palmer, who has been careful to differentiate between the concepts of spirituality and religion, nonetheless has been open about the impact his own religious background has had in shaping his spirituality. Attention to such frames of reference (mental models) will be important for those who advocate the importance of spirituality in education. Writing on the topic of human vocation, Palmer (2000) stated that as human

beings, "Our deepest calling is to grow into our authentic selfhood … (and) as we do so, we will not only find the joy that every human being seeks—we will also find our path of authentic service in the world" (p. 16). Later in the same text he continued,

> The world still waits for the truth that will set us free--my truth, your truth, our truth--the truth that was seeded in the earth when each of us arrived here formed in the image of God. Cultivating that truth, I believe, is the authentic vocation of every human being. (p. 36)

That vocation is what has drawn me to this consideration of how spirituality informs one's teaching philosophy. For me spirituality is related to fully becoming oneself, and that becoming happens within the human community of which we are part. In the words of Karen Armstrong (2004):

> I have discovered that the religious quest is not about discovering "the truth" or "the meaning of life" but about living as intensely as possible in the here and now. The idea is not to latch on to some superhuman personality or to "get to heaven" but to discover how to be fully human…. Men and women have a potential for the divine, and are not complete unless they realize it within themselves. (pp. 270-271)

That potential for the divine realized within us--that becoming fully human--is the core of what I believe about spirituality, and has been my impetus for wanting to explore these issues further. In doing so, I note that *becoming* implies some form of process, some type of development, which is the reason I wanted to employ various models of development as a means of giving shape to the ways in which the participants and I have thought about the stories they shared.

Three of the primary frameworks I used in understanding the experiences that the participants discussed are the developmental systems that were initially outlined by William Perry (cognitive development), James Fowler (faith development), and Robert

Kegan (cognitive development) respectively. Other theoreticians have added to the work of these three educators, but my initial points of reference were the theoretical models that were developed by Perry, Fowler, and Kegan.

After many years of teaching and counseling students at Harvard University, William Perry (1970/1999) collected his learning in the articulation of a scheme intended to outline the cognitive developmental stages through which students pass as a result of their college experiences. Even though college students made up the sample population that was studied in the construction of this scheme, the model incorporating these stages of cognitive development has been applied to much broader and diverse populations. Perry's model identifies nine positions that occur as an individual develops his or her cognitive abilities, but these nine positions often are collapsed into four basic stages of development:

- *Dualism*. This stage is characterized by polar ways of thinking—good/bad; right/wrong— what often is referred to as black/white thinking. People at this stage in their thought processes tend to view and judge the world from the extreme end of what they perceive to be dichotomous realities, often in expressed opposition to their perception of the other pole. In this stage of thought, learning is an accumulation of knowledge that lies outside oneself; answers reside in those who are perceived to be in positions of authority; and gray areas are not tolerated.

- *Multiplicity*. Some theoreticians consider this stage to be a variation of dualism in that knowledge still is grasped from outside oneself and understood in quantitative measures. On the other hand, this stage marks a 180º shift from Dualism in the aspect of moving from a rigid intolerance of divergent positions to

what many would consider an over-acceptance of multiple alternatives – the

learner readily endorsing multiple alternatives and tending to ascribe equal

validity to each or them. People in this stage of cognitive development are much

more tolerant of diverse views, but they feel no compunction to support opinions

with facts and tend to operate from a stance that all opinions are of equal validity.

- *Relativism*. This stage marks a radical shift in how one processes information,

  replacing quantitative measures with qualitative ways of knowing. The focus

  becomes not how much one knows, but the quality of one's thought. The learner

  in this stage of development is comfortable with a variety of perspectives but now

  is able to view these in a relational manner that rewards some positions with

  greater sanction. One develops an appreciation for context and the ability to apply

  its impact in regard to one's thinking about issues, and though multiple

  perspectives still are acknowledged, the person's ability to exercise moral

  differentiation gives some positions greater merit than others.

- *Commitment*. This stage is characterized by the learner's ability to make choices

  and to act—even in the midst of uncertainty. A person in this stage of

  development is able to view the broad range of perspectives that may be pertinent

  to an issue or a decision, and choose a course of action. This individual has a

  much higher tolerance for ambiguity and paradox than is true for learners in any

  of the earlier stages of development. While this stage accentuates one's ability to

  commit to a course of action, the nature of this commitment does not portend

  finality rooted in premature or immature resolution of complex issues. Rather the

learner commits to an ongoing process of development that is established as a

foundational element of his or her ongoing growth.

In 1986, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, in their book, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*, added a significant amendment to Perry's work after noting that the sample for his study had been entirely male. They studied an all- female sample and, based on their observations of this group, created a scheme of cognitive development processes somewhat similar to the one that had been crafted by Perry, but distinctive in its own right. Their scheme included five stages of development:

- *Silence*. These individuals exhibited low levels of cognitive development that appeared to be rooted in experiences of deprivation on many levels. They tended to have little sense of self and looked to authority figures for their sense of identity. They had little ability to speak for themselves and seemed to accept sex-role stereotyping that left them stuck in submissive or subservient positions.

- *Received Knowledge*. This stage was recognized as similar to Perry's *Dualism*. These individuals had more of a sense of voice about their lives than did those in the *Silence* stage, but they still looked to others for their sense of identity. Knowledge still was perceived to come from outside oneself, and moral arbitration tended to be characterized by black-and-white thinking.

- *Subjective Knowing*. Individuals in this stage of development were characterized by their ability to find knowledge within their own experiences. These individuals tended to be more intuitive and self-reliant. Part of what seemed to have brought many of them to this way of knowing was an experience in which they had made

a dramatic break with their past and, now, they seemed to be resolute in pressing forward with their lives.

- *Procedural Knowing*. These individuals tended to be more reflective than those in previous stages. They were more tolerant of a range of opinions but tended to weigh those positions in a pragmatic manner in their efforts to arrive at a position of their own. The theoreticians split this stage into two sub-categories: *Separate Knowing* for those who tend to evaluate positions in a practical manner from outside the situation; and *Connected Knowing* for those who give more sanction to the affective realm and tend to evaluate positions from an empathetic perspective.

- *Constructive Knowing*. As the name suggests, As the name suggests, this stage was characterized by a more constructivist approach to knowing; in other words, knowledge comes from within and the learner is involved in shaping what becomes known. Individuals in this stage were much more attentive to context, as well as being more tolerant of ambiguity and contradictions, and they were involved more actively in the seeking of knowledge and personal growth.

Belenky and her colleagues (1986) were careful to assert that their model was not intended to compete with that of Perry; rather they intended their formulation to complement (to make more complete) Perry's work. They also asserted that, although Perry's sample was male and theirs female, the stages identified in the respective formulations were not strictly gender-specific.

James Fowler (1981) in his book, *Stages of Faith: the Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, moved beyond cognitive development to look

at stages of faith development that occur over the course of an individual's lifetime. He identified six stages, preceded by what he called a pre-stage experienced in one's infancy.

- *Pre-stage – Undifferentiated Faith.* Aspects of faith that are characteristic of this pre-stage are the basic trust and mutuality of relationships on which infants rely in regard to their primary caregivers. The deficiencies that may occur include a failure of mutuality, either in the form of excessive narcissism or neglect that leads to patterns of isolation and a failed sense of mutuality. The transition to the first real stage comes with the development of language and its convergence with the child's thought.

- *Stage 1 – Intuitive-Projective Faith.* This stage most often is observed in children between the ages of three to seven. It is characterized by fluid thought patterns, unrestrained imagination, and the ability to hold images related to that imagination. It also is the stage in which the person first experiences awareness of oneself. The possible deficiencies related to this stage could be extreme and destructive imaginational patterns of thought. The transition to the next stage begins with the development of concrete operational thought patterns.

- *Stage 2 – Mythic-Literal Faith.* People in this stage of development exhibit the ability to distinguish between reality and make-believe. Stories become important vessels in which the individual can make sense of his or her experience, and the ability to understand others' perspectives is the origins of a sense of morality that is based in justice and fairness rooted in reciprocation. The deficiencies of this stage include exaggerated control that takes the form of either excessive perfectionism or shame. The transition to the next stage begins with the need to

try to reconcile contradictions in stories that have become important to the individual's way of viewing the world.

- *Stage 3 – Synthetic-Conventional Faith*. This stage calls for the person to expand his or her worldview beyond the family, which immediately increases the range and complexity of involvements. Beliefs and values are felt deeply, but this occurs more in the sense of the person dwelling within those beliefs than in having those beliefs. The person is consumed in his or her ideology but without objective examination of the elements of that ideology. This stage is predominant among adolescents. However, it also is the stage at which many adults find a place of stasis such that they do not continue on to other stages of faith development. The deficiencies of the stage are internalization of the expectations of others or an over-reaction to what is perceived as interpersonal betrayal. Transition to the next stage of development usually begins with some type of contradiction between valued sources of authority or marked changes in one's life that evoke a re-evaluation of one's value system.

- *Stage 4 – Individuative-Reflective Faith*. In the transition to this stage, the individual begins to take responsibility for his or her lifestyle and beliefs. The person claims a self not defined by the expectations of others and attends to the composition of a frame of meaning that supports that identity. The strength of this stage is an increased ability to consciously reflect on one's identity and worldview. Transition to the next stage begins with a restlessness with the images one has constructed and a willingness to move toward a more diverse, multi-leveled approach to truth.

- *Stage 5 – Conjunctive Faith.* In this stage, the individual attempts to piece together a system of belief that is consistent with reality in all of its ambiguity and paradox. This person is comfortable enough within his or her self to extend one's belief system beyond the self. This person is open to other cultures and traditions, realizing that truth is always partial and that there always is more that one can learn. The strength of this position is the openness one has to multiple forms of truth. Transition to the final stage of development, when that occurs, begins with a sense of call to root one's transforming vision for the world in action to achieve that vision.

- *Stage 6 – Universalizing Faith.* The movement to this stage does not occur with great frequency. People who attain this level of development radically commit themselves to the fulfillment of the human community. These individuals may appear to be subversive in that they concern themselves, not with security and survival, but with the transformation of the future of the human community. Fowler (1981) offers the names of Mohandas Ghandi, Martin Luther King, and Mother Teresa of Calcutta as examples of people he feels have achieved this stage of development.

Though few people (in Fowlers' estimation) attain this final stage of development, its characteristics are worth noting because this stage brings closure to his scheme of development and, on some level, suggests the fulfillment of the developmental processes in which we all are engaged. With that in mind, Fowler's (1981) close of this section is worth attending:

> The bearers of Stage 6 faith, whether they stand in the Jewish, Christian or other traditions, embody in radical ways this leaning into the future of God for all

being. I have noticed that whenever I speak on the stages of faith and try to describe the structural features and style of each stage, it is always Stage 6 that people are most interested in. The more "secular" the audience, the greater the interest. I ask myself, What is it about those people best described by Stage 6 that enlivens our excitement and draws us out of our embeddedness in the present and the past? What is it about these persons that both condemns our obsession with our own security and awakens our taste and sense for the promise of human futurity? I believe that these persons kindle our imaginations in these ways because in their generosity and authority, in their freedom and their costly love, they embody the promise and lure of our shared futurity. These persons embody costly openness to the power of the future. They actualize its promise, creating zones of liberation and sending shock waves to rattle the cages that we allow to constrict human futurity. Their trust in the power of that future and their trans-narcissistic love of human futurity account for their readiness to spend and be spent in making the Kingdom actual. (pp. 210-211)

Another theoretician to whose work I am drawn in this consideration of developmental schemes is the work of Robert Kegan (1994). Out of his background as a developmental psychologist, he too formulates a scheme of development, describing orders of consciousness rather than stages of development. These *orders of consciousness* involve the dimensions of one's ability to think about and act on his or her experiences of the world. Kegan identifies five orders of consciousness and states that each of these is characterized by particular ways of making meaning and an increased complexity in one's ability to process his or her experience of the environment:

- *Independent Elements* (Experienced generally in children ages two - six). This dimension is characterized by attachment to the immediate, thought processes that are illogical, feelings that are constantly shifting, and relationships experienced from an egocentric position.

- *Durable Categories* (Experienced generally in children ages seven - teen years). This dimension is typified by the person's ability to organize one's environment,

to think logically and concretely, to be less impulsive in one's feeling life, and an increased ability to recognize and accept others as having different points of view.

- *Cross-categorical* (Experienced generally in one's teen years - adulthood). This dimension is observed in the ability to subordinate aspects of one's structure of order, an increased ability to think abstractly, the experience of self-reflexive emotions, and commitment to a stance of loyalty to a community and/or to ideas larger than oneself.

- *System/complex* (Experienced generally in adulthood). Movement to this dimension from the third order is the major developmental shift that occurs in adulthood. This dimension is characterized by an ability to think abstractly. This individual is more conscious of, and more able to manage, multiple roles, and is much more able to take responsibility for choices that shape one's life.

- *Trans-system/Trans-complex* (Experienced generally in adulthood, but rarely prior to mid-life). This dimension is observed in the ability to understand dialectics within oneself and the institutions of which one is part. This individual is much more in touch with ways in which she or he shares in others' lives—not from outside, but as part of the same transpersonal reality. This person discovers connection with others in place of what used to appear as differences. Therefore, this person is high in empathy and a commitment to the broader human community.

In introducing this scheme, Kegan (1994) outlined five principles that underlie and guide one's movement from one order of consciousness to the next. Kegan characterizes these passages as *transformative* (as described earlier in this chapter) and applies the

following principles to his description of these processes (a) These dimensions are broader than cognitive processes; rather they embrace meaning-construction as experienced in thought, emotion, and relationships; (b) These dimensions speak to the form, not the content, of this meaning-construction; (c) As one moves along the spectrum of development, that which earlier was subject becomes object, and thus can be acted upon in moving to a new stage of consciousness; (d) As one moves along the spectrum of development, the higher form of consciousness subsumes the previous dimensions; in other words, such growth is "transformative, qualitative, and incorporative" (p. 33); and (e) What we take as subject and what we take as object are not permanent designations. It is, in fact, the ability to move things from subject to object that enables cognitive, emotional, and relational growth to occur.

One final articulate voice that needs mention is the work of Sharon Parks. Although she has not promulgated a developmental scheme with the degree of detail of those outlined above, she is an excellent synthesizer who has drawn from each of the schemes that I have mentioned and one who has addressed these attentions to the higher education community. In her book, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (2000), Parks states that "We reserve the word *faith* for meaning-making in its most comprehensive dimensions" (p. 20), and then goes on to speak of faith development as the central aspect of spiritual development. She argues,

> All human beings compose and dwell in some conviction of what is *ultimately* true, real, dependable within the largest frame imaginable. Human beings, either unself-consciously or self-consciously, individually and together, compose a sense of the ultimate character of reality and then stake out lives on that sense of things. (p. 20)

Parks' (2000) work will be helpful in this study due to her attention to the

developmental processes in which college students are engaged and the unique role that

faculty, in their role as *mentors* (pp. 127-157), play in facilitating responsible

development. In commenting on the role of higher education, Parks writes,

> [H]igher education and professional education is distinctively vested with the
> responsibility of teaching critical and systemic thought and initiating young lives
> into a responsible apprehension first of the realities and questions of a vast and
> mysterious universe and second of our participation it. Higher education is
> intended to serve as a primary site of inquiry, reflection, and cultivation of
> knowledge and understanding on behalf of the wider culture. As such, institutions
> of higher education hold a special place in the story of human development,
> particularly in the process of becoming a young adult in faith. (p. 10)

Parks (2000) acknowledged that students likely will be exposed to various mentors in

the course of their college experience. Some of these will be teachers; some will be adults

who interact with students in other capacities. No matter the formal role definition, these

mentors can be encouraged in the passage Parks used to close her text:

> Self-conscious practices of interdependence and a renewed consciousness of the
> commons are perhaps the most significant strengths that a mature culture has to
> offer to a young adult world. Consciousness of the wholeness—the holiness—of
> life confirms the lives of young adults while inviting participation in
> commitments beyond mere self-interest, narrowly defined. In our political life, the
> press toward profound recognition of the interdependent reality in which we dwell
> is evident in issues of inclusion and entitlement, and growing ecological
> awareness. Though these issues ebb and flow, their persistence manifests the deep
> current of democracy that seeks to rejoin an ethic of rights, competition, and
> detached justice with an ethic of responsibility, connection, and love. This motion
> is toward wisdom; toward maturity as a culture; and toward a faith that knows the
> one who is other is the one to whom, inextricably, the self is related in the mutual
> interdependence we are.
>   This kind of faithful alignment with the motion of life invites young adults to
> imagine not only a job, a career, or a lifestyle. It invites them to claim Dreams
> that are the fruit of a deep sense of vocation, that place, as we saw earlier, where
> the heart's deep gladness meets the world's hunger. It invites them to participate
> in what some have spoken of as the Great Work of our time. The strength of that
> invitation is dependent upon those who will practice a faithful, generous, and
> mentoring adulthood. (pp. 220-221)

Concluding Remarks

My hope in doing this study was that I would get to know well the stories of some who, in their role as teachers, courageously have taken on the mentoring role described above; giving of themselves to foster in their students the kinds of awareness and growth so richly portrayed by Parks (2000). Much of the common task in which the study participants and I engaged centered around better understanding the developmental journeys each of them has travelled in becoming whom they are today. Those journeys only were made richer as we aligned their stories with the ways in which they have been able to connect with the developmental experiences of their students, and the ways in which they have been able to bring together those experiences in what they understand to be their spirituality and their philosophy of teaching.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology for Study

*We create ourselves out of the stories we tell about our lives, stories that
impose purpose and meaning on experiences that often seem random and
discontinuous. As we scrutinize our own past in the effort to explain
ourselves to ourselves,
we discover - or invent - consistent motivations, characteristic patterns,
fundamental values, a sense of self.
Fashioned out of memories, our stories become our identities.
(Faust, 2003, ¶ 1)*

In the spirit of the above statement, my purpose in this study was to use the stories

told by seven faculty members in higher education to explore how they perceive their

spirituality to inform their teaching philosophy. As stated in chapter 1, the teachers'

stories, to a large degree, depended upon their understanding or interpretation of the

terminology expressed in that statement as well as in the questions posed to them.

Nonetheless, I restate, here, my use of those terms in formulating the purpose of this

study: As pertaining to this study, *spirituality*:

> [H]as to do with the values that we hold most dear, our sense of who we are and
>
> where we come from, our beliefs about why we are here—the meaning and
>
> purpose that we see in our work and our life—and our sense of connectedness to
>
> each other. (Astin, 2002, ¶ 3)

And *teaching philosophy* relates to "how teachers think learning occurs, how they think

they can intervene in this process, what chief goals they have for students, and what

actions they take to implement their intentions" (Chism, 1998, ¶ 5).

There are myriad other ways each of those terms can be defined, but these two

definitions capture well the crux of what I had hoped to learn and portray in doing this

study: what aspects of the ways in which these educators think about life shapes the

manner of how they choose to instruct. To that end, I identified six research questions (restated from chapter 1) that I wanted to be able to answer as a result of doing this study:

1. What did these teachers in higher education think about their spirituality and/or religion?

2. What did these teachers in higher education think about the processes of teaching and learning?

3. How have spirituality and teaching come together in the cognitive processes, the affective experiences, and the actions—that is, in the person—of each of the participants?

4. What were the perceptions of these teachers with respect to the factors that have enabled them to reach, or not to reach, their students in ways that promote growth and development?

5. What kinds of experiences have manifested these learning and developmental exchanges?

6. What can be learned about the connections between spirituality and teaching based on the perceptions and experiences of these seven teachers in higher education?

Theoretical Framework

Research, by its nature, is intended to further what we know. Beyond just *what* we know, however, it is important to consider *how* we know what we know. Epistemology is the form of study that gives shape to this consideration, and the epistemology that seemed most appropriate to this study, in my opinion, was that of constructivism. Crotty (2003) defines constructivism as: "the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within

an essentially social context" (p. 42). He goes on to state that the tenets of this epistemology include: that meaning is not discovered, but constructed in relationship to objects and experiences in the world; that meanings are constructed as people engage their environment; that meanings always involve both objectivity and subjectivity; and that peoples' opinions, choices, and activities are rooted in the meanings they have constructed.

This study involved all of the concepts outlined in the previous paragraph. The intent of the study was to consider how seven teachers in higher education make sense of their experience in relationship to the larger world, and how they translate that meaning into what they communicate in their social exchanges with their students. Thus, meaning was constructed in the processes the teachers used to reflect on and conceptualize their experiences, but also in the exchanges in which they engaged with their student populations. Had I engaged in this study from a positivist standpoint, knowledge would have been construed as an entity out there waiting to be discovered. Rather, it seemed more accurate to me, to seek knowledge and meaning in the constructs that were developed as a result of the social interchanges of these teachers with their environments and with the students they teach. It made sense to me that such constructs were products of what is out there and what is within: within the teachers themselves, within their students, within the exchanges that occur between them, and within the teachers' exchanges with me in talking about these constructions. Finally, the study was situated in how these instructors think, feel, choose, and act as teachers as a result of the meanings they have constructed.

Within the constructionist epistemology, there are numerous theoretical frameworks that can be used as avenues for the construction of knowledge. Among these, the methodological framework that seemed most appropriate for this study was that framework designated as symbolic interactionism, which in the words of Taylor and Bogdan (1984), "places primary importance on the *social meanings* people attach to the world around them" (p. 9). Perhaps the leading school of thought regarding this methodology was outlined by Blumer (1969) who stated that the theory of symbolic interaction rests on three guiding principles:

> [H]uman beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them; … the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interactions that one has with one's fellows; … [and] these meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he or she encounters. (p. 2)

Thus, this framework seemed ideally suited to the types of questions this study was to address, in that it is used to understand the meaning that individual participants ascribe to their experiences, based on their interactions and their environments.

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

Sample

The participants for this qualitative study were seven faculty members who teach at a public urban research university located in the mid-southern part of the United States. This was a purposive sample, selected primarily on the basis of the interest the prospective participants demonstrated in exploring this issue with me; in other words, the study was likely to be more meaningful if these teachers had an interest in better understanding the connections between their spirituality and their teaching philosophy.

Also I preferred to include participants who were from different academic disciplines and from various religious traditions.

The selection of the participants happened over the course of a 2-3 month period. Initially, I contacted people from across the university, seeking referrals to professors who, in the opinion of the person making the referral, may have had an interest in exploring such a topic. I then contacted these individuals by e-mail and/or telephone, explaining the study and what would be involved if they were to participate. For those who expressed an interest in possibly being involved, I then scheduled a time that I could meet with each of them for a mini-interview to get a better sense of their suitability for the panel of participants. I, particularly, was interested in using these mini-interviews to get a sense of how well the candidate and I communicated about these kinds of concerns and what perspectives this candidate might bring in comparison to the other people who I was considering for inclusion in the pool of participants.

Initially, I planned on having only four participants, but upon completion of the mini-interviews, I expanded that number to seven because of the dynamic stories to which I already had been privileged during the mini-interview process. In this initial screening process, these seven individuals shared information that, in my opinion, fit well into what I hoped this study would be able to address and denoted stories that should be told. As well, the academic, demographic, and spiritual and/or religious backgrounds of the seven individuals demonstrated a diverse range of experiences (see Table 1 on next page). Some of the factors that guided me in this selection process were: (a) the participant's willingness to explore the connections between spirituality and teaching in some detail; (b) his or her apparent insight concerning such issues and the ability to speak about the

Table 1

Participant Characteristics

Name	Academic Discipline	Teaching Level Observed	Academic Status	Age	Gender	Racial Identity	Childhood Religion	Adult Religion
Michiko	Counselor Education	Under-graduate	Associate Professor	Early 50s	Female	Japanese American	Fundamentalist	Seeker
Daniel	Sociology	Graduate	Assistant Professor	Early 40s	Male	Caucasian	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
Jerome	Social Work	Under-graduate	Associate Professor	Early 50s	Male	African American	Baptist	Disciples of Christ / AME
Don	Physics	Under-Graduate	Professor	Early 60s	Male	Caucasian	Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic
Jim	Music	Under-Graduate	Professor	Mid-60s	Male	African American	Episcopalian	Episcopalian
Sarah	Political Science	Graduate	Assistant Professor	Early 40s	Female	Caucasian	Southern Baptist/ Disciples of Christ	United Methodist / Servant Leadership
Will	Planning	Graduate	Professor	Mid-50s	Male	Caucasian	Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic

articulately; (c) the participant's *thoughtfulness*, using that term in the sense of being able to give reasoned consideration to the topic, but also that person's level of regard for students, for self, and for the place of one's area of study in serving the needs of the human community; (d) representation in an academic discipline that varied from that of the other participants; (e) a personal history that demonstrated a spiritual and/or religious tradition that is distinct from those of the other participants; and (f) an ability to connect and communicate with me in such a manner that it seemed there would be potential for growth, deepening awareness, and effective construction of knowledge.

I was aided in this selection process by discussions with the chair of my dissertation committee and my peer consultant, both of whom helped me sort through the criteria listed above in identifying the participants for this study. In regard to this selection process, the point made earlier in this paper regarding the difference between spirituality and religion bears repeating. I was not looking just for participants who identified themselves as religious; rather I was seeking participants who demonstrated insight, and the ability to articulate that insight, regarding "the diverse ways (they) answer the heart's longing to be connected with the largeness of life—a longing that animates love and work, especially the work called teaching" (Palmer, 1998, p. 5).

Data Collection

In any qualitative study, it is important to gather information in more than one way. The concept of triangulation stipulates that information should be gathered from more than one type of source in order to confirm, as well as to challenge, any conclusions that are drawn from the data that is gathered (Creswell, 1998). In this study, I gathered data from four different types of sources: multiple interviews of the participants; at least two

observations of the participants as they were engaged in teaching; a review of archival data (course materials used by the instructors to communicate with their students about their learning); and the narratives that I constructed in relation to these various sources of data. The use of several sources of information provided me with multiple ways of viewing the topic of this study.

In order to manage the data that I collected, I maintained separate folders for the seven participants, both in my hard copies and in computer documents that I generated. This was an important provision as it related to confidentiality for those who chose to be part of this study. In order to further protect the identity and confidentiality of the participants, I used pseudonyms in my transcriptions and non-identifiable referents in all of my discussion of the teachers who participated in this study.

Interviews. Over the span of 5 months, I did three formal interviews with each of the participants in this study. I audio-taped each of these interviews and, upon completion of each interview, I sent a copy of the tape of the interview to a transcription service. When I received the paper copy of the transcription, I went through the audio-tape and the copy of the transcription one more time to verify the copy and to make sure the nuances of the conversations were preserved in the copy of the transcription. Additionally, each of these interviews were followed by member checks. These were less formal conversations with each participant following my transcription of an interview, intended to ensure that I was accurately portraying the story and its meaning as told by that respective participant.

The first of these interviews was fairly comprehensive in scope, using a critical incident technique to encourage each participant to tell his or her story. The critical incident technique is a tool that can be used to guide one through a personal story on the

hinges of critical moments or turning points that are noteworthy in the mind of the person who is being interviewed. This method of interviewing allows freedom in what the interviewee chooses to address as pertinent to the interview, while also providing an entry point for questions that invite clarification and expansion on the points being made by the person who is being interviewed. In saying I used critical incident interviews, I am using the concept as described by Kain (2004): "invit[ing] the respondents to tell a story and explain why it is significant for a given context" (p. 74), with the purpose of "seeking the unique experiences of meanings of individuals (such that) we can illuminate patterns that may apply to other persons and contexts" (p. 82).

In order to be able to answer the research questions outlined above, I identified six primary interview questions, supplemented by six questions that I might use as probes in seeking more depth regarding the interviewees' responses to the interview questions. The interview questions were: (1) Would you tell me about a critical incident that guided you toward being a teacher in higher education? (2) Would you tell me about a critical incident that shaped who you want to be as a teacher? (3) Would you tell me about a critical incident that shaped the ways you think about your spirituality? (4) Would you tell me about a critical incident that caused you to alter the ways in which you think about teaching or spirituality? (5) Would you tell me about a critical incident that reinforced how you viewed yourself as an educator? (6) Would you tell me about a critical incident in education that changed you as a person?

Using those six questions as the skeleton on which the interview was constructed, I pursued the participants' responses more deeply by also asking questions that probed for greater detail. The types of probe questions that I used in response to the interview

questions outlined above included: (1) What circumstances and beliefs led up to the situation you have described? (2) How did you handle the situation as it developed? (3) What was the outcome of the situation for you personally and professionally? (4) What did you learn from this situation? (5) How did this situation change you? (6) What made this a critical incident for you? The actual probes I used were not always these exact questions, but these give an idea of the types of questions I employed to follow the participants' initial replies with the consistent intent of seeking more depth and more detail. In this type of interviewing, the interview questions (as outlined in the previous paragraph) establish the foundation for the conversation, but it is the probes that provide the building blocks that give shape to the construction. By skillfully applying probing questions in response to the participants' answers to my interview questions, I actively participated in the construction of the interview at the same time that I helped the participants go deeper in their exploration of the topics that were explored in the interview questions. (The rubric for the first interview is provided in Appendix A).

The second interview included what I called a right brain activity. This activity was intended to be an experience that invited the participants to engage in different ways of thinking about the topics pertinent to this study. In asking them to engage in this activity, I provided them with examples, suggesting they might consider doing some type of poetic representation (that would be constructed by the participant related to his or her concepts of teaching and spirituality), or a photo elicitation exercise (in which the participant would be asked to take pictures intended to capture images that communicate spirituality or good teaching). My purpose in suggesting this type of activity was that such an exercise would be rich with potential for the affective exploration of our topic,

due to the creative choices that were involved both in their construction of the exercise and in our communications about the projects they completed. Not surprisingly, some participants were more comfortable than others with such an exercise, but even for those for whom this was a substantial challenge, this exercise provided additional data as related to the subjects of spirituality and teaching philosophy.

I also used the second interview to re-visit some of the concerns we had discussed in the first interview, asking for clarification or elaboration of some of the comments the participants had made. This was an excellent technique for making sure I fully understood what they had said to me, while also encouraging them to speak with depth about these concerns. Similarly, I also used the interview to talk with them about the observation I had done in visiting their classroom between the times of the two interviews and to solicit their thoughts in regard to the commentary I had written after visiting each of their classes. Again, this provided a means for seeking clarification and elaboration with respect to themes and ideas related to my observation of their classes.

I also included in the second interview a question that I formulated as a result of what the participants shared in our earlier interview. Following the first interview, I kept thinking that the comments that some of the teachers shared reminded me of something I had read years before in regard to spirituality. After some searching, I found the reference in a book by Henri Nouwen (1992), in which he had described the spiritual life as composed of four movements: being *taken*, *blessed*, *broken*, and *given*. I, then, asked the participants to speak to any or all of these movements if they seemed to make sense in their own experience. To focus their replies a bit more, I also asked them to respond to

three sets of questions that I drafted in response to Nouwen's formulation. These three sets of questions were:

- Is teaching a vocation to you; that is, have you been "called" to teach? If so, what does that calling mean to you?

- What have been the seminal experiences (physical, emotional, cognitive, spiritual) that have carved out who you are for the world and your students? What are the layers that lie beneath some of the stories that you shared with me in our first interview—layers that add meaning; layers that well up within you and seek some form of expression, connection, solitude; layers that integrate, define, impel; etc.?

- To what do you give yourself in teaching?

(The rubric for the second interview is provided in Appendix B).

I used the third interview as an opportunity to integrate the overall process with each of the participants. By that time in the process, I had completed two previous interviews, observed two or three of their classes, and collected other forms of data (which will be outlined below). Also by that time in the study, their own thinking—perhaps, even, their *ways* of thinking—about this topic had developed further. The combination of all of that rich supply of data provided fertile ground for a third interview, in which the participants had the opportunity to expand upon their experience and their thinking in regard to how their spirituality has informed their teaching philosophy.

In order to use that third interview to gain some closure on our process, I used this interview to re-visit some of the concerns we had discussed in the first and second interviews, again asking for clarification or elaboration of some of the comments the participants had made. Similarly, I also used the third interview to talk with them about

another observation I had done in visiting their classroom again, this time for the first class of a new semester. I intentionally made a point of attending those first class sessions to do my observation, thinking that often the first class can be pivotal in setting a tone, or establishing a culture, for the new semester. Now, in the third interview, I solicited their thoughts about the class and the commentary I wrote after visiting each of their classes.

Also in using this third interview to draw the process to some type of closure, I asked the participants to engage in three wrap-up activities:

- The first of these was rather simple. Shortly before the time of that interview, I had read in a popular news magazine about a book in which people wrote about their lives in just six words. In turn, I asked the participants to summarize their thoughts in just six words in regard to each of the following concepts: *God* or *Higher Power*; *Spirituality*; *Teaching*; and *Soul*.

- To prepare for the second exercise, I sent the participants a collection of excerpts from literature pertaining to this study (This collection included several quotations from the literature review I had done in proposing this study). I asked the participants to review the collection that I had sent and then, as part of this third interview, share their thoughts about three or four of the excerpts.

- Finally, in setting up the third and final exercise, I provided an Internet reference for a video showing Randy Pausch of Carnegie Mellon delivering his *last lecture* (prior to his death from cancer) in which he shared his perspectives about what's important in life. I, then, asked each of the participants to tell me what they would say if they were asked to give their last lecture.

(The rubric for the third interview is provided in Appendix C).

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Observations. To corroborate the information that was being gathered via multiple interviews with the participants in this study, I did at least two observations of each participant while they were engaged in teaching in the classroom. These observations were interspersed throughout the 5-month interview period. Initially, I thought about doing only one observation of each professor, but I decided it would be fairer, and more informative, to observe the participants on more than one occasion. Much can happen in the environment of a classroom that can radically shift the dynamics and tenor of a particular class session. In each class, I gathered field notes that helped me to capture my observations over the course of the entire class session. Later, away from the site of the observation, I expanded on these notes in order to add detail to the observation that was done. As I did for the interview process, I, again, used member checks to substantiate the conclusions that I drew as a result of doing these observations.

Archival materials. In addition to the data gathered via interviews and my observations of the participants in the classroom, I used that same 5-month period to review archival data related to the courses that these instructors teach. By archival data, I mean documents and records that are used to communicate information related to the teaching process. These included class syllabi and personal and course websites. Parks (1986) stated that "higher education -- self-consciously or unself-consciously -- serves the young adult as his or her primary community of imagination, within which every professor is potentially a spiritual guide and every syllabus a confession of faith" (pp. 133-134). The same baptism Parks gives to the syllabus surely would apply in today's world of higher education to websites and the use of other forms of information technology.

My narrative. As I gathered data and processed what I was learning, it was essential for me to be engaged in writing my own narrative related to this experience. Being in the midst of the story that was being gathered, I enjoyed a unique position from which to engage in my own narrative construction. Narrative can be an important form of communication precisely because it engages both the participant and the interviewer in the mutual act of interpretation. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated, "Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (p. 20). Schwandt (2000), in addressing this same phenomenon, indicated, "[M]eaning is negotiated mutually in the act of interpretation; it is not simply discovered" (p. 195). Similarly, Denzin (2003a) wrote, "All inquiry reflects the standpoint of the inquirer. All observation is theory-laden. There is no possibility of theory- or value-free knowledge" (p. 245), and Richardson (1990) observed, "Narrative is both a method of reasoning and a mode of representation" (p. 118). Richardson went on to observe, "At the individual level, people make sense of their lives through the stories that are available to them, and they attempt to fit their lives into the available stories" (p. 129). Thus the one who is telling the story, the one constructing the narrative, is central to the story itself. The one who constructs the narrative is integrally involved with what information is included in the story and with how it is presented, a truth manifested both in how the participants related their stories and in how I interpreted and communicated the meaning within those stories.

Parker (2004) noted, "Narrative inquiry is interpretive in nature" (p. 145), and Richardson (2003) spoke to the central role of the writer by stating, "Writing as a method

of inquiry, then, provides a research practice through which we can investigate how we construct the world, ourselves, and others" (p. 500). For me, this statement implies that the weight of qualitative research is carried in its text and in its presentation. This observation highlights the importance of the one who is doing the research, whose challenge it is to find effective ways to tell the stories that lie within the data. Bochner (1997), in identifying the importance of this kind of writing, stated, "The narrative approach to qualitative inquiry that I favor privileges story…. These stories activate subjectivity and compel emotional response. They long to be used rather than analyzed, to be told and retold rather than theorized and settled" (p. 434). Thus, in writing about the participants' construction of knowledge, I too engaged in narrative construction— interpreting, making meaning, connecting, and constructing.

Data Analysis

Inductive narrative analysis. The primary mechanism that I used to do my analysis across the various sources of data was the narrative by which the participants told their stories. Denzin (1989) described narrative as a story of a sequence of events. These events are assumed to be meaningful to the narrator and the audience, and this meaning is conveyed in the telling" (as cited in Parker, 2004, p. 144). Similarly, Upson (2003) stated, "[S]cholars have argued that humans understand their lives in a storied form, making narrative an appropriate way to explore their experiences," (p. 49) and Connelly and Clandinin (1990) averred, "Humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially lead storied lives. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world" (p. 2).

The method I used to analyze the data for this study was that of narrative analysis, which "takes as its object of investigation the story itself" (Riessman, 2002, p. 696). To this end, I was interested in the ordering and sequence of material that each participant manifested in response to the questions I posed. Langellier (2001) stated, "When we tell stories about our lives we perform our (preferred) identities" (as cited in Riessman, 2002, p. 701). This acknowledgment of preference is not to suggest that people are disingenuous in their presentation, nor their identity, but rather that people always engage in communication from a subjective position. To this end, "Personal narratives are, at core, meaning-making units of discourse" (Riessman, 2002, p. 705), and "the process of narrating one's identity in storied form leads to the ongoing construction and revision of that identity" (Parker, 2004, p. 144). Cook (2004) stated similarly, "For the most part, researchers using the narrative approach believe people construct stories to make sense of things, to figure out meaning, and to establish connection" (p. 30). Thus, in telling me their stories, the participants in this study were engaged in a fecund process of meaning-making, identity construction, and connection.

Narrative inquiry. Polkinghorne (1988) divided narrative inquiry into two forms: descriptive and explanatory. Descriptive narrative inquiry asks participants to construct "an accurate description of interpretive narrative accounts individuals or groups use to make sequences of events in their lives or organizations meaningful" (pp. 161-162). Explanatory narrative inquiry, on the other hand, seeks to construct a narrative account "to answer the question of why something has happened" (p. 171). I would put this study on the descriptive side of that ledger because I was attempting to explore the ways the participants made meaning of events that have occurred in their lives. In a later

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document, Polkinghorne (1995) identified one common form of narrative analysis as paradigmatic. In commenting on Polkinghorne's work, Upson (2003) elaborated, "[W]hen the researcher undertakes this process she [*sic*], 'seeks to locate common themes or conceptual manifestations among the stories collected as data'" (p. 57), and "The process of narrative analysis involves synthesizing the data 'into a coherent developmental account' that represents the experiences of the participants" (p. 58).

In order to make sense of the diverse array of information I had on hand, I modified an analysis model to which I was exposed in my coursework in qualitative methods. The original model provided a framework for examining pieces of information in the way they are incorporated within a story—the narratives I would collect from the teachers as well as my own. As I began to sort through the data I had collected from the participants, however, this framework seemed too rigid and unwieldy. It provided a helpful beginning in that it caused me to look for narrative blocks that told smaller pieces of the overall story, but beyond that it felt forced and restrictive.

I continued to sort through the transcriptions of the interviews, my notes from the observations, my reviews of the archival data, and my own narrative in order to begin constructing each participant's story. I did so by dividing the blocks of material into subject categories based on whether these excerpts spoke more directly to teaching, spirituality, or the integration of those concerns. This seemed to provide an effective way for me to collect the various smaller stories that made up the participants' and my narrations into a larger story that captured their thoughts in regard to the topics of the study. The primary criteria I used in deciding which blocks of narrative to use was that

described earlier in this chapter, the three principles of symbolic interactionism as delineated by Blumer (1969):

> [H]uman beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them; … the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interactions that one has with one's fellows; … [and] these meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he or she encounters. (p. 2)

The writing of these stories was challenging, but very rewarding. It gave me a deeper awareness of what Richardson (2003) meant when she wrote:

> Although we usually think about writing as a mode of "telling" about the social world, writing is not just a mopping-up activity at the end of a research project. Writing is also a way of "knowing"—a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable. (p. 499)

I felt responsible to tell the stories of these participants well, and having to figure out how to tell their stories as fully and as honestly as possible (within a limited space) caused me move more deeply into the data than when I simply read through the transcripts or my notes. As well, piecing together an introduction and conclusion for each of these pieces forced me to sort out which pieces of material would help provide a context for the story by communicating a sense of the person about whom that particular story was written.

Journal writing. In analyzing the data that I gathered, it was important for me to interact with that material on an ongoing basis. This occurred initially through the writing I did as a journal exercise, and then, later, in my narrative construction. In speaking to the importance of this aspect of the research, Conle (2000) stated, "Narrative inquiry as a research approach unites theoretical reflection, data gathering and analysis, and research representation…. Narrative inquiry suggests 'the interdependence of content and form, of product and process, of ends and means'" (p. 30). This symbiosis of process and product

was true of my experience in collecting and analyzing the data for this study. Throughout the process, I was challenged to find the various forms of narrative in different constructs related to the participants' role as teacher, and to use these as the mechanism for articulating my understanding of what I experienced—in effect, to construct a narrative that unified and expressed my understanding of those experiences.

Comparison to pertinent literature. Another tool helpful in analyzing the data gathered from these participants were the educational concepts discussed in relevant literature. These included the ideas of the various authors, the theories, and the developmental schemes that were outlined in chapter 2. As well, these included some of the literature that has been produced by renewal programs directed toward similar concerns. An example of such a program would be the Center for Courage and Renewal, the organization mentioned in chapter 1 that is based on the work done by Parker Palmer. Although much of the early history of this organization was driven by attention to elementary and secondary education, the principles and practices seem to apply to higher education as well. As mentioned previously, Richland College of the Dallas County Community College District in Dallas, Texas, has been using these practices as a pilot project related to organizational renewal. By attending to what is being learned in programs like these, I had a better framework for understanding what I was learning from the participants in this study.

<div align="center">Academic Rigor</div>

Subjectivities

Because people are complex beings, it is important to acknowledge a few limitations and/or qualifications related to this study. The analysis was based on limited information:

a few discreet interviews and observations, reviews of course materials from a few designated courses, and my own reflection vis-à-vis those materials and conversations. Though each of these was an important source of data for this study, they inherently were limited in their ability to capture the full story of how the spirituality of these teachers has informed their teaching philosophy. Any time two people engage in conversation, there are at least two (more likely, many more than two) subjective processes involved in the exchange of that information. In some cases, the questions I used to try to access the information I was seeking may not have provided a forum optimal for these instructors to tell their stories. Nor was there any guarantee that my interpretation of their stories did justice to the actual lived experiences that were the foundation of the stories they created.

These limitations are constraints that are inherent in any interview process. Riessman (2002) addressed this concern by stating,

> Storytelling, to put the argument simply, is what we do when we describe research and clinical materials, and what informants do with us when they convey the details and courses of their experiences. The approach does not assume objectivity; rather, it privileges positionality and subjectivity." (p. 696)

Thus, my interviews with these teachers offered me privileged *positionality* in that I was the one who was in the unique position to be able, not only to collect their stories, but to construct the narrative that was the product of that collection. Furthermore, my interpretation of these teachers' stories, and the ways in which I related those perceptions, was filtered through my own *subjectivities*; that is, my own frames of reference and the preconceptions and beliefs that have shaped those frames.

In the midst of all research (as was noted in chapter 1), is the person who is doing the study. Rather than denying this reality, or pretending that we can eliminate its effects, practitioners of qualitative research embrace this phenomenon under the heading of being

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aware of one's subjectivities; that is to say, as researchers, we are always in the midst of that which we study. Awareness of these subjectivities is essential since these affect one's interpretation, as well as one's telling, of the story that is communicated through the research study. The best recourse for taking into consideration these subjectivities was the use of member checks, which I will discuss in further detail below.

Probably the most significant subjectivities I brought to this study were my beliefs and preconceptions as those relate both to spirituality and to teaching. As I stated in chapter 1, the interest I have in each of these subjects is what led me to this topic, but I had to be careful that my frames of reference did not keep me from hearing the participants' stories or from telling their stories honestly and completely. Using a classmate for peer debriefing (described below) was one way to keep this issue before me as I proceeded with the study.

From the spirituality side, my religious heritage is Judeo-Christian as experienced within the denomination of Roman Catholicism. In line with that tradition, I believe we are closest to God when we are closest to the human community. Turning religion into an other-worldly phenomenon, I believe, actually shifts our attentions away from God (as I understand God to be) and away from who we are in our fullest humanity. Thus, I see spirituality being rooted in our connectedness with humanity and with our yearning "to be connected with something larger than our own egos" (Palmer, 2003, p. 377). Obviously, this perspective may have disposed me to more easily resonate with similar concepts or themes in the stories of the participants, at the same time that it could evoke a negative reaction to viewpoints that did not match the ways in which I think about these concerns.

From the teaching side, I have been a teacher in an institution of higher learning for over 6 years, and I have been a student, exposed to numerous teachers in various systems of higher education, throughout much of my adult life. In each of these capacities—student and teacher—I have experienced rich, and I have experienced barren, experiences as applied to the topic of this study. As a student, I have been graced to have had some outstanding teachers who gave of themselves in such a manner that my life was enriched and I learned; but there also have been teachers who I faced in the classroom day after day, with little sense of connection to them or to the subjects we studied. As a teacher, there have been times, when I felt the grounding of my spirituality played a vital part in helping create a connection with my students and in me being able to help my students to learn; there also have been times when I was too constrained by other concerns, so as to impede the connection that is essential to good learning. Again, it will be important for me to be aware of the impact these experiences have had on my life, and my consequent reflection, as these points of reference may have contributed to a stance in which I more readily responded to some concepts or themes in the stories of the participants, at the same time that I diminished, or even rejected, other points of view that may not have matched my consideration of these concerns.

Journal Writing

As stated earlier, my own narrative, constructed in regard to my interaction with the participants was important to this study. Due to the large volume of data that I gathered, it was important that I engage in journal writing as a means of processing what I was experiencing and as a means of keeping track of these interactions. Kramp, in speaking to the various purposes of narrative as inquiry, stated, "What distinguishes narrative as a

mode of inquiry is that it is both the process—a narrator/participant *telling* or *narrating*—and the product—the *story* or *narrative* told" (n.d., p. 1). By engaging in a process of journal writing, I was interacting with the data even as I provided a record of my thoughts with respect to that process.

The journal writing was helpful particularly early in the process when I was trying to sort out how I was going about the study and was trying to make sense of the multiple forms of information that were part of the data repository. As the study progressed my narrative shifted more to the pieces I was writing with respect to my interactions with each of the participants. This narrative was of a different style than that of the journal, but equally as helpful.

Triangulation

This concern was mentioned earlier in this chapter. In order to increase the rigor of this study, it was important that I gather data via a number of methods so as to confirm, or possibly to challenge, what I learned in implementing each of the methods that I employed. This corroboration of sources was not intended to enable me to make generalizations based on the results of the study, but rather to gather information that is manifested in various forms of delivery, to increase the depth of my analysis, to balance the results of these various methods of data collection against my subjectivities, and to create a prismatic effect in which the topic of study were viewed from multiple angles and via many forms of light. Rooted in these multiple viewpoints, I hope that my narrative is honest and bountiful in reflecting the stories of those who participated in the study.

Member Checks

Although I was the primary researcher in this study, it is important to note that, in many ways, the teachers who agreed to participate in the study were more central to the study's outcomes than I. After all, it is their stories that are told. In order to honor their central place within this study, I used member checks to insure that I was accurately understanding what they told me and communicating the meanings that they attached to their narration of those specific stories. These conversations occurred following all data collection and data analysis activities.

Because it was the teachers' stories that were being told, it was essential for me to do member checks with respect to all types of data that was collected relative to their work: the interviews, my observations, and the reviews of their classroom materials. These conversations were intended to be more than just mirroring the participants' words back to them. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state that member checks in narrative research have a broader, more humanistic approach:

> When narrative inquirers return to participants with text, their question is not so much, Have I got it right? Is this what you said? Is this what you do? Rather it is something much more global and human: Is this you? Do you see yourself here? Is this the character you want to be when this is read by others? These are more questions of identity than they are questions of whether or not one has correctly reported what a participant has said or done. (p. 148)

This was the standard that I asked the participants to use in determining whether I had transmitted their information appropriately. My charge was to tell the participants' stories deeply and well. Member checks helped me to do so.

Peer Debriefing

I spoke earlier about the subjectivities I brought to doing this study. Those, of course, affected the study in all of its phases, but I especially needed to be careful of the impact

of my subjectivities on any analysis that I did with respect to what I was learning. To help me in this aspect of the research, I utilized a practice called peer debriefings. These were meetings that I arranged with a peer who was familiar with my topic, and with qualitative research, for the specific purpose of helping me to assess my analyses and interpretations. Having a third party who was outside of the normal bounds of the study collaborate with me in looking at the data and how I was responding to it was helpful in keeping me true to the purpose of the study as outlined above. I actually used two peer consultants. The first person's schedule changed, making it more difficult for us to meet, but another peer with a background in both spirituality and teaching stepped in to help. I am grateful for the contributions of both of these peers for helping me make decisions about the direction of the study and for helping to stay on course.

Reciprocity

When I began this study, I was less than excited about the topic of reciprocity, which in qualitative research means rewarding those who participate in a study with something in exchange for agreeing to be a participant. Initially, this idea annoyed me somewhat; it felt like I was being asked to bribe people to participate. As the study began, however, and I became aware of how much I was asking of these seven professors, I decided that some form of recognizing their contribution was the least I should do in exchange for their munificence in helping me with the study. I decided to give each of them a set of books that addressed the types of concerns we were discussing, and so, after each of the interviews, I presented each participant with a new book. This seemed to be a way of tying together the work that we were doing, at the same time that it allowed me to thank them for their kindness and generosity.

Ethical Considerations

The primary ethical concern revolved around the issue of confidentiality. In the initial Informed Consent agreement that each participant signed, there was a paragraph that stated:

> Any information that can be identified with you, and which is obtained in connection with this study, will remain confidential. This will be true for both my presentation of the study and for the storing of data relative to shaping that presentation. It also will be true for any conversations that I have with the people with whom I will be consulting in the course of doing this study—notably the chair of my dissertation committee and a peer consultant. If a situation occurs that calls for any personal information to be disclosed, I will do so only with your permission.

Once I had collected the data and begun to write the participants' stories, however, it became apparent that the anonymity that was necessary for all of this information to remain confidential would be difficult to maintain. Particularly since their stories were so very personal, it was difficult to disguise their identities. Once I realized this, I sent the participants an e-mail stating:

> As our conversations developed, you and the other participants disclosed some very personal and self-referential information—information by which you, probably, could be identified if it were made public. Initially, I thought that I could disguise such information relatively easily (e.g., change the discipline in which you teach) in order to maintain your anonymity. However, such maneuvering in my writing has resulted, at times, in a feeling that I may be doing you a larger disservice by distorting the information that you have shared and in some cases, perhaps, violating your identity. Thus, I am returning to this matter of the Informed Consent, asking if you would prefer to remain anonymous or if I have your permission to identify you with respect to the material that you shared in the course of this study.

I, then, spoke with each of the participants regarding their decision about this matter, trying to be sure I was honoring their wish in regard to how they wanted me to present their material. In some cases, they gave me permission to use their true identity and information; in others, some asked that I disguise their identity and identifiable

information. Once I had completed the individual's story per the parameters requested in regard to confidentiality and anonymity, I checked with the participant, once again, to have him or her authorize me sharing their story in the way that it was now written. This process was difficult for some, but I believe everyone was pleased with the arrangements we were able to negotiate.

Concluding Remarks

In beginning the educational program for which this study is the final learning product, I wanted to acquire a deeper understanding and awareness of elements that foster the processes of teaching and learning. In the course of my studies, I had the opportunity to learn about the theoreticians mentioned earlier in this paper and the ideas that they (as well as others) bring to better understanding these processes. I was excited when, in the course of that engagement, I found people who wanted to address the dynamic role that spirituality can play in teaching and learning. Spirituality, of course, is not the only filter for understanding these processes, but it is one that, I believe, has been underplayed and even discounted—to the detriment of education. Redefining that role could be an important part of improving the ways in which we as a human community teach and learn.

On a personal level, this exploration of the place of spirituality in education makes sense in the language of my own experience. Thus, this study presented for me a rich opportunity for engaging these ideas, not just with respect to my teaching and learning practices, but in the ways I think about myself and the world of which I am a part. By engaging in this study with seven practitioners who have a similar interest, and who demonstrated insight concerning the impact of spirituality on their teaching philosophy, I

grew as a human being. In the transformative processes that begot that growth also lay the elements, I believe, that enabled me to improve my understanding and my abilities both as a teacher and a learner.

On a broader scale, this study was intended to add to the growing span of literature in the field of education regarding how knowledge is produced, coupled with a recommitment to meaning-making education. By studying the work of these seven professors in higher education--by interviewing them across a span of time, by observing them in their classrooms, by reviewing the teaching products they use to facilitate their interactions with their students, and by using my own construction of narrative as a means of interacting with that which I experienced in these exchanges--I hope that I have been able to effectively communicate the stories of these teachers regarding the ways in which their spirituality has informed their teaching philosophy and, thus, added to the growing awareness of the importance of these connections within the field of higher education.

CHAPTER 4

Findings of Study

What patients say tells us what to think about what hurts them;
and what we say tells us what is happening to us—
what we are thinking and what may be wrong with us ...
Their story, yours, mine—
it's what we all carry with us on this trip we take,
and we owe it to each other to respect our stories and learn from them.
(Coles, 1989, p. 30)

In reporting my findings for this study, I have opted to tell each of the participants'

stories separately. I have done so, largely, through the use of their own words in response

to the various questions I put before them and the exercises in which I asked them to

engage. As a fellow participant in this study, my own perceptions about these topics--and

about the content the participants shared with me--are part of this presentation, as well, in

that I was the one who sorted through the data and made the decisions about what should

or should not be included, and about how the material should be presented.

In attempting to balance this influence, and to be sure I was fair in my disclosure of

each of the participants' material, I asked them to review the section that I wrote

regarding their material. In doing so, I reiterated my commitment to tell their stories well

and with integrity, and asked them to review the material I had written using the criteria

suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) in their approach to the research process:

> When narrative inquirers return to participants with text, their question is not so
> much, Have I got it right? Is this what you said? Is this what you do? Rather it is
> something much more global and human: Is this you? Do you see yourself here?
> Is this the character you want to be when this is read by others? These are more
> questions of identity than they are questions of whether or not one has correctly
> reported what a participant has said or done. (p. 148)

Due to the nature of the material that we discussed, I also re-visited the issues of

confidentiality and anonymity with each of the participants (as was explained in the

Ethical Considerations section of the previous chapter of this document). As was explained in that section: After reading the piece that I had constructed with respect to our conversations, some participants decided they would prefer that I disclose their true identity, while others chose to have certain pieces of identifiable information altered. With respect to those who selected the latter of these options, the modifications to the materials pertaining to that participant were done in such a manner as to protect the anonymity of the participant without changing the basic content of their story in regard to how their spirituality informs their teaching philosophy.

The individual data collected from each of the seven participants is presented in the remainder of this chapter, with each of those stories divided into sections that portray the professor's thoughts about teaching, spirituality, and way in which they go about integrating these concepts in their role as teacher.

CHAPTER 4-A

Findings of Study

Michiko's Story

Although bits of laughter were interspersed throughout her telling of the story, the

pain was palpable:

> So at the point that I had to break from my mother, I broke from God. I just said,
>
> "You know what, if this is what God is about, I'm not having it." So I pretty much
>
> stepped away from God for several years. (Michiko Sato (MS), personal
>
> communication, September 30, 2008)

Having been raised in "a very religious--sort of Southern Baptist, Fundamentalist, Asian-

-home" (MS, personal communication, September 30, 2008), Michiko's decision that she

must emotionally separate herself from her mother's ways of thinking precipitated a shift

in her own approaches to knowing, so as to call into question many of the tenets on which

her belief and value systems had been based from the earliest days of her childhood. In

re-joining her story a bit later, she reported:

> I think I left you in my last story with, "I'm through with God, and Mom's way of
> doing things isn't working"—until [I ran into a family situation for which I had no
> answers]. And that's when I realized, "Okay; all right. So you're trying to get my
> attention." And I realized, "I cannot make this right. I cannot….Okay, I shouldn't
> have blown you off." (MS, personal communication, September 30, 2008)

Thus, Michiko began the narrative of how she became a spiritual "seeker" (MS,

personal communication, September 30, 2008). Now involved in various efforts that give

shape to that quest, she was generous in her discussion of how these turning points in her

life have given shape to her own identity and the ways in which she interacts with the

world around her.

A Japanese-American woman in her early 50s, Dr. Michiko Sato is an Associate Professor of Counselor Education at the University of Memphis. She has been teaching in this academic discipline for 15 years—12 of those in her present position. Presently, her teaching responsibilities include three courses: *Counseling Techniques*, *Multicultural Aspects of Counseling*, and *Spiritual Issues in Counseling*. It was especially this last course that caught my attention as I considered who might have an interesting story to tell in response to my questions about how professors in higher education perceive their spirituality to inform their teaching philosophy.

Michiko came to this project rather warily. She seemed a cautious person, but also one willing to take a risk once she had assessed the value of doing so. On the one hand, the course she had recently developed and begun teaching (*Spiritual Issues in Counseling*) disposed her to asking the same kinds of questions that seemed to underlie the study in which I was asking her to participate; on the other hand, she viewed herself as a rather private person and this topic as very personal. Cautiously, we began.

In the first interview (of three), I attempted to gather information about a range of concerns that would introduce me to Michiko's thinking and would lay a foundation for deeper inquiries in the interviews to follow. Equally important, I thought it was essential that the first interview provide a forum in which Michiko could get to know me, such that she might develop a level of trust that would help her explore these topics deeply and openly. We connected well in that first session. I quickly gained the sense that I had been correct in my estimation that Michiko would be a responsive and insightful participant. In turn, I thought she seemed comfortable in how she interacted with me and gradually began to develop a sense of trust about the process by which we would share these

conversations. I was grateful--even more, humbled--by her willingness to speak about matters that were very personal in response to the questions that I posed to her.

Teaching

Early in our first interview, I was interested in learning about how Michiko thinks about teaching. I asked her, "Could you talk to me about some of the influences in your early life--people, ideas, experiences--that shaped how you think about teaching? You said [earlier] you thought you'd never be a teacher." She replied,

> It's not because I had bad teachers. I guess I never saw myself in a position of authority, and I think teaching … I see it as a very serious position in that you are, in a sense, shaping minds, introducing certain materials, kind of putting a spin on it or a perspective on materials. It's a very serious business and not to be taken lightly. And I just thought … It seemed like it would require some leadership qualities, and I never saw myself as a leader. (MS, personal communication, September 30, 2008)

In responding to the part of the question regarding influences, she lauded the teaching abilities of her husband but made it clear that her admiration of his abilities has not translated into her being able to adopt a similar style in her own teaching:

> Probably the person that I really look up to is my husband, but his style is so different. I couldn't … And I even tried to (Like, maybe I could pretend to be him a little bit … It never worked)….I really ended up: "Like, what other choice do I have? I have to be me." So at that point, then like, "Who am I and what is my style?" (MS, personal communication, September 30, 2008)

When I pressed her to describe the teaching style that she has developed, Michiko stated:

> I think my style is not all that different than the profession I'm in, in terms of counseling. I definitely don't see my students as clients, but I think I am there to invite, introduce, encourage to give pause that there might be another way of looking at something….On the other hand, I think if you go over there and ask them, they'll say I'm pretty hard-nosed because … I do; I have standards. And so my desire to nurture and foster and invite doesn't translate into: "She's a pushover." (MS, personal communication, September 30, 2008)

A short time later, Michiko felt it important to add a further comment regarding another aspect that she considers important to how she perceives her role:

> I also have this sense of professionalism: We're gatekeepers. You let folks out the door with a degree and they're going to go out there and supposedly help people? But they can really do some damage, so I think it's very important that we be able to ascertain that, "You do have some skills; you are capable." (MS, personal communication, September 30, 2008)

And still later in the same conversation, she added another remark that spoke to how she thinks about her role in being a teacher:

> Each person can, kind of maybe … You can reach them in a different way; you can't just go with one party line approach. And so I do challenge myself, "What might get them to think outside the box?" And I guess that's a big deal for me because I think, as counselors, if you're going to be anywhere effective, you've got to almost constantly be thinking outside the box. Because once you start putting people in boxes, it's all over. So, if that's what I want them to do in practice, then what am I doing to model that, or give them pause? (MS, personal communication, September 30, 2008)

Michiko, clearly, was a woman who took herself, and her professional responsibilities, seriously. Although her vitae indicated that she twice was nominated for a Distinguished Teaching Award, she was extremely humble concerning her teaching abilities—at one point, stating, "[I]f you had said, 'I want to talk to good teachers,' I certainly wouldn't have signed up; no way" (MS, personal communication, November 20, 2008). Nonetheless--perhaps, even, because she had struggled with how she might fit into this identity--it seemed to me that Michiko had given a good deal of consideration to her role as teacher, had labored to situate her responsibilities within the discipline of which she is part, and had given a great deal of thought to the types of concerns pertaining to this study.

At one point, in trying to draw out more of her thoughts about teaching, I asked her, "Would you tell me about at least one critical incident that shaped who, and how, you

want to be as a teacher; perhaps an incident that changed how you think about teaching or

an incident that reinforced how you think about teaching?" Michiko related a story about

a situation in which one of her students reported that another student had been cheating

on an exam, forcing her to examine her responsibilities to her students, herself, and the

institution for which she teaches:

> I came up with a problem with a student [recently] which really caused me to stop
> and pause … regarding, you know, them cheating and what was I going to do
> about it?...I was really left with this dilemma of, "Do I support somebody who
> was trying to step up and do the right thing--which is hard for a student--or just
> pretend that nothing happened?" You know, "What'll I do; what'll I do?" It just
> put me in a dilemma that just challenged me: Well then, in my role as teacher, am
> I not supposed to stand for something? Am I not supposed to be a role model for
> the students to see that I stand for something? I mean, all these questions came to
> mind, so I ended up taking it all the way. (MS, personal communication,
> September 30, 2008)

Michiko expounded considerably on this incident, one that has caused her to alter her

syllabus (which now includes a rather lengthy section about cheating and its potential

consequences) and has given her pause for thinking in a more focused way about the

commitments she makes with respect to her role as professor.

It was clear that Michiko takes the charge to be a good role model seriously—

particularly in grounding her teaching within the profession to which her students aspire.

Steeped in her training to be cognizant of the authoritative position that counselors have

in their relationships with clients, Michiko carried this understanding forward into how

she thinks about her relationships with students, and how she wants to help them think

about the professional roles into which they are moving:

> Probably I think of it like that maybe more (and I'll put those kind of labels on it)
> than maybe some other teachers, because I'm so cognizant of it in our field. The
> counselor is in a position of authority, and many times counselors will try to come
> on like, you know, "I'm just the same as you. We're just … I'm just talking with
> you." But the fact is you are an authority; they came to you because you were

supposed to be an authority. And so I want them to be aware to use their authority wisely and be mindful of that fact. (MS, personal communication, November 20, 2008)

In speaking about her use of the authority that is given in her role as teacher, she emphasized the importance of helping each of her students discover their own gifts and talents. I was impressed with how carefully she had considered how she models good practice for her students without burdening them with an expectation that they be just like her:

> I want to, then, be really careful about how I share information, what kind of messages I give them, because I really want to affirm them, and I want to encourage them. Yes, I want to impart information, but I want them to see me: I'm a person of authority, but I am not trying to say, "I am the one." (MS, personal communication, November 20, 2008)

Following her lead, I asked Michiko what she tries to affirm in her students. Her response was simple and direct, acknowledging the importance of professional skill, but emphasizing the person as the medium by which those skills come to have value:

> That they have their own gifts. Each one has their own gifts. Will you tap into your own gifts, and how will you use your own gifts? Because you could have gifts and you could misuse them….So I guess that's what I want to affirm in them: That when they come into class, I'll say, "I'll bet you thought you were going to learn a bunch of tools--a toolbag--and you can just like, 'Oh, I can do this on somebody; I can do that on someone.'" I said, "I'm sorry, because what I'm going to try and talk to you about this semester is 'You are the secret weapon; you're it.'" And like they're all, "You've got to be kidding. I paid money for this?" But it's true. You know, you can always open a book and find techniques; that's not it. It's just how you utilize those tools that's going to make it or break it. (MS, personal communication, November 20, 2008)

It was apparent that Michiko had given a great deal of thought to what she brings to her interactions with her students. Following my observation of one of the classes in her *Multicultural Aspects of Counseling* course, Michiko reflected on the ways in which she uses herself in trying to have an impact on the students that she teaches:

I really think long and hard about doing any self-disclosures. And that's a tough one, because in that class a lot of self-disclosures come up from them. I mean, I'm asking them for a lot of personal things about "your values, your beliefs, your lifestyles." But I'm also aware I don't share a whole lot with them. I'm a very private person, for one thing. And yet, on the other hand, I try and think carefully about, "If I share this, is this more of my need, or it has a point, or it's their curio…" I mean, I really weigh that back and forth. (MS, personal communication, November 20, 2008)

Following my observation of another of her classes, I noted that both in her syllabus and in her presentation she indicated that she wants the classroom to be a place in which different perspectives can be shared safely. She asked the students to assist in making the classroom that kind of safe place even as she encouraged them to share their various perspectives. She added one caveat: Whatever position one presents, the student should have some rationale that supports his or her reason(s) for holding that perspective. I asked Michiko to say more about that caveat.

What I'm wanting to do is to encourage them to participate in some self-examination. We all have values; we all have preferences; we all have things that we're used to and the things that are very foreign or odd to us….

I mean I'm not going to say … I'm not going to try to talk you out of it, but tell me a little bit more about that. What is that about and what is that tapping into? Because I think the more you can articulate (even if to no one else but yourself) where is this coming from, then I think it will help you to begin the process of evaluating what values you want to keep; what values you might want to alter. It's not my job to tell you what to do or how to do it, but I'm hoping that you'll be, continually, in the process of asking yourself, "What is this about? Is this going to be helpful to me or hurtful to me?" So I want to encourage them to practice a little bit of that in the classroom in hopes that it will continue outside of class—in their lives. (MS, personal communication, March 16, 2009)

Following my observation of one of her classes, I told her that her presentation was well organized, giving me an idea of the many avenues that she provides for her students in leading them into new areas--and, perhaps, new ways--of knowing. I, then, asked her if she would talk about how transformational learning fits, or doesn't fit, into how she thinks about the teaching and learning processes that occur in her classroom? She replied:

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I never thought about the terms you're using, but I think that is really, to me, what learning is. Learning … I guess I shudder at the idea, and I will pay some lip service to, "You have to know operational definitions, blah, blah, blah …" But, to me, learning is really the ability to take in information and making it yours. And so, I guess part of that is for me to figure out how can I use myself as a tool to help make that information be seen as something for them to--something rich for them to--take away, and not just, "What do my notes say she said on this day, so I can feed back her own answer to her?" (MS, personal communication, March 16, 2009)

As was the case in so many of her comments about teaching, this perspective, again, was grounded in what she wants to pass along to her students as they prepare to serve the human community as counselors.

I guess that's what I want to see them do as professionals: That their client takes the energy they gained from their work with you to propel them into their own life. And that's what I want them to leave the class doing the same thing. So I guess I want to model that without, of course, ever saying this is what we're doing. But I'm hoping that that process will, sort of, take … I don't know, take seed. So that's what I guess I see teaching and learning is what that's about. (MS, personal communication, March 16, 2009)

In our final interview, I asked Michiko to engage in an exercise in which she summarized her thoughts about various concepts in just six words. In response to the word *Teacher*, she offered the following list:

(1) Facilitator: I think that's what I really see myself as—a facilitator. To me, that's what a teacher is; (2) Experience; (3) Student--being a student of life; (4) Open; (5) being an Advocator; and (6) being Empathic. (MS, personal communication, March 16, 2009)

I did not ask Michiko to elaborate upon this conspectus of her thoughts about teaching. In my opinion, she already had done so over the span of our three interviews: The six words she selected captured well so many of the ideas she had shared in discussing her teaching philosophy with me across the preceding months.

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Those concepts also seemed to fit well with the thoughts she had expressed in concluding our second interview when I had asked her, "To what do you give yourself in teaching?" Initially when I posed that question, she was unclear about what I was asking. I expanded on my question by offering an opinion that in teaching we commit ourselves to something, and then offered some examples of what I meant: Some teachers wish to further the knowledge base of their students, while others may be more interested in fostering the psychosocial development of their students; still other professors may teach in order to promote the pursuit of knowledge or wisdom, or to serve the advancement of a specific discipline. Using that statement as background, I again asked Michiko from where her energy emanates in her role as teacher. She replied:

> I do hold the profession ... I hold it quite high, I guess. I do believe it's an honorable profession, and if we choose it, we must conduct ourselves honorably. And if we're going to promote it, we must promote the values and the premises that it's built on. So, yes, I do … If I say I'm a member of this profession--if I'm a teacher in this profession--then I do want to promote the basic concepts. And it's not just a job when I come here. This is a job, but the subject that I teach: I very much want to promote the profession.
>
> And then my relationship, in relation to the students, I am very … I guess it's a part of getting older (aware of the psychosocial development that we all go through), and that again, I'm not just teaching a class. I really am trying to invest in their development as a person—and as a person who wants to be this professional. But you can't be this professional unless you develop the person. (MS, personal communication, November 20, 2008)

Spirituality

This theme of developing the person (in regard to both herself and her students) ran through many of Michiko's remarks in talking to me about how she thinks about spirituality. In order to explore those thoughts, I made an inquiry similar to the earlier one regarding her teaching, "Could you talk about some of the influences--people, ideas, experiences--in your early life that shaped how you think about spirituality?" It was here

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that Michiko began the narration of how, from an early age, her relationship with her

mother shaped her views and her understanding of God and, eventually, led her away

from any kind of formal system of religious belief:

> [M]y mother would kind of stir the pot, and mix that in with values and beliefs
> and perspectives, and … Pretty much I struggled. Her vision, her view of God and
> God's will and God's way were very narrow, and pretty much they kind of got
> mixed in with her: her goals and her agenda. And so she'd pull out these little
> verses: "In the Bible it says, 'Thou shalt not …'" You know? "Therefore, what
> you're doing is wrong." And so, she spoke with the authority of God….So if I'm
> rebelling against her, I'm rebelling against God. (MS, personal communication,
> September 30, 2008)

As indicated earlier in this chapter, that rebellion carried Michiko away from formal

systems of religious thought for a number of years until a familial situation re-awakened

a need that seemed to be satisfied only in reaching out to a power beyond herself. This

crisis precipitated in Michiko a need to re-visit some of the issues that she had temporally

resolved years before in such a manner as to discover new ways of thinking about her

spirituality. As she spoke about the regret she felt with regard to her earlier rebellion, she

stated,

> [I]t got me back to thinking, "Okay, somehow or other, I need to find a peace with
>
> my higher power that's not just about religion. And I don't know what that looks
>
> like, but something is drawing me toward something other than dogma." (MS,
>
> personal communication, September 30, 2008)

I was glad to hear Michiko say later in our conversations that this connection to a

higher power also helped her to come to a more peaceful place in reconciling the tangled

relationship she had with her mother:

> I'm trying to now struggle with my own relationship with my higher power. I'm
> also being able to maybe start to see my mother differently—in terms of seeing
> her less as bigger than life and seeing her more as a person who had many fine

qualities and many flaws, as well. We're all flawed, and seeing that, hopefully I'm trying to get her in more perspective. (MS, personal communication, November 20, 2008)

Michiko's testament that there is a higher power in her life has led her to explore numerous avenues that have given definition to her identification as a "seeker" (MS, personal communication, September 30, 2008). Many of those journeys have centered around better understanding herself—her system of values and the role those play in shaping both her identity and her interactions with the world around her. At one point, Michiko stated:

> [T]his journey into spirituality has given me more of a sense of context of myself in relation to the world and the entities around me. Because I just used to have this belief, "If I just try hard enough, if I work hard enough, I can make this right. I can fix this; I can, I can, I can." And then, that part that says, you know, to be able to recognize and accept what you can't change and to be okay with that: I think it's helped me. And I think it's also helped for me to be able to say, "Some of this I have to turn this over to the powers that be….And so, it's kind of like it's in God's hands." (MS, personal communication, September 30, 2008)

And in discussing her efforts to call forth the best in her students, Michiko, at one point, indicated:

> That's a big deal for me--self in relation to others--but that also comes after self in relation to self. So I promote that a lot. And I think I'm the biggest student of that because I'm becoming more and more aware of myself every day (little pieces) and trying to make that kind of come together into a holistic picture. It's a challenge! (MS, personal communication, September 30, 2008)

When I responded to her thoughts about spirituality with the question, "You're very clear about the fact that you think we need to honor the spiritual aspect of every human being. What leads you to believe there is a spiritual aspect to everyone?" she replied,

> I don't have any … If you say, "Show me the evidence; show me the scientific evidence:" It just is. I mean, if you get up in the morning and you look outside and the sun is shining: How could there not … Like, how could there not be a spiritual realm? And you look at babies, and they're so incredible: How could there not be a spiritual realm? And then I guess in my own struggles with--and spending so

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much of my life actually denying there was a spiritual realm--and then just slowly, through this journey, realizing it's a very powerful aspect. Now, what I do with it is going to vary, but I think it's a powerful entity. (MS, personal communication, November 20, 2008)

During our second interview, I discussed with Michiko a framework of spirituality that had come to mind as I had listened to her and the other participants in the first round of interviews. The framework was one put forth by Henri Nouwen (1992) in which he described the spiritual life as composed of four movements: being *taken*, *blessed*, *broken*, and *given*. Michiko indicated that of those four components, she identified most readily with brokenness:

> My first connection would be to the broken. But I still feel myself … It's not just what happened in adolescence. I mean, I still see imperfection. It's not that I'm trying to be perfect, but it's just like there are so many times I have fallen down. And I guess I'm kind of a scrapper, because I'll try to like, "Come on, got to get back up." But being the mother, mistakes I've made in adulthood, things that I regret doing: I have a hard time letting go of that. (MS, personal communication, November 20, 2008)

Returning to the theme of wanting to be a good role model for her students, she continued,

> So probably forgiveness of self is very difficult for me. And I'm very hard on myself, which … That's part of why I guess I am not being a good role model because I would want to encourage others to, at some point, "Forgive yourself so that you can forgive others and you can ..." But it's very difficult. I hold myself ... I don't know, I just see this magnifying mirror, and I see myself in too close. But it's very difficult to be okay with my … some of my downsides. So I try to aspire to do better: "I've got to do better; got to do better." I don't know. Yeah, I think I have trouble with affirmation. (MS, personal communication, November 20, 2008)

Although I was surprised by her acknowledgment of this harsh standard to which she holds herself, I was impressed with the zeal she brings to growing and developing—a quality that seemed foundational in how she thinks about her spirituality:

I've kind of talked to you in different terms: like being a seeker—totally; I'm definitely not finished. I do want to continue to learn and grow. And, in fact, I think the older I get it seems like the realization about the less I really know….So I mean just like, "Wow, maybe I'm actually on track in terms of developmental stages and moving to that stage of really understanding that life is more than all about you." But just sort of a humbleness and understanding that the world is so big, and me wanting to better understand the bigger world and try to figure out really where might I best fit in, and actually might even make a contribution somehow, someway before I die, kind-of-thing. (MS, personal communication, March 16, 2009)

Her comment brought me back to something she had said in a previous interview regarding how she understands herself with respect to the topic of spirituality:

I've told them in different classes, "I'm a seeker". You know, they'll say, "Why do you want to teach spirituality?" You know, they want to know do I have enough credentials to give them answers. But "I'm a seeker; that's all I can say."

(MS, personal communication, September 30, 2008)

This identity as a seeker came up at various times in our conversations. It appeared to be the label that seemed most comfortable to Michiko in defining an identity better suited to the ways in which she thinks about the topic of spirituality as a result of the unique journey that she has travelled: the ideas she has explored; the questions with which she has grappled; the experiences she has lived.

As part of our second interview, I asked Michiko to engage in what I referred to as a right brain exercise. This was an attempt, on my part, to challenge her to think about spirituality and teaching in a less linear manner. To facilitate such a shift in process, I suggested she attempt an artistic representation of images that, for her, would capture what spirituality and/or teaching mean. As examples, I suggested she consider a poetic representation or, perhaps, a photo elicitation exercise in which she would go out and take pictures of images that represent the confluence of spirituality and teaching for her.

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Michiko opted to do neither of these types of exercises, but instead brought a poster

covered with photographs of an assemblage of items. She explained that these were items

that she has hanging on her office door. These artifacts included lyrics to meaningful

songs, aphorisms regarding truth and wisdom, and wearable pins that expressed ideas

pertaining to the subjects she teaches. In presenting the poster to me, Michiko stated,

"These are pieces of me" (MS, personal communication, November 20, 2008).

The item we discussed the most was a picture of a piece of paper folded to look like a

frog. Michiko explained, "This is a frog; it's a kaeru (Whew, can't say it, but it's a frog),

and it also means 'to return'" (MS, personal communication, November 20, 2008).

Michiko went on to explain that she had received this specific kaeru a couple of years

earlier when she toured the internment camp in which her parents were confined during

the Second World War. This pilgrimage, obviously, had been a powerful experience for

her: giving her new perspective and a greater appreciation for her parents. She stated:

> It gave me a context to understand my parents a little better. They wanted us to be American so bad, but like many of their other peers … So, you know, they pretty much kept a lot of our culture away from us, and then they get frustrated because we don't practice the culture, and we don't speak the language. We don't … They didn't want to encourage us to do this and that….But then, on the other hand, I think I've taken in a lot of their values, so … But probably not the ones they meant to. It's the ones that we pick up just by observing our parents because that's what kids do. And so I am aware that I am very Japanese—in some ways, more Japanese than women in Japan. (MS, personal communication, November 20, 2008)

I asked her what she meant by that last remark. She explained that many of the aspects

of Japanese culture that have been handed down to her are those of a time gone by—the

Japan that her ancestors left in emigrating to this country in the early 20th century. And

even though Japan has changed radically over the past 100 years, the Japanese culture in

which she was raised did not. If anything, confronted with the sundry prospects of a new

culture, her parents and their contemporaries clung more preciously to pieces of the

heritage that had been passed along to them, thus, preserving the culture in which

Michiko was raised. This observation struck me as noteworthy since earlier in that

conversation (when I had asked her about her thoughts regarding the previous interview),

Michiko stated:

> I think the one thing that struck me about my identity was I really wasn't aware
> how much my ethnic culture really does influence me even on a day-to-day basis,
> or even how I see myself as a teacher or counselor or professional. It still very
> much influences who I am, and I don't think I really realized that until we were
> talking. (MS, personal communication, November 20, 2008)

Increasingly, it seemed to me that matters of identity stood at the center of how Michiko

thinks about spirituality today, and much of that identity is experienced and expressed in

her ethnicity. This identity has become a vital aspect of how Michiko responds to, and

acts upon, the world around her.

As I had done in discussing her thoughts about teaching, I asked Michiko, in our final

interview, also to summarize her thoughts about the concept of *Spirituality* by offering

six words that captured how she thinks about that concept. She offered the following list:

> (1) Peace; (2) Humility; (3) Compassion; (4) Connected … Connectedness, I
>
> guess, would be the word; and (5-6) Lifelong Journey. (MS, personal
>
> communication, March 16, 2009)

Once again, I felt that Michiko's introspection and precision of thought enabled her to

produce a list of concepts that resonated well with the substance of her discussions of

spirituality over the preceding months. Later, in that same interview, in trying to educe

more of her thinking in regard to this domain, I noted that Dr. Randy Pausch of Carnegie

Mellon (prior to his death from cancer last year) received a good deal of publicity for a

last lecture that he presented in which he shared perspectives about what he felt was important in life. I then asked Michiko what she would say if she were asked to give *her* last lecture. She replied:

> [I]f I could live each day, just live that day unto itself; if I could stay in the moment….And living in the moment, I think, entails being more mindful of how you pass each moment of each day….I think that will give me more fulfillment--a sense of fulfillment--in my life if I can learn to stay in my moment. (MS, personal communication, March 16, 2009)

Integrating Teaching and Spirituality

The key to this study, of course, is how the participants think about and integrate their spirituality and their teaching. Thus, I inquired how this desire to live each day unto itself transfers into her classroom. She replied:

> I think it does transfer into the classroom because if I don't put my whole self into each class … Because of the way I want classes to be (I want them to experience modeling of what I want--the message I want--them to carry out), that I really have to be fully there, which is why I'm exhausted when I come out of those classrooms….But if I'm not there processing with them, I think I won't be doing what I said I want them to be doing. So I don't think it's fair for me to ask them to do something I'm not willing to do. So I think, therefore, I've got to take my "Live fully", and continue to try and do as much … more … as much or more … with each class. (MS, personal communication, March 16, 2009)

Michiko was generous in her reflections on the juncture of how she thinks about her spirituality and her role as a professor. I asked her, "Could you talk about a critical incident that exhibits how spirituality and teaching have come together in you—in your cognitive processes, your affective experiences, your actions? How does that come together in who you are?" She replied:

> I don't know if it's anything, like, crystal clear. I think just … I think just a better understanding of myself, maybe beginning to accept myself as I am in my imperfections, has helped me look at my students: that they're just in the process of being and becoming (Carl Rogers talks about that). And I think it helps me be less judgmental and more seeing them as developmental creatures—creatures in developmental process. And so, I can see them more gently just in terms of

looking at them and where they might be in their path or their process of development professionally, even as a person, or professionally….[I'm] just trying to facilitate greater awareness of sense of self and self in relation to others. (MS, personal communication, September 30, 2008)

Similarly, I asked her, "Could you talk about a critical incident that has had an impact on what you believe, and what effects those changes have prompted in the ways that you interact with your students?" She responded with a rather lengthy narrative about the impact that she experienced in being present at the time of her mother's death and the effect this has had on her thinking about her interactions with students:

> Sometimes I think higher powers put things in our way to help us learn things, to help us grow, learn hard things, and we struggle. And I guess it made me think, "Well, maybe I'm just another piece in the puzzle of what the students are going to come across."
>   And it's not like they're going to remember me on their dying deathbed, but … But, you know, all you have to do is, you just kind of … You put just a tiny little piece of experience, and then they move on. And it's just a collection of a lifetime of experiences that make who you are, and you kind of say, "Well, I'll give what I can today and hopefully that will have a positive impact." So, I guess I just see myself as, sort of, on the journey of life; you're just one of many stopovers. And so, you do what you can. (MS, personal communication, September 30, 2008)

Aware that spirituality can be used for many purposes--some positive, some less so--I asked Michiko, "Could you talk about a critical incident in which you perceive spirituality to have been a negative force, or in which you may have employed spirituality in a negative manner in your teaching practice?" Her response, I thought, didn't really answer the question that I had asked. Nonetheless, I thought her reply provided another window for better understanding the connections she makes in bringing together her spirituality and her teaching practice:

> I think the impetus for, actually, me choosing to do the spirituality course--create one (because there wasn't one in our department)--came out of a stand-off in the Multicultural course, and I was upset with myself because I couldn't fix it. I couldn't … I mean I was like frozen in time, and you see these students squaring

off.…I was like, "I didn't diffuse it, and I was supposed to. Because I was the one in charge, I was supposed to have done something."

Like, I couldn't change peoples' minds, but I was supposed to do something. And I did not. And I was very disappointed in myself; I was very upset. I guess, being upset with myself made me say, "Well, you're going to have to step up now. So, you know, think about how you could create a course"—in a sense, so I will be better prepared in the future to address difficult situations because I don't want to ever not, not do something like I did before. (MS, personal communication, September 30, 2008)

I, especially, was impressed with the way in which Michiko concluded her telling of this incident: "I can't even say I'm disappointed in the students. I mean, students are going to be who students are. I was responsible for somehow bringing this together, and I did not" (MS, personal communication, September 30, 2008). It seemed to me that her willingness to accept responsibility for her classroom spoke both to her personal sense of accountability and to her care for the students she teaches.

This concern about how she relates to her students ran through many of the comments that Michiko made regarding how she strives to be a positive role model for her students. Repeatedly she returned to speak about the importance that she gives to consistency between her person and her role as teacher:

I want them to challenge themselves to continually try to seek to grow, and develop, and learn. So I want to try to be consistent with what I'm telling them, so it won't be, "Do as I say, not as I do." I really would like for them to see a consistency between the person and what she says; I think that's an important part of being a teacher. It's sort of like being a parent: It's not all just what you say; it's what's happening when you're not saying something. (MS, personal communication, September 30, 2008)

Following up on this point in our second interview, she added,

[O]ne of the things we teach, you know in *Foundations of Counseling*, is to be genuine. That means you can't talk the talk if you're not going to walk the walk.…I want them to see me, as much as I can, to be congruent. To be congruent: That when I challenge them to grow and be courageous about facing their own demons (and being mindful about how they are with the people they want to help), well, then, shouldn't I try to be doing that in my own life? So I don't

want--as much as possible, I don't want--to present a contradiction in what I tell them and what they see in me. (MS, personal communication, November 20, 2008)

This commitment to being a good role model came through, as well, in a comment that Michiko made regarding self care. In this remark, she seemed to incorporate at least three elements that shape her spirituality—her commitment to the profession in which she teaches; to the students that she teaches; and to her own personal growth:

> I think the spiritual realm: I'm just really aware that if I'm going to be that role model that I have to try and take care of the different aspects of myself. Spirituality is one of them, so … I'm not here to give a message; you know? I guess, I'm just here to, hopefully, make a contribution to the profession … to the students … to grow. (MS, personal communication, November 20, 2008)

The latter element of that statement--her personal growth--was addressed, as well, in other comments Michiko made, particularly in regard to seeing herself as involved in a process of development. I was impressed with the way in which she used this awareness as a means of connecting more fully with her students:

> I believe I remain the teacher who is ever the student. I don't want to distance myself from the role of the people who sit in the desks, because if I do, I'll lose touch with how to connect with them.…I just think if I can maintain that, again, I'm evolving and this is all a process, and I'm involved in a process just as much as they are in their process: that I can, hopefully, continue to consider … try and keep fresh, I guess (MS, personal communication, September 30, 2008)

Since so much of what she had shared regarding teaching and spirituality revolved around her value system, and since having a positive effect on her students' value systems was an important component of how Michiko thought about her role as an educator, I asked what dynamics in her own system of values may be active in shaping the teaching dynamic. Her response to the question surprised me:

> I have values that in many ways contradict some of the values of our field even. And so, I am aware that I am teaching and making them more aware of their own values, but I'm--and I'm teaching a lot of mainstream values that I don't really

adhere to--so I kind of have to challenge myself to like, "Am I doing … Am I presenting the mainstream values the way they need to hear it?" But also, I try to present the caveat: Mainstream values have positives to them and they have downsides to them. And so to try to remind them that there's a downside—that there are other ways of thinking. (MS, personal communication, November 20, 2008)

Given her earlier comments about the need to be genuine, I was surprised by this acknowledgment of a division within herself—a division in which she attempts to be true to herself, but also serve the larger needs of her students. At first hearing, I remember thinking that teaching mainstream values to which she doesn't adhere seemed false and acquiescent. On further reflection, however, it seemed more that Michiko feels an obligation to prepare her students--both those of the mainstream and the minority cultures--for professional service in a society that is strongly conditioned by the values of a mainstream culture, and does so via her willingness to stretch her own system of values for the benefit of her students. In a subsequent conversation, Michiko helped me to understand more fully that living within this duality is an aspect of her *bi-cultural* identity—not denigrating one culture in service of the other, but rather living within both of the cultures that sculpt her identity (MS, personal communication, November 10, 2009).

The value conflicts about which Michiko spoke centered predominantly around two areas: group affinity versus the rugged individualism that so often characterizes the American ethos; and gender role definition. She spoke about each of these differences and how she attempts to balance what makes sense in her own life with preparing her students for the various cultures in which they will live and serve. In translating that concern into the work she does in the classroom, she stated,

I think it's important for them--and for me to help teach them--that they also do not operate in a vacuum; that they operate, whether we're talking about a counseling relationship between them and the client, that it's two people in the room. We may be talking about a client who's connected to extended family, to a community, so they can't assume that their client is independent. And so, I think I want to teach, to help them understand, that every decision they make--every direction they move in--has a ripple effect. (MS, personal communication, March 16, 2009)

Near the end of our first interview, I asked Michiko, "[I]n the words of the old song: 'What's it all about?' And how do you give shape to your commitment to helping your students find meaningful answers to that question?" She responded:

I think I have tried to focus my attention not so much on having any student--any of the students--think a certain way. I guess I just want them to start thinking. Because I think thinking and processing will help them lead themselves to their own answers. Because I have faith: I have faith in students and in people, that if given opportunity and an environment where it's safe to look and explore, and even to say, "I don't know," … Well, that's okay too, you know: Permission to not know. I think that's kind of what we do in counseling: We give people permission to grapple with what's hard. Well, I think again, in the classroom it's my job to create an atmosphere, an environment, where it's okay to say, "I'm not sure about this; I'm not sure how this comes across," but they articulate it, and they process it. To me, that's real learning. (MS, personal communication, September 30, 2008)

Later in our conversations, Michiko said something similar regarding her understanding about real learning—her own, as well as that of her students:

I think I want to promote in them what I'm still struggling to promote in myself.…Context is everything, and without it you really don't have any frame of reference. And so, I guess I want to encourage others, as well as myself, to just be accepting of events or feelings or thoughts within a context of the moment, because to take it out of context, you have no frame of reference and you just get caught up in your own ego happening. So I guess I would probably … am trying to align myself through aligning others. And maybe someday I'll get there—to just be aware of where you fit into the bigger scheme of things. (MS, personal communication, March 16, 2009)

Prior to our final interview, I sent Michiko a number of comments that I had gathered in my review of pertinent literature and asked which ones spoke most strongly to her

about the interface in how she thinks about spirituality and her teaching philosophy. When we met, it was apparent that she had spent some time reviewing these. She selected five that spoke most clearly to her (MS, personal communication, March 16, 2009):

> I think the pieces I chose, I chose them because they had to do with context (one of my key words) and meaning (which is sort of another variation of context). I need to understand meanings and not just hear facts. And I think that's what I want to see in the learning that occurs: is for them to grasp the underlying meaning.
>
> ➢ I am a pedagogical agnostic, resigned to uncertainty and committed to questioning. My questions are about many things, but, most of all, they are about meaning—about the meanings of my course content, the meanings I bring into the classroom , and the meanings my students construct from their experiences in my class….Education, after all, is about meaning. More than knowledge, my students thirst for meaning. (McGinty, 2006, p. 315)
> ➢ I settled on a definition of spirituality in education as that which animates the mind and body, giving meaning, purpose and context to thought, word and action—or, more simply, the meaning-making aspect of learning. (Kazanjian, 1998, ¶ 4)
> ➢ Spirituality is one of the ways people construct knowledge and meaning. It works in consort with the affective, the rational or cognitive, and the unconscious and symbolic domains. To ignore it, particularly in how it relates to teaching for personal and social transformation, is to ignore an important aspect of human experience and avenue of learning and meaning-making. This is why spirituality is important to the work of adult learning. (Tisdell, 2001, Spirituality, Culture, and Emancipatory Education section, ¶ 4)
>
> I guess some of the other pieces are like … This is what I say:
> ➢ Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher. (Palmer, 1998, p. 10)
>
> It's not a matter of technique. I try to say that you can't just robotically go through stuff, but you have to speak from your core to the core of the other person. And that's the hard work….And then, for some reason, this whole nurturing soul seemed to be really important to me:
> ➢ Attending to spirituality in learning doesn't necessarily mean that one needs to discuss it directly in classes or learning activities, although there may be occasions for drawing it into course content. Dirkx (1997) has suggested that our interest is not so much to teach soulwork, or spirituality, but rather to nurture soul, i.e., "to recognize what is already inherent within our relationships and experiences, to acknowledge its presence with the teaching and learning environment, to respect its sacred

message." (p. 83, as cited in Tisdell, 2001, General Discussions of Spirituality section, ¶ 3)

Concluding Remarks

In my estimation, striving to speak from her core to the core of her students seemed to be the guiding force in how Michiko's spirituality ties into her teaching philosophy. Far removed from the dogmatic prescriptions of the early years of her life, she has discovered a new springboard that gives shape and definition to how and what she believes: about herself; about the students she teaches; and about the world in which these exchanges occur. It seemed to me, as well, that upholding these exchanges is a tremendous faith—not so much a religious faith (as that prescribed by her mother in her early years of development), but a faith in the processes of teaching and learning; and faith in the capacity of her students to develop and grow via their own abilities to think and to make decisions about the issues around which this dialogue happens.

It was clear from our conversations that in her seeking, Michiko has come to embrace a sense of meaning and connectedness as central to how she thinks about her own spirituality. It was equally clear that these are the venues into which she wants to invite her students in their quest for knowledge—challenging them to expand their fund of knowledge, but also their sense of meaning and an increased awareness of their connections to the larger human community.

CHAPTER 4-B

Findings of Study

Daniel's Story

Raised in the mountains of eastern Kentucky, he was frank about his family's lack of interest in formal education: "No one in my family had ever been to college….Education was not something that was really pushed in my family" (Daniel Seis (DS), personal communication, October 6, 2008). A bit later in the conversation, in preparing to name some of the people who were most influential in encouraging him to pursue an education, he continued,

> There certainly was no encouragement from home. My parents, in fact, didn't want me to go to college. At one point they told me when I left … they said, "If you go to college, don't come back home."…I think it was fear of the outside--of flatlanders--not knowing where I was going to go, or what I was going to learn, or how this would change me. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

The hurt of defining himself apart from the values of his family still seemed fresh in the telling. Now the hurt seemed sheathed within a diverse array of emotions: amusement, relief, anger, pride, dismay; all of which poured forth in Daniel's verbal portrait of the constricted worldview in which he was raised.

Later in our conversation, he acknowledged many of those same kinds of constraints in describing his spiritual heritage to me. Against his earlier portrayal of the community in which he was raised, his characterization of his family's belief system seemed austere:

> In our family, there always was an understanding that God was real; that we knew that God, and the Judeo-Christian understanding of God, was what we fell back on. But it was pretty thinly veiled. I don't think it was based on a deep understanding of the Bible necessarily. These were more traditions that had been passed down. You were born into it, so you believed it. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

In describing his church affiliation he, again, revealed a certain narrowness of thought but, in this description, he also identified the beginnings of his exposure to, and his yearning for, broader ways of thinking:

> [We] went to small, little independent mountain Baptist churches, not part of a larger association, usually about 50-60 members. I only attended one church, really, in my whole childhood, and that was very influential. That was an opportunity I had to meet people who weren't the same as me. Like my neighbors, directly, were very similar to me, but the church that came into my community was [made up of employees of] a plant, so they came from outside of my direct community. They were sort of my connection to the outside … Even though they weren't educated either, it was somebody new and some other ideas and some different things. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

A Caucasian man in his early 40s, Dr. Daniel Seis is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Memphis. He has been engaged in his present teaching position for the past nine years after securing a Ph.D. in Sociology from Arizona State University in 1999. He reports his areas of academic interest to include: immigration, occupational stress for law enforcement personnel, elder abuse, substance abuse and crime, and research methods. Presently, his teaching responsibilities include three courses: *Public Policy and Sociology, Research Methods in Sociology,* and *Latin Americans: A Sociological Perspective*.

Daniel came to this research study with a good deal of enthusiasm. He and I had known each other before I asked him to consider participation in the study, but we had not previously engaged in any lengthy discourse. Nonetheless, when I inquired if he would be involved, he readily assented, indicating that he wanted to be of help in any way he could, and that the topic was one that piqued his interest. I was drawn to his willingness to be engaged and to his enthusiasm for the topic. I also thought he might be an interesting participant in that his religious heritage differed from that of many of the

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other people I was considering for inclusion in the study. I wondered what impact these differences might have in shaping his perceptions about how his spirituality informs his teaching philosophy. As we began our conversations, I was grateful that he had chosen to be part of the study and became increasingly appreciative of his willingness to speak about matters that were very personal in response to my many questions.

Teaching

Early in our first interview, I was interested in learning about how Daniel thinks about teaching. As I did with each of the participants, I asked him, "Could you talk to me about some of the influences in your early life--people, ideas, experiences--that shaped how you think about teaching?" He replied with quite a lengthy description of his family and the community in which he spent his childhood and adolescence. Some of that description is recorded in what I already have written about Daniel. For me, these images of his home community accentuated his description of the impact he experienced when he began to encounter the world beyond his immediate community:

> I had always … you know, working the fields, I was always down in the ground, looking around, and I had found lots of arrowheads (Indian arrowheads) and Anthropology was something that fascinated me. And the idea that Archaeology … and the idea that people got paid to do that kind of work was just enthralling to me. And then, when I was a junior in high school, the University of Kentucky had a graduate student who came to do some field work about a mile-and-a-half down the creek from where I lived….And so when I heard about this dig that they were starting that summer, I headed down the creek and met up with these guys, and that was a huge impact, because I hadn't really thought about college much until I met these guys, and they talked about graduate school. And I thought, "This sounds great." (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

Daniel's experience with this project eventually led him to enroll in Western Kentucky University where he enrolled to study Archeology and where he met a professor of Anthropology who became a mentor to him. In reflecting on the impact of

David Dolan (the graduate student from the University of Kentucky) and Dr. Ann

Hastings (the Anthropology professor from Western Kentucky University), Daniel

opined:

> You know … they caused me to want to do more. And their approach to teaching, you know--teaching through mentorship, of a sort--really pulled me in a great deal. And they also called me to question a lot of my own worldviews and beliefs that I held at the time … because I didn't … I mean, I'd never met anyone like these folks. They were fascinating. They truly were from outside and their worldview was so different than anything I'd ever been exposed to. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

Later in our conversation, in response to me asking, "Would you tell me about a

critical incident that shaped who, and how, you want to be as a teacher?" Daniel singled

out two individuals for mention; Dr. Hastings was the first of these. In discussing the

impact that she had on him, Daniel portrayed himself as a young impressionable student

who was touched powerfully by the interest and the kindness displayed by this one

professor:

> I would say things that were outlandish and completely ridiculous sometimes (I was just uneducated), and she would gently bring me back in without making me feel inferior or somehow unprepared for college. So she took what I was best at and made me feel good about those things, and she helped me bring the things that I wasn't good at into perspective and helped me to digest it in such a way that I could maintain dignity while continuing to pursue my education.
>   You know, my parents were serious. When I told you they told me, "Don't come back home:" I couldn't go back home. So she let me stay in her house one summer….She [also] kept me employed. You know, I would do archeological fieldwork and do survey work for her; she kept me employed. And, you know, she was almost like my mother on campus…. She invested in me, and that meant a lot. I don't think there's any other person that meant more, early on, than her. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

The second person that Daniel identified as critical to the development of his thoughts

about teaching was a professor for whom he served as graduate assistant while at Arizona

State University. Quadriplegic as the result of a car accident, Dr. Alejandro Santos relied

on Daniel not only to fulfill the usual duties of a graduate assistant, but for many of the daily physical challenges that he faced in remaining active in the classroom:

> I had to do things that graduate students aren't normally called on to do. Like before we would go to class, you know, he would say, "Is my hair combed?" or "Is my face clean?" And I would have to literally wipe off his face….[H]e would go to class, and I would stand there and flip the pages….And when he would want to put something on the board, I had to write it on his board, so I became an extension of this guy's brilliant mind….When he'd be in the hospital, I'd go, and he would dictate teaching materials--his class notes--to me….[H]e was out quite a bit because of his injuries, so it pushed me to be in the classroom before I was really ready to be in the classroom. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

Through all of these interactions, Daniel came to have a tremendous respect for this scholar/mentor, and he learned lessons that he would then carry into his own teaching career:

> I saw his dedication to teaching and how hard he worked, and how much he loved teaching, and how he wouldn't let anything stand in his way. The guy prepared meticulously; his teaching plans were outstanding….[H]e was a great influence on me in how he approached teaching….I appreciated his preparation for class, and his dedication as a teacher….[I]t was through him, really, that I saw the inside view of a professor's life; what it would be like to be a professor. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

In doing this study, I was privileged to observe some of the ways in which Daniel has carried the lessons of his mentors forward into his own teaching. These observations occurred as I listened to Daniel's discourse, but also when I had the opportunity to sit in on two of his classes. I was impressed with his desire to be of help to his students beyond the immediate demands of the courses that he was teaching:

> When I talk to the students individually, I think any of them would be able to tell you that I told them that I am interested in them personally: beyond the scope or parameters of this particular class. So if you have a paper from another class that you want me to read, I'm willing to do that. If there's anything else that you have, I'm willing to do that. I think that, at the graduate level, it should be more of a mentor relationship with students; that you model behavior that they should attempt to follow in all areas. And I want to be accessible to them. So first and

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foremost it's just offering time. (DS, personal communication, November 25, 2008)

The two classes that I observed were very different in their focus: One was on research methods; the other on sociological perspectives of the Latin American experience in the United States. Despite the different nature of the courses, I felt I sensed in both classes elements of the lessons that Daniel had learned from the mentors he had described to me previously: professional competence mixed generously with concern; kindness; and a strong desire to increase his students' success in how they live their lives. In articulating the importance of the research course, he stated:

> In terms of statistics, I think it's important for them to move beyond anecdotes. They need to be able to say things--they need to make decisions--that are based on the data—the analysis of the data….I teach the undergraduate statistics class (That's been the main course that I've taught since I've been here), and I am convinced that many people continue to be influenced by sensationalized accounts of the news rather than being able to say, "Well, how did you actually count that?"…So I'm trying to get them not to statistiticate, but to actually think critically and look at ways that data can support … And if the data's not there, collect the data that you need to answer the questions that you have. (DS, personal communication, November 25, 2008)

In contrast to the research course, the course on the Latin American experience in the United States seemed very different in structure as well as intent. This was a new class; one Daniel had lobbied the administration to begin for some time. In our conversation, he spoke about the reasons he had worked so hard to initiate such a course for the students in his department:

> One of the things that students in this course have been forced to do is to engage people that they're not used to engaging, or be in situations that they're not used to being involved in…. I don't think until we de-mystify this ethnic other will we ever be able to truly become culturally competent….We've got all these new people living in our community, and they have different issues and different needs than the larger community…. So we have to, I think first, step back and take a look at "What does it mean to be Latino; what does it mean to be an immigrant; what does secondary language studies--or English as a second language--how

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does that affect the delivery of justice in our system?" And I believe that by exposing these students to those issues, that they will be the beginnings of the solution to those kinds of problem that we have in our community. (DS, personal communication, March 18, 2009)

This concern for people outside of the mainstream culture was evident, as well, in some of Daniel's efforts beyond the classroom: notably, his efforts to get the university to pay more attention to the resources that largely go untapped among the Latin American community. Although many of these efforts have taken place behind the scenes, they demonstrate, I think, another facet of the vision and the leadership that Daniel brings to the university and to the students that he teaches:

> We had the Hispanic/Latino recruitment night on Monday night of this week. I had been telling them that they needed to do this and they finally did….This was their first ever Latino recruitment. They had 84 students show up. It's the largest recruitment turn-out they've had this year. And not counting the students, there must have been another 75 parents at least, or others who are associated with that, and there's clearly talent … talent that's being wasted if we don't get them. Maybe the University of Memphis is the right springboard for many of them. I think it is. They should be students in our community; they live in our community; we should train them to be effective in our community. (DS, personal communication, March 18, 2009)

In our second interview, Daniel stated that he wants his students "to apply a personal lens of responsibility" (DS, personal communication, November 25, 2008) to the issues that confront the communities in which they live. In our next meeting, I asked him to talk more about this lens of responsibility. In responding, he spoke at length about a project with which he is involved that attempts to address the disproportionate numbers of racial minorities within the criminal justice system and how the juvenile detention system contributes to these numbers:

> [W]e're heading to a situation in Memphis and Shelby County where 60% of all black men will have a criminal record. That's ridiculous. I mean this city is never going to improve until we address the issues that are leading to that. Some of them represent institutional racist issues, and I think that [the students] need to

feel passionate about it. It is like almost a conversion of sorts: that they have to …
I just feel like, if I could say something to somehow guide them to that
understanding, then I can promote real social change.

So when I teach students, I want them to be able to think critically. The point
of a liberal arts education is supposed to be to have a broad-based education that
allows you to consider various facets of the world. I don't think we do a very
good job of that. I think basically students take classes to get credits and they
move through and they often are not able to connect the different classes that
they've taken at all. And that falls--the onus falls on us--to do that.

And if I can somehow provide a more holistic (and by that, I mean a
completely rounded) view of the world: What's at stake, you know: Why does it
matter? Why does it matter that boys are being referred to Juvenile Court right
now? Well, because those boys' records are tarnished for life. It affects their
families, their offspring, and their future—and the future of the City of Memphis
for the next 60 years….Unless we can do something to reduce the early
involvement of these kids in the criminal justice system, it's never going to
improve. (DS, personal communication, March 18, 2009)

As I did with each of the participants in this study, I concluded our second interview

by asking Daniel to comment on some of the elements in the schema put forth by Henri

Nouwen (1992), in which Nouwen talks about the spiritual life as being embodied in four

movements: being *taken*, *blessed*, *broken* and *given*. Wanting to get a sense of whether

the first of these movements resonated with the ways in which Daniel thinks about

teaching, I asked him, "Is teaching a vocation to you; that is, have you been called to

teach? And, if so, what does that calling mean to you?" He replied:

I think that I have a gift as a teacher; I think that I do a good job as a teacher. I
sincerely, genuinely, care about the students and their success—beyond the grade
and the course…. I think for me teaching is a calling. I mean, this is what I'm
doing right now. All work is honorable, and I believe all work can be dedicated to
a spiritual end, a spiritual goal. So in that sense, I'm doing that now. So, yeah, I
think teaching is a calling, and I'm happy that I'm here. I wish I taught more than I
do. And that's just … It's been a conundrum that I've not been able to get past
since I began teaching. There's dual expectations [teaching and research], and
something that I continue to be good at is bringing in [research] money. (DS,
personal communication, November 25, 2008)

Still using Nouwen's schema as a framework, I asked Daniel, "To what do you give yourself in teaching?" His response to that inquiry was lengthy, but said much about how Daniel thinks about his role as teacher:

> I want to make sure that I'm not an armchair sociologist; that students feel that same draw to be relevant too. I'm really not interested in producing intellectual whatever for its own sake. I'd rather it be something that affects policy--that improves the situation--that identifies or diagnoses a problem and produces some reasonable, practical solutions to solving them….
>
> I hope that I can show students empathy when I try to promote real-life experiences. Regardless if they have any intention of working in corrections, if they're going into law enforcement, I want them to go to the jail. I want them to see the other side to what they do. I want them to hear victims speak. I want them to go sit in court, hear the process, understand what it is, what's really at stake here. Look a little deeper….
>
> I want them to understand the whimsy that often occurs in political circles: the decisions that get made and how they get made, and the process in which they occur. I want them to have a deeper understanding. So if I can help that by creating opportunities for them to do that through the Students of Sociology Association, or through something else that's outside of my teaching role, I'll do that. And inside of my teaching role: Every day in class I'm going to try to do the same kinds of things. I'm going to create opportunities….
>
> I want to be a person that the students can trust and count on. In terms of, "What do I give?" I want to be consistent. I want to be [the person] that shows up every day: that's here; that's steady; that will be here; and no matter if I get some other job later on, I'm still available to them emotionally--personally--to impact them. (DS, personal communication, November 25, 2008)

Spirituality

It seemed to me that many of the principles Daniel included in his disquisition on teaching appeared, as well, in his remarks concerning spirituality. Wanting to further explore these connections, I used a number of questions to draw out his thinking regarding the topic of spirituality. From the beginning of our conversations, Daniel spoke readily about his religious background and the impact this has had on the ways in which he thinks about spirituality. He indicated that, in addition to being a farmer, his father was a Baptist preacher. However, he did not attribute much of his present thinking to his

father's spiritual influence. In fact, in describing his father's preaching, he concluded:

"He's not a very theistic person, in terms of having systematic theology. He doesn't have

that; I would say he doesn't. He may believe that he does, but I would say it's pretty thin"

(DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008).

When I asked Daniel about critical junctures in his life that have shaped who he wants

to be as a spiritual person, he singled out his interactions with one person from his early

years, but that person was not his father, nor anyone else in his family, but rather a

member of the church that he attended as a child:

> There was one old guy that went to that church that I told you about when I was a
> kid. His name was Boyd Robbins. And Boyd was …You have to get a picture of
> this guy; he's seven feet tall. He was about 75 years old, and one of his fists
> would make two of mine: a big, big man. And he had been a farmer, but he loved
> the Lord. And he was such an intense, and a physically intimidating man; a
> booming voice; and I couldn't imagine anyone that could be stronger than
> Boyd….He was a … He still is a powerful influence on me….
>   He came from a different generation; he was a lot older than me (there was a
> 60-year difference between us). But to see how in his everyday life, his faith
> mattered for how he lived….He was a powerful force: His faith affected the way
> he lived. He treated his wife with respect, he treated … All of his kids were
> upright, good people, and I still keep up with all of them, and his grandkids. Boyd
> was a strong leader, and I want to be like Boyd. (DS, personal communication,
> October 6, 2008)

Daniel's admiration for this spiritual mentor was obvious in his recollection. He

continued:

> Boyd was a preacher, by the way, too. Boyd was the preacher at that church….
> But he didn't have a systematic theology either. I don't even know if Boyd
> could—if he ever went beyond junior high school. He didn't have any education,
> but he knew the Bible; he knew the important parts, anyway. (DS, personal
> communication, October 6, 2008)

This concern about a lack of a systematic theology was one that Daniel visited

repeatedly in our conversations—a concern that he addressed in regard to his own

thinking as well. In describing his relationship with his first college roommate (an

agnostic Philosophy major, per Daniel's report), he stated:

> [H]e couldn't type; I couldn't type. But we would help each other write papers
> and stuff so I learned about what he was doing. And so, over time, we sort of
> balanced each other a little bit. I realized where I … that I came up very
> conservative and a little bit blinded in some of my doctrine—like I didn't have a
> systematic theology really. I keep saying that word, but I didn't understand why I
> believed the things that I believed, and I couldn't back up why I believed what I
> believed. And so, from an apologetic standpoint, I was pretty weak; I didn't really
> know … I knew that I believed that there was a God, but if you got much deeper
> than that, I couldn't back up why I believed it. (DS, personal communication,
> October 6, 2008)

Daniel seemed grateful for his college years, a time ripe with opportunities to explore

new ideas and concepts: ways of thought, perhaps, that leant credence to his parents'

fears about how he might change in leaving his home in the mountains:

> [A]s an Anthropology major, I had to take Anthropology of Religion, and I was
> exposed to theories of religion, functionalism, and all the classics of religious
> anthropology work. And, I mean, all of those things all along were testing me and
> making me question things. I'll be honest—I mean, I wavered in college: A whole
> new world was available to me.
> And I was mad still: I was still upset about my parents and their … how they
> had blackballed me as a result of my desire to go to college. And so, why did I
> want to give them back anything? But, I just … College was a time for me to
> understand and to begin working through some of the ideas that I had. (DS,
> personal communication, October 6, 2008)

Despite the excitement that he felt in being exposed to this surfeit of ideas, there came a

time, a few years later, when Daniel felt it necessary to focus his beliefs more clearly.

> I had been to Africa; I had lived in an all-Muslim community; and I had
> experienced lots of other things, and I'd sort of become more pluralistic, I guess,
> in my outlook. But then when my kids were born, oh, then I had to get a little
> more: "Now, what do you really believe? Because you can't …" It's okay, I
> guess, in an academic sense to be pluralistic and accepting of everything, but
> "What do you really believe, and how are you going to raise your children?
> Because now you've got something that …" Is it real or is it not? And if it's not
> real … It's either the greatest truth or the greatest lie of all time. "So pick what
> you're going to choose and go with it." And that's … It became more urgent
> when my children came along. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

Eventually the concern that Daniel felt about needing a firm foundation for his system of beliefs led him to seek some underpinning for his beliefs by enrolling in a seminary, where he could get the systematic theology he so long had desired. In fact, he was enrolled in a seminary program even as we spoke. In our first interview, Daniel reported:

> [W]hen I came to Memphis, the Ph.D. was done, and I heard about the seminary here. And like, "Well, there you go. God's put this in your way, and you're under-prepared to be of any use, formally, because you don't really have the deep theological background—you don't have the systematic theology and all of these things." And so, I inquired about it.
>
> I've been a student at Memphis Theological Seminary for the past couple of years. And there were some things about it that I really appreciated; and there were some things about it that I've had a hard time getting along with. But I thought that this would be a way that I could, at least, advance my knowledge and better serve—get equipped.
>
> I feel like, you know, it's not enough to just have the spiritual motivation (or the personal motivation); I needed also to be educated: to be able to put some meat to what I thought and believed, and investigate what I believe and be able to rationally (however you want to use that) … rationally apply my faith. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

As it turned out, Daniel and I had begun our conversations near the end of his tenure at the seminary, for between our first and second interviews, he withdrew. He explained to me that he felt he had secured the educational foundation that he desired from the experience, but that he had decided he was not really interested in pursuing another degree. He seemed grateful for the learning experience he had as a student at the seminary and noted that one of the highlights was the privilege he had of studying under a scholar for whom he had tremendous admiration—a professor whom he identified as another significant influence on his thinking about spirituality:

> I would be presumptuous to even think I'd ever come close to Dr. Houston Morland. Houston Morland is the current … Well, he's the emeritus president of the seminary that I attended: Memphis Theological Seminary…. Just an amazingly intelligent person (has read just about everything you can imagine); very thoughtful, but also no nonsense when it comes to spirituality: His is …

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Faith in action is really what he practices, and just the ways that he has approached life, and always stepping out on faith and following his calling, and not having … not wavering in terms of his calling to serve. And also the way he treats his wife has always really impressed me. If I could be like that I'd be a lot … I think I would aspire to be like him, but I don't think I could match it. (DS, personal communication, November 25, 2008)

Wanting to know more about this important influence on Daniel's thinking, I asked him to tell me more about the *no-nonsense* part of Dr. Morland's approach to spirituality and how this was important in his own thoughts regarding spirituality. I was interested in the delineations and self awareness that he expressed in his response:

How it's important to my own? Well, I'm not quite as rigid as Dr. Morland was. I mean, he believed that you had to have a verbatim recollection of the scriptures and so forth. And that there was an actual formula that you follow when doing … in his case, it was evangelism. And there's a formula that he laid out, and it was very rigid….
    I'm not that way. I think that different people are reached through different strategies. And so, while that may have worked just fine in a 1950s classroom--or in a more rigid, sort of, structured environment--I tend to be a little more accepting of different ways that people learn, and also different ways that people come to recognize their spiritual issue, or their spiritual depravity, or their spiritual situation: whatever it may be. (DS, personal communication, March 18, 2009)

Having gained some understanding of the people who were influential in shaping Daniel's spirituality, I wanted to know more about his own personal spiritual journey. Daniel was generous in sharing multiple aspects of that journey, but it was obvious that the seminal event in his early years was his experience of being born again: an encounter that remains a wellspring of his spirituality--his life--even today:

As Baptists (and I think you probably know this), when you have … We believe that you're saved--born again--and that, for me, happened when I was about 16 years old…. We had a revival, and they had an evangelist who came in and he was preaching. And I don't know (I can't really explain the emotional effect of it), but the whole time that he was preaching, I felt myself … I mean, this wasn't something abstract; this was me standing on the edge of eternity, and I had an opportunity here, and God was calling me right now to follow Christ: Not just in a

superficial "I believe in Jesus" thing, but "I'm going to follow Jesus." (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

The thrust that Daniel felt in being saved drove him to find ways of being saving for others—a quest that has taken myriad forms as he has grappled with his purpose and his place:

> I've always felt that God wanted me to do more, and that there was something I had to offer, and that these experiences I'd been blessed with: you know, the opportunity to speak Spanish fluently; to speak French; to have the agriculture background; and then to have the Sociology background; and, sort of, the perspective that would allow me to understand the ways to understand international peoples (some of that broader international perspective worldview, whatever). I thought that there were some things that God must be preparing me for all along. So I've been feeling like this nagging going along. And it was kind of a one-sided negotiation: Like, I felt God wanted me to do one thing; I just wasn't sure what that was. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

Although the personal struggle of sorting out his purpose has been confounding for him, it repeatedly has found expression in service to others:

> My mother … my parents were convinced that I was supposed to be a preacher….I never really thought that was what I was supposed to do, but I did think that I that I had … that God was dealing with me and working with me in this area of international peoples—helping, you know, working for others, service for others.
>   And so, when I joined the Peace Corps … This was something I had in mind before I met my wife, and so when I met her, then that kind of threw a monkey wrench in things because I wasn't intending to get married then. You know, I said, "Would you like … We can do this together." And that's where I could use the French and the agriculture experience; that's kind of like serving God, right? That's kind of like it. And then I came back and we moved to Arizona, and then we moved to Mexico. And I worked down there and I was working for the federal government, but in the Office for the Development of the Community. So I worked with peoples who had been displaced by tourism development; and, that's kind of like God's work, right? (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

I was struck by the contrast between the narrow worldview Daniel had described, earlier, in telling me about his formative years and the disparate experiences, of more

recent years, in which he has engaged with various populations around the world. I asked

him to talk more about how such a dramatic shift in his standpoint occurred.

> I lived in Mexico; I lived in Africa. I have always been drawn to international peoples…. Richness in life comes through diversity and understanding of other peoples. We, in my family life at home, now, I'm involved in the Spanish church. That's what I do: Spanish Church. Everyone (pretty much, everyone) that we hang out with is different than us. And it's just … I've been drawn to that differentness since I was a teenager. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

In counterpoint to the strong allure that Daniel acknowledged for working among

those who are not like him, I was intrigued, when he was discussing his activities among

these various populations, by his repeated use of the phrase, "kind of like God's work"

(DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008). I asked him to tell me more about the

importance of this distinction in regard to how he thinks about his spirituality. He replied:

> [F]rom the time I was a teenager I felt that I was supposed to do something: that God had called me to do something more. But it's never been clear to me exactly what that was. And so around the area where I grew up, the interpretation--if you have a calling, what that normally means--is you're called to preach….Well, I never really felt like that. And I really thought that I … I knew that I had a love for people that seemed to be more of a burden than I saw other people have….
> I kept trying to rationalize it in some way, saying, "Well, this is kind of … This is good work; it must be God-approved, right? It's good work, so it's worthy. And I'm helping people, and I'm doing things that are affecting lives." (DS, personal communication, November 25, 2008)

He concluded this portion of his narration by stating:

> For me it was kind of like, "Okay, God …" It was like a one-sided negotiation—a one-sided compromise: Like, "God, this ought to be close to what you're calling me to do, right? This is it, right? And I really want to do it, so how can I make what I really want to do match with what you're telling me to do?"…[I]t really was my rationalization of what I was doing to help me to better deal with the decisions I was making. And so all along, it's been like that. And even now I still feel like I'm kind of doing that. I don't know what God would have me do exactly still. (DS, personal communication, November 25, 2008)

His ongoing negotiation with God came up a number of times in Daniel's narration. Although he told me that he still struggles with the questions that are part of that dialogue, he also indicated that, a few years ago, he was able to come to some measure of resolution, consequent to an experience that he described as one of the most critical in his life. He indicated that this crucial moment was the result of an episode in which he and his wife were struggling with taking their commitment to a deeper level. Initially, I was surprised by the personal nature of this disclosure, but on further reflection, I decided that Daniel's inclusion of this experience in his account made sense in light of an earlier observation I had made: that in telling me about Boyd Robbins and Houston Morland (the two men he had identified as important influences in shaping his spirituality), Daniel had made a special point of commenting on how they relate to their wives. Clearly, for Daniel, marriage is an important relationship: one, perhaps, that is foundational in how he thinks about his own spirituality, thus accentuating even more the importance of the passage he was about to share:

> I've had some challenges, even in my marriage. At one point that came to, perhaps, the most deeply impacting personal experience I've ever had—where I actually really got angry with God….[God and I] had to have a meeting: Because I said that "I feel like I've been pulling mine and doing mine and you're not doing yours. And I've been trying." And that was that same compromise that I've been telling you all along, that, "God, I've been trying to do this," and the message I'm getting was, "Yeah, but that was on your terms; this is my terms. And this is the way ... This is where you are right now, and the situation you're in is because of some of the choices you've made, and there are consequences to sin—there are consequences to resistance."
>
> And so I just, from that part, started to rebuild a relationship with God, and the other things sort of fell into place. And that's where I am now. But I am very clear on the fragile nature of life. Not just … I'm not talking about just death, either. There are a lot of things worse than dying--a lot of things worse than dying--and so every day, I'm thankful for what I've got.
>
> I think I'm a good husband, and I love my wife intensely (because I don't know any other way). I don't know any other way to not … I can't be lukewarm. Maybe that's probably why I have high blood pressure and everything else—because I do

care. I can't, like, half-way commit. (DS, personal communication, November 25, 2008)

The energy suggested in those last couple of lines is true to much of how I experienced Daniel throughout all of our interactions. He is a man who feels deeply, who cares passionately, who lives intensely. In a moment of self-diagnosis, he told me,

> I wonder if it's just not my sort of ultra-sensitivity that I always feel like I need to do something (or co-dependency, in some way): Like God needs me--he needs me to do something--or I need God to need me. And then, so I try to work my own way into being relevant. And I think sometimes I should mellow out a little bit and not be so intense. It's not all my fault … I don't have the ability to effect a change in everybody. So I'll pick a small sector of the world that I can affect and do the best I can. (DS, personal communication, November 25, 2008)

The resolution suggested in that final statement did not ring true to my ear. It seemed to me, perhaps, that Daniel would *like to* maintain this measure of acceptance, but beneath presses an urgency--a disquietude--that keeps him unsettled, seeking. Some of this restlessness was suggested earlier when, in describing his love for people, he had used the expression, "more of a burden than I saw other people have" (DS, personal communication, November 25, 2008). I told him that I thought *burden* was an interesting word to use in that context and asked him to expand on this remark:

> Well, I mean, I think burden is still the right word. When I look around, I think I see empathetically, sort of, pain behind the scenes…. For me the burden part is seeing human suffering and wanting to do something about it in such an intense, almost driven, way. I can't … It is in my nature to want to help fix things….
>
> I mean, when I finally got my Ph.D. and I got this job: I had had this one-sided negotiation with God for years saying, "Now just let me get this and then I'll really be able to serve you and all this. And I got to Memphis and here I was: I was settled; I wasn't taking any more classes; I had more time than I thought I had at the time (This was my first couple of years here). And, I mean, I did: I felt guilty, almost, that I hadn't done what I was supposed to do—that there was a calling that I felt like I was supposed to respond to that I had been putting off.
>
> And (you know scripture), I mean, I was on the road to Nineveh for a long time, and in some ways, I still … I'm a frequent flyer to Nineveh: That's the way it goes for me. I keep thinking that I'm getting closer to where I'm supposed to

be, but then I … It's cyclical, and I come back and I go, "Oh, you should be doing this, or that, or the other." (DS, personal communication, March 18, 2009)

I took his reference to Nineveh to suggest (as in the biblical story of Jonah and the whale) that he still feels he is avoiding what God would have him do. Of all the participants in this study, perhaps, Daniel was most consumed with the kind of struggle suggested in that image … and the most articulate in voicing the pain this struggle brings to him. A good portion of that pain, in recent years, has been related to figuring out how he fits into the culture of higher education:

> When I first started at the university, I think there was some sense that I obtained that being a religious person was a sign of intellectual weakness in many ways: That people would somehow think that you were intellectually inferior if you had … Clearly if you were a Christian, you hadn't considered all the evidence kind-of-thing. I kept going and, oftentimes, throughout my process of self-realization, I guess, these things were in conflict….But I've learned that there are different ways of serving, and that I'm a more fully equipped servant, having accomplished the studies that I have—having had the experiences that I've had. (DS, personal communication, March 18, 2009)

Still trying to determine how Daniel draws the lines with regard to his concern about what God would have him do, his background in evangelical religion, and his involvement in various kinds of social justice initiatives, I asked him to help me sort it all out:

> I do believe evangelism is very important. And when I'm in that context … Like here at the university, if I were to go around in an evangelistic mode all the time, I wouldn't be employed very long. It's just not the appropriate setting to do that….Now, if someone comes to me (and I've done this here at work) … comes to me with an issue and wants to talk further, we'll talk. But I wait for them to suggest or provide some indication that this is something they want to talk about: not something that I'm pushing or pushing on them whatsoever….
>
> I do church. I do church every day as I go. But it's more through example—not with sort of in-your-face proselytization that would be offensive or invasive. But I do share a burden. I believe that there are people who are going to literally die and go to a literal Hell, and that concerns me. I'm concerned that people are separated from God….

I think that as a family we are settled. Coming to Memphis has helped solidify and shore up some of those things, that … Before we were attenders of church, but not really active members, or it wasn't (like I said awhile ago) faith in action. We did good things, but it wasn't because … The reason wasn't clear to my children, at least. So now when we go and we serve and we feed somebody or we pick somebody up or give some things away (whatever it might be), we clearly say to the kids, "This is what God would have us to do. This is what God would have us to do." (DS, personal communication, November 25, 2008)

Integrating Teaching and Spirituality

Ultimately, of course, my central interest in talking with Daniel was to learn how he thinks about and integrates his spirituality and his teaching. In keeping with my earlier line of questioning, I asked Daniel to talk about at least one critical incident that would demonstrate how spirituality and teaching have come together in him. I was surprised when the immediate association he made in hearing the question was with regard to a teaching experience other than his work at the university. The reason for this immediate association, however, became clearer as I realized that the experience he chose to describe is one that he consciously and repeatedly chooses (as a volunteer), and that it includes three important aspects of his identity: his desire for social justice, his concern for international peoples, and his skills as a teacher.

Daniel stated that he teaches English as a volunteer. His present class is the staff of a Chinese restaurant who have come to this country under various circumstances—possibly even human trafficking.

[T]hey don't speak English, and I don't speak Chinese, but I believe that it is their connection to the outside, and I … I always believe teaching's about relationships. And so, if there's someone in distress there (I don't know if there is, but I believe there is) … If there's someone in distress, they'll come to me, and maybe I'll be able to help them. And in the meantime, I'm improving their human condition by improving their basic skills in English. In my own sort of way, this is something that I can do as a volunteer—can affect these ten peoples' lives. And over the last four years, I've taught hundreds of students—from 28 different countries now. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

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He went on to talk about a couple of other situations in which, as a result of his service as a language tutor, he was able to assist immigrants in other aspects of their lives. One of these was a mail order bride who was living with a husband who was abusive to her.

> [S]he didn't have any clue that she could seek divorce, and that there was a Violence Against Women's Act, and all these things … that she could become a citizen just through her status as a victim. Now she has her own apartment, and she's divorced this guy, and she's doing great. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

Another person he helped was a woman whose sister's children were being sexually abused by the woman's brother-in-law. In this situation, Daniel indicated that, not only was he able to help her in dealing with the immediacies of that awful situation, but the relationship they established also created a forum in which they talked about their faith and their religious beliefs:

> [S]he confided in me and wanted to know what I thought she should do, and I kind of helped her along, and there were some other things that came out of that. And over time, these are things that I would talk to her about. She shared first on that one, though; she was saying, you know, "These are things that are important to me." But it's not something that I actively pursue in the sense that, you know, I'm looking for the next person to witness to—in the sense of proselytizing. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

As I listened to Daniel, it occurred to me that he had interpreted my question about the integration of teaching and spirituality in a manner more closely tied to a verbal sharing of his beliefs than was true of some of the other participants in this study. That response, of course, was consistent with his evangelical heritage, but I noted how careful he feels he must be about maintaining the boundaries that inform his decisions with regard to these types of situations. In discussing these boundaries with respect to his work at the university, he stated:

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> [C]ertainly, if there was a student who came to me, and asked the question--asked me what I thought--I would tell them. Well, I mean, I think you have to be sensitive to the individual … Sometimes, it's not just appropriate to do that. And you certainly don't want to offend anyone (or get fired for being inappropriate, for sure), but, I mean, I don't make a secret of it either. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

The matter of not having to make a secret of his religion was important to Daniel, but it seemed to me that the issue for him was less a matter of a desire to project his beliefs onto others than it was a concern that his beliefs--that he--be respected. Informing my assessment of this concern were two remarks that he made in our first interview: one that acknowledged a level of distress regarding his perception that, if his faith were known, he would not be taken seriously by the academic community of which he is part; the other that denoted the balance that he strives to maintain in his daily teaching routine:

> I love teaching; I believe that the university should be the opportunity … should be a location where people have the free exchange of thoughts and ideas. I challenge my students. I don't think there is a student in any of my classes right now who could tell you what my faith is--or what my political opinion is--because I intentionally try to expand them in both directions. If it's a liberal or conservative issue, whatever it is, I want them to think about it. I say it in class, "I don't care what your opinion is, I just want you to have one." And that's true. So to me, I'm really pushed daily towards fair teaching, I want to make sure that they can't tell. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

He attributed his vigilance about this latter concern to two situations in which he felt that teachers "overstepped their bounds and pushed their own personal agenda on me in a way that I did not appreciate" (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008) in his own years as a student. One of these was a situation in which he felt the instructor forced her own views about marriage onto her students; the other was an instructor who advocated the sterilization of women in third world countries. Daniel indicated that he felt oppressed in having to be subjected to the biased opinions of these instructors, but concluded by saying:

> In the end, some of these radicals that I had were balanced out by my overall experience, but in my … They had the wrong attitude when it came to teaching. It was their opportunity to incite, or to be accusatorial towards anyone who didn't agree with what they thought, and that's just not the way I think teaching should be done. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

Wanting to pursue further the connections he makes between spirituality and his teaching, I asked Daniel to talk about an incident that might show the personal qualities he has that have enabled him to reach, or not to reach, his students in ways that promote growth and development.

In answering the question, he didn't name a specific quality, but the nature of his reply suggested that he sees his student-centered focus as being very important to the impact he has been able to have in serving the students in his department. He indicated that one of the first things he did in coming to the university was to start an association for students in his department in order to foster increased socialization among the students and to provide a forum in which they can learn more about the profession they are choosing. He also has been extremely successful in attracting research dollars to the university, and has made it his practice in applying for these grants to apply for funding for internship positions that provide opportunities for his students to earn money while engaged in experiential learning with respect to various types of concerns:

> In my mind, if I … if what I do in my office doesn't matter outside, then I'm wasting my time….I have a very applied and practical approach to these things. It matters to me that a kid at Manassas [an inner city high school] gets in a fight, and a kid at Arlington [a suburban high school] gets in a fight, and the kid at Arlington gets in-school suspension, and the kid at Manassas goes to jail. That matters to me. That's … That is injustice, and I'm going to fight for social justice in this sense. And I'm going to promote that same activist spirit in my students. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

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Toward the end of our first interview, I asked Daniel, how he gives shape to his commitment to helping his students find meaningful answers to the questions of life. He replied:

> Well, I believe that it's possible that this was my calling all along: to be a professor. I believe that I'm in a unique position because the … People like me are so rare in the university: people who have faith and who believe in science, as well (I mean, believe in the practices of science—of the scientific method). And so this is a unique opportunity, I believe, for me to show them how I live and how I approach questions in a way that's consistent with my faith. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

After listing various practices he employs that challenge his students to think critically and to heighten the students' understanding and empathy for the people they will serve, he added:

> I believe that it's important for me to do those things, to teach in a way that is consistent with my Christian faith. And that doesn't mean that I'm proselytizing to them, but I'm not …To me, there are no logical inconsistencies here. This is not two different worlds: one is for how I practice faith; and one is for how I teach. I teach in a way that's consistent with my faith. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

Wanting him to go deeper in describing his faith, I asked him what qualities would exhibit that faith. However, Daniel heard the question in reference to the students' faith responses and talked about the kinds of qualities he wants to inspire among his students. Although his reply took us in a direction other than what I had intended, I felt the remarks were instructive in demonstrating the kinds of concerns to which he attends in considering how he might more fully inform--or, perhaps in many instances, form--his students:

> For example, honesty or integrity. You know, if someone will cheat on an exam, what will they do as a police officer when they have an opportunity? If someone will slight the truth in that situation, what would they do when it really mattered in the real world, and when they had the opportunity to judge someone? What

does it mean: justice? Criminal justice (the system as a system) was created by men--and I mean that in a generic sense-- but is it just?...

Look deeper, see the broader context. What does this all mean? You know, what does … What is the relationship between socioeconomic status, poverty, and disadvantage, and crime? What is it; what is the relationship? Is there something more that we could be doing? So I guess I want them to approach criminal justice not only from a--not even from a punitive stance--but from a rehabilitative stance: one which includes community; includes empathetic thinking about what would make this world better. What would make … How can we really address crime? (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

Daniel went on to voice a good deal of frustration about the community's response to crime. He seemed frustrated, particularly, by the fact that, in response to the problem, the community keeps doing the same things in spite of the fact that these approaches are not working. Daniel clearly felt that these approaches are short-sighted and counter-productive, and he was frustrated by the lack of creativity and compassion displayed by community leaders who seem more interested in retribution than in approaches that would foster rehabilitation and reconciliation. Plainly, he did not want his students to fall into the same patterns of response:

Memphis is a great place to do criminal justice, on the one hand, because there's plenty of data points: There's lots of crime….But remember the people; remember your data points represent lives….

I mean, an ill-prepared social worker, or an ill-prepared probation officer, or police officer, can leave a wake of destruction in their path. You know, if they have certain biases, or certain things that they've … Even biases they've not realized can cause them to do damage. You know, they say doctors are supposed to be, "First do no harm." It should apply to probation officers, and social workers, and others as well. And there's a lot of them out there that are just real, you know, grasping at straws and swinging in the dark trying to make a difference. Make data-driven policy decisions; let the data talk; follow those principles; do what's right: That's what I think! (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

Daniel's response led well into the next question I wanted to ask him: how the academic discipline in which he teaches provides a forum to communicate what he

believes and what he values. Consistent with the manner in which he conveyed many of

his remarks, he was passionate in his response:

> What we do, matters. I mean, you know, policy … Shifts in policy affect lives. How we approach our job as a police officer or whatever: Every person you pull over … You know, remember that it says "To Serve and to Protect". Well, remember the service part.
>
> I think all of our students should have … they need to have their sensibilities piqued. And I want them to think about where does a homeless person use the bathroom … you know, things that you wouldn't normally think about. I want them to think about if you're coming back to your community from jail, what are the true possibilities for success? Why is it … Why is going to school at Manassas [the inner city school] different than going to Arlington [the suburban school]; what is the educational difference? If there are equally hard-working teachers and equally qualified teachers why does the product look so different? And I … In that sense, if students begin to have a more empathetic--or sympathetic--service-minded, loving approach, I think that their solutions will look different. That's my thought. (DS, personal communication, October 6, 2008)

Perhaps, for me, the highlight of the time that I spent with Daniel was in discussing

the right brain exercise that I asked him to do as part of our second interview. He was the

only participant in the study who took on the challenge of doing a photo elicitation

exercise in which he went out and took photographs that, for him, captured images

expressing what spirituality and/or teaching mean for him. I thought his composition

provided a vivid display of how spirituality and teaching come together in his thinking.

In discussing the product that he put together, he seemed a bit self-conscious—

concerned what I might think about his creation. He presented six pictures to me with

careful explanation of what he had hoped to capture in each of the photographs:

> Well, I'll put them in the order that I took them, but that's only because that makes it easier for me to do it. I don't think there's any real order. This task has been particularly challenging for me, because to define spirituality and teaching (the intersection of those two), I kept trying to think of what that actually means….
>
> This first one is a picture of my hand—the wedding ring on my hand, which is a symbol that's open to others. And so the ring itself counts … means a lot to me. This is a commitment: not just a commitment to another person, but a spiritual commitment. And I wear it every day and people see it. But it's also … My whole

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life is like this. So people see it. This ring is a tangible, physical thing on my finger that signifies that I'm married and I've made a covenant with my wife, but also with God. I'm hoping that my life is similar to this.

The next one [Photo 2: a picture of an acorn superimposed against the background of a huge tree] is …You might see the background, that's the University of Memphis; that's the parking lot down there. Walking on, carrying my … the camera, thinking about what I'm going to do, and I step on this acorn, and I'm thinking, "Man, we're teachers, and the potential is locked within each child--each student--just like this acorn."…And, anyways, this is the way that I think of each student. I mean, we don't really know which one is going to take, which one's going to really take off….This acorn and the tree bit has been done before, but that's what I was thinking.

[Photo 3: a picture of a large tree with branches going in multiple directions]. Same kind of analogy that the others are saying: What an amazing tree. When I looked at this tree, I walked up to the base of the tree—the same tree. This is the same tree, and I walked up to the base and stood at the base and looked up. I took the picture from there. And the branches of where all the students go—the branches: Where does everyone go, and how does it all work?…

[W]hen I think about the spirituality issues, I mean, it strikes me that's sort of the hidden potential in each one. It's like inside, and it has to be somehow let out or exposed or released. I don't know how that …what the actual word is…. Each one of us, too, has that same kind of potential locked away in a supernatural place there, I think, by God. And through this structure that He's provided, that those who come first teach those who come behind--the sort of passing of the torch--cultural transference of information is very important. (DS, personal communication, November 25, 2008)

In response to this remark, I told Daniel, at our next meeting, that I thought his statement put teaching on a very high plane. I asked him if he considers teaching to be a divine act and, then, asked him again how he perceives his spirituality to inform his teaching philosophy. He replied:

When I said that, I wasn't really thinking about that. But that seems to make sense now that you've said that. I do believe that teachers are called; I think social workers are called; police officers are called….Teachers have a unique opportunity, and it's a blessing, I think, to stand in front of anyone and to feel like you have anything to share. I believe that I've gotten better over time as a teacher, and I think it's something that I will continue to improve on. I do see that … I hadn't thought about that actually, in those words, but I think it is, in some ways, a very spiritual issue.

I think that the kinds of social issues that I favor--social responsibility that I favor--are also godly. I mean those are also godly objectives. So, in that way, they are in line. I don't think I teach anything that's inconsistent with scriptures or with

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a godly perspective on life. And if I did, I hope that someone will tell me about it and I'll stop doing it, because I think that it all falls together in this way: That we are responsible for socializing the next generation. (DS, personal communication, March 18, 2009)

I was delighted with Daniel's response to my request regarding the photo elicitation exercise. Although he seemed a bit uneasy in presenting the fruit of his work, it seemed to me that he had done an excellent job of carefully thinking about what images he wanted to include and his reasons for those specific selections. He continued in his explanation:

I don't know why this [Photo 4: a picture of a road sign] is here exactly, except that it was that: Parent/Child. And, actually, when it says, "Slow, Children at Play," I'm actually thinking of this almost from a more universal sense. This is like God's warning sign (like we're all children at play): "Slow; children at play. Be patient; they're coming. They're coming along. Help them; work with them."…All of us are trying to work our own way through. And while I have people that I deal with who are called students, I feel like a student myself. I'm still doing the same things to try to learn and learning from those above me. And I don't know who the … I can't identify one who has all the information and all the knowledge. So we're all just children at play.

This [Photo 5] is a picture of the crosses at Bellevue [a large Baptist church at the edge of the city]. I had another picture that was right up front, where all you see are the crosses, and its obvious Christian symbolism that is there. But I wanted to take it back a ways--behind the trees, through the trees, through the power lines and the cars passing in front, and the busyness of life, and all these things--from a distance….This giant symbol is right on the side of the road: teaching people; drawing people; convicting those who would drive by and ignore it, saying, "You know, there's something else; think about it. Think about this."

And I heard someone once criticize them. "How many people could they have fed with those crosses?" [I say,] "How many people are they spiritually feeding every day that walk by and are reminded, 'There's something's more ... there's something more to this than my own existence.'" (DS, personal communication, November 25, 2008)

This image of these crosses, obviously, was an important one for Daniel, and so I asked him, at our following interview, to expand upon that last statement:

Well, [this church] does feed a lot of people, but I also think that these markers encourage a lot of people everyday: They drive by it; they see it; they think about it; they ponder what it means to them. I think that it has the ability to make people

think. And I believe that there is power in seeing those kinds of symbols, especially for people who have a background to understand the symbol's meaning. (DS, personal communication, March 18, 2009)

The concepts that Daniel discussed in sharing his photo elicitation exercise served as a precursor for many of the thoughts he expressed in concluding our final interview. Near the end of that conversation, I said, "Prior to his death from last year, Randy Pausch of Carnegie Mellon received a good deal of attention for his 'last lecture' in which he shared his perspectives about what's important in life." I, then, asked him what kinds of things he would say if asked to give his last lecture. His response, I thought, captured much about the ways that Daniel's spirituality informs his teaching philosophy. An abridged version of his eloquent reply is presented below:

> I think that one of the things that I would want to share is that students, I think in general, feel this certain level of anxiety. It doesn't matter what their stage of life is; everyone has career anxiety, whatever it may be. I would probably want to encourage them to just relax: "It's a process; it's unfolding. You're perhaps-- probably--the most flexible, now, you've ever been. Use this time to explore. You can work the rest of your life; you know? First, spend some time thinking about what kind of impact you want to make, and what kind of career do you want to have. What are the things that are most important to you?"…
>
>   I would strongly encourage people to build life experiences. That whole thing in the classroom: Step outside of your normal comfort zone and explore some other things. Just because this is the way you've experienced it, or the way it's always been in your life doesn't mean that that's the way it is for everyone else. So I would encourage them to look for those invisible people that I've talked about before. Look around. Be observant.
>
>   But I would also encourage them to … It's the last lecture: I mean, I really think that I would want them to find a spiritual grounding in their life….[T]o be made in God's own image, what does that actually mean? Well, one of the things it means is that we are immortal; we just decide where we're going to live. But also, you know, we have the same God-like abilities to love and to produce and to affect the environment around us. And we need to be careful to do those things, and not look past [that] opportunity….
>
>   [T]hey sometimes say an investment in another person is the best way to get your own personal returns, and I think that that's true. I think: Go and serve somebody. Whatever it might be, do it through service and love, and don't do it out of a sense of guilt or obligation, but do it because you want to help. And if you don't have those feelings, then find out why you don't….

And I would encourage people in the last lecture--encourage them very strongly--to love intensely, and not to let anyone that they care about go one day without knowing how you feel about them. I think, too many times, we get caught up in the rat race of everyday, and there are people who our affection for stagnates. And we have to be intentional about the way we reach out to people….

I think I would talk about responsibility. We have a responsibility: Find out what yours are and fully develop them. I'm afraid that too many people fail to realize who they are or what they could be. It's just lost potential, and they wash out pretty quick. I think it's … We have to be good stewards of ourselves to make sure that we don't miss opportunities.

Anyway, I think those are some of the things that I would impress upon them. Self-realization: find out what your gifts are; maximize those, so that you can be as effective as possible. Love intensely, and make sure that no one else knows … No one that you care about doesn't know how much you care, and how you care, because life is too short and things go quickly. (DS, personal communication, March 18, 2009)

Concluding Remarks

I was grateful to Daniel for what seemed a compelling synopsis of the ideas and

values that he would want to pass along to his students if asked to give his last lecture.

The concepts he included seemed consistent with so many of those that had been part of

our conversations over the preceding months. I thought this seemed particularly fitting,

given the final image of Daniel's photo elicitation exercise—an image he used

convincingly, I thought, to communicate the connections that he draws between his

spirituality and his teaching. The picture [Photo 6] showed just part of the back of a man,

who was watching as children exited from a school bus. Daniel explained:

I took this one a couple of different times. This guy on the left is a police officer--Memphis police officer--a good friend of mine….And he's waiting for his kids: expecting, waiting. He loves his kids; loves his kids! And he's training them. He's showing them that he loves them. Just a simple way: meeting them at the bus stop every day, making sure they get back. Lots of other kids get off there, but he's the one that's always there—always right there. And he's watching to see what's going on. There just is anticipation of seeing his kids. And his son ... This particular day his son gets off the bus, runs right past him, goes in, gets a sucker because the office is giving away candy. His son ignored him, seemingly, but he's very aware that he's there.

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And in some ways, this is how we are as teachers: Just by being available--being consistent--showing up and looking for opportunities to help when they're available, that's how we do the same kind of things. And this is ... We love our students--we do--even if you don't like certain things about them. For me, the love of teaching is the same kind of anticipation that he has right there: "How was the kid's day at school? What's going on? I'm available to talk to you if you need me to." But not pushing it: "You can run past me and get the sucker if you want to, but I'm here." Every day he's there. So: Consistency. (DS, personal communication, November 25, 2008)

It was this consistency that repeatedly came through in the ways in which Daniel talked with me about his teaching: consistency in being available to his students; consistency between what he believes and the way he lives his life; consistency in challenging those he teaches to become more informed, responsible--better--citizens; consistency in his advocacy for international peoples and others in various kinds of need; consistency in his encouragement that his students attain fulfillment in their own lives by finding meaningful ways of serving others.

In listening to Daniel, I was tremendously impressed with his integrity; the amount of consideration he gives, and the energy he exerts, in being true to himself amidst his efforts to be true, as well, to the multiple roles he has claimed: husband, father, professor, mentor, student, volunteer, citizen, Christian. Those identities, of course, also have laid their claims on him, and I felt honored that he had been willing to speak so openly with me about how each one has touched his life, his spirituality, and his teaching. The fidelity he devotes to each of these roles, I think, have provided Daniel with a powerful tool for giving flesh to what seemed to be his guiding tenet: that teaching is always about *relationships*; relationships that call for *action*; action directed toward *justice* and *service* to the human community. In listening to his story, I was left with the strong impression

that Daniel regularly embodies the transitive properties implied in that formulation as he teaches his students in ways informed--shaped--by his spirituality.

CHAPTER 4-C

Findings of Study

Jerome's Story

 "I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth:" That's the
kind of stuff I don't doubt at all. I actually do believe and it's really the simplest
sermon I ever heard preached. [My minister] did a sermon and he had only two
points in the sermon: You will leave here, and you will meet a maker. Those were
the two critical points in the service--in the sermon--and I think part of why I
remember it is that my mom and dad had come to Memphis to visit and went to
church with me that morning. But it really sort of sums up my belief. (Jerome
Blakemore (JB), personal communication, October 14, 2008)

I appreciated the brevity of Jerome's summation. Part of it came as no surprise

because I had heard him speak, previously, of the solace he derives in the straightforward

assertions of the Apostles' Creed. The primacy of his concern about meeting a maker,

however, did surprise me: Although judgment is one of the tenets of that creedal formula,

I had not heard Jerome speak, previously, of this conviction as foremost in his system of

belief. The next time we met, I asked him to say more about the emotions that are part of

shaping his spirituality in regard to this aspect of his faith. He replied:

It's probably moved. It used to be fear—because I grew up in a household where
fear was a tangible sort of way to exert a certain kind of behavior. It's probably
much more hope. I think the other, that I probably didn't mention, is really a, sort
of, real sense of just obligation. (JB, personal communication, December 17,
2008)

Jerome went on to talk at length about how these emotions have played out in shaping

his thoughts about spirituality. I found it especially moving when he talked about the role

that his sense of obligation played in sustaining, then rebuilding, a relationship with his

father:

My father and I got to a point where, out of obligation, I needed to treat him as
though he were my father. And in that experience we connected enough that …
Because I stayed out of obligation, there was this kind of unfolding as though

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there were … It was a plant that had gotten tight and needed something, and if you leave it, you don't keep the obligation; you don't get to the part … (JB, personal communication, March 12, 2009)

I knew that Jerome and his father, in fact, had arrived at a place where that sense of obligation had become the ground in which something new had come to be: Two years earlier, I had watched Jerome take his father into his home and care for him in the final months of his life. Now, hearing this part of the story, I appreciated even more fully the feelings poured out in the selection Jerome sang at the funeral following his father's death: *It is Well with My Soul*.

Dr. Jerome Blakemore is an African-American man in his early 50s. An Associate Professor at the University of Memphis, Jerome serves as the Director of the Division of Social Work, a position he has held since 1999. His appointment to this position followed two four-year teaching stints (at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Loyola University-Chicago, respectively). Despite being the sole administrator of the social work program, Jerome continues to teach a full-time schedule of courses each semester. His teaching responsibilities most often include at least two of the following courses: *Social Work Research*, *Social Welfare Policy II*, *Introduction to Social Work*, or *Field Placement Seminar*. In his childhood years, Jerome attended the Baptist Church. Presently he is an active member of a church in the Disciples of Christ fellowship, but he claims his true spiritual home to be the denomination of his early adulthood, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church:

> [My] connection to the AME Church is probably how I understand spirituality and it's, kind of, connection to African American culture and spirituality. And while I go to a different kind of church, I am … I'm probably still AME Methodist. (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

As I began my consideration of who I should ask to participate in this study, I already knew Jerome far better than any of the other prospective participants: For the past six years, he and I have worked together in the Division of Social Work (he, in fact, is my immediate work supervisor). Due to concern about that dual relationship I, initially, ruled out the thought of including him in the study, but upon further consideration decided the benefits he would bring to the study far outweighed the detriment of that concern. From previous interactions, I knew him to be a person of insight and discernment, a man who has given considerable thought both to spirituality and to teaching, a professor who is skilled in the classroom, and someone who, by virtue of his background in the African American church, likely would bring a different set of experiences than most of the other participants. I was quite certain his perspectives would add substance to the study—an opinion that would prove true, repeatedly, as we discussed the ways in which his spirituality informs his teaching philosophy.

Teaching

As I did with each of the participants, I began our first interview by asking Jerome to tell me about some of the influences in his early life that have shaped the ways in which he thinks about teaching. Without hesitation, he began to describe the impact of three people in his early life, each of whom had a marked effect in shaping his teaching philosophy:

> Yeah, actually probably the person who shapes my teaching the most is really a fifth grade teacher….I was born fairly ill; I was sick most of my childhood. And Joyce McEwen, in fifth grade, treated me in ways that were positive--like she cared about me--and it kind of shocked me. (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

Jerome went on to explain some of the reasons that Ms. McEwen's attention meant so

much to him:

> Miss McEwen was probably the first teacher who really connected with me. You
> know, most of our [familial] history in schools was: Jerry was president of student
> council, and played piano, and sang; and Jimmy was always a very good athlete.
> It was, you know … So Miss McEwen knew me! Not as Jerry's brother, or
> Jimmy's brother, or the Chief of Police's son, or the Secretary of the Board of
> Education's son. (JB, personal communication, December 17, 2008)

He described, in more detail, some of the aspects of Ms. McEwen's impact in shaping--in

changing--his life:

> Joyce McEwen was my introduction to African American history and African
> American literature. I grew up in an almost 99% African American school system
> in the suburbs of Chicago, and now it shocks me that it was the fifth grade before
> someone really talked about African American history….I think part of my, what
> I think is a, fairly engaged teaching style, in part, comes out of just watching
> Joyce McEwen and her engagement with me. (JB, personal communication,
> December 17, 2008)

In this first interview (of three), Jerome went on to identify two other people who had

a significant impact on the development of his teaching style: his grandfather and his high

school English teacher:

> I think the other influence: I've probably been teaching some form of Sunday
> School since junior high. My grandfather was the superintendent of Sunday
> School and I would … I'd go Sunday mornings at like 7:30: I'd get up, clean up,
> put on clothes, [and] go walk through the lesson with my grandfather because he
> had a spirit or mindset that said, "You know, you need to do the lesson
> right."…So there's a part of me that's always been teaching. (JB, personal
> communication, October 14, 2008)

He added:

> Probably the other influence about teaching is my high school English teacher,
> who I thought hated me 'cause she always critiqued my writings. She was my
> mother's high school English teacher, as well (which was a mistake for her to find
> out who my mother was)….[T]his teacher treated me quite … her name was
> Letha Paulson … treated me quite differently from that point on. But I think it has
> made me a decent writer, and English (in terms of sort of the technique and
> beauty of English) probably didn't resonate until Letha Paulson. So probably

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those three people when I think about my, sort of, teaching pedagogy and style probably comes from them. (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

For our subsequent interview, Jerome prepared a reflection he entitled, "*From – To,*" in which he did a more systematic and comprehensive presentation regarding some of the people and situations that played significant roles in both his personal and his professional development. In addition to the three people named above, he identified four others who had a demonstrable effect in contributing to the teacher he has become. The first of these was one of his teachers in junior high school, a man who was strict and disciplined, but deeply caring—Sam Lawrence:

> He ... I don't think he knew anything about music, but he put a band together, and he found a friend of his who played some instrument somewhere, who taught us how to play, and we actually performed at some big holiday thing. He, really, organized student council … he organized a student patrol….He was just really amazing. He wore a lab coat. And, of course, for the kind of kids in a fairly poor community, we were, like, "Who the hell does he think he is with a lab coat?" And we played tricks on teachers….[We] threatened teachers, and tried to run the school … and he wasn't biting: He said, "I ain't having it." And so he in some ways, interesting, was sort of my introduction to *To Sir with Love*, because he really cared about students. (JB, personal communication, December 17, 2008)

The next two people identified as influential in shaping his understanding of teaching were two professors Jerome had while studying for his Master's Degree. The first of these was Don Cooney, a strong advocate for social change and the development of critical thinking skills:

> Don Cooney was one of my MSW teachers. Don Cooney's a former priest. He never talked about the priesthood or why he left the priesthood….But Don taught … He had a course that was called, *Truth, Love and Social Change*, and so, he really talked about basic movements of social change. And we didn't know he was a priest until he sort of introduced sort of the role of the Church. And he was critical, sometimes, about the role of the Catholic Church and some stuff. And finally, somebody (I guess who was a Catholic) said, "Why are you beating up on the Catholic Church?" And his response was, "Sometimes the Catholic Church deserves to be beat up on—much like the AME Church does, and the Baptist Church …" He said, "So if you ain't comfortable with doing real critiques …"

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"He was very big into, "It is important to critique what's going on in your world."
(JB, personal communication, December 17, 2008)

The other major influence during Jerome's Master's degree program was Nat McCaslin,

a professor who went out of his way to provide support and guidance for Jerome and the

other students in his class who were members of various racial minority groups:

> The day I got to Western, there were nine students of color who got admitted to
> the MSW program--9 out of about 200--and we were at orientation. And Nat
> McCaslin, very discreetly, sent a note to all nine of us (there were six African
> American, one African, and two Latino): "You need to come to this address." (It
> was his house). So he said, "I invited you, to welcome all of you to the university
> and to the social work department. And to tell you that folks bet every year, about
> how many of you all won't make it." He says, "I'm here to hedge my bet. You all
> need to support each other; study hard; and I'm going to be your mentor." And we
> were like … It's first day, so we had no idea that there were faculty who were
> going to try their best to literally boot you out. (JB, personal communication,
> December 17, 2008)

Jerome remembers Nat McCaslin fondly, as well, for another act of kindness he

provided—helping Jerome find and connect with a new spiritual home:

> He went to a little AME church. And it's the first time I thought about joining an
> AME church, you know, but I knew that my parents and grandparents were so
> rooted in the Baptist church that they'd be like, "What the hell have you done?" I
> finally did join an AME church, and actually went to his church more than I went
> to my own church after awhile. (JB, personal communication, December 17,
> 2008)

The final person that Jerome mentioned as significant in the development of his

teaching style was the chair of his Ph.D. dissertation committee, Wynne Korr:

> I think part of how I teach … I mean, she teaches Research and Policy. So I was
> her research assistant, her teaching assistant, her graduate assistant. I co-taught
> her classes, and then, finally, when I taught my own class, I taught Wynne's
> class—still under her tutelage. So I really had a very different experience about
> how to learn how to teach. And it really comes from having spent four years of
> working with Wynne. I still think there's a part of how I teach is influenced by
> her….[S]he's always been just this gift for me … And if I model my teaching
> after anybody, it probably is Wynne. (JB, personal communication, December 17,
> 2008)

Jerome mentioned one other way in which Wynne Korr, in more recent years, has had a major impact on his life: advocating for his selection to serve, and then working with him, on the Commission of Accreditation for the Council on Social Work Education (the national body that oversees all social work programs in higher education):

> [S]he's the chair of the … on the Commission on Accreditation. I'm sure she's the reason I've spent the last, almost, three years kind of running up and down what feels like the country to really do, I think, wonderful service to the profession. It's probably an opportunity I would not have gotten without Wynne. (JB, personal communication, December 17, 2008)

Jerome's discussion of the people who have been significant in shaping his thoughts about teaching provided an informative background for me to better understand the elements that characterize his teaching style today. I attempted to focus more directly on his thoughts about his teaching philosophy by asking him if there are specific educational theories that serve as an underpinning for his thoughts about teaching, and he replied:

> [O]ne of my education teachers did a series of films on … by a guy named Leo— Leo Buscaglia, I think is how they say his name. And the teachers used to call him the love teacher, because he really had this sense that you really can't teach people if you don't connect with them.…And so, probably, Leo Buscaglia--and I don't know that he had any real philosophy other than you've really got to connect with your students; it's not just a kind of academic exercise. [That] probably always resonates in my mind about what I think my role is supposed to be with students, and it's probably the thing I remember most from my education courses. I don't remember the professor who used him, but I remember Leo Buscaglia. (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

It was obvious that the lesson about the need to connect with people in order to teach them left a lasting impression on Jerome. Now, some 30+ years after having taken that course in education, he, not only remembers what was taught, but professes this concept as one of the guiding principles of his work:

> Probably the thing that I think I do most--and most consistently--is to always support students, even students who I, probably, outwardly (not to the student, but other people) … who I wonder and cross my fingers and say, "I don't think this is

going to work." Because the thing I've learned from students is: Some who you say won't make it, fool you….And so I think part of how I do that, I think, is to, sort of, make a conscious decision to support students. (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

I had the opportunity to witness some of the ways in which he supports students when I visited Jerome's classes. In reflecting on that experience, after attending his *Social Work Policy II* class, I wrote:

I was impressed with Dr. Blakemore's ability to connect with students in the classroom. What particularly stood out to me, today, was his empowerment of students to find answers to their own questions. I also noted, again, his ability to challenge students in such a way that they seem to feel affirmed and invited to grow. He doesn't back off of the expectations that he has of his students, but he does a wonderful job of helping lead them toward being successful and being able to measure up to those expectations. (Schneider, 2008c)

I also attended one of the *Social Work Research* classes Jerome was teaching. In this case, I made it a point to attend the first class of a new term, hoping to gain a sense of how he sets a tone for the work to be done that semester:

Throughout the class, Dr. Blakemore seemed relaxed and comfortable. It was obvious that he likes teaching and that he values the topic of this particular course. Today was mostly about connecting with the students and laying a foundation for the work they will be doing in ensuing weeks. It was obvious that Dr. Blakemore cares about his students and wants them to do well—as social workers, but also as human beings. It seemed to me that his message was offered with care and with commitment to his students' growth, with an investment in fostering learning that will serve his students, across multiple venues, throughout their lives. Even though it seemed to me that not everyone was grasping every concept that was mentioned, I had the sense that the students trust Dr. Blakemore and his ability to guide them in this learning process. (Schneider, 2009c)

This first class of a new term, obviously, is an important one. I asked Jerome to talk with me about the ways in which he thinks about that session: his structure, and what kinds of objectives he hopes to achieve, in the first class of a new semester:

Usually, when I think about what I do in a first class: My goal is to just get their attention—for them to, sort of, get a glimpse of who I am. I think students doubt faculty … and I think students have a racist overtone about faculty. I've had

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students who have asked me do I have a real doctorate. And my observation has been, if it's a white faculty member they automatically say, "Doctor" and never ask….So, for me, I think the first class really is about, one, getting their attention—helping them understand how critical the work is and why this course fits; and, quite honestly, making sure they see some order and competence because I think students need order and competence in a class—that if they feel as though you are competent and you have enough structure, that they might learn something. (JB, personal communication, March 12, 2009)

Jerome acknowledged one other item in the way he uses that first class session in setting

a tone for the semester:

> I sometimes think students (and this is probably my own craziness) need to see how quick your wit is in the first class, because some of them will want to have a debate with you. It's like, "Let me kind of … Let's shut that down now: that you don't want to have a [match of wits] with me because I'm bright enough that I'm not going to lose a [match of wits]." And it's interesting: When I've had students once, they come to a second class, and new students in the class who want to [match wits] … it's the students, themselves, who go, "You might not want to go there."…
>   So it is kind of setting agenda; I think, being a real person to them. Because I talk a little bit about me in the first class—about kind of where I've taught and how I teach. So my hope is that they start to connect in the first class, and that they understand there's some work down the road, and some thinking. Because I don't think they think well; I think they're used to the teacher says you've got to remember this for the Gateway (or whatever the exam is) and you remember it. (JB, personal communication, March 12, 2009)

I wanted to know more about the qualities that enable Jerome to connect with his

students. I asked him his perception of why students relate well to him. He answered:

> I think, for some students, I am not what their assumption is: I think students automatically hear "Ph.D.; runs the department," and I think they automatically assume there's no, sort of, personal side of me, or there's no feeling side of me. I think students realize fairly quickly that I really want them to succeed (although some don't realize it as quickly, because I think some of my botherment is just being a pain). But I think once they realize … Once they have some success, they go, "Well, he was probably right." (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

Much of what Jerome had to say about teaching was directed to teaching in general,

but some of his comments were related more to some of the challenges he encountered in

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moving from his previous place of employment (Loyola University - Chicago) to the

University of Memphis:

> Actually, moving from Loyola to here made me challenge my teaching more than
> I had before….[I]t took me awhile to figure out: "How do you maintain standards,
> but also still reach students who may not come with a level of preparation you're
> used to students having?" And I think I do pretty good at that, but it probably
> changed my idea of what kind of energy you have to have to … to not just be in
> the classroom, but the energy it takes to figure out, "How is it you connect with
> students? (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

He went on to discuss in more detail some of the concerns that have been part of

working in this particular setting:

> I think the other part of the difference is: I've had some very good students here.
> But I've had, in the same class, students who are over here (way at one end of the
> continuum) and fifty points over to the other side you have other students, and
> trying to figure, "Okay, how do I reach the student who's way at the top, and how
> do I reach this other student who may be in social work because they thought it
> was easy (which I think was the mindset of students who were coming here when
> I first got here: "It's an easy degree; I'll just show up.") And they've been a little
> shocked that it probably is not as easy as they thought it would be. So that's
> probably the challenge that's made me think more about teaching. (JB, personal
> communication, October 14, 2008)

After visiting one of Jerome's classes, I shared my observation that a number of his

students seemed frustrated by the demands of his course, but I had noticed that it was

many of these same students who expressed an interest in taking him again the following

semester. I asked him for his thoughts concerning my observation. His response:

> While I've never taught high school, I think students have not really been
> challenged. I think they've … Particularly students who are fairly bright: You
> know, they get a syllabus or a class outline, and they go, "Okay, I can get this
> done." Part of my theory for our students is: I don't think they learn without being
> engaged, because if you say, "Well, just read a book, and you can talk about the
> book;" I think they have to have assignments….
> And I actually think that students primarily (for the most part) want to learn,
> and want to feel like it's been worth their effort to pay for a class, show up to
> class, and do the work. And my hope is that with some consistency, students leave
> my class saying, "Well, I learned some stuff about what social work is. (JB,
> personal communication, December 17, 2008)

At our next interview, I told Jerome that it seemed obvious to me that his

understanding of his role as teacher is more than just the transmission of facts. I asked

him to talk with me about the kinds of knowledge he wants to foster among his students:

> One is just knowledge about themselves, because … I don't know that students
> get this well in an undergrad program, but they really are an instrument, and if
> they don't understand their own needs, their own issues, their own concerns, their
> own burdens, their own bias, they are not going to be a very good instrument, or
> they may get in the way of someone else's change….I think that it's important for
> them to start to think about, "Whose needs are you meeting as a practitioner?"
> And so some of it is just understanding themselves….
> While I don't formally teach cultural diversity, I think there's an element of
> cultural diversity in everything I teach. I think students need to understand other
> cultures. For me, it's always process….So part of what I want them to understand
> is how to have an appreciation for other cultures and other communities. (JB,
> personal communication, December 17, 2008)

Again, I felt that I had had the opportunity to observe these concerns when I had

visited Jerome's classroom—this one the *Introduction to Social Work* course. After my

visit, I wrote:

> I wasn't surprised by much of what I observed today, but I was impressed. Dr.
> Blakemore is a very good teacher—possessing a broad span of knowledge that he
> is able to apply across various topics and levels of his students' needs. His
> commitment to the field of social work and the ways this profession can serve the
> human community comes through in the ways he interacts with students and the
> ways he inspires them to grow within the profession. In his knowledge, his skill as
> a teacher, and his commitment to the profession of social work, he offers a class,
> like this, a powerful sign to which these students may aspire as they are being
> introduced to their future profession. (Schneider, 2008a)

Spirituality

I was impressed with the knowledge, and with the presence, Jerome brings to the

students in his classroom, and I was equally taken with his generous responses to my

varied inquiries. I remembered that, as I began to seek participants for this project, I went

to Jerome to ask if he knew people on campus who might be good candidates for such a

study. He suggested a number of people to me, and then came back the next day to say

that, if I were so inclined, he would like to add his name to that list—that the concerns I

was proposing to address were issues he had an interest in exploring, as well. Early in our

first interview, I asked him to say more about why he had been interested in being a part

of this study. He responded:

> Yeah. Actually it was easy. I actually see part of my life and part of my being as always connected to religion and spirituality. And while I don't ever see myself as formally wanting to preach or be a deacon in the church, I actually do sort of … The idea that religion is a Sunday kind of thing just doesn't make sense; that if it doesn't impact on how you live and what you do and what sort of values you have and so …
>
>   It's rare that people in this environment ask you about spirituality. I remember a conversation with a colleague … when he first got here. We were talking about something and two days later, he says, "You're the only one who talks about religion." I said, "Other people do, I'm sure." He said, "No, other people probably don't," he said, "but it doesn't seem to bother you that some people think that's strange." I said, "Well, I think there's probably more people who have some sort of religious orientation." I said, "But I also think 'cause I'm in social work that, yeah, I think some of the roots of social work really come out of religious reform—that kind of stuff." So it's … It's probably sort of an opportunity to think about stuff that seems natural to me, I think. (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

The next time we met, I asked Jerome to expand on his comment about the roots of social

work coming out of religious reform, and to talk about how this affects his teaching. (His

reply was conditioned somewhat, perhaps, by the timing of this interview—immediately

following some of the campaign dynamics that were part of the national presidential

election of that year):

> Yeah, actually, if you sort of look at, particularly, stuff around the Charity Movement, it's really kind of churches and really sort of religious thought. Even the Poor Laws are really sort of born out of this … But I also think … When I think of sort of human services--social change--I think it's hard to separate the Black church from, in some ways, being a … one, an agent of social change; but I also think a social service delivery system. Which is probably why my own … While I don't go to AME church now, there's a part of me that … I think part of why I like the AME church is the sort of marriage between basic religion and

Black theology (which, I guess, sounds like a bad word if you follow the presidential election; I still don't think it's a bad word, necessarily). And so, those things for me sort of intertwine and, particularly, this sort of notion about service and … Because I think of ministry as service. (JB, personal communication, December 17, 2008)

From some of his other remarks, I knew that the Church had been a significant force in Jerome's life. I asked him to talk about some of the early influences that were part of shaping his spirituality:

[M]y notions about spirituality, I think sort of grew as sort of a normal part of growing up. My grandfather was the chairman of the deacon board. My mom was with the Baptist Church, called a deaconess (I guess they didn't want them to be deacons in the Baptist Church). My mom was the minister of music. We lived here; if you went across the alley my mom's parents lived there; and my dad's parents rented a small house from my other grandparents that was actually closer to our house; and the church was next to my grandparents' house. And so, there was always a, sort of, integrated sense of the church and spirituality are just part of your life….

So, there really was sort of a sense of community that was always, sort of, connected to church, and probably spirituality, although I still think there's a difference between church … I think there's some people who don't get spirituality who go to church every Sunday. But I actually think there was this kind of gradual sense of … sort of church and spirituality. (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

Given those early influences, I inquired about experiences that have either reinforced or changed how he thinks about spirituality:

There's probably a couple of people who have helped me reinforce my thinking as a spiritual person. One is the … The Methodist Church I was a member of was Centenary United Methodist Church, and Herbert Lester….When I got to Memphis, one of the first things I did was to go to some transformation stuff for public housing. And he was a minister who was there trying to figure out what kinds of things his congregation--and what they called Centenary Ministries (which is the service arm of Centenary)--what they could do to support this transformation in public housing….

It was interesting to watch Herbert Lester and to hear him because he was … He's what I call a total radical. You know, some people are black radicals; their sense of radical is only about what's wrong in the black community and the oppression of the black community. But he was, for me, a total radical. So it was interesting, in a primarily African American congregation, to have a preacher who was radical, but was sort of people radical. And, for me, it really has made me

think about, you know, it really is okay to make noise in an organized way. (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

It was readily apparent that Reverend Lester has had a marked impact on Jerome's spirituality. In response to his remarks about what he learned, I asked Jerome if making noise has become a part of his own spirituality, and he replied:

> Part of the piece about religion that I probably connect with the most, is probably the social justice pieces….Part of how I sort of have that voice, really, is to say we ought to be doing some other kinds of stuff….   And while I don't do a whole lot of public speaking, it is always about how the church, in its broadest sense, can have more utility for communities.
>
> When I spoke at the AME church--at their conference--it really was about my understanding of how the AME church was, really, born out of oppression. And that we-- and it's a collective we--have done little about the kinds of oppression that still happens in our society for people who are marginal and poor. (JB, personal communication, December 17, 2008)

In naming the influences that have either changed or reinforced his spirituality, Jerome didn't single out anyone else in the manner that he had in speaking about Reverend Lester. He did, though, talk at length about the powerful impact he experienced in being with his parents as they were dying. He also acknowledged, in this disclosure, the vital role that singing has played as a channel, or medium, for his spirituality:

> I think there's probably some instances: I was with both my parents when they passed. And I really followed their lead about what you do with your parents when they are sick. And I think there's a part of my spirituality which is heightened because I spent so much time with my parents….
>
> I don't remember what I sang, but I sang to my mom the last 45-minutes-to-an-hour of her life. And people ask, "So how did you decide to sing?" I didn't; I just started singing. Part of it was my spirit around singing I learned from my mom, who was my first music teacher. And so my first thought was, "How do you comfort your mom in what may be her last day here?" And I don't remember consciously saying, "Sing."
>
> I actually do believe that there's a God, and that someone sends you, usually, the right message if you'll hear it—and I think my life is different because of that. (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

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These experiences related to his parents' deaths were predominant in Jerome's

thoughts as he reflected on my inquiries about his spirituality. He continued:

> [M]y brothers, for awhile, made me mad because I wanted to have them stop
> asking me, "How was mom the last few minutes of her life?", because I was tired
> of answering the question. And I realized, "You have a gift they don't have—that
> they wished they would have been there. You, at least, were there and probably
> did something she enjoyed." That, and the other interesting thing that … And I
> think this was my father's spirituality in use: He said to my mom, as she was
> fighting to stay alive, "You have been a wonderful wife and mother; you have
> believed in God and Christ all of your life. It's okay to meet him." And I was like,
> "Oh my god," 'cause my …
>   Part of that was my dad's transition. My dad, early on, drank a lot, stayed out
> late, was … I knew if my dad would put on a suit to go to a church, it was either a
> wedding or funeral. But once he moved to another point, he … My dad was
> extreme: He was either in completely or out completely….And so, once it hit
> him--and it hit him, I think, because one of his best friends, who lived a very
> clean life, went to work one day, opened the door to his business, had a heart …
> massive heart attack, and died--and I think that was, at least my mother's
> perspective, that that was the thing that changed him. (JB, personal
> communication, October 14, 2008)

Given his reflections on those experiences, I was not surprised that, when I inquired

about the links between his spirituality and his teaching, Jerome's immediate response

was in regard to funerals he has attended for students or their family members. Each of

these incidents was moving to hear, in its own right, but perhaps the most poignant was

his recollection of his connection with an elderly student who had come back to pursue a

degree late in life:

> [P]robably the other incident was a student who died of stomach cancer….I went
> to the hospital 'cause her daughter, or cousin or someone, said, "She really wants
> to feel like she's finished this degree." So I went to the dean's office and said, "I
> need to give this lady her degree—some certificate that says she has finished her
> requirements. And I worked with [the graduation analyst] to find some substitutes
> for her to finish.
>   And so, [my wife] and I went to the hospital, took her a certificate that was
> inside of the graduation … whatever that thing is they give you at graduation.
> And her family (there were probably 15 people around her bedside): That was her
> graduation ceremony. But I remember [my wife] saying to me, "Jerome, did you
> notice that the only time she smiled is when you were talking about her getting a

degree?" And she probably died twelve hours later. (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

In reflecting on that experience, Jerome brought our conversation back to the importance of connecting with students:

But it was … It was for me, one, what I thought I ought to do. And I remember going to the funeral service and they had some … on the back of the program, acknowledgements … and they had this acknowledgement of my role in her life. And I thought I'd been a decent advisor, and a decent teacher, but it helped me realize how important that sort of connection was with students….

But … and even now when I deal with students who want to be lazy and say, "I can't get through this," I think of [this student and her friend] who were probably, when they got in the door, late 50, early 60s—when they started the degree. Who never stopped, never said, "I'm old I can't do this; I didn't have good training, I can't do this." They just said, "I'm getting this degree."

So it probably has had a major influence about me not letting people off the hook— still supporting them, but saying, "You don't understand." Because if these two (who, quite honestly, they probably were not going to do any major social work stuff; were never going to have any sort of career path), but they wanted to, in this lifetime, to have had a degree….So for me that was a critical piece about … It wasn't the use of spirituality, but it probably has enhanced how I teach, I think … or at least how I deal with students. (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

It was evident that Jerome feels that Memphis has been a good fit for him and for the ways in which he thinks about some of the concerns that are the substance of this study. In reflecting on how spirituality fits into the present setting of his work, he commented:

There have probably been more opportunities to be a spiritual person here than anywhere I've taught….Maybe because I run the department, I learn more about when students are in a crisis and have trouble. So I think in terms of being spiritual, I think there's more opportunities in terms of serving students.

I just think that there's a little more openness [here] to talking about spirituality and trying to connect with students. It's not that it wasn't there at Loyola, but students had a different set of needs at Loyola….And so, there was just less opportunity to serve students in that way … or for them to have comfort to do that. I think it has made me a better teacher, because I've had to think broadly and deeper at the same time. (JB, personal communication, December 17, 2008)

I thought Jerome's observation regarding the openness of people in this region to speaking openly about spirituality was an interesting one, but one balanced by a remark

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he had made in our previous interview—this one in response to my question regarding times when he has perceived spirituality to have been a negative force or to have been used in a negative manner:

> I think it has been a negative force when people misuse it….I think sometimes people use spirituality and religion in ways that only support their perspective….And so, I think there's a lot of negative energy from people who deem themselves to be religious and spiritual because I think they miss some of the boat around what religion and spirituality means….
>
> And so I think those kinds of instances worry me about students, 'cause I really do think they will use religion as a way to say this group is right and this group is wrong….I think students struggle with what spirituality means because I think they've had these awkward ideas about what it means….[W]e still use religion and spirituality as a way to separate and segregate people, which I think is harmful….I think there's more potential for religion to be a problem for people here than in any other place I've been. (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

Toward the end of our final interview, I asked Jerome to summarize his thoughts about various concepts related to this study in just six words. I hoped that the exercise would provide a venue in which he would be challenged to focus the ways in which he thinks about some of the subjects that had been part of our discussion. The words Jerome opted to consider were *God* (or *Higher Power*) and *Soul*. In articulating his concept of God, he stated:

> Actually if I had to choose between God or Higher Power, it would be God for me. It is my whole orientation….I'm sort of old-fashioned. I really do think God is sovereign….So it's God, but I think because of the notion about God and sovereignty. I have a hard time with Higher Power; it's just not part of my orientation. Probably the only other term that comes to mind and it … I mean some of it comes out of the creed for me, I mean more people have these, sort of, scientific debates about how the earth was formed. I think God is creator. I don't even deal with the sort of scientific notions about how long the earth has been here; it doesn't make much difference for me, so probably, God: sovereign creator, probably still come to mind for me. (JB, personal communication, March 12, 2009)

In response to the word Soul, his response was a bit more scattered:

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You know, strangely, Soul is a difficult concept. I actually do think there is a soul. I don't know that I separate heart from soul well—maybe because I still have a few days to be here, so I don't worry about soul journey kind of stuff. I think souls do connect. I mean it is how, I think, I'm still connected to grandparents and parents, is that there's some kind of soul connection that's there. It is … Probably, if I think about it, the soul is the bridge to people who are not here—who are in a very different state (And I'm not one of those folk who believes that folk are watching you)….But I really do think that there's a sort of interaction of something that I think really is soul, where there's pieces of other people that form my make-up. And so I think that the soul is always influenced by those kinds of experiences. The, sort of, gist of who I am, is a combination of them and a whole set of world experiences that I think make up my soul….

I actually believe in the notion of a soul's transition. I'm probably one of those folk who doesn't want to rush it. I'm always shocked at people going, "I'm ready to go today." Okay, I'm probably not as ready to go today; I'll wait my turn. [And] I think the word care comes to mind when I think of soul a little bit. Because I think what people don't have is any real capacity to care for their souls. We have a *Soul Care Ministry* at the church. It really is the church's substance abuse ministry. And I remember asking the elder who runs it, "Why *Soul Care*?" Part of what he said is, "People don't want to tell other folk they're coming to a substance abuse group." And the reality, from his perspective, is the intervention around substance abuse is about helping people deal with their soul and their heart and their total being. So it really is soul care. It's kind of what it is, so care probably comes to mind when I think about soul. (JB, personal communication, March 12, 2009)

Integrating Teaching and Spirituality

I appreciated Jerome's synopsis of his thoughts about these concepts related to his spirituality. I asked him to tell me about an incident that has had an impact on what he believes, and the effects those beliefs, in turn, have had on the ways in which he interacts with students. He replied:

I've never been shy about … while I don't want to be overbearing about it, I'm not shy about what I believe. And I think students don't mind that you share your beliefs in a way that is not: "Well, if you don't believe like I believe, you're going to … then something's wrong with you." I think, in the South, I think it's better to be a believer than it is to walk in and say you're atheist….And so being … having some spiritual life, I think, in the South (and I think of it in the South because I've been here going on 10 years; it probably has the same application in lots of places); and so that belief, I think, one, gives energy; for me it [also] gives focus. (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

Jerome's statement led well into another of my questions: In what ways his academic

discipline provides a forum to communicate what he believes or values:

> It is difficult for me to separate my work [from] what I think the church teaches
> that people ought to do. And so this idea that "We ought to be our brother's
> keeper:" I think social work is a natural way to do that. I probably could have
> chosen some other professions, but in some ways I think this is a natural; it is an
> extension of what I believe….I think teaching social work, really, is about this
> kind of hands-on support for people….And so I really think this is a more natural
> progression from what you believe to doing something everyday than probably
> any other department in the university. (JB, personal communication, October 14,
> 2008)

It was evident that Jerome finds the profession in which he teaches a good fit for the

ways in which he thinks about both spirituality and teaching. It was clear, as well, that he

wants the profession to be one in which his students can excel:

> I actually think the other part about, sort of, helping them become who they are is:
> I always want to exhibit real energy to them about the work that I do. I get excited
> in the classroom about teaching research, and I think that's different for them
> because they're like … And sometimes I ask at the end of class, "Was it better
> that I was excited, or should I have just been bored about research?" And clearly
> the answer is: "No, 'cause it made much more sense." And so I think part of it is:
> Are we supporting students; always having passion about what you do? Because I
> think students see passion, and if you're not passionate they will just sort of go,
> "You're just doing a job." (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

The energy that Jerome puts into his teaching came up a number of times in the course

of our conversations. It was clear that, in his estimation, a high level of energy is critical

to his success as a teacher:

> I think energy is important for me in class, and I think energy comes out of
> spirituality. I'm always shocked when people don't have energy for class. I'm
> shocked when people aren't nervous about the first class. One of the things that I
> did at Loyola (because it was probably easy to do): There's a chapel right behind
> the social work building; I'd go pray in chapel before the first class. And I had
> people who'd say, "You're probably one of the best teachers here. Why are you
> worrying about class?" "It's the first class, and if I'm going to connect … If I
> don't do it now, I may not: I'll spend the whole semester trying to do that
> connection." So I really think energy for me, really, is critical to how well I do

most things—certainly how I function in a class. (JB, personal communication, March 12, 2009)

At one point in our conversation, Jerome talked about the toll that all of this energy exacts from him:

> I used to not think teaching was tiring. Maybe at 52, it's more tiring than it used to be, but I guess it always has been tiring … that if you really teach well … because I sometimes can sit in the class and know, "Okay, what you're doing isn't connecting, so you need to … whatever adjustment you need to make … And you can't wait until next class session; you need to make the adjustment now."
>   And sometimes they have weird questions, and sometimes their lives are too full, and problematic. A student in my Intro class, this semester, had been sexually assaulted and after class said, "I just need to talk to you." Well, I was probably not prepared to--in between classes--to talk to a student about being sexually assaulted. I, actually, made some referrals, and then, like any decent social worker, I felt like I needed to follow up with her about how that was. So that piece was even … took a little more energy. But I think good teaching does just take energy. I'm always shocked when people are sort of laissez-faire about it: "Eh, they'll get it—maybe." Well, the only thing you control in a classroom is the teacher … is leader behavior. And so you're the only person in a position to make sure they get it. (JB, personal communication, December 17, 2008)

One of the ways in which Jerome tries to assure his students get what they need is to communicate with them in a forthright manner:

> I don't think I can separate who I am as a religious or spiritual person from who I am in the classroom, or who I am in terms of research, or who I am on a golf course: 'cause I ain't four or five different people; I'm just the one. And I think students see that when they sort of go, "Well, that's who he is." I mean, students will jokingly say, "God, he'll tell you exactly what he thinks and he won't doctor it up." Well I don't think they hear well when we doctor it up. And so part of my commitment to them is I'm just going to tell you the whole truth. I actually remember telling one of my African American students, I said, "That's as close to Jesus as I get. I'm just going to tell you exactly what the deal is." (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

The continuity of character of which Jerome spoke was central to another remark he made in summarizing his thoughts later in that same interview:

> I think religion and spirituality for most people ought to be systemic—i.e. that I can't separate Sunday from Wednesday from Tuesday from Friday. And so my hope is that students--even when I'm the meanest to them--sort of say, "Well he

cares enough about us that he wants us to do well." And I think my spirituality says, "You really have to do stuff well, and you've got to be a decent role model for people." (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

In being that role model, Jerome is avid about creating avenues for his students to actively participate in the work that he does—thus, providing them with real, practical experience, but also increased integration of the various types of information they are learning across the spectrum of the social work curriculum. In sharing these thoughts with me, Jerome used examples from two of the programs with which he has done a fair amount of work in providing service to the larger community: The Rise program which strives to help people of limited financial means become increasingly self sufficient; and the First Tee program which uses golf to teach young people a core set of values—a mentoring program intended to serve these young people in developing productive lives:

> I really think of my style as one of, sort of, necessary engagement with students … I really try and bring them into … If I'm doing some Rise stuff, they're going to … While it's a Research course, part of me teaches Practice at the same time, and Policy at the same time … because I think students have to learn how to integrate it.
>   And if it's First Tee, they learn probably more about First Tee … In fact, one of my students is now a member of the First Tee Parents' Association … She got introduced because their research project was based on First Tee. So it's a strange sort of engagement. But that's kind of how … I think about teaching. (JB, personal communication, December 17, 2008)

I asked Jerome why he feels engagement is such a vital component in how he thinks about teaching, and he replied:

> Because I think that's half the work. I mean, in social work, I think that's half the work. I also think it is … I think it's necessary 'cause it flows out of who I am. And I think it flows 'cause I think part of me is a natural fit for this kind of work. So, I think it's natural. It may not be necessary for everybody but I think it's necessary for me. (JB, personal communication, March 12, 2009)

He accentuated the importance of engagement even further by stating:

Probably when I think about students, I actually have this theory that says they learn as much from relationship as they do from books or readings or projects. While the books and readings and projects are necessary, minus the sort of engagement in terms of professional relationship, I don't think they get it….I just happen to think it's critical. I think it's probably more critical than content, although I think content is important….

I think it's my way to sort of model how you have to engage to make sense about doing social work. That you can … I don't think you can be distant and aloof and be a good social worker, although I don't think you can go to the other extreme and not have any boundaries. That people … I think people really do want to understand if you care about them, and I think it's in that caring that students--and clients--sort of go, "Well, this might be worth my time; this is someone who actually hears me." (JB, personal communication, March 12, 2009)

It was increasingly apparent that Jerome feels a strong connection with students who choose to pursue social work as their profession, and that he has an overriding sense of responsibility to make sure they are well prepared for their professional futures:

I think our students have some … have more privilege than they know because most people don't finish high school these days….I really do think that even our students have a privilege, and that part of my role is to always be supportive of that. But I always challenge them so that … 'cause I don't want students to leave and do a poor job of social work. I still worry about some of them but I think we have enough in place--that we challenge students enough--that I think they leave with some skills and some capacities. And so part of my belief really is intertwined with, in a strange way, this is as close to God's work as I'll get. (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

In a subsequent conversation, I asked Jerome to elaborate on his thoughts with respect to what constitutes God's work. He replied:

Usually, when I think of God's work, I think of a, sort of, level of working purely in ministry—where you are either like an assistant pastor, or an associate pastor, or an elder, or something like that. I don't think about wanting to do that kind of stuff. It's not … it ain't on my agenda….But I think that God's work is not just limited to that….I really do understand that lay people are critical in terms of the life of the Church, and I think they're even more critical in terms of how you … how do you live a sermon for other people.

I think this work, for me, is really a way to do service. I mean that social work was an easy decision: I really felt I could sort of live a sense of, sort of, service and religious conviction in the kind of work that I do. 'Cause I never really understood being called in the formal sense. (And I guess folk who are called understand it, which is why they're doing it—because they understand calling:

They felt a calling, and they moved on the calling). (JB, personal communication, March 12, 2009)

At first hearing, I was confused by Jerome's remark that he didn't understand being called because there had been other times in our conversations when he had reflected on his work as something he was called to do, at one point, stating, "I think people are called to … to a range of things--not just pulpit minister--and I think you honor that call by making sense of it" (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008). Upon further reflection (and in conjunction with some of his other remarks), it seemed to me that Jerome was saying that he has never experienced a Paul-on-the-road-to-Damascus kind of moment in which his call became immediately and completely clear to him. Rather, he has grown into an awareness--an acceptance--that he is called to teach:

> Now, I believe I've been called to teach. Now earlier, I think I just chose it….I just thought it was a conscious choice. I think the reality ... I really see it more as sort of calling. That scares me some. You know I remember the first time my father said to me, "Now you know preachers are accountable for what they say to people." I said, "Yeah, I believe that." He says, "You know teachers are too." He says, "Well, teachers in the church are also accountable: That you have the power to influence people either this way or that way." And for awhile, it sort of made me nervous…. But I think the more I do this, the more I really do see it as calling. (JB, personal communication, December 17, 2008)

In bringing our final interview to a close, I mentioned the last lecture that Randy Pausch of Carnegie Mellon gave prior to his death from cancer. I asked Jerome what he would say if asked to give *his* last lecture. He said that he hadn't given much thought to what he would include on such an occasion, but then went on to list several components that he would want to be part of such a talk. An abridged version of his lengthy reply is provided below:

> I think my last lecture would talk a little bit about being evidenced-based: That if you support people well enough, what kinds of evidence can you find that the support has been helpful? And so, I think in my last lecture I might identify grads

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who I feel as though my thinking and my energy has helped move them along….I would probably talk about just the importance of being solid in terms of how you understand people—how you assess, and how you find evidence that starts working for you, would be important.

I'd probably talk about having a life that's balanced—to teach that for yourself, but for other people. I probably teach that better than I do it, because I probably don't have the same balance that I would tell other people to have. I think most people need a lot of balance.

I would probably lecture about what I've learned from friends and family, in hopes that people hear some of it and connect with it. And I think, particularly, when I think about friends … You know, there are people who will come into the office and see the golf clubs and say, "Are you going golfing today?" I say, "No, I'm not going to golf with those, but they're in the right place." 'Cause I was close to Paul [a cherished friend who died, and whose golf clubs remain in Jerome's office as a reminder of their friendship]. It always amazed me how connected he was to family … much better than, probably, anybody I know. So, I would tell students there are good models about how you love and connect to family….

I would pull out peoples' capacity for change. I'd talk about the two fathers I had—same person; two different people. And how life, whether or not support (or whatever) changes, it can make people's life different. And so if you're working with families that are in trouble and the kids aren't doing well, maybe people can change.

I would probably talk about my brothers some in a last lecture. Jerry and I are very close. I'm probably closer to both of them than they are to each other, so I'm, sort of, the kind of bridge kid I think. And would talk about, sometimes, we have to take different roles with family so that family can be whole and be connected and heal….

I'd probably talk about my own life a little bit: That the picture you see, today, is very different than the picture who went through high school—kind of un-connected to education; not caring about it. I, sometimes, when I talk to family groups, send a message that talks about, "Do not give up on your sons."…"Don't give up on them, because chances are they'll be better." I'd probably talk about how people peak at different times. So, we have to stop believing that, at 18 … We ought to have a set of expectations, but understand people don't get there at the same time….

If I had to do a last lecture, it would be more about the kind of life lessons and stuff that people need to pay attention to. Some I did well, and some that I, probably, haven't done well, but I understand they are important for people to know. (JB, personal communication, March 12, 2009)

Concluding Remarks

Throughout our conversations, I was impressed with Jerome's ease and with the

enjoyment he seems to derive from his role as teacher. I also, personally, was glad to hear

him speak of the strong connection he feels to the student populace here. I asked him about his reasons for choosing to come to work at this specific university, and he answered:

> Oh yeah, it has nothing to do with the institution. It has much more to do with: My mom was diagnosed with terminal cancer in '98. I still remember my dad calling and saying, "Your mom's in the hospital."…My mom and I were close. I really do believe in the old, sort of, spiritual--or the church--doctrine of, "Honor thy mother and thy father," and I just, sort of, thought, "Well, maybe I ought to move; maybe I can find a job." So coming, really, was about trying to be closer to my parents. (JB, personal communication, October 14, 2008)

Jerome's willingness to extend himself to others seemed to be a primary feature in much of what he values in life. This was evident in his telling, not just with respect to his care of his parents, but in the ways he talked about the relationship he had shared with his beloved friend, Paul, and his presence with various students in the midst of significant life-changing crises. I said to him, "I notice when you talk about your spirituality, it often seems to center around your religious practices and/or issues of death and dying. How do these influences infuse your daily teaching practice?" He responded:

> I actually sort of struggle with that question about how they actually influence … My own religious practices give me a sort of core sense of how I ought to relate to people. My current, sort of, core church experience is pretty intellectual. Frank Thomas is the pastor where I go, and I think part of why I like it is that he's intellectual. And so it's sort of energizing to sort of hear it on Sunday and to sort of say, "Well that's the level you need to be at with students."…So, in some ways, his energy is healthy for me because it gives permission to keep it up here, keep it analytical, keep critical thinking. And so, I think that helps in terms of my teaching….I probably don't do a good job of thinking about spirituality beyond religion because for me they're connected. I mean, theoretically, I understand that there is a broader sense of spirituality, but for me it's really centered on probably the two things you identified— those two things. (JB, personal communication, March 12, 2009)

Jerome continued to talk about his perceptions regarding his spirituality, eventually coming back to the complicated dynamics that characterized his relationship with his father:

> I think I get energy from close relatives, you know? I think there is a part of me that is my grandfather. There's a part of me that's my mom. There's probably even a part of me that's my dad, although that took some work--a long time to sort of reconcile--because he and I early on did not have a good relationship…. And so I think I carry … I think there's a piece of me that's sort of part of that. (JB, personal communication, March 12, 2009)

The energy Jerome gathers from those who have gone before him indeed seems to infuse his teaching. At one point he stated, "I think people don't change without support—without some engagement," (JB, personal communication, December 17, 2008) and then went on to attribute much of this belief to observing the changes that occurred in his father's life:

> And so I really have seen this real capacity for change. And sometimes I have to go back to that when I'm dealing with students who I'm scratching my head going, "Why are we letting this student in?" And sometimes, they fool … Well, you know, they fool us sometimes…. And so sometimes, I have to sort of hold on to this understanding: People change and get better and they get through stuff. And I probably learned that, in a difficult sort of way, from my father. (JB, personal communication, December 17, 2008)

The small country church was packed with people who had come to pay their respects to the members of Mr. Blakemore's family. The service began, and Jerome's rich baritone voice echoed off the walls:

> When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
>
> When sorrows like sea billows roll;
>
> Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
>
> It is well, it is well, with my soul. (Spafford, 1873)

CHAPTER 4-D

Findings of Study

Don's Story

Mirroring the image of its first line, the beginning of his poem drew me in:

> Like moths to a flame,
> We enter science, espousing the loftiest of motives,
>   To discover the truth
>   Know the mind of God
>   And help our fellow man
> Yet can't admit what feels good about it …
> (Don Franceschetti (DF), personal communication, December 19, 2008)

These did not seem the musings typical of a man of science, but Don already had showed himself to be of rather a different timber than any Physics professor I had ever met. The assignment had been to engage in some kind of right brain activity that would explore the connections between spirituality and teaching in a manner less linear than in our first couple of interactions. As an example of the type of activity I was inviting, I suggested that he consider, possibly, a photo elicitation exercise or the creation of a poem. Don opted for the latter, and I was duly impressed—both with his willingness to engage in the activity and with the product of his effort (the remainder of which is proffered later in this document).

Dr. Donald Franceschetti (Don), a Caucasian man in his early 60s, is a Professor of Physics at the University of Memphis. Don joined the Department of Physics in 1979—five years after completing his Ph.D. in Chemistry at Princeton University. Just six years after joining the department here, he was named its chair—a position he held for eight years. He, then, served for six more years in various administrative positions (related to overseeing the research component of the entire university) before returning to full-time

teaching and research—which, for the past 14 years, have been his stead. He has received a number of awards both for his teaching and for his research. His primary research interests have been related to studying Ionic Transport and Artificial Intelligence, and his teaching assignment (presently) is composed of three courses: an undergraduate class—*Introductory Physics*; and two graduate courses—*Fundamental Concepts of Classical Physics*, and *Quantum Mechanics*.

I did not know Don prior to this study. I received his name in somewhat of a third hand manner: Another member of the campus community whose name I had been given as a potential participant, in turn, passed along Don's name as a good candidate for the study I was proposing. I was intrigued by the referral—a physicist who had a strong interest in both the aesthetic and the scientific realms of life. It seemed that he might well bring a different perspective than some of the other participants I was considering for inclusion in the study. When I contacted Don by e-mail, telling him of his colleague's reference and inquiring if he might be interested in being a participant, his reply was short and to the point: "Count me in. Could be interesting" (DF, personal communication, August 21, 2008).

I was drawn to his enthusiasm, a quality that, I would soon learn, is nurtured by tremendous curiosity, intellect, kindness, and humor. I was delighted that he agreed to participate in the study, and, as we talked, my gratitude only increased for the multiple perspectives he brought in responding to my many questions.

Teaching

I began our conversations by asking Don to tell me about some of the influences in his early life that have shaped the ways in which he thinks about teaching. He was generous in his reply:

> Well to me, I mean, I find refuge in school. In junior high school and high school I was good in a number of subjects, and my teachers encouraged me. And so I came out with, you know, lots of warm fuzzy feelings about teaching professionally. And as I was graduating high school and starting college I began to realize that a lot of science was done by college professors and it seemed like a really attractive career….
>
> My family was not particularly wealthy; in fact, for our community, which was … It was a well-to-do community on Long Island, but we were probably in the bottom portion of that. I was growing up in the 50s and 60s, and I remember teachers that made it a point to say, "You really need to go to college … You don't want to sell yourself short….You need this whole exposure." And they sustained me when my parents would have been quite happy--at least my father would have been happy--to have me fixing TV sets or, you know, going in the military or just …
>
> And I got a great gift from the Russians when they sent up Sputnik because suddenly it was patriotic to become a scientist, and there was money there to study science. I had a National Science Foundation Fellowship in 1969 (when I went to graduate school) which paid for Princeton University Graduate School and gave me enough to live on. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

At the beginning of our next interview, I asked Don if he had any comments about the script of our prior discussion (which I had sent earlier), True to his analytical background, he readily began to dissect our previous conversation:

> Oh, okay. Yeah, I had a couple of observations. One is that, I mean, you've got … I think you've got two fundamental questions, which is, one, how did I decide to be in teaching as a profession, and two is where did I decide spiritual was an important aspect to it? And the answer is largely that it was the path of least resistance, given the environment I came out of….Part of it is just teaching was attractive because it paid; it let me do what I wanted to do; [and] it let me think of myself as doing something important….
>
> The other piece is that … Something that did have a wide effect on me was what I read over those years—a number of books at different stages in my life (some not very good but all kind of dealing with development of personality and development of the individual). (DF, personal communication, December 19, 2008)

Don went on to name a number of authors whose books have been influential in shaping

his thoughts and in developing his perspectives, eventually concluding:

> I've probably read hundreds of books, over the period of time, that had nothing to
>
> do with sciences but just had a lot to do with my interests. So I think that was an
>
> important piece of what I became. (DF, personal communication, December 19,
>
> 2008)

I was intrigued as I sat and listened to this transplanted New Yorker. I wanted to know

more about his journey—both personal and professional. When I asked him his reasons

for becoming a professor at this university, he stated, simply, that this was the job that

was offered at that point in time. However, his reply became a bit more detailed--and

substantive, I thought--when he moved to talking about the reasons that he has remained

in this post for 30 years:

> Why did I stay here? Well, after about … Let's see, I came here in '79; '82 I got
> married … I advanced pretty well at this university; I mean I was treated
> reasonably well: I was made a chairman; I was an associate professor after my
> fourth year; and I think I was made a full professor at six years. And I found it
> rewarding. Students are all over the place here: I mean, some are very serious;
> some are … Some don't know why they're here at all; and some discover … And
> that may be the thing which keeps me here (aside from the practicalities of
> needing a job): There are enough students who actually benefit from this.
>
> My wife has taught at [three private high schools in the area], and she's met
> these extremely bright students, but they're all set on trajectories and, for the most
> part, they will stay on those trajectories: They'll go to medical school or become
> stock brokers; they'll get married and have a bunch of children; they'll become
> school teachers; they'll be veterinarians. They're not really exploring; they're
> kind of locked in. They'll be successful no matter what—because of their parents
> and because of their direction in life.
>
> Here, we have students who their real chance, here, is to get an education and
> decide what they want to do and get enough guidance. So I think that's one of the
> things that's kept me here....You know, the idea of seeing someone, who had no
> clue that they might really want to be in science discover it, is pretty rewarding.
> It's also pretty rare, but, you know, it does happen. (DF, personal communication,
> October 8, 2008)

I admired Don's concern about making a difference in the lives of students who, per his estimation, have had fewer opportunities in life than many of their contemporaries. At one point, he stated: "One of my major objectives is simply to be approachable, so the students are not afraid to come to me with a question, either in class or after class" (DF, personal communication, April 8, 2009). As benign-sounding as that was, I suspected that Don's accessibility is no small matter for those students who look to him for assistance. And as I came to know him better, the more I thought his caring, approachable manner, very likely, is a vital aspect of his impact—not only in making Physics a less frightening subject, but in fostering his students' confidence as they strive to make sense of the world in which they live.

It was clear that Don feels he has been able to achieve a good deal in his career. In explaining some of the reasons for his success, he stated, "I've got this broader outlook than most other people. I'm more willing to try … I'm more willing to recognize a biologist as a colleague than some of my colleagues (DF, personal communication, December 19, 2008). At our next session, I asked him to say more about the origins of this expansive approach to life. In response, Don mentioned his diverse reading practices, the various scientific disciplines in which he has been involved, and the exposure he has had to living among various cultures that have broadened his views. He also mentioned a character trait that I thought was essential to the commitment he brings to his students:

> I always think, "We could be doing a better job." I'm kind of … Well, my dean said I was a perennial optimist. In other words, that: Too many people are just kind of, "Well, why should I have to change? It worked for my teachers; it worked for me. Why shouldn't it work for my students?" And I never bought that kind of logic; I thought we should be making things better for our students, which means: understanding them better. (DF, personal communication, April 8, 2009)

Judging from the awards he has received, it appeared to me that Don has had some success in connecting with, and understanding, the students that he teaches. I was impressed with his efforts to educate broadly, and I noticed that I was not alone in my admiration. In perusing his vitae, I took note of his membership on numerous doctoral committees for students whose disciplines were not in Physics. I asked him about this involvement and he replied:

> Well we don't have a doctoral program in Physics (which is something I would like to see straightened out one day) but it's … It's a very costly business to start a Ph.D. program--in Physics particularly--but my degree … Actually my Ph.D. is in Chemistry, so when I stepped down from the chair, here, they gave me a courtesy membership [on the] Chemistry faculty, and because I was good at getting grants, lots of people wanted to talk to me. And so, I had some time with the Biomedical Engineers; and I followed some of our students into Electrical Engineering or Earth Science Ph.D. programs (I mean they knew me from taking my courses and asked me to be on their committee, so I said, "Sure"); and Psychology, also, because they do a lot in Physics Tutoring systems—computer systems that tutor Physics. So I got to know some of the graduate students, and I've been on, oh, a dozen or so Ph.D. committees that are not in Physics, which is … It's been interesting and fun, and I do tend to want to learn lots of different things, so this is one way to do it. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

It seemed that Don's ambition in pursuing a wide range of interests may be part of what has made him unique in his roles both as a scientist and as a professor. I noted his engagement in various initiatives the university has tried in its efforts to improve its services. The most recent of these has been the Fresh Connections program, an initiative that has involved Don as a co-instructor for a learning community—a cohort of students from assorted academic disciplines who commit to take a series of courses together in order to develop a deeper understanding of the connections between their disciplines. The particular learning community with which Don has been engaged is entitled *Leonardo's Legacy* and is intended to demonstrate how art and science interface so as to influence and inspire both creativity and invention. I asked Don for his thoughts about the program.

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He began his remarks by talking about the creativity that is manifest in both art and

science and went on to say:

> The ground rules are different. I mean, you can be terribly creative in science and come up with something which simply isn't true, or you can be terribly creative in art or music and come up with something which is … Well, your opinion is whether it's valid or not. But I still try to get students to think about creativity— think about, maybe, what gifts they might have, or what they might get out of the arts, or what they might even get out of science (aside from the ability to earn a living). (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

When I asked him to say more about his evaluation of the program, he replied:

> Well, I've got to remind myself these kids are 18 years old. I mean, they're making progress slowly. In some cases, they light up; they suddenly … Things begin to make sense to them, or they begin to have a different view of themselves. That's a minority of cases … In some cases, they're … Well, unfortunately our students arrive: "Is that going to be on the test; what do I have to know; what's the correct answer?" And we have to get them out of that dichotomous mode where there is stuff which I need for the test to get the certificate to get a good job, and has nothing to do with learning anything or actually developing as people. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

This concern regarding students being more concerned about grades than about

learning came up more than once in our conversation. Later in that same interview, Don

noted:

> Our students that are now of college age: They've done nothing but high stakes testing and, unfortunately, the teachers who teach them have responded to the ecosystem that [says], "Well, if I get rewarded for students doing well on a high stakes test, I'm going to give them the stuff they need to do well on tests." Anything that's not there or anything that might require some time to cultivate, it's not rewarded and it's not enforced. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

It was evident that Don abhors test-based education. In contrast to the stultifying

effects of that mode of teaching, he rhapsodized about the benefits of true learning as

made possible though the field in which he teaches. At one point, in lauding the value of

his discipline, he stated, "Physics is a marvelous education for any area.…[I]t's just a

marvelous education in how to think and, sort of, how to develop your judgment as to what is feasible; what is pertinent" (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008). Wanting to know more about the enthusiasm that lay beneath this testament, I asked him to talk with me about a critical incident that shaped who, and how, he wants to be as a teacher. Don's reply helped me appreciate his development as a teacher but also heightened my awareness of the vehicle that Physics provides him in his efforts to enrich his students' understanding of the world:

> One of my first meetings as a Physics chairman: I think it was a fellow, Bassam Shakhashiri from the National Science Foundation, showed this video from Project Star at Harvard, which begins at the Harvard commencement and asks the graduates and some faculty some simple science questions they can't answer. And then they do a little bit of a … it's a pedagogical piece about how it's so hard; you know? Children do not walk in--students do not walk in--to their education with an empty mind; they've already figured out a whole bunch of stuff. And lots of times it's wrong! And so I've become very interested in the misconceptions students have, and how you can attack them--or challenge them--to understand that the way they think the world works is not how it works. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

I learned more about Don's investment in helping his students move beyond their preconceived notions of the world when I inquired if there is a particular area of Physics in which he has been most involved. Don's reply spelled out his interests within the field of Physics, itself, but also in an area of study with which he is engaged in a relatively early stage of its development:

> Actually that is a very salient question. I came from Chemistry. I was mainly interested in that area which is now Condensed Matter Physics, which is basically what the electrons do to keep matter together and explain the properties of matter….
> And, when I became a chairman, I started going to meetings with Physics' chairs (and this was the point of the *Nation at Risk* study in the 80s when suddenly we realized that our students coming out of college--and going into college--weren't nearly as well prepared as previously). So I always have been interested in Physics Education topics, and, now, Physics Education research has actually gained a certain amount of legitimacy among the Physics community. We

realized we're not reaching that many students. We're not giving them the thinking skills that they really need, not only to do Physics, but to do anything. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

Don stated that the decline in interest and preparation for studying the sciences has "had a big effect on [him]" (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008), and he has chosen to act on that awareness by becoming involved in a collaborative process to improve the ways in which Physics is taught at various levels of education—an effort which Don feels may become his most significant contribution to Physics and to the field of Education:

> We weren't doing a very good job of it, and so, I got involved with a psychologist and we're trying to develop systems that would do teaching better. And I think my contribution--if I last another 10 years or so--probably, first of all, is Physics Education and maybe, secondarily, is Condensed Matter Physics. Though I do occasionally come up to something that, you know, looks like, "Well I could say something about that. That might be worth writing a paper about." So I haven't withdrawn from Physics either. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

In discussing his interest in Physics Education, Don stated that some of his work has paralleled that of a Physics professor at Harvard (Dr. Eric Mazur), who "basically went through the same transformation" (DF, personal communication, December 19, 2008) as he. I asked him to tell me more about this transformation:

> Okay. Well, it's basically a realization that teaching is much more than knowledge transfer. I mean … I had a professor that had a tie clip which he would award to other people; I never got one, but it was a shovel. And the idea was that you shovel the information into the student's head and it all works. And we now know that people need to be engaged with the information to construct their understanding, and their understanding will be personalized, and you have to work quite a bit so you're on the same page….So I try to, now, inspire that reflective engagement thinking. Much more of the activity is student dependent. There's a limit to what I can do in a class of 100, but, still, that's where I'm headed. (DF, personal communication, April 8, 2009)

The large class that he is charged with inspiring in the *Introductory Physics* course seemed daunting to me. This was a different type of classroom environment than any

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other I had experienced in my observations of the participants in this study. I asked Don

how he manages working with this many students in one setting, and he replied:

> Yeah, well, you have to be really excited about the subject. I think our students
> are pretty good detectors—pretty good lie detectors. I mean, if you're not really
> excited about it and you try to present it to them as important, they'll tune you out
> completely. I mean, they may tune you out anyway if they're not interested, or
> they think they've got a high enough grade, but if I make it interesting and try to
> point out things where it impacts their lives-- how they might understand
> something that happened historically (if they're a history major, or a philosophy
> major, even a business major)--they can learn something that will be pertinent to
> their other study. That's kind of where I come from. (DF, personal
> communication, December 19, 2008)

Don stated that in order to facilitate that kind of learning environment among so many,

he lectures, most days, for only part of the class session, then gives the students a

worksheet or a quiz to engage them directly in thinking through whatever the subject for

the day is. This also gives him the opportunity to move around the room and connect

more personally than is possible from the front of the large lecture hall:

> And then, often I will just give them a piece of … a quiz or something to work on
> in class, so that I can go around and talk with them and see what they understand.
> That's probably the most valuable thing. You can't really … I don't know
> anybody who has an attention span of an hour-and-a-half. But, you know, like 40
> minutes of lecture and show some visuals things and then have them work on this
> and finish it. I'll grade it because I … They won't take it seriously unless I do.
> But I can see where they're learning and have a little bit of relationship with them,
> just walking up and down those aisles— talking to them; answering questions.
> (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

Don's passion for enriching his students' lives was obvious, and it was evident that,

even after three decades of teaching, he continues to put a lot of thought and energy into

figuring out ways that he might be more effective in helping them achieve a better

understanding of the world in which they live:

> [I]n my more recent reading, I'm thinking more about stories as memorable ways
> of getting into the understanding. Like if I were going to talk about gases: Talk
> about the atmosphere and the development of ballooning--who figured out that

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stuff and when they figured it out, and so on--rather than simply telling them, "Well, here's the way gases behave." So basically: try to give them more understanding of an integrated picture of what's going on in Physics, and that means that they will actually have that ability after years from when they take my courses. (DF, personal communication, December 19, 2008)

Later in that same conversation, he added:

Stories are memorable; assertions and proofs are not memorable—especially for our students. And I can see where if I told more stories--not trivial stories; not about the individuals, but about the process of discovery--they might retain more. (DF, personal communication, December 19, 2008)

Don, it seems, has been quite successful in his efforts to understand and reach his students. At one point, I asked him what kinds of things his students say about him. Rather than answering with some type of generic characterization, Don simply turned to his computer and typed in the address for a website that students can use to provide anonymous feedback about their instructors. I was impressed with what I read there! In spite of the fact that his subject area, probably, is intimidating for many, Don's students had rated him very highly. On a scale of 5.0: "Average Easiness: 3.8; Average Helpfulness: 4.8; Average Clarity: 4.4….Overall Quality: 4.6" (Ratemyprofessor.com, 2010)—these scores mostly from non-Physics majors who likely took his introductory course because their major required them to take a Physics class or because it was convenient to their schedules. The individual reviews written by some of the students (two of which are provided below) accentuated even more the positive regard his students hold for him:

- One of the few great profs at Memphis- academic brilliance and a humble attitude (willing to help). He wants students to succeed but more to understand the material. He loves physics and unloads a humorous amount of "factoids." "Take this class if you want to live." (Ratemyprofessor.com, 2010)

- awesome teacher. really smart, witty, very cool, fun little facts dispersed throughout the class lectures, good amount of demonstrations. one of the best

teachers i've had here at uofm. one of those classes where attendance isn't mandatory, but you actually enjoy going anyway. (Ratemyprofessor.com, 2010)

Spirituality

In reviewing his students' comments, it was clear to me that Don brings considerable

gifts to his teaching, and that his identity is an important aspect of his success. As he and

I talked, it also became more and more apparent that, even though his students did not use

the term in rating his effectiveness, Don's spirituality is a fundamental aspect of that

identity. Wanting to know more about this area of his life, I asked him about the early

influences that have shaped his spirituality. He answered:

> Well going back in the 50s: I was born in '47; so '52, I'm in kindergarten; '53, I'm in first grade—going to public schools but going to Sunday school. My father, a typical Italian man, hardly ever entered--crossed--the threshold of a church. My mother was Protestant. I had an aunt who lived with me and my grandparents and my parents. And my aunt was my godmother, and she made sure that we got all the stuff we were supposed to get. And it was all kind of rote-- I mean the Baltimore Catechism--and there was a lot of stuff that was a little bit hard to believe. It became a bit more intellectual in the high school years. And so I got the standard education through high school, even, and then I started thinking about … (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

I interrupted Don to ask if he had attended public schools throughout his youth:

> Public schools all the way, but I did get the official religious education and I started thinking about [spirituality] in college and I started thinking about it more in graduate school. In graduate school, I was living in the dorm (graduate college in Princeton) and again talking to people all over the place: a lot of my fellow science people, but also people who were majoring in like church history and some others who were taking … Not many that were taking courses at the seminary, but we had this whole historical thing going on about the church in the United States, and so I learned a lot. And I started thinking about it, and I'm still thinking about it. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

I asked if there were influences other than the Church that affected his spiritual

development, to which he replied:

> Well, just reading very broadly—especially in graduate school. I was a single person; I was … I did my homework and I also had all these books. And so I read

Schweitzer; I read even a little bit in Bultmann; Bonhoeffer. I had some friends who were Jewish and had some interesting conversations with them about their religion. [And] in science, you always know a few people who are strictly atheistic, and that's kind of an interesting slant on things.

So, as I said, reading was a very big thing and, anyway, I would attend things: I'd attend the university chapel service occasionally to see how that was--just sort of a non-denominational, Presbyterian type of thing--and see things from that standpoint….And there was also a Catholic organization: It wasn't the Newman Club; they called it the Aquinas Institute….It was a place where people felt relatively free to express opinions that might not have been accepted. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

The array of influences that seemed to have shaped Don's thinking about religious and spiritual concerns during his college and graduate school years was quite impressive. Without me prompting the shift, Don readily moved into an explanation of how these experiences have translated into his belief system today:

Now, okay, one thing I've realized (and more so in recent years), I mean there's this kind of view among Catholics and Protestants of: Well, this universe that we live in: it's kind of a rough draft for the next one, okay? But if you really study the way things are put together and the way things work and … If you take the picture of God as the creator (kind of the literal little old man in overalls sense), well, he took a great deal of care in creating it. Now, I'm somewhere between that and….[S]omewhere between Spinoza and the burning bush is where I am. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

I enjoyed the hyperbole of Don's remark. Nonetheless, the range of belief encompassed between the pantheism of Spinoza and the burning bush from which some believe God to have spoken to Moses seemed quite a stretch. At our next meeting, I asked him if he couldn't narrow that span a bit. He replied:

Well, okay. It depends on the day. But, really, I mean … I think Spinoza had some insight, and ultimately … And the Asian religions also have this insight: There is this ultimate reality which is not the sensible reality. So I think God has to be that. But then there was the question, "Does that ultimate reality in any way, shape, or form care about us?" And Christianity says that it does, and it kind of makes sense. You can take something which is … Like in the catechism, where we're made in the image and likeness of God (well, that's kind of figurative). But on the other hand, God made the universe in such a way that we can understand it, which means there must be some connection there.

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So, I mean, I'm not uncomfortable having both pieces there. I think we have to allow for the grand meta-Physics, but there's also the individual religious experience and teachings that come out of the Scriptures and religious practice, which brings it down to an earthy level. And I don't see them conflicting. (DF, personal communication, December 19, 2008)

This was the type of remark that repeatedly validated my decision to include Don as a participant in this study: His ability to articulate the places that he finds within himself to accommodate a sense of both the transcendent and the very personal, and his facility for speaking about those junctures in such a manner as to help others be open to all that is offered in the occasions that define and shape their lives. In our previous conversation, Don had stated:

[S]o I think, you know, there are the spiritual values; there are things that are not captured easily in rational language. I believe in God, and I believe that there is purpose and meaning in this life, but I don't think any … I don't think, you know, "Oh here's the book with all the answers in it." I mean … I don't believe in that. I think that's where we go astray. God didn't promise--for whatever reason, he did not promise--to give us all the answers. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

As part of that same conversation, Don said something about attending church—a statement that surprised me because when I first met him, I thought he had said that he was not active in a particular religious tradition. I asked him to clarify:

I do; I still go to church. I would say my practice is largely Catholic; my beliefs are largely Catholic…. I mean, also it's a question of tradition … I mean, I'm comfortable going to--belonging to--a Catholic church. I don't think my friends who are Methodists, or Presbyterians, or Baptists, are that far off the mark. I mean, we now recognize that there's a lot of commonality. In fact, one of the things that the church has kind of half resolved is we have a lot of people with different views. I'm not a great fan of the pope…. And there are some historical issues there (with whether the great font of authority really should reside with that one individual) that would probably be … In an earlier age, I would be branded as heretical.
But with sort of everyday American Catholicism, I'm pretty comfortable—at the same time, not feeling an urge to convert my Protestant friends, or my Orthodox Christian friends, or whatever. And I have Jewish friends who are … I certainly have no compulsion to tell them, "Well, hey, you missed part of it." And

so that's where I am. And it's not entirely based on reason, but it's not conflicted by my experience. And a lot of people don't … For a lot of people, you're in a particular religion because the most significant people in your life are in that religion. And so, why change? Changing is not easy, and why change if you don't need to? (DF, personal communication, December 19, 2008)

Ever the pragmatist, Don's practicality appealed to me. I asked him to tell me more about what kinds of experiences have informed his views about such questions. In reply, he stated:

> Well, one of the things … A lot of my religious thinking has developed in contact with other religions. I've actually been in a Buddhist temple; I've actually been in a Taoist temple; I've actually … I've been to a Muslim wedding; a Hindu funeral. I know people who are sincere in those faiths. And so there are some similarities. I mean, religion deals with the question of meaning and the question of persistence in life, and that's kind of a common concern of all religions. (DF, personal communication, April 8, 2009)

Knowing that I shared his background in Catholicism, Don went on to discuss a number of concepts and beliefs that have been a part of that culture. Some of these he questioned; some he endorsed; but always with a reasoning and critical eye. It seemed to me that his stance--in counterpoise to the idea that faith is a passive acceptance of things not fully understandable--asserted his capacity to think and to reason—perhaps, even, affirming these abilities as constitutive of what it is to be human. Eventually he concluded: "So, anyway, I'm Catholic because the significant people in my life have been Catholic. And the cult is something I'm fairly comfortable with" (DF, personal communication, April 8, 2009).

Don's ability to think and to reason was readily apparent throughout our conversations but, perhaps, never more so than in discussing the vitality of the relationship between science and religion. In speaking to this connection, he indicated that the types of concerns inherent to the subject of Physics frequently call into question the ways in

which many of his students have thought about and configured their understanding of the world. He stated:

> I've had students tell me, "Well, how can you be a scientist and still be religious because they completely contradict each other?" And I have to explain, "No, they don't, and this is why I don't think they do, and this is just my personal opinion." (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

Repeatedly, Don rejected the idea that these respective views of the world were in opposition; at times, almost sounding as though he has become an emissary between these worlds: holding forth against the pressures of those who would pose these as two opposite sides of an argument; instead to show them as simply different ways for us to experience and talk about the world in which we live. It was apparent that, for Don, science and religion (in their fullest potential) are mutually beneficial—each having something that can inform and enrich the other; neither being an answer unto itself:

> One of the things that Einstein said … [was that] the most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible to us. There is nothing in the evolutionary picture--nothing obvious--that says we ought to develop a brain that's capable of understanding the universe.
>   Now I've looked and actually several physicists and philosophers have written about that sort of thing: How we could get from the basic essentials of life (which is, you know, how to defend yourself against a predator, or how to go find food); how you develop notions of space and time from that; and from that you develop notions of the basic ideas of Physics and so on. And so there's that connection, but I think also, you know, our brain; our mind; our spirit (including the part that understands the universe) is rather marvelous and even if it came about through probabilistic processes, it's still … It's worthy of thinking about. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

Later in that same conversation, he added:

> I mean, the image of God as sort of the super mechanic who puts things together and makes them work yields to more of the sort of mystical: God is the ultimate reality. There is … In a sense, there's nothing else. And that's much more profound. It's not that God created the particles and sent them moving, but rather the laws of Physics are such that it allows for beings to be talking about themselves. I mean, I think, if there was a creative piece to what God did it was

choosing how matter would behave in such a way that matter would evolve to produce us. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

Don, later, addressed a similar concern in responding to the literary excerpts I had sent him (from various sources that I felt pertinent to our topic). The purpose of the exercise was to see which of these statements might evoke a reaction of some kind. One of the statements to which Don chose to respond was a very brief remark in which the author had made a sweeping remark about a life force that is everywhere. Don was uncomfortable with the division--the externalism--suggested by characterizing the life force in such a manner:

> This is too dualistic or vitalistic for me. I don't see a life force as something distinct from the laws of Physics and chemistry, but rather in the amazing thing that Physics and chemistry give rise to the possibility of life. The true spirituality comes in recognizing the hand of the lawmaker in the playing out of the laws. Consider this a modern spin on the mustard seed parable, or Blake's universe in a grain of sand. The existence of that lawmaker may mean we are in for a new set of laws, even more wonderful, when the new heaven and new earth are unveiled. (DF, personal communication, May 4, 2009)

His respect for the playing out of the laws was evident when I asked Don how his academic discipline provides a forum to teach about what he values and believes. He stated:

> Hmm, that's a good question … Physics is kind … Well, it's supposed to be value neutral, but the beauty of it … Understanding how things fit together, how things happen: If it doesn't reflect a creative intelligence, I almost can't conceive of that. I have to state it in a way that does not bias the students to a particular religious belief, but I think it's just … This is just one … This is the way the world is; it's such a fantastically beautiful world. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

One of the things I appreciated most about my conversations with Don was the careful analysis he would apply to his understanding of how things fit together, but always balanced with an acknowledgment that there still were mysteries that lie within. In

discussing the ending of the poem that he wrote, he shared a section of an essay by

Borges (1964) that contributed to the way in which he chose to craft the closing lines of

his poem:

> We (the undivided divinity that operates within us) have dreamed the world. We
>
> have dreamed it strong, mysterious, visible, ubiquitous in space and secure in
>
> time; but we have allowed tenuous, eternal interstices of injustice in its structure
>
> so we may know that it is false. (p. 115)

In response, Don said:

> I like that image….You know, we've built this marvelous rational structure, and
> we've left in it crevices of un-reason, so that we can remember that it's false. Well,
> I think in those crevices, there is a lot of what God is doing. We have a
> completely working explanation that is deterministic and mechanical, and yet I
> think prayer works. I think people have experiences. And so it's like, "God is
> available: Just look." And that's kind of what I was trying to get at. (DF, personal
> communication, April 8, 2009)

Integrating Teaching and Spirituality

I was moved by Don's expressions of reverence for the world he studies. It seemed to

me that there was a spiritual component to this testament, and I wondered what effect this

aspect of his thinking has on his teaching. Early in our engagement, I asked him to tell

me why he had agreed to be part of this study:

> Well it sounded intriguing. I see some of our students, and some of our society,
> basically programmed by advertisers to be consumers. Basically all they know is
> they want to make more money because they want to buy the sneakers, they want
> to buy the music, they want to live in this kind of house, drive that kind of car.
>   And, to me, that seems to be missing the point, or at least you live a very
> shallow life, if all you're doing is chasing money to be able to buy stuff that
> maybe you really didn't want to begin with. And so, from that standpoint, I think
> spiritual values, or whatever you want to call them--religious values, or ethical
> values, or aesthetic values--I think make life much more appealing. (DF, personal
> communication, October 8, 2008)

In concluding these remarks Don stated, "I try to light the torch of rational inquiry, with spiritual values--or, you know, spiritual, aesthetic, ethical--something more important than just acquiring stuff" (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008). It seemed to me that the lighting of that torch has become a central feature in how Don perceives his role as teacher. In exploring this further, I asked him to what he gives himself in teaching. He responded, "We send these students into the future. I mean, we're all gone in something less than a hundred years, and it's creating something good in the world, I think. So, yeah, I give myself to that, I guess" (DF, personal communication, December 19, 2008). I told Don that it sounded like generativity may be an essential aspect of his spirituality, and he agreed with my assessment:

> Well, I think … I've thought about this. I mean, we have a certain state of knowledge about the world, which I don't think is going to … It will deepen and will adjust itself somewhat, but I don't think we're going to, at some point, throw it over and start again. And so, I want my students to start from where we are rather than a position of ignorance. So I think it's a positive, humanistic thing to send people out with enough education that they can function in the world and maybe advance the state of knowledge—or at least not do stupid things. And I think that's part of the validity of what we do as teachers. (DF, personal communication, April 8, 2009)

Sending his students out with enough education to function in--and perhaps to change--the world, indeed, appears to give validity to Don's efforts. It seemed that, in making this comment, he was speaking primarily of an external validity (that comes from society and the world at large), but I thought it was apparent, as well, that there is a large measure of internal validity that he derives from his work—manifesting his system of beliefs; giving value to his interactions. Responding to another of the literature excerpts that I sent him (this one commenting on the kinship that teachers often feel for the subject that they teach), Don spoke favorably of such affiliation. I sensed in his remark some

spiritual overtones as Don portrayed the subject--the discipline--as the ground in which

the seeds of authenticity and meaning can ripen in both student and teacher:

> That kinship with some subject, which is considered by most Americans as dangerously intellectual, because the subject becomes more important than the students. But it is the subject that can provide meaning and authenticity to the student and teacher. Again the mustard seed or grain of sand that contains the whole universe in potentiality. (DF, personal communication, May 4, 2009)

I liked the earthiness of the image Don used and thought it accentuated well a point

that he had made earlier. In explaining some of the imagery he selected for the poem that

he wrote, Don had talked about the role that the physical senses play in engaging

scientists in what they do:

> All the things that we do in science, each have a tactile … some sensory aspect to it— whether it's feeling something that's warm; or whether it's drawing something that looks pretty; smells that come about; there's all … We do that and that gives us pleasure. (DF, personal communication, December 19, 2008)

In response, I asked him if he felt that sensuality is one of the places where his spirituality

and his teaching might intersect? He replied: "I haven't thought much about that, but

that's probably true….I think to be a fully living, sensing being is part of my spirituality"

(DF, personal communication, April 8, 2009).

In observing Don's classes, I saw one of the ways in which this aspect of his

spirituality seems to have significant impact on his teaching. On both of those occasions,

he used a visual demonstration to engage his students more fully in their consideration of

the topic for that day. Following my second observation, I wrote:

> Near the end of the presentation, Don conducted a demonstration concerning the rate of speed at which two dissimilar items fall. It seemed to me that the students became even more attentive at this point. As in my first observation of Don's classroom, I was impressed with the way in which a visual demonstration seems to engage students on a different plane. Perhaps this is a testament to the subject of the poem Don wrote for our second interview—the importance of engaging our senses in coming to know what is. (Schneider, 2009a)

In talking with Don, I gained the distinct impression that he enjoys the intellectual challenge of teaching graduate students about the complex issues that are a part of the graduate Physics curriculum. Nevertheless, I noticed that the locus of most of his remarks tended to be in regard to the undergraduate *Introductory Physics* course. Part of the reason for this may have been that this was the class that I attended on two occasions; part also may have been the demands inherent in the sheer size of this group. Still, it seemed to me that, perhaps, a large part of the reason for Don's focus on this class was his interest--his investment--in wanting to help these students begin to make sense of the world in some new ways and, in a few cases, ignite an interest in science as a career. In discussing one of the classes that I observed, he stated:

> [B]asically, "How do I get these students to understand science so they're not afraid of it?" Some of them, there's a … Out of a hundred students, I'll have one that decides to be a Physics major because they took my course. Because that's the thing: It's explicitly a non-Physics major course, but they've now got turned on to it. I'd like to have a few more. But, mainly, just have them not be afraid. (DF, personal communication, December 19, 2008)

In making this remark, I thought that Don meant he didn't want his students to be afraid of science, but I wondered if (in, perhaps, a more existential way) his intent didn't extend also to wanting his students to be courageous in their approach to life. It was evident that his own spirituality is one that draws him into an embrace of a world that fascinates him; it seemed likely that he wants no less for his students. When I asked him how he gives shape to helping his students find meaningful answers to the questions of life, he replied:

> It's about giving students the knowledge that they can do things they couldn't do before they took my course; before they came to college. It could be empowerment to be a more effective member of the religious body; it could be empowerment to earn a good income so you have some disposable income to do

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something with; it could be empowerment to understand yourself better. There's a lot of growth that goes on in college….So I try to give them the tools for coping with the life they've got, as best I can. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

Perhaps because of the personal development that he experienced during his own years of college and graduate school, Don was a strong proponent of college being a forum in which students should have the opportunity--the challenge--to expand their ways of thinking about the world in which they live. On a couple of occasions, Don mentioned how young many of the students who take his *Introductory Physics* course are, and the challenges inherent in trying to teach across the vast span of development represented in the large class:

> I think you've got to think; you've got to have a little bit of an existential crisis to grow. And so I think that first day of every semester I have that experience of, you know, "How do I lift these kids up? How do I make them really think about the possibilities here of what they really want to do: Not what their parents are telling them what to do; not what the catalog says they've got to do to graduate? How can they be an authentic student?"… That and I try to point to … In teaching this Introduction to Physics course, I try to point to places where science and religion, or science and art, have something to say about each other. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

It seemed to me that Don is uniquely gifted for the role he plays in enriching his students' lives—by my judgment, a man who is extremely intelligent, inquisitive, and kind. I wondered what his own perceptions are in regard to the gifts he brings to teaching:

> Well, being interested in everything--nearly everything--translates to being able to put things into context, I think, which makes things easier to be effective. I try to show my students that, you know, the science they're learning has got something to do with the history they've learned, and with the arts they might be doing, and with the things that they're going to encounter in their lives. I think I have a broad historical background….I have a sense of humor, which … I'm not sure always whether students see the humor. I may not tell jokes in class generally--rarely do I tell a joke in class--but I often put something in a way that highlights the strangeness of it, and the students seem to respond to that. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

Given that this is his perception of his teaching style today, I wondered about the ways in which he has changed in his efforts to be effective. Don commented: "Well … I've become a better listener" (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008), and went on to tell a story about trying to teach a student what seemed a very simple scientific principle (unlike charges attract and like charges repel) only to discover, after about an hour of not progressing, that the student did not know the meaning of one of the key terms (repel). Don indicated that he has encountered this type of problem on numerous occasions— having to deal with significant learning deficits that many of his students bring to the classroom and having to be more circumspect in his use of language.

He also discussed the effect of an experience in which a student returned an exam along with a quotation from the Bible that, apparently, was offered because of the student's concern for Don's salvation. In response, Don stated:

> I guess that made me more aware of where the students might be, and so I try always to be respectful of their beliefs and challenge them to think about them….I'm, you know, getting more to appreciate them as they are and to try to even challenge each one, or to challenge them to come … to develop a little bit more: develop a little bit more as a mind; develop more in aesthetic appreciation to … They don't have to wall off their religious life from everything else; they just need to try and keep track of everything…. And so I'm mellowing out, or I'm just becoming a more … probably a more effective student's teacher. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

Don stated that one of the areas in which his awareness has grown is in regard to the impact that peoples' cultural backgrounds have on their learning. He went on to state that one of the cultural viewpoints that many of his students bring to the classroom (and thus, one that he is called to address regularly) is a perspective that has been shaped by a strict, literal understanding of the Bible. I admired Don's sensitivity to the plight that many of these students must feel in trying to reconcile that outlook with the content of his course,

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and his willingness to help them explore ways in which they might be able to integrate their scientific and religious views:

> It's probably 1 in 10, or 1 in 20, that actually adheres to a strict literal biblical view of the world. So the world is not 13 billion years old; it's 6000-and-something, or whatever … And you can't, you know … I'll say, "I respect your beliefs and you're allowed to keep your beliefs….All I can do is tell you what most scientists believe and why we've come to these conclusions."…You know, I wasn't here 6000 years ago, so I can't say with the same kind of certainty, but I can say, "Well, here's this picture and it only makes sense: All this data supports the idea that the universe began with this big bang 13 billion years or so ago. And here's a lot of the evidence for it, and most scientists agree on it." (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

Per Don's report, these exchanges concerning a literal interpretation of the Bible vis-à-vis science have occurred almost every semester with at least one or two of his students. In speaking to that concern, Don indicated that, somewhere in that discussion, he notes the unanimity of thought among the scientific community and what he feels is an intellectual responsibility to give serious consideration to that measure of accord:

> [O]ne of the things that really impresses me … Scientists can be of many different religious stripes (Catholic; Protestant; Jewish; Muslim; Buddhist … we had one Zoroastrian here): We pretty much all agree on the same scientific story. That to me is amazing. I mean, people can get together and agree on a large amount of stuff even though they may hold very fundamentally different beliefs.
>   And so, I think that that's an impressive thing to, you know, get our students to think about….In most cases, there's still mysteries there, but, you know, it's part of our inheritance from people 400 or 2000 years ago to have this information about the world. It's ours to do [something] with, I think. You know, "People, we do kind of have radical responsibility for what we make of the world … but we can't just ignore it and say, 'Well, none of this happened; I'm just going to believe [literally] the two creation stories in Genesis and all that other stuff.'" That is a little hard to piece out sometimes. (DF, personal communication, October 8, 2008)

Finally, in regard to defining his own boundaries in addressing these kinds of concerns, Don spoke to how he views his role by stating:

I am very careful to say, you know, "It's a public institution. I'm not here to say

to you … to sell you a set of religious beliefs or spiritual beliefs. But I am here to

make you think … and not just about science. (DF, personal communication,

October 8, 2008)

The next time we met, I asked him to say more about the final clause in that statement,

and Don replied:

> I wonder how many times I've said it explicitly. But it's my attitude. One of the
> reasons for studying science is that you learn several important ways of thinking:
> You learn to think; you learn to recognize what is salient, let's say, in a problem.
> So it's not suddenly just so I've memorized all these things that are true, but, okay,
> "I throw this rock; where will it land? What's pertinent to that? What's not
> pertinent?" To be able to … The beginning of critical thinking is realizing what's
> relative … relevant….
>   So I do think that part of teaching science is teaching people to think: to realize
> what's … how to attack a problem; realize what's relevant; to realize when you
> have a coherent view of the world as well as when you don't. I do feel that way.
> (DF, personal communication, December 19, 2008)

Don is a talented individual, but the plenitude of his talents, at times, has left him

pondering the best means for exercising those gifts. I was glad to hear him say that, in

resolving this dilemma, he has decided that teaching remains a core aspect of how he

wants to spend his life:

> But, you know, one little conflict I have is: I'm very good at writing things that
> get money into the university, and I could easily have had a successful
> administrative career, or I could be like [some professors] that do very little actual
> teaching, but do a lot of this grant getting and administration and so on. And I
> kind of always got … have gone up to a point and then I stop, because I don't
> want to not teach; I don't want to not be in the classroom. (DF, personal
> communication, December 19, 2008)

I admired Don's dedication to the profession of teaching and, in our next interview, asked

him to say more about this commitment:

> Well, teacher has become part of what I am from the feedback I get from my
> students—almost entirely. I have very good interaction with my colleagues, but I

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think it's the students who pretty directly say … that I've made some difference. They'll tell me that—that they really learned something. Then it's hard to say, "Oh, that's really not important." So, I mean, that's one of the things that keeps [me at it]: I enjoy it!

I like thinking about the process of teaching, and so that's another aspect. And so, my argument would be: I do it so well, why would I not want to do it? Is there anything else I would do that has value enough to make me give that up? And the answer is, "No," except on a very short-term basis….I'll just teach, and I'll teach a lot. (DF, personal communication, April 8, 2009)

I thoroughly enjoyed my conversations with Don. Some of that reaction was due to the energy I had to exert in trying to keep up with his lively presentation; some of it was the fascination I experienced in listening to his integration and articulation of complex concepts. But perhaps the highlight of my time with Don was in having him share the poem that he wrote. I appreciated the way in which he so willingly accepted the risks involved in composing something that, obviously, was not within his usual form of discourse. Even more, I admired how well he was able to bring together so many aspects of his life in an effective and moving manner.

By way of introduction, Don identified a couple of ideas that he had tried to incorporate into the poem. One of these was a dynamic he remembered from a poem he had read in his youth, "I play the music and the music plays on me: That was one of the things I was trying to get at here" (DF, personal communication, December 19, 2008); The other was related to sensory engagement: "Then I decided to take up the challenge of bringing the senses in, because a lot of what science is, is sense" (DF, personal communication, December 19, 2008).

And it's called *Poem*:

Like moths to a flame,
We enter science, espousing the loftiest of motives,
    To discover the truth
    Know the mind of God

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<pre>
        And help our fellow man
Yet can't admit what feels good about it
        The neat equations line by line,
        The diagrams, Feynman as Paul Klee
        Chalk on slate
        Getting passionate with chalk
        The colors and smells of the chem lab
        The solvents now banished to the hood
        The various sources of warmth
        Including the high speed Xerox
        The hum of machinery, even computers
We draw a picture amazingly complex
And we draw ourselves as we draw nature
A seamless web with diminishing cracks

While God hides quite openly
In all the cracks
Revealing as much of Self as we can bear
Or just a bit more. (DF, personal communication, December 19, 2008)
</pre>

Concluding Remarks

These did not seem the musings typical of a man of science but, frankly, had they been, I would have been disappointed. I was delighted with what seemed a skillful integration of images, elements, experiences, and feelings—all of which go into making Don the unique and talented person he is: a man of science *and* spirit.

Given the broad diversity of his interests, I wondered what Don feels is most essential to his students' lives. In hopes of singling out what he felt was most vital, I invoked the memory of Randy Pausch of Carnegie Mellon (who, prior to his death from cancer last year, delivered a last lecture in which he summarized many of the lessons that he wanted his students to absorb), and asked Don what he would say if asked to give *his* last lecture. He replied:

> Oh, boy. What's important in life? I came across a … Interesting, from my reading, there's a book by Bill Moyers on *Genesis*, about a few of the people he met at the theological seminary (a Jewish one) from all different perspectives. And a rabbi said, "There are two pieces of paper you should carry in your

pockets: And one of them is that, 'Remember, man, you are dust, and to dust you shall return' (That is: You're completely unimportant); and the other one is, 'Remember that, for you, the universe was created'" (Moyers, 1993, p. 20). And I found that very edifying.

Teaching about stellar evolution: I mean, we are atoms that have been cooked up in stars. So, in a sense, a lot of what's happened in the universe goes to make us up. And so we should be deeply connected with the universe. And, then, Einstein said the important thing was to be at home in the universe. And I think that's something that science--Physics, particularly--gives you a chance to do.

So I think my last lecture would be on being at home in the universe: That everything that's out there has something to do with us. We may not know it, but we can understand it. And in that understanding, that's one way of approaching God. We can contain the universe in our minds, to some extent … not completely, but … So I'd make it a commercial for never being afraid of the universe—trying always to celebrate the fact that we are in this fantastic world. (DF, personal communication, April 8, 2009)

I enjoyed spending some time in that world with Don as my guide. In concluding our

discussions, I asked if he had any closing thoughts, and he replied:

Well, it's a standard piece of Physics that when you make an observation you change the system you're observing. And I think this interaction is doing that. I will be a better teacher; I'll have thought through a lot more stuff. I can say that I have tended to shy away from …Well, I shy away from doctrines--religious doctrine--in class because I don't want to be in the position of imposing my beliefs….I want people to make up their own minds. But I realize the value of … I do have some assumptions about the spirit--or about the ultimate--and those do color my teaching. And that means I need to visit them and think about what I'm trying to convey. (DF, personal communication, April 8, 2009)

I was left with no doubt that Don would do exactly that: Visit his beliefs, think about

what he wants to convey, strive to light the torch of rational inquiry, and draw his

students in—like moths to a flame.

CHAPTER 4-E

Findings of Study

Jim's Story

The room already was crowded when I arrived. Packed into the small studio--along with the baby grand piano, a desk, ten chairs, six music stands, at least two computers, piles of books, stacks of manuscripts and other papers--were nine students milling about, piecing together their instruments, softening their reeds, tuning, and engaging in conversation: readying themselves for the first downbeat of the new semester in *Applied Clarinet*. In their midst, stood Jim--his Michigan State ball cap askew on his head--boisterously (yet calmly) offering directions, suggestions, and support. Later that day, in chronicling my observations, I noted how different this classroom experience felt in comparison to the other classes that I had observed as part of this study:

> Much of that difference is due to the nature of what is being taught, but some of it, I think, also is due to Jim's personal teaching style. That style, to me, at times seems a little chaotic: students coming and going; continual tuning, re-tuning, and adjustments to their musical instruments; multiple conversations going on in the classroom; and (in the midst of the hubbub), Jim's de-stabilizing comments as he challenges students' attempts to settle for easy solutions or mediocrity. (Schneider, 2009b)

The next time we met, I asked Jim to comment on the views I expressed in my commentary. His reply enriched my understanding of his teaching style, even as it heightened my awareness of the breadth of concerns to which he must attend in helping his students become good musicians:

> Chaotic. I see that it's … I see chaos as creative; okay?...I see chaos as giving us a way--new ways--of looking at old solutions. And I see chaos as analytical in a sense that it's the process of taking things apart, you know. And when you take things apart, sometimes the pieces float around a little bit. And so then we've got to glue everything back together….

So, no, we had to take that apart a little bit. We're going to create some chaos; okay? And we're going to take that apart and look at it and say, "Okay, well, this is a downbeat and this is an upbeat; okay? And these are the ways that you analyze **rhythmic** content and you synthesize it this way; okay? And then we're going to do a lot of sight reading, and we're also going to do some transposition because that pattern occurs in other keys; okay?" And as we do transposition, then they find that they have to deal with their key signatures and learn how to play in a lot of different keys and learn the scales and their thirds. And then we're developing technique; okay? (Jim Gholson (JG), personal communication, March 9, 2009)

An African-American man in his mid-60s, Dr. G. James Gholson is Professor of Clarinet in the Rudy E. Scheidt School of Music at the University of Memphis. Jim received his DMA from The Catholic University of America in the mid-1970s and has served as a faculty member in the music department at the University of Memphis for the past 37 years. In addition to his teaching responsibilities on campus, he also performs regularly as principal clarinet of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra and as a member of the Memphis Woodwind Quintet.

I did not know Jim prior to this study. Another member of the campus community had given me his name as someone who might be interested in being part of this study. When I contacted Jim by e-mail, telling him of this reference and inquiring as to his interest, he replied:

> "Whew Gary: you caught me at an awesome time....just going back to the Symphony after a year off and trying to get my students organized on clarinet....I do have very strong opinions about spirituality and teaching (do not know how Tom knew that !!); both some of my heroes and my love of the Mississippi Delta and the tactics that govern my teaching reflect those things. I would like to participate and help you any way I can.....so count me in!! (JG, personal communication, August 20, 2008)

The eclectic list of topics that he included as pertinent to his teaching of the clarinet, coupled with the verve of his reply, should have prepared me: Jim is a high energy person

whose vigor is matched only by the range of ideas that he is entertaining at any one point in time.

Teaching

I began our conversations by asking Jim to tell me about some of the influences in his early life that may have shaped the ways in which he thinks about teaching. His reply suggested that the mix of music and education was engendered in him from the very beginning of his life:

> Well, I had a lot of influences. My mother was an influence, because she was a musician. Daddy was an influence, 'cause Daddy was an administrator….The other influence is I've had wonderful clarinet teachers, starting with Keith Stein at Michigan State. And then before Michigan State … Actually in D.C., I studied at … traveled to Du Pont Circle in D.C. and worked with Sidney Forrest, who was a prominent clarinet teacher in that area then. And then, after him, of course, I did a lot of work with Anthony Gigliotti and the Philadelphia orchestra. And I really miss him, because he … You know, he was a very wise man, and he had a great deal of experience in the field, and he had a great vision … and he was extraordinarily humane. He could talk to anybody; you know, he never met a stranger. So I've been, I think, really lucky in that sense of having influences that I can fall back on at various times, depending on what the problem is. (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008)

In subsequent interviews, Jim shared more with me about what he learned from each of these people, as well as from other teachers in his own experiences as a student. It was clear from the very beginning of our conversations, however, that the key figure who inhabits his thoughts about teaching, and education in general, is his father—a man who seemed larger than life in Jim's retrospect:

> Daddy was trained … He actually instituted the core curriculum in our high school. And the core curriculum was really a problem-centered approach to … It was actually research; in other words, your protocol depends upon what works for the student and what works in that particular environment. So it was actually research. And he did that; he was very much involved in that. And then he went into sensitivity training. And I think he desegregated the schools in Prince George's County, so he was also involved in mediation; okay? And one thing I always remember him doing, instinctively almost, was having both parties come

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in. One party: "Your side of the story;" the other party: "The other side of the story;" "Okay, now, where is our common ground?" You know? "Let's find common ground so that we have a program now—a plan for moving ahead." (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008)

Conflict resolution and problem solving came up several times in the three conversations that I had with Jim. Very early in that process, I began to surmise that these were predominant themes in how Jim perceives his role as a teacher. When I inquired if he had specific educational theories he follows in his classroom practice, he started to deny having a particular theory from which he works, but then enthusiastically lapsed into describing a technique he uses quite regularly to work through problems or areas of disagreement—in his personal, and in his professional, life:

> Theories? Not re- … You know, for me, I've done dialogue journals now for about 10 years, and that's really to me … I keep coming back to that because I think it gives us a solid foundation for growth. And so, I like to … I've enjoyed using that. I use it in my personal life, you know, when I have things I want to hash out with another person and we have some issues that we need to talk about, sort through. You know, I really have enjoyed doing that—using that process….
>
> For instance, I may have a student who doesn't want to practice; okay? Now, this is *Applied Clarinet*; so [if] you have a student that doesn't want to practice, that's kind of a problem. Now, there are lots of ways that we can approach developing good practice habits….But we've got to talk about it, and we've got to be sure that our definitions are the same; we've got to be sure that we're having good follow-through. You know, we've got to … If there was something that prevented it from happening this week, then we've got to try to figure out organization … and time organization. (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008)

The dialogue journal has been a meaningful tool for Jim to use in working toward resolution of a variety of situations with family members and with his students, but not everyone has been eager to engage in this form of dialogue. At one point he said, "[Y]ou would be surprised at the number of people that tell you that they won't do that" (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008). He went on to describe a couple of

situations in which students have attempted to avoid having to engage with him in this kind of dialogue. In his description of one of those incidents, he reported:

> Well, the student went to [a colleague] because the student didn't want to come to me and say, "I need to … We need to do a dialogue journal," or "I would like to do a dialogue journal." The student didn't want to do that. So, he went to him. He gave the student a bye. He said, "Well, have you talked to Gholson about it?" And he said, "Well, Gholson's going to want to do a dialogue journal; I don't want to do that." So, he said, "Well, go see the chair."…And that has been the bane of my existence at the University of Memphis. That's [angered me] more about the University of Memphis than anything else that I can say that's happened here—is to have students go up the administrative chain of command without having a serious and effective encounter with the professor. They think that they can beat the system. (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008)

The simmering anger that he has felt in regard to students avoiding direct interaction with him--and a departmental system that, apparently, has failed to challenge that kind of triangulation--has resulted in a lingering pain in Jim. Some of that anguish has found root in questions related to the dynamics of racial bias that underlie so many interactions (consciously and unconsciously) in this society:

> That's right: in the rounds all over the place—because I'm an African- American, I think. You know, I don't know if that's happened to me more than most, but I think that I've been put in a position where that has happened to me a lot--many times--for a variety of reasons. It could be for race; it could be for aspects of how they feel African-American males function in a pluralistic society—or in White society. I don't know; I really don't care! You know? Because my job at the University of Memphis is to help students become better clarinet players and to help them mature as adults. So, in order for that to happen, they have … They have to be effective in their encounter with me. (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008)

Jim's desire to communicate effectively with his students was a fundamental element in much of what he shared with me over the course of our conversations. Again invoking the legacy of his father, Jim indicated that his efforts to communicate often are stymied by the formidable remnants of our national history:

You know, I think for me it would be nice to have an administrative environment … I would say this for the sake of … for the institution; you know?... It would be nice to have an administrator (and once again, I'm looking back at Daddy a little bit) that said, "Okay, let's hear this side; let's hear this side; let's see where our common ground is; let's see where the deviation is--where the deviations occurred--and what are our next steps?" It would be nice to see mediator training as part of the administrative package at the University of Memphis. I think that could happen in either a class or retreat where … Because conflict and dispute resolution are part of the workplace … and, certainly, a part of the Memphis workplace!

You know, you've got … I mean, the history of Memphis, in terms of communication, is not good, frankly. And when you're coming from a place where you've had slavery as a backdrop to your communication procedures, then you've got some distance to travel! (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008)

I did not take Jim's remark to suggest that he was accusing anyone--administrators, co-workers, nor students--of overt racism. Rather, it seemed, he was speaking to the lingering vestiges that slavery has cast upon our society: a subtext that runs beneath every inter-racial exchange—contaminating our relationships; defiling our interactions. For Jim, living and working within this history has evolved into a personal mission of sorts—a legacy that has become, perhaps, the driving force behind his efforts as an educator. Jim described this mission to me in response to my question about a critical incident that has had an impact on what he believes, and what effect this has had on how he interacts with his students. He replied:

I guess the most critical incident for Memphis (and Memphis, of course, will never live this down) is with Martin King. And Martin King came here for the least of us--the garbage workers' strike--and he was killed in the process; okay? And I always think of myself as functioning, to a certain extent, in his blood … for the good of all human beings in Memphis. (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008)

One of the singular ways Jim has chosen to honor the legacy of Dr. King has been the development and sponsorship of a free online system of tutoring that he, for years, has made available to students throughout the community. Jim explained that, in response to

the low reading levels and the other learning problems of many of the students he was

asked to teach here, he decided, in the early 1990s, to engineer (with the help of a couple

of his students who were interested in computers) an online bulletin board. This now has

grown to become a website through which he provides various online tools, making

tutorial assistance available to any student who chooses to access the site:

> [T]he website is my back door on the community. That's my responsibility--that's part of my responsibility--to the Memphis community: is to provide a scaffolding for students that want to do well in school—because that's what I taught from, and that's a part of my family's charge, I think, to carry on that Fairmont Heights [his home neighborhood] tradition. And, you know, it costs me 70 bucks a year to maintain that website; that's nothing….It's a service to the community and it keeps my conscience clear about my responsibilities to Memphis. Memphis has been very, very good to me. You know, I've been here 30 years and I've been able to do, you know, what I love. (JG, personal communication, December 8, 2008)

The first time that I observed Jim interact with his students, I admired the uplifting

presence that he brings to his role as instructor. I wrote: "The overall atmosphere was

relaxed but dutiful. Once they started practicing, there was very little time wasted. [Jim]

was very much in control of what happened within the room without being oppressive.

Overall his temperament was buoyant and encouraging" (Schneider, 2008b). I was

intrigued with the meticulous way in which he seemed to listen to the ensemble, and, at

our next meeting, I asked him what he listens for in those kinds of sessions:

> Well, I'm listening for a lot of things when I listen. When I listen to the students, I'm listening to their concept of sound; listening to their concept of phrasing. I'm listening for intonation; I'm listening for expressiveness; I'm listening for rhythm; I'm listening for their sense of drama….So I'm listening to see how they solve problems. If they have problems, I'm really listening….And in the teaching environment, a lot of them don't understand this part, but I'm also … I'm studying the others to see their reactions to the problem and wondering how they would solve the problem. (JG, personal communication, December 8, 2008)

This theme of problem solving was one to which Jim returned frequently in our discussion of his teaching. It became apparent that cultivating this skill in his students is one of the essential tasks with which he feels he is charged in his role as teacher.

> [W]hen we stop I ask … You know, "Let's go around the room." I want to see how each person would solve the problem; you know? And if they can't solve it, then I know there's something that I'm not doing in my teaching in helping them to think about problem solving….So students have got to have some imagination about solving it even if I haven't taught them how to solve that specific issue. (JG, personal communication, December 8, 2008)

In response to that same classroom observation, I asked Jim if, in addition to teaching musicality and clarinet techniques, the master class was intended to teach his students how to be teachers themselves. Answering in the affirmative, Jim again returned to the importance of teaching his students how to solve problems:

> Okay, teaching them to teach: Let me go back to the problem solving part because, you know, I'm more like my father in some ways than I probably care to admit. But when a student comes to me and we talk about the reed, or we talk about the materials that we're doing in a lesson, I'm teaching them ways of solving problems. That's really what it comes down to. And then that student in his imagination takes those ways, writes down certain ways, and in his imagination explores those ways on the way home—thinks about them. And then, during the course of the week, that student is his own teacher. (JG, personal communication, December 8, 2008)

In addition to his parents and the various clarinet instructors with whom he studied, Jim named one other person who had a significant bearing on his teaching style: his high school basketball coach. Jim spoke generously about what he had learned from this mentor, again with respect to the development of problem solving skills, but also in regard to one other feature that I observed as characteristic of the way in which Jim goes about his teaching:

> I bring a lot of the strategies that I learned in basketball to the studio. For instance, my basketball coach, during the summer, would give everybody a basketball. During the summers, the gym was always open at the high school. Now he didn't

have to do that; he didn't have to be there all that time. But he was very devoted to developing basketball talent; he loved the game, and he loved youngsters.

So I kind of developed … kind of more of a community action approach to teaching the clarinet--now, in retrospect--because the kids, nowadays, don't have the same supports that they had in the '50s and '60s when I was growing up….I like for my students, now, to find a place of … almost as a second home, you know? I want them to be able to work collaboratively. I want them to stay around me a little longer. You know, I want them to feel as though they don't have to come, necessarily, at and for an assigned hour. But if I'm here, they can come in, and we can work a little bit.

So I'm trying to … I'm loosening all of those, you know, the formalities up some, and I have almost … You know, I've assigned them, like, villages: to come in and we work for two or three hours and listen to each other, and comment on each other's … More lateral interaction than from top down….That's the way that … three-on-three or four-on-four kids come to the gym; they play; they develop their talents by working … by testing themselves against one another, in addition to being guided by the teacher. (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008)

The manner in which Jim makes his studio (and himself) available to his students

seemed laudable, and I was impressed with his sensitivity to the kinds of problems his

students must overcome in order to pursue their interest in music:

My job is to give them supports. You know, whether it's through the Internet, or whether it's in my personal contact, or whether it's the kinds of experiences I can provide for them; you know? And in order for me to be able to do that, I gotta know where they are. You know, if the student can't go home and practice because their parents are going through a divorce, or their parents don't like to hear them play, then I've got to get … you know, create some environment for them where they can be nourished.

And, you know, it's crazy: some of the stories that I hear sometimes about … My parents would never have said, "Well, you can't practice because I don't like the way it sounds;" you know? To me that's incomprehensible, but it happens; but it happens! You know what I mean? I mean, when a kid is starting out on an instrument, it can sound kinda funky. But the joy in that is watching the development over time, and seeing how it changes—just like anything else; you know? But for a parent to say, "Well, I don't wanna hear it;" … Hey man, then that's where I come in. (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008)

Jim indicated that many of his students come with limited training: most of them

never having received an individual music lesson, and many of them having developed

bad practice habits that encumber his initial efforts to teach them:

You know, some of them will miss an accidental and berate themselves. You know, they bring their bandmasters to my studio. So their bandmasters will stand and scream at them for 15 minutes about missing an accidental. Or they get to the same place … One really horrible way to practice is: to start at the beginning, get to a place, break down; start again, get to the place, break down; and go through that … But that's rote learning; they've, in effect, practiced making that mistake. They've learned that mistake now by rote; okay? And they haven't thought about how to get out of that. And also they have become mentally lethargic. That's the downside of rote learning: To me, it is almost a death sentence; you know?

And that's where the arts come in: Because the arts teach kids how to think with imagination—how to bring metaphor to problem solving….[Y]ou come to a university to learn how to think. No, you don't come to a university to just get a job. (Oh, that may be … that's part of it; okay?) The biggest part is you come to a university to learn how to think. (JG, personal communication, December 8, 2008)

I thought the image of students carrying around bandmasters in their heads was a compelling one, and at our next meeting I asked Jim what parts of himself he would like his students to carry with them once they leave his studio:

Okay, I want them to be very curious; to always realize that there's a solution for every problem; to be resilient--I think resilient is the best word--to be resilient in their pursuit of excellence—to not always try to solve a problem the same way, but to be a little … maybe a little more creative in their problem solving. I want them to be resilient and creative: those two things. If they leave me with those two things, I'm happy. (JG, personal communication, March 9, 2009)

Spirituality

Creative and resilient: As I listened to Jim, it occurred to me that these were apt descriptors for characterizing the responses he has made in his own life—a life that has taken him, from a childhood lived under the strictures of segregation, to service as an African American faculty member at a university in the southern United States for the past 37 years. I wanted to know more about the kinds of resources that have made it possible for him to bridge those distances. It seemed in listening to him that, perhaps, one of those resources was his spirituality. When I asked him about this area of his life, Jim was rather straight-forward in his response:

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I've been very fortunate to be around some really great communicators and some people that view music as one of the purest forms of communication….I think spirituality, through the church, and through music, and through conversation--basically revolving around the Golden Rule--is to me my fundamental premise. I think it's very important, and it's something that always has to be cultivated and nurtured. (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008)

Toward the end of that same conversation, he said, "I define spirituality as the worth and dignity of every individual human being," (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008) and reiterated:

I think if you want a society where every individual is valued, every person has dignity and worth, and people rise to their fullest potential in terms of their talents, then we want to be driven by our concern and our care for our fellow man [*sic*]—by the Golden Rule again! (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008)

Despite the simplicity of his remarks, it seemed to me that Jim's spirituality was anything but simple. For Jim, the concept of spirituality also seemed to be wrapped up within his familial heritage; in communicating effectively with others; in his concern that justice be done (across various scales—personal, institutional, national, global); in making connections to the human community and to the concerns that shape that community; and, foundationally, in his identity within the African American culture.

It was apparent, in listening to Jim, that a fundamental component in his experience of life, and in his processing of those day-to-day experiences, is his identity as an African American man. That is to say: What he believes, and how he believes, is filtered through a cultural experience etched upon the lingering residues of slavery, within the changes precipitated by the Civil Rights movement of the mid-20th century, and consequent to the ongoing adaptations (personal *and* societal) that are emerging from the turbulence of that history. The impact of these forces on Jim--his perceptions and his ways of interacting with the broader world--was in evidence in remarks interspersed throughout our

conversations. At one point, he observed, "[Y]ou have a history in Memphis of slavery, and that history still affects the way that people--I think--the way that people relate to one another in Memphis—in terms of Memphis being primarily Eurocentric" (JG, personal communication, March 9, 2009). And, at another time in our dialogue, he offered the following comment:

> The dialogue teaching part is very unique to my teaching. But it's unique to my teaching because I'm African American, and I have experienced riding in the back of a bus; I've experienced being ignored because of my race; I've experienced being expected to function stereotypically based on whatever racial stereotypes are out there floating around. (JG, personal communication, December 8, 2008)

The foundational event that gave substance to all of the perceptions and experiences that Jim discussed was the death--the martyrdom--of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It became abundantly clear during our conversations that Dr. King has become more than just a hero to Jim. Rather, it seems that the impact of Dr. King's life (and death) has come to pulsate within Jim as a fundamental part of his own being. This was stated directly by Jim on at least two occasions, but also was apparent in more indirect ways such as in our final interview, when Jim invoked the words and vision of Dr. King: "Let us realize the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice" (1967) as a foundation for how he desires to live his own life: "I think that's a wonderful statement by him, and I function with that in mind" (JG, personal communication, March 9, 2009).

In that same conversation, I asked Jim to review a list of several quotations that I had selected (in my review of literature) as pertaining to this study. I was interested in finding out which of these remarks resonated with the ways in which Jim thinks about his teaching and his spirituality. He selected two from the list I put before him. I thought it

notable that the first of these was one selected from an article pertaining to the impact of culture on spirituality:

> Spirituality is one of the ways people construct knowledge and meaning. It works in consort with the affective, the rational or cognitive, and the unconscious and symbolic domains. To ignore it, particularly in how it relates to teaching for personal and social transformation, is to ignore an important aspect of human experience and avenue of learning and meaning-making. This is why spirituality is important to the work of adult learning. (Tisdell, 2001, Spirituality, Culture, and Emancipatory Education section, ¶ 4)

Though brief, Jim's response was emphatic: "I agree with that; I love that" (JG, personal communication, March 9, 2009).

The second quotation that Jim felt relevant to his thoughts, in respect to the topic of this study, was one taken from Sharon Parks (2000) in which she described her interpretation of the word *faith*—a description that I thought matched well the ways in which some of the participants in this study might describe the term *spirituality*. Obviously, Jim agreed:

> All human beings compose and dwell in some conviction of what is *ultimately* true, real, dependable within the largest frame imaginable. Human beings, either unself-consciously or self-consciously, individually and together, compose a sense of the ultimate character of reality and then stake out lives on that sense of things. (p. 20)

Again, Jim was definitive in his endorsement: "I think that's true; I agree with that" (JG, personal communication, March 9, 2009).

In asking him to engage in this exercise of commenting on pertinent quotations, I extended to Jim a substantial number of offerings. After selecting the two indicated above, however, Jim put the list aside and offered a suggestion for one more source that he would have included as relevant to his thinking about spirituality. He stated that he would have added some material from Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand*

Faces. When I inquired as to the reasons for his recommendation of that source, he

replied:

> I think, for me, Campbell says: We do have a hero, and he has made himself available to us in many different religions. And that, at the face of it, you know, our job as human beings is to creatively … is to become—[To] re-make ourselves in Jesus' image (if it's not in the hero's image); and to treat one another with respect; and to develop ourselves to the fullness of our capabilities. That's all anybody can do, I think. And, you know, to appreciate the wonder and the curiosity and the things that we have available to us. (JG, personal communication, March 9, 2009)

Wanting to better understand the wonder and the curiosity that nourishes Jim's life, I

asked him to identify the early influences in life that have shaped how he thinks about

spirituality. He began by describing himself as a "cradle Episcopalian" (JG, personal

communication, October 20, 2008), the Christian denomination in which he remains

active today. He attributed this religious lineage primarily to his father's selection, but he

also acknowledged the influences of the Baptist church where his mother served as a

musician for a period of time. In discussing his early spiritual influences, Jim also

reminisced about times when his family took advantage of opportunities to hear dynamic

leaders like Martin King and Howard Thurman when they would come to Washington

and speak at Howard University in the inchoative days of the Civil Rights movement—in

effect, participating in the inception of that movement in this country.

It also was in response to my question regarding early spiritual influences that Jim

first spoke about his basketball coach. I was surprised by Jim's comments in this part of

our conversation, not because of his inclusion of his coach as a spiritual influence, but

because of the function his coach played at that time in Jim's life—one of only two times

when Jim said anything mildly critical of his father's influence on his life (the other,

being an expansion of the same concern):

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And, then I also had, as a youngster too, a tremendous basketball coach, who was Ken Freeman. And he always … He was easier to talk to than my father. My father was a very proud person, and also a very powerful person. And I didn't always feel that conversations were reciprocal. And I always search for that in other people: a real reciprocity—not of inferior to superior. Maybe those are some of my own power issues. I think black folks in this country, generally speaking, do have power issues, you know, because they've been so powerless. And that … and they've been so controlled. (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008)

The composite effect of these remarks, again, brought home to me what a powerful influence the dynamics of race have been in shaping Jim's experiences and his responses to the world around him: here mediated by way of forces as grand in scale as the African American church and our national political development, and as intimate as the seeking of a young man wanting to be heard—a young man seeking connection.

I thought about this early need in Jim, when later in that same conversation (in describing his use of the dialogue journals), he asserted, "I'm trying to get a communication; I'm trying to get a deeper form of connectivity" (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008). The conviction with which he spoke caused me to pursue this theme a bit more; I asked if it would be fair to say that his spirituality is rooted in connectivity. When he replied in the affirmative, I pressed further: Was he speaking of interpersonal connection or connection with some kind of spiritual force? Jim replied, "I'd see connection with others as a connection with spiritual forces, because that helps me to become … to realize myself—to self-actualize; you know?" (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008).

In listening to Jim, it became more and more evident how much of his life revolves around music: as a teacher; a performer; a composer; an artist. Responding to a remark in which he described music as "one of the purest forms of communication" (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008), I invited Jim to share a musical piece that he might

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offer as an expression of his spirituality. He declined to play anything at that point in time, but invited me to come and hear him play as part of a larger spiritual experience:

> An expression of spirituality: What is an expression of spirituality? Let's see; I'll tell you what. Let me do this: Let me invite you, at some point, to come to a service at Holy Trinity [his church]; or better even yet, to come to the Memphis Symphony and experience a concert because each one of those concerts is different. And in each one of those concerts you will meet a different spirit: You'll meet the spirit of Bach; or the spirit of Beethoven; or the spirit of Tchaikovsky; or the spirit of Messiaen. (JG, personal communication, December 8, 2008)

I inquired: "How about the spirit of Gholson?" He laughlingly replied, "Oh, I can't … Look, those are the big boys, man. I can't hob-knob with the big boys" (JG, personal communication, December 8, 2008). I found myself willing to accept his retort so long as his deference was in regard to the musical genius of these historical luminaries; I didn't think it a fair, nor accurate, appraisal if in any way he was being disparaging of his own spiritual capacity—Jim Gholson has a large and a caring spirit!

Integrating Teaching and Spirituality

It seemed, in talking with me, Jim was conscious of the important roles that both spirituality and teaching have played in his life, but I wanted to derive a better sense of how these mainstays of his being have come together in his interactions with the world around him. Responding to two of his previous statements (the one in which he acknowledged that he may have issues regarding power and control, and the one in which he indicated his perception that students have been allowed to avoid having to deal with him as an African American male), I asked him to say more about the cumulative effects that he perceives these dynamics have had on his spirituality and his teaching philosophy. He replied:

I try to deal with each person as a unique entity—fairly and with justice. And that's what the dialogue journals are all about….I am going to be myself and be as ethical as possible. I am going to be as fair as possible, and I'm going to be as comprehensive as possible, in my intellectual search for creative meaningful answers to questions that come to me in the course of living my life; okay? And I'm going to enter into a fair and balanced dialogue with whomever I am adjoined to in that particular moment. That's my responsibility to myself; and to my heritage; and to my parents; and, you know, to my lineage: is to be fair to them and to be responsible--psychologically, historically, culturally, and intellectually--to where they brought me in this moment. (JG, personal communication, December 8, 2008)

His lineage, obviously, has been a grounding point for Jim. As noted earlier, some of his sense of accountability to this pedigree has been in regard to his racial heritage, but some of it also has been focused simply on being true to the qualities and values of those who have nurtured and guided him along the way. In our concluding interview, I asked Jim if he thought his family heritage was an important component of his spirituality, to which he responded:

Yeah, well, when you make decisions … When I was making crucial parental decisions with my son--and now (it's not really in loco parentis, but, you know, shepherding of my students)--you feel your ancestors … I feel my teachers and my parents looking over my shoulder a little bit to say, "Okay, now you've got the problem that we had with you in terms of making decisions about your career, and in terms of making decisions about how you relate to other people, and how you become a mature adult. Let's see how you handle it." (JG, personal communication, March 9, 2009)

Much of Jim's ability to handle his role as a professor has evolved as a result of his willingness to modify the ways in which he teaches. I was impressed that, even though he has been teaching for almost 40 years, Jim continues to make adjustments to the ways in which he strives to connect with students. His willingness to adapt his teaching to the needs of his students was apparent in many of his statements; for example:

I say, "Okay, what strategy will work with this student?" and, "What strategy will work, today, with this student?" So if there's low energy … If a student comes to me with low energy ("Oh, I haven't practiced"), then for me to sit over them and

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tell them--and reinforce the fact that they haven't practiced--is counterproductive; you know? And so, that's why I decided to go to a group situation….You know, there are a lot of ways to keep them moving forward without having a complete one-on-one lesson every time. And especially in an urban commuter setting, you know, where I have students that have kids; I have students that are just working … most of my students are working. It's crazy what these guys … It's not traditional; it's not what I had….You know, so I'm coming at this completely different. (JG, personal communication, March 9, 2009)

In recent years, the connection Jim seeks has been fostered via his development of the online tutorial system, his open studio/community action policy, and his willingness to use various types of Internet tools. His willingness to make such adjustments in his style of teaching has been beneficial to his students' development, but invaluable to his own learning, as well. Even after his many years of conducting classes in the studio, Jim remains a student himself—yearning to learn and to grow:

> I am … taken with the process of teaching myself. I learn, first, teaching myself—as a student. And then I want to share that with other students. And I enjoy being transported by the music because I think that it's such a wonderful environment. And I've always loved music. (JG, personal communication, December 8, 2008)

Near the end of our first interview, I asked Jim, "In the words of the old song: 'What's it all about?' And how do you give shape to your commitment to helping your students find meaningful answers to that question?" His response was brief and to the point: "The idea is about communicating with people, and it's also about being able to teach. It's about teaching and playing, for me, and that involves communication" (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008). I pressed my line of questioning further: "Do your students … As a result of their interactions with you, do they understand more of what life is about? What spirituality …" Before I could finish the question, Jim answered, "You know, not directly; I think, indirectly— because it's not a religious course. It's

about--it's more about--their spirituality supporting them in their day-to-day activities"

(JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008).

Still searching, I probed, "How does your particular academic discipline provide a

forum to communicate what you believe and what you value?" to which Jim replied:

> Okay, it provides a huge forum for what I value. In terms of my intellectual
> beliefs, that's not … To me that's more personal and not so much to the point;
> you know? I value music; and I value ideas in music; and I value my students
> being able to share ideas in music with the audiences; and I value my students
> being able to walk into a classroom and feel confident that they are musically
> literate. And so, I value those things because they have shown, historically, to be
> important. (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008)

Very early in my time with Jim, he told me that he had a tremendous interest in

history. This avocation was in evidence numerous times in the examples he would use or

the asides he would interject into our conversation. At one point, reflecting on changes he

has observed at the university where he is employed, he said:

> I think Dr. Raines [the president of the university] has brought the place so far, in
> terms of its development as a major metropolitan university. I think that our next
> step is to make--to produce--a student that has a little more cohesion of character.
> You know, there's certain … There used to be certain institutions, you'd say, "Oh
> well, that person is a graduate of so-and-so institution," and you knew that that
> person had solid grounding in the humanities; you knew that that person had a
> special way of working with people; and you knew that that person was really
> good at his discipline.
>   When you say discipline now to students, they think of … That's usually
> something that occurs outside of themselves, rather than something that they
> develop as a part of being an academician; or being in a university environment
> and developing an inner discipline that is always seeking the truth; okay? And
> even if we bring … If we're a mathematician, or musician, or a visual artist, we
> still have to communicate with others, and so we want to be our brother's keeper,
> so to speak. And that means spirituality. (JG, personal communication, October
> 20, 2008)

Toward the end of our second interview, I told Jim that, as I had listened to him and

some of the other participants in the first round of interviews, I was reminded of an old

formulation that I recalled from one of Henri Nouwen's books (1992) in which he

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discussed spirituality as being composed of four movements: being *taken*, *chosen*,

broken, and *given*. Immediately, upon hearing my listing of the four components, Jim

reacted:

> I wouldn't say that I've been broken; I wouldn't say that I fit that category. My
> spirit just refuses. I think I am taken; I am really transported by music….I would
> say that when I play in the orchestra and the performance is going along and
> everything is just cooking, I'm transported. You know, it's just like my spirit
> becomes concrete. And it's just …You know, I'm captivated by the beauty of it
> all. (JG, personal communication, December 8, 2008)

Noting Jim's immediate connection with the idea of being taken, I wanted him to

expand on these thoughts: If he had a sense of being taken, I wondered how he thought

about who, or what, was doing the taking. With that in mind, I asked him if he feels that

he is *called* to teach. As so often was the case in my discussions with Jim, I was surprised

and intrigued by his response:

> I don't want to say called. I don't want to say … because when you get called--
> when you say you get called to do things--people think that you want to do it for
> free…. It's the same thing with musicians. They think, "You've been called to be
> a musician and you have talent so that means you don't have to practice; you
> don't have to work at it." That's not true. Musicians work very hard at their craft.
> They practice hours. You may practice ten hours to be able to play two bars
> effectively, efficiently. It's very hard work, very demanding. And a lot of that
> hard work goes on behind closed doors that they never see. (JG, personal
> communication, December 8, 2008)

It was clear that, in posing the question about being called, my choice of words had

evoked some strong emotion in Jim. At our next interview, I approached the issue again,

this time phrasing my question a bit differently: "Is teaching a vocation for you? And, if

so, how have you come to know that within yourself?" Jim remained resistant to any kind

of notion that might suggest he is a teacher by virtue of divine assignment. Rather, he

situated his aptitude for this role within the engagement--at times, the transformation--he

experiences in relationship to music, and his desire to share that sense of connection with those who desire the same:

> Voca- … I think, again, I just enjoy people and I like to see people prosper. And so I look at it … I don't think that I'm divinely inspired to teach. You know, I think that I have been very fortunate in: I was lucky with parents--with great parents--and I've been very fortunate with teachers, and I want to share that. Sometimes, I think people who feel called to preach reject the scholarly aspect of the discipline; they do not feel they have to be scholarly, study history, examine the discipline from an international perspective….
>
> You know, I just want to share it with no halos: No halos, and no unnecessary or undue bending of the knees … or proselytizing. You know, I enjoy it and I like when folks are … Because I'm very captured by music and by the clarinet. And folks that want to share that, I want to show them how they can do it. (JG, personal communication, March 9, 2009)

I was drawn to the generosity of Jim's desire to enrich his students' lives and wanted him to say more about this impetus. I asked him to what he gives himself in teaching. This time, there was no great surprise in his reply, but rather, in me, a deeper admiration of how Jim strives to use the medium of music to help his students grow in their artistry but also in their humanity:

> What do I give myself to? The truth and honesty; I'm searching for the truth. I'm looking for the truth….I want my students … I guess you really want your students to love something as much as you do. I want them to love it as much as I do, and so I want to see if they do. I want to see if they bring me something that makes sense emotionally: something that is well-sculpted emotionally; something that is well-prepared technically; something that is a statement that is believable. (JG, personal communication, December 8, 2008)

As I did with each of the participants, I concluded my final interview with Jim, by referring to the last lecture that was delivered by Randy Pausch, of Carnegie Mellon, prior to his death from cancer. I asked Jim, "What would you say if you were asked to give *your* last lecture and how do you incorporate those concepts into what you do each semester … or each day?" Jim's response impressed upon me, yet again, how broadly he

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perceives his role as teacher and how globally he thinks in regard to the substance of his

teaching:

> For me? For me, it's music and from listening to … I listen to all kinds of music
> now. There used to be a time … I went through a period where I listened to
> mainly symphonic music because I was … You know, I was involved with the
> clarinet. And now, I'm listening to all kinds of music and I find that, for me,
> music nourishes the love I have for, particularly, Memphis. Let me step back a
> minute and let me re-approach that.
>
> I would say, the symphony is central to the well being of Memphis. The
> symphony … We need people in place, now, that understand that because this
> town loves music…. And the symphony has to find ways to gain traction in a
> town that loves music. That's crazy but that's the role … That's where the
> symphony finds itself because the symphony here … See, for black folks … I'm
> not sure that symphony folks understand that, for black folks, the symphony was
> elitist and it was not a place where they could go and their humanity was
> approached as if it were divine….
>
> You can't make that music elitist, and deny it to your community, and expect
> good things to happen; okay? Because music is one of the spiritual experiences
> that African-Americans have had that's brought them through the slavery that
> we've had in this country. Music brought them through it….So, especially in
> Memphis, the symphony needs to be hand in hand--marching hand in hand--with
> the commercial music enterprise and ethnic music enterprise in this city.
>
> And so, if I were to give my last lecture, my last lecture would be, "Let's spin
> the kaleidoscope of composer activity in the world and let's continue to show and
> to play music from all parts of the world, have those composers talk about the
> dialogue--the dialectic--that exists between ethnic music and serious music." (JG,
> personal communication, March 9, 2009)

I appreciated Jim sharing his perspectives regarding the symphony so generously, but

I also was interested in how these concerns have translated into his day-to-day activities

with his students at the university. Thus, I asked, "Are you able to build that into your

teaching right now?" and he replied:

> Not so much into my teaching … a little bit. But, you know, my kids … You
> know, the job market that I'm preparing my kids for is not as much of a world
> market. My parents want to know, "Can Johnny get a job after he leaves your
> studio?" See, so my … You know, it gets very significantly narrowed.
>
> It goes the other way, and becomes more open and voluminous, when you talk
> about composition and when you talk about creating music…. So, I'm saying, take
> that love of music and translate it into tickets and translate it into creating an
> environment where kids develop a love for music and a love for the symphony—

and a love for Al Green and Elvis Presley too, because they're all part of that tapestry.

So if I were Randy Pausch, that's what I would talk about: I'd talk about the importance of music in Memphis, and I'd talk about Memphis music, and Memphis--the history of Memphis music--and I'd talk about the role of the symphony in the history of Memphis music. (JG, personal communication, March 9, 2009)

Concluding Remarks

Jim is an avid ambassador for Memphis music--for music in general--and he seems to thrive in the various aspects of that role. Repeatedly in the course of our conversations, he avowed his love for his work. One such testament came early in our discussions when I asked him what kinds of personal qualities he exhibits to which his students respond (or fail to respond). Although he chose to speak to the latter of those reactions, I liked the zeal of his reply:

> Students are intimidated by my energy. I just don't know any other way to put that, but that they're just intimidated by my … They don't bring my kind of energy to the table. You know, I have great energy for what I'm doing; I love what I'm doing! You know, they are intimidated by it. I don't know if it's a searching for … for better ways to do something, but I'm always searching for that. You know, I'm just … That's just me. (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008)

Similarly, in concluding his remarks about Dr. King's martyrdom being liberating for all people, and how this event has become a focal point for his life, he stated:

> And that means that the job that we as artists, and as intellectuals, and as educators, have to do in Memphis is to help people communicate that. That's what dialogue journals are about; that's what spirituality is about … that's what music is about! You know? So I'm really at home! (JG, personal communication, October 20, 2008)

That seemed to be the crux of the issue for Jim—deeply appreciating the powerful impact that music can effect in people and wanting his students to be able to share in those experiences through practiced discipline and disciplined practice. Following my

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observation of one of his classes, I wrote, "I was struck with the question of how he continues to do this after 30 years of teaching. And the answer I keep coming to is his devotion to what he teaches and to whom he teaches." The next time we saw each other, I asked him to share his thoughts regarding my comment. Jim returned to the theme of teaching as effective problem solving, but with a slight twist, perhaps, to the perspective that many people would have in speaking about this topic:

> For me, it's fun. For me, it is fun. And you know, I guess it just basically goes back to seeing people develop and having a great time at it, you know, and solving some problems—problem solving.
> Problem solving: It's play. That's what play is all about. And for me, that's what it is: It's play; it's fun….You know, Leonardo da Vinci was having fun; Picasso was having fun. You know, it was joyful problem solving. (JG, personal communication, March 9, 2009)

I was privileged to experience this playful creativity in various exchanges that were part of Jim's conversations with me. One of the more interesting--and meaningful--of those came in our final meeting when I asked Jim to discuss a number of words that connote assorted concepts and images for him. He replied:

> I like the word soul because it has so many meanings these days; you know? And soul to me … Some people would say soul means spirit; and some people would say that soul has African-American overtones; and some people would say that soul is … you know, would play with the ambiguity of the sound: S-O-L-E; you know? So, I think if there's any …
> I think one person can make a huge difference. And I think the spirit and the resilience of one person can do so much to change the entire--the coloration of an entire--episode that looks negative….A soul can have such a--if there was such a word as a--milli-impact. I mean, you think of a kaleidoscope and all of these colors that impact, and the way that they reverberate and reflect like a stained-glass window, almost, in a brilliant sunshine, you know, where you see the impact of one spirit on one—of a soul's soul, if you will. (JG, personal communication, March 9, 2009)

A soul's soul: That phrase captures well, I think, many of the features of Jim's ideas about how his spirituality informs his teaching—a presence that strives to imbue the

essential natures of those he instructs with qualities that will serve them across time, place, and circumstance; a font that inspires, sustains, guides, uplifts; a wellspring on which his students can draw in lessons he hopes will lead them to become, not only skilled musicians, but caring, responsive members of the human community. The munificence of Jim's spirit seems to offer all of this and more to those who gather in his studio to study *Applied Clarinet*.

CHAPTER 4-F

Findings of Study

Sarah's Story

I totally love this exercise. I looked up this website, and I read all this stuff. And then, they have a Facebook page, where people have made up all new ones, and they have books. Do you know this? Yeah, there are several books of them. Some of them have the back-story and kind of explain what their six words mean. I spent a lot of time looking at that! Yeah, it's a good challenge; it really makes you get to the essence of it….I've been thinking of making my students do this. I'm trying to figure out how I get them to do this: Like, "What do you want out of class?" "What change do you want to make in the world?" I can imagine all kinds of things. (Sarah Lawson (SL), personal communication, April 6, 2009)

The exercise was rather a simple one. I had mentioned a brief piece that a popular

news magazine recently had run about a book in which people were asked to describe

their lives in just six words. In turn, my question to Sarah had been what six words she

would use to capture the ways in which she conceptualizes each of the following: *God* or

Higher Power; *Spirituality*; *Teacher* or *Professor*; and *Soul*:

I think the God one was the hardest one; I have lots of issues in trying to define who / what God is: *God: That which connects us always*. 'Cause I have this really kind of Buddhist / Zen / Eastern kind of feeling of what God is, that I can't put words around very well, I feel. But it's that thing that we all want to be connected in some way, and I think that all that keeps us from it is fear and ignorance—that people don't ever hate it when they have a new friend, it's just the struggle to make that friend. So I think that we all yearn for those connections; it's just you can't figure how to do it.

Spirituality: *Is a worldview that creates wholeness*. I think it's trying to live into God, maybe. Although then that gets to be a problem with defining soul—how that's different than spirituality.

So the soul one was: *A yearning inside to live outside*….I have to think of the living soul that you have. So what is my soul right now? And it's that deep down thing that's wanting to be doing something else….So I struggle whether soul means something about the essence of who you are when you're alive, or that afterlife notion of soul, which doesn't do anything for me; I have no need to think about that….

So my teacher words were: *Inviting others along for the ride*. 'Cause it's stuff I want to think about and learn about, and I just feel like I'm trying to convince

them they want to get on board and do the same thing. (SL, personal communication, April 6, 2009)

I was delighted, but not surprised, by Sarah's enthusiasm for this exercise. The creativity, the light-hearted playfulness, the acuity of thought that she put into composing her responses, all were characteristic of the qualities I had observed in my previous conversations with her.

Dr. Sarah Lawson, a Caucasian woman in her early 40s, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Memphis, a position in which she has served for the past 4-1/2 years. Sarah is a native of Memphis. After receiving a Master's Degree from this university, Sarah left Memphis to earn her Ph.D. in sociology, then worked in Washington, D.C., for 6 years as a research associate for the Urban Institute, before returning home to accept her present teaching position. While at the Urban Institute, her work involved research with respect to public and assisted housing policy, an area of concern in which she remains very involved. Her more recent interests have focused on work related to self-sufficiency outcomes, with a particular focus on the impact of poor health as a barrier to employment. Her teaching assignment generally includes two of three graduate courses addressing research methods and policy concerns—these as applied to both nonprofit and government agencies.

As a child, Sarah's formal religious exposure was drawn mainly from the Southern Baptist and Disciples of Christ traditions, but as an adult, she primarily has been engaged in the United Methodist fellowship and in a servant leadership program. Sarah and I knew each other before I asked her to consider participation in this study. We had met when she first came to the university and had attended some of the same meetings. We had even collaborated on one class project. There had been occasions when we had talked

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previously about issues similar to those of this study—not in great detail, but enough for me to know that she thinks about these types of concerns and would bring some unique perspectives to the mix of participants I was considering for the study. Indeed, she has.

Teaching

Wanting to know about the ways in which Sarah thinks about teaching, I began by asking her to tell me about some of the early influences in her life that may have contributed to her ideas about teaching. She stated that, as a child, her school performance was inconsistent, and that she frequently got into trouble for talking and being inattentive. In some years, this created a very negative experience of school for her, but in other years, she encountered teachers who figured out ways to constructively guide her curiosity—teachers with whom she connected strongly. The patterns of irregular academic performance, and varying levels of connection with her teachers, continued through high school and into her college years:

> I remember teachers who … Sometimes I'd be making As; sometimes I'd be making Cs or Ds, in different situations, but that they would see that I'm just curious about things and wanted to learn and would find other things for me to do that would teach me something about the class. Or the professors that told me I needed to go to graduate school and told me where I should go, and, you know, that they can identify the things in me that were my strengths—despite my weaknesses being the thing that I think a lot of other teachers saw. (SL, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

This experience had a marked effect in fostering her own education, but also in shaping Sarah's views about what it means to be a teacher:

> So understanding that there's that power and responsibility that teachers have, I think, helps me be conscious of that in lots of situations. I don't know that it's necessarily some special gift I have of how I can do it, but having experienced that range of types of teachers, I can really see the effect that the different teachers and different situations can have on a student 'cause there were times where I … I never wanted to go to school; I didn't want to read; I didn't want to do my homework—and I didn't (and I made Ds and Fs). And then there were times I

made straight As because I loved doing something and I was attached to the topic or the teacher. And I think being analytic and smart enough that I can think of ways of being creative of how to teach people … I don't know that it mattered what I would teach. So I think that's … that the idea of teaching something is kind of separate from the what I teach, necessarily. (SL, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

In spite of that last statement, it was evident that Sarah is delighted with her present teaching assignment:

I thought I wanted to move back to Memphis to be near my family, but I struggled that I wanted to have a job that meant something to me like my one in D.C. initially had (I was kind of worn out on it, but it originally did). And I couldn't imagine what I'd do if it wasn't go into a university. So I hadn't really looked very hard 'cause I didn't know … I can't picture what any other kind of job would be that I would want—or be qualified for.

So I just asked [some colleagues here] to be on the lookout for me, and they had let me know before … I applied for a sociology job when it was open and got rejected. All my degrees are in sociology, but I really don't belong there. I totally agree with them, but I really tried to sell myself on it. It didn't work; they saw right through that….[T]his one just seemed to be a good fit of needing someone who had the evaluation expertise to teach that, which I've never … I've never taken a class on [political science] so it was really exciting for me to think about teaching it. I mean, I was actually kind of interested in learning more about it. So it was, like, "Guess if I teach it, I'll learn more about it." (SL, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

I asked Sarah if she was drawn to teaching at a public university—to the types of students who attend this institution. She replied:

Yeah, my … My first reason for liking that was not about the students as much as the relationship of this public university with the city, and the idea of this engaged scholarship community connections that I would hear [the people who recruited me] preach about. So that part I really liked, again, so that I wouldn't be part of disconnected research hopefully.

And then, I mean, it was after, I guess, I came for my interview and really talked with the faculty about, "What are your students like, and what do they do, and where do they come from?" and, you know, "What level are they for this stuff?" that I really started to get excited about, "I mean, this is great; I teach these people who already work in the community--or want to--and we have the ability to help bring something to them that might make them better leaders, and that would make our community better." (SL, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

Still wanting to know more about how she conceptualizes her role as teacher, I asked

Sarah if there are particular people after whom she models her teaching. She stated there

was no particular model, but went on to explain some of the actions in which she engages

to be more fully informed in her role as professor:

> I do a lot of talking to other people who teach--whether it's here or friends who
> teach other places--or people who teach similar things to me who I don't know
> (who I'll reach out to) and … You know, I've called several people when I have a
> new prep to teach here. I'll find, you know, just googling them online and find out
> who teaches classes like this, and call them and say, "Hey, what books do you
> use? What kind of assignments do you do, and how does that work for you? What
> are your students like?" I think I do a lot of research that I wouldn't think of when
> I think of, "Do I model myself after something?"
>
> But I do try to get a lot of input into how I structure a class the way I do, and
> how I teach it. And I really … I mix it up a lot. I mean, like there's sometimes
> where I'll lecture a whole class and there are other times where I feel like student-
> led is the only way to go. And sometimes it's just the pace of who the class is and
> how the semester's going. It's not necessarily that topic always needs to be taught
> in that manner. So I'm not wed to any particular pedagogical style—which I don't
> know if that's a good or bad thing. It's probably both in some way. (SL, personal
> communication, October 17, 2008)

In response to her comment about mixing up her styles of teaching, I asked Sarah to

tell me more about the criteria she uses in making these choices and, ultimately, to where

she is trying to move her students in the course of their work together:

> Where am I trying to get them? A lot of it … is trying to get them where they're
> comfortable articulating their vision and their understanding of issues, which I
> think is a very vulnerable place for a lot of people who have never done that
> before. It's risky to say, "This is what I think you should do," especially about
> topics that other people are likely to disagree on.
>
> So I think about what we need to do in the next class to get people toward that
> end goal at the end of the semester or the program. It's a combination of their
> individual personalities and ability to do that: whether they're introverts or
> extroverts; whether they come to the class with a lot of substantive knowledge
> about something or not; and if they know how to talk about the issues in a way
> that is conducive to conversation and debate or decision-making.…And so I think,
> sometimes, in mixing it up I think about reaching particular individual or students,
> and other times it's trying to craft something that's going to help them, as a group,
> move forward 'cause I think a lot about how their jobs are generally not going to

be about acting in isolation, but learning to act as a group and have some consideration of each other. (SL, personal communication, December 18, 2008)

Pursuing these concerns a bit more, I asked Sarah to talk about a critical incident that has influenced the ways in which she thinks about her role as teacher. She answered:

I think the times that I bring up (I don't know what the right all-encompassing word is) a political or social issue into class--the things that, generally, people are scared to talk about--and get students to address actual, real issues going on in the world, using their critical, analytic skills that we're trying to teach them. And when that really happens, and they're able to see how these tools that we give them, and ways of talking about and making decisions with these issues that people are usually scared to touch will result in something that's better for the whole of us….

[Y]ou know, initially students start out those conversations with gut reaction on all sides of it—strong opinions about it. But when I've been slow enough, and intentional enough, to have that longer conversation, I think they really get something out of it and understand things a little bit better, which, as I've said before, makes them better people--not just better leaders--in ways that they are gonna be … but I think it's what all of us need to do more of….

I mean, we talk about all the [political] conventions--and the debates--and the issues that they brought up; the ones they haven't brought up. And that these are important to talk about: It's not stuff that we should put off the table in our personal lives, or our work lives. We need to confront … These are big issues (about money, politics, religion, abortion, you know) that we should talk about, 'cause we need to solve them….I used to feel like it was, perhaps, inappropriate that I was doing it. And now I feel that it's completely essential. (SL, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

I told Sarah that a shift from inappropriate to completely essential seemed pretty remarkable and asked her to tell me more about the experiences that have contributed to her changing her thinking so dramatically in regard to this aspect of her role:

The doing it a few times, and hearing the students' responses about how they really learned something from it, or they think about something completely differently. Or having them contact me that, you know, this came up at work and they were able to really deal with it well because of what they learned in class, or … So seeing, over time, it worked its way into the world….

I say probably every other class meeting of all my classes, "I don't want to teach you this stuff because it's in a book, and I don't want to put it on the exam because I want to test your memory. I want you to learn things that are gonna help you on the outside, you know: That it's a waste of my time to teach you something for the sake of teaching." So I kind of force them to become more invested in

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having that conversation and being part of it. (SL, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

Near the end of our conversations, Sarah and I were engaged in a discussion of complexity of thought and true learning. In regard to her efforts to help develop the complexity of her student's thinking, she stated:

> Often … I'm starting to find (in year four of doing this) that one of the easiest ways to do that is take the most rhetoric-laden policy issue happening out there … And so we talked about universal health care in class. And about three people are like, "Well, I don't want socialized medicine; I don't want the government to tell me who my doctor is." So I made them look at the White House Policy Statement on what health care reform they wanted, and said, "Okay, this seems to be the most liberal, leftist proposal out there: Let's look at what it really is, and let's talk about it. When you say all those words, what do you mean by them? Do you know the substance of how this policy is really intended to work out?"
> So when you break it down and you look at what it is, you can get rid of all that rhetoric. You can say you don't want to pay for whatever for poor people, but you can't call it something it's not. And so, when you take things that they hear about non-stop on news that they watch, and Internet sites they look at, and kind of tear that apart--and they all have heard of it, so it's like community discussion, you know--I think I'm going to start with stuff like that … of how we take that apart 'cause I think that, instantly, gets them to think a little bit more critically of policy issues, and gets them to be more aware of the world they live in. (SL, personal communication, April 6, 2009)

I asked Sarah from where she draws support for engaging with students in the manner that she does. She indicated that most of her support comes from informal arrangements with people that may have similar interests in various academic disciplines, as well as friends from other places she has lived. She added:

> And then, my friends who work in public and non-profit jobs around the city who I just, you know, keep … A lot of times when they talk to me about their jobs, I'll ask them questions like, "What kind of things should students know coming into a job at your place? Like if they were to come and want a job, what would you want them to know about—substantive issues (about homelessness, or education, or whatever it is they deal with), or is it some kind of skills? Is it mapping?" You know, just kind of opening up broadly so it gives me some feedback of what I think I need to incorporate into my classes. (SL, personal communication, December 18, 2008)

I was impressed with Sarah's commitment to serving the needs of her students. I felt she displayed this dedication in a number of ways, but one that impressed me early in our exchange was when I noticed that she includes a statement indicating her commitment to be a good teacher in the syllabus for each of her classes. In each of her syllabi, Sarah includes this pledge:

> I will come to class prepared to teach the materials assigned. I encourage class discussion, both as a way to make class more interesting and as an opportunity for students to ask questions or share ideas. I will make a concerted effort to return written assignments at the next class meeting, with appropriate feedback. I can meet with students by appointment as necessary throughout the semester or by phone or e-mail. My goal is to help you learn the material outlined in this syllabus. (SL, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

Wanting to know more about her thinking with respect to this sense of accountability, I asked her to tell me about the commitment she feels toward her students.

> I think I need to make sure I'm teaching them something that they need to know. I think that often it's easy to get caught up in what are the concepts that apply to this class that I need to teach students, but if they're not going to be using those concepts in the types of jobs that they're likely to get, then I'm not as wedded to the discipline as I am to what's relevant from the discipline for them. So that's one of the things that I focus on. What my commitment to them is, is understanding that—which is another reason I really need to know who they are, and what they do in their jobs, so that I can continue to refine what I'm teaching in a way that's relevant for the types of jobs that our students get. A few of them work in the federal government--a few will, and a few will go on to Ph.Ds.--but the majority of them don't; they work for county government and small nonprofits. So what kind of ideas and concepts do they learn that are relevant to them? (SL, personal communication, April 6, 2009)

While doing this study, I had the opportunity to visit three of Sarah's classes for purposes of observation. This was a rich opportunity for me to observe the application of what she and I were discussing in our conversations. In one of these classes, the students were discussing the semester projects in which they were engaged, leading me (in a following conversation) to ask Sarah if she was pleased with the results of these projects.

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The one she singled out to discuss, I thought, demonstrated well the type of learning she

strives to inspire by engaging with her students in the manner that she does:

> In [one] class, there was one student who was really judgmental about the program at the beginning of the semester, who thought it was a useless program this organization ran, and had very condescending things to say about the staff he had talked to on the phone, I think, as well as the materials they had sent. And at his final presentation--and in his final paper--was so concerned that he needed to do the best thing for them because they could really make this program better with just a little bit of tweaking. And he had really bought into their whole philosophy, and he had thought about it and he had changed his mind because he had spent time really trying to see it from their perspective….
> So I feel good about those kinds of experiences: that I've crafted an experience in steps that allows them to learn some information, to interact, to reflect on it, and then to try to prepare some final project. And what they get out of it: That they understand by the end what they've learned from it, I think, is really important. So there are several in that class that were pretty good projects, in that way, and that really understand at least the constraints of a person trying to run a program on a limited budget and limited time in a day that they didn't have at the beginning of the semester. So that part is good. (SL, personal communication, December 18, 2008)

Another class I attended was the first session of a new semester. I asked Sarah to talk

with me about her large and her small agendas in her structuring of this class. Her

response:

> I think in that kind of situation (I think this will answer the question) that there's a real pressure for me to keep things on track because the conversational style lends itself to an understanding, for some students, that they can just talk about whatever they want to. And that I have to be the one in control, and that they can't just go on and on about something that they want to talk about. And there are a couple of students in that class, that's it's really hard to keep the class on track, which I think is the challenge (and how I get so exhausted from class), because I want it to be open to some discussion, but management of those people is really difficult, and trying to manage them in a way that doesn't make them feel shut-down is hard.
> So trying to get them to participate in a way that shows that their life experience--and their understanding they come to the class with--is part of what we're talking about. I think that night we were talking about why should the government be involved in policy, and writing down all different kinds of things. I want them to recognize they already know stuff that we're going to talk about in the class, so it's not all new … It's issues they think about all the time; it's thinking about it in a different way.

So I think every class I want to draw on their experience. I think that's, kind of, some kind of foundational something: That trying to get them to bring what they already have to the classroom and recognize that we have--we all have--something to bring, but now we have to figure out how to talk about it in terms of public policy (or whatever the class is) in an intellectual way—an academic way. (SL, personal communication, April 6, 2009)

Spirituality

Meaningful connection with her students seemed to be a core concern for Sarah. I wondered in what ways her spirituality contributes to her thinking about these connections. To explore her thinking in regard to this area of concern, I began by asking about the early influences in her life that may have shaped how she thinks about spirituality. She replied:

My dad and my grandfather, and to some extent my mom, were clear models of how I understood what I thought of as spirituality in the world—which was kind of (tangentially) church-related, but was more broadly about just taking care of whoever's in front of you at the moment, and whoever is your family and your neighbors. I understood, early on, you are supposed to share your stuff--your food, your money, your time, your compassion--with people (however you could), but, again, it wasn't much God-related or church-related. (SL, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

We had a brief moment of confusion due to me not understanding which grandfather she was speaking of, after which Sarah provided more detail about the family in which she was raised:

My parents got divorced when I was five and I lived with my mom. And I saw my dad once a month, pretty much, my entire life (I see him more now than I did then), and liked him; I just didn't see him much. But we spent every weekend … My mom and I would go to my grandfather's for all of Sunday. So instead of going to Sunday church we would always go out to Casey, Mississippi and spend the day at my grandfather's. And he had a farm, and they just grew vegetables for the whole family and all his neighbors and, so we would spend the day doing activities with him where he lived and having a big brunch and biscuits and gravy and stuff. But that was kind of a touch point for me, like a day--a whole day--during the week where I went and had that. [My grandfather] was very involved in, like, "What are you doing in school? And how are your friends?" And my

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friends would often come with me, and … So that was kind of our quiet, pensive place in the week like the church is for some people….

My father's Southern Baptist. I don't even know what kind of church my grandfather went to back when he went to church. He met my grandmother at Central Christian Church, which is … Disciples of Christ? Which is where my mom went when … And we went there for a short time after my parents got divorced. But yeah, so my dad is Southern Baptist. I went to church with him when I was with him on the weekend; it scared the pants off of me every time I went. It made me so sad, and not just for me. I don't know how I've ever done this, but I don't take all that stuff personally. Like I never felt like the minister was telling me that I was a sinner and going to hell. I felt like, collectively, that's where we were … That was what was happening to all of us, and it was like a sinking ship that we could do nothing about. Yeah, I … Ooh I hated it! (SL, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

At another point in our conversation, when I was attempting to understand some of the experiences that have shaped Sarah's spiritual journey, I asked her to tell me how her belief system has changed over time. She began by reiterating her rejection of the punitive images of God that were part of her experience when she attended her father's church as a child. She also noted that most of her friends in middle and high school were Jewish, so she knew that some people had other ways of understanding God. She continued:

So none of that ever made sense for me. And I think that maybe that's why I became a sociologist: I was trying to understand how people construct meaning and talk about meaning in life, and experience the world differently because of where they are … helped me kind of broaden how I understood the world. And I think it was some sociology professors I knew, that would talk about religion in a way that was far different … that those were the first, probably, liberal Christians I knew in my life that were activists--not for Jesus, but for the poor people--like they weren't doing it for their church. So seeing that and understanding it. And probably in D.C. was the first time I really knew people well enough to know how they integrated their spirituality into their work and in their daily life in a way that seemed whole to me. (SL, personal communication, December 18, 2008)

This concern about integrating her spirituality into her work came up a few times in the course of our conversations. It seemed to me that Sarah was right in identifying her teaching as an essential element of her spirituality. As well, some of her other remarks

portrayed elements that seemed to be additional features of her spirituality. Through my questions, I attempted to enumerate some of these.

At one point, Sarah was telling me that she recently had attended a Muslim Iftar dinner during Ramadan, an experience she found enlightening and uplifting. She stated, "I just feel like those opportunities of spirituality are far more profound because they are people trying to reach out. That it's not becoming individualistic and closed" (SL, personal communication, October 17, 2008). In response I asked her if reaching out is a fundamental element of her spirituality:

> Absolutely. Yeah, that sharing and community outward peace. I really hate being involved in anything with a church--my own church or other places or religions-- that try to define themselves more clearly so that it sets them apart, rather than places that continue to try to make connections elsewhere. So for me that's essential. Any place that looks to be going inward, to me, is going to a bad place. And I realize there has to be some degree of that, I think, to make a community, but that's not the part I ever want to be involved in. (SL, personal communication, December 18, 2008)

Similarly, in response to her saying that she learned early in life to share her stuff (food, money, time, compassion), I asked if it would be fair to say that sharing is a foundational element of her spirituality:

> I think so. I mean that's the core of it to me….I think that, for me, it is foundational, figuring out how you share that—especially because I think I have some gifts or talents that enable me to do this bringing people together in a way that I think is easier than other people can do it. (SL, personal communication, December 18, 2008)

A short time later, I asked Sarah if taking care of each other also is a fundamental aspect of her spirituality. Again, she agreed:

> Definitely. I think that those two things together: Thinking about, "We're supposed to be taking care of each other," and "What is the part I can share that moves us toward that," in trying to get each person to recognize, kind of, where their piece of that is. And that our roles are very different in it, and that's there's a lot of personal responsibility in you figuring out what you're supposed to be

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doing in the world—in your job, in your relationships (whatever it is). It puts a lot of it on them--on me--as I think about it. I think that's one of the things students hate about my classes, is that I put … I mean, it's on you: "What topic do you want to do? What do you care about? How are you going to solve it?" Not, "Here's what you need to do, and here's how you should write the paper" And it freaks them out. (SL, personal communication, December 18, 2008)

When she moved to Washington, D.C., to take the job with the Urban Institute, Sarah

joined a United Methodist Church, at which she became friends with many people who

were part of a program that became an important addition to Sarah's spirituality:

A lot of people I befriended in D.C., at this church I went to, were also part of the original school of servant leadership there … you know, people who are intensely focused on inward spiritual development, but, just as equally, intensely focused on the outer—what that means for what you're doing in the world. And most of them have jobs that kind of allow them to marry those two….
    And they were people whose spirituality was such a core of who they are … And they really struggled to want to be relevant to younger people who were searching in some way—and not in an evangelistic way, but in a completely open and helping other people be nurtured however they needed to be nurtured [way]. That they were genuinely curious and open to, "What do you see in your life and in your friend's lives and in your job? How do you all deal with this?" And, you know, "Where do you see things going and how do you operate in the world?" And them kind of bringing all those questions to me. And then having conversations with them about how, throughout their life, they had lived with those questions and issues and what they saw. It was a really rich experience of all those relationships—to be able to explore all that kind of stuff. (SL, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

Observing that the servant leadership program, clearly, resonates with the ways in

which Sarah thinks about spirituality, I asked her to explain more about why this program

is so meaningful to her:

That kind of group? It's people that clearly realize the role of community in life and spiritual development; that realize the utility of things like spiritual disciplines and accountability to each other; and thinking about how you continue to push yourself to do more of what you think needs to happen in the world. So it's a very proactive group that doesn't sit in judgment of what's not being done or how other people don't do it. But it's really, in some ways, very individually focused on, "What is your role and what can you contribute?"
    So it's people who have thought a lot about how best to do that together in a community while, at the same time, recognizing that you don't need to just be

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with each other to do it—you need to be other places, and connect to other people to bring that into the world. And not in a paternalistic way, but just to be part of a world—to understand it better, as well as to offer whatever you can where you are. But I found that it's very non-judgmental on people that aren't part of that group, which gets back to my un-satisfaction--dissatisfaction--with a lot of religious groups that really try to define themselves in opposition to another. And this group really tries to define itself so that it can be more with the others. I think that most of those folks would agree.

And it's a lot about empowering individuals to think on their own about how you need to do this: Not, "Here, we've figured out the answers if y'all come join us we can be stronger;" it's "If you come with us, you're going to have to think really hard, and you're going to have to help us figure out what we should be doing … as well as yourself," which I really like. (SL, personal communication, December 18, 2008)

In response to her comment about people in the servant leadership program pushing themselves to do what needs to happen in the world, I asked Sarah for her thoughts about what needs to happen in the world:

I think that we need to be more connected, and that can mean lots of things. It's easy to see how we clearly need to be more connected in personal relationships, with people that we encounter on a daily basis that don't have any relationship, as well as people that we don't even know in our communities … that we need to form some of those relationships. And it feels kind of utopian and idyllic to talk about that, but I think moving toward that is the goal for all of us. I don't have any illusions that I'll ever do that perfectly before I die (no matter how long I live), but that when you're moving in that direction, the world is a better place. It's closer to that wholeness that we need to strive for. And I think that getting my students to try and think of that is one of the ways that I work toward that … for them to recognize that in their life….

I constantly, obsessively, neurotically, am looking for places where I can be that I feel pushed, 'cause I know if I'm not being pushed in some way spiritually in my life that I feel bored, and bad, and like I'm not really working in the world for anybody, but feeling sorry for myself. So, part of it is church and who I hear preach; and part of it is friends and who I'm surrounded by; and part of it is volunteer work I do, and how I know that pushes me in different ways. (SL, personal communication, April 6, 2009)

I was impressed with the many ways in which Sarah consciously strives to nurture and sustain her spiritual life. Seeking to better understand her quest, I asked her to tell me about a critical incident that has shaped the kind of spiritual person she wants to be:

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I think if I chose one incident I would pick the silent retreat I went on for a weekend….[I]t was the first time that I had realized how much silence does for me ('cause I've probably never been quiet for more than, you know, 10 minutes intentionally in my life before that), and how freeing it was. Like how engaged I am normally….And that spiritual retreat just made me realize when I can disconnect from that, there's a whole other world of thoughts that go on that are way more important than all that other stuff that was going on. And that coming back--having that experience of being quiet for 2 days--of how much more I had to give, and how much more patient I was in the world upon re-entry.

And so it made me find places in my life where--even if it's just, you know, an hour or two on a weekend--knowing that I just need to sit down and read a book, even if it's not meditation; I need to do something that's not involved with another person, or a TV, or a radio, or trying to learn something, but it's just about relaxing to do it. And since then, when I've especially done retreats or just evening things--for church especially, when there's that forced 10 minutes of silence for something--it's like the whole world opens up in my head of how I can get the big picture of what is important in my life and what I need to be focused on in a way that I just don't otherwise. (SL, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

Given all of the conversation that Sarah and I had had regarding engagement with the world, I was surprised by her designation of a silent retreat as critical to her spirituality. When I told her this, she explained:

I know that I need that silent time and reflective time and time that I'm forced to not be making grocery lists and doing other things … Which is why I make myself knit; and I make myself cook and bake a lot … because that's time where my brain is checked out of the other academic kind of intellectual side of things. But I don't do it enough strategically, or as much as I think I could that would be a lot more beneficial for me….

I think I've kind of built little ways into my life to make sure I do that a little bit. And the ability, seriously, to work at home a couple of days a week is really important, where I'm not interrupted; I don't have to talk to anybody; I don't answer the phone; I'll e-mail, but only check it a couple of times a day. So I think I'm really proactive about crafting my life in ways that support that need for silence and reflection … in ways we don't often identify as that. I've just done it because I know it makes me happy--happier--if I do it. (SL, personal communication, December 18, 2008)

It was clear to me that Sarah's sense of spirituality is a compelling force in her approach to life. Wanting to explore that further, I asked her to share her thoughts in response to a schema I had found in the writing of Henri Nouwen (1992)—one in which

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he described the spiritual life as composed of four movements: being *taken*, *blessed*, *broken*, and *given*. As part of her involvement in the servant leadership program, Sarah already had read many of Nouwen's writings and confessed to loving his work. Consequently, she and I spent quite a bit of time discussing the various aspects of this framework.

The two pieces of this part of our conversation that I felt were most notable were Sarah's remarks in regard to being *broken* and *given*. Commenting on the *broken* component of the framework, Sarah said, "And then I get the broken part. Like I am so not right" (SL, personal communication, December 18, 2008). Sarah laughed as she made this statement, and quickly went on to add:

> As I don't think anybody else is. And so it's just recognizing the parts of that that I can deal with and do something about. And so, for my teaching I really try to bring that … that broken part has deep spiritual kind of connotations too. But just that understanding where you aren't … you don't feel right with the world; you're not acting right in the world … You know, it can be internal or external … But what can you learn from that and grow, going forward? So it doesn't have to be like a death sentence; it's actually a growing place….
>
> I think bad relationships are where you learn the most about what a good relationship might mean—if you can have the foresight to look at that both ways. Bad jobs are where you learn how you want to be a boss in a good way. And so understanding that brokenness in lots of different ways is something I think I focus a lot on in classes—both kind of individually and as a leader with people. (SL, personal communication, December 18, 2008)

The final component of Nouwen's schema was *given*. Thus, I asked Sarah to what she gives herself in teaching. Sarah said that she has never really fully understood this component, and asked me to clarify what I was asking. In response, I gave some examples of various ways one might give oneself in teaching: "Some people: the energy is 'I want to fix the world;' some might be, 'I want to help these students;' some, 'I want

to serve the discipline of sociology;' some, 'I want to make a difference:'" At that last example, Sarah jumped in:

> So, there's a lot of that "Make a difference; make the world a better place." I don't have any understanding that I'll make it all better. But I'd like to make it more in that direction, than not. It's an incredible opportunity to be able to influence all these students who will go on to work in our community, which is one of the things we talked about the last time that I love about this program: Is that these students are mostly local; they're mostly going to stay here; and they're mostly going to continue working … which makes me want to try harder to teach them well because I want them to make my city a better place.
>   So it's all kind of connected and self-serving again: that if they can figure out programs to help kids do better in after school and tutor them, and whatever--if they can develop that--then we'll be better off. So, because my spiritual, personal life is so completely interconnected with my discipline, that all fits together really well for me. (SL, personal communication, December 18, 2008)

I told Sarah that one of the reasons I was drawn to this concept of giving ourselves was that, in studying William Perry's scheme of cognitive development (1970/1999), I was intrigued by the fact that he identifies the highest level of intellectual development as *commitment*. I wondered if there may be a connection between these lines of thought. Sarah replied:

> You can't not be committed if you have all these other things going. But I feel like we often say we commit to something in order to make it happen. Like I'm going to commit to this new diet routine because you think if you commit, then that makes it happen. To me, it's like Christianity and saying, "If you believe it then you are saved:" It's not if you believe it, it's if you live it. The belief part is this thing that we say to make us feel like we've got it going on, and if we just say those words then we can be good. But I think it's the living into however you want to live that's the key. So the commitment just is … (SL, personal communication, April 6, 2009).

Giving herself a moment to think a bit more about that statement, Sarah giggled and added, "Or not" (SL, personal communication, April 6, 2009).

The next time we met, Sarah and I talked more about Nouwen's framework, and she expanded on her thoughts about giving herself in teaching by stating:

> I'm not sure where this fits in, here, but … One of the things that I feel really strongly about pushing students in so many ways--personally and intellectually--is that a lot of students who go here don't have other choices of where to go to school. I went to school all over the country--wherever I decided was the best place for me to learn something--which is a real opportunity. And if you have to go to one place 'cause that's the only place in town that's teaching what you need to know, I feel that they need to get a lot out of it.
>
> I mean, I think that's the main thing, maybe, that causes me to think that I should really give a lot to them personally and intellectually is that: These folks can't go to Princeton, they can't go to the Wilson School of Public Policy, if they're not going here. They might be smart enough to, but they don't have the money; and they're not well-connected; they have families … whatever it is. So part of that given thing is recognizing, these are the people in front of me. And I have opportunities to be other places, but I choose to be here 'cause I want my community to have some good leadership. So I better do a pretty damn good job in the classroom, or else I can't expect much from them out there if they didn't get good training. (SL, personal communication, April 6, 2009)

Toward the end of our first interview, I asked Sarah to explain how her teaching and her spirituality have come together in her—in how she thinks about things, in her affective experiences, in how she acts. She replied:

> How they've come together? I think this is the part where I say, "I think they're so much the same thing I can't take them apart," because I don't imagine them as separate. I mean, I imagine that talking about the political stuff in class is because we have to figure it all out together, and that's the rule. And that's how we're supposed to live life. But being … creating some safe space where we can all do that is my job—and that's where the responsibility part of teaching comes in, so everybody can do that equally in some way.
>
> I really struggle, sometimes, in those conversations in class where, if it's going well and there's a lot of interaction (every now and then, I'm re-guiding a little something), to have a little conscious moment with myself to say, "Oh, and I'm the teacher here so, not only am I just the focus group facilitator, but I need to figure out what the lesson is we learn from it and, you know, go write on the board, summarizing what the three points of something are, or figure out how to draw something bigger from it." So that they're aware of what's happened, because I want them to be able to go do the same thing for somebody else in some other situation.

I don't want them to just come out of the class with new substantive knowledge, but I want them to have the skills of being able to think through these things and help teach other people how to do it too. I think sometimes I try to do too much in class. I don't think I succeed at all of those things, but those are the kind of … all the different parts that are going through my head while we're doing those things. (SL, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

So much of what Sarah said in regard to her teaching was based on the ways in which she interacts with her students. I noticed that when she was talking about her own spirituality, she talked about a need to be pushed, and, similarly, in regard to her duty to her students, she talked about feeling a responsibility to push them:

I'm hyper-analytical which oftentimes comes across as critical, I know, to my students—just challenging them on every strong statement they make. That they're pretty sure they know how to make the world a better place, and I'm pretty sure they don't. I'm pretty sure I don't have the answer, but making them stop and think that they don't have that answer, I think, is a pushing kind of place for them. And all of the small group stuff in class: To make them talk about that with each other so that they don't just think it's me who's not thinking they have the answer, but that they're understanding there are a number of world views that they could have, I think, helps with their pushing.

I walk a fine line: I often feel like, "Oh, I need to back off in class," 'cause I can feel that I'm pushing them too much in one night, and I know that can come across as mean and spiteful, and especially if it's clear that my politics are different than theirs … 'cause it's not about that. I don't need them to think what I do; I just need them to be able to be challenged and communicate their ideas. (SL, personal communication, April 6, 2009)

It was clear that Sarah takes the responsibility to be a goad for her students very seriously. At another point in our conversation, she expressed anxiety about this responsibility. This remark came in the context of an exercise in which I asked Sarah to review a collection of excerpts from literature pertaining to the kinds of issues we were discussing and, then, to comment on three or four of the pieces that resonated with her in some manner. The first quotation Sarah selected was a one-sentence comment written by Parker Palmer (another author who Sarah holds in high regard): "[E]very mode of education, no matter what its name, is a mode of soul-making … all forms of teaching

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and learning are forms of spiritual formation, or deformation" (1993b, ¶ 5), to which

Sarah replied:

> Which is always my … the stress in the classroom: that I'm doing some
> deformation of souls if I do it wrong. I've talked about this several places (I think
> in servant leadership classes): That I always fear that all the critical pushing is
> harming people in some way; that if it makes them feel small, or stupid, or
> different; that I think that's at the top of my radar screen of things I should be
> concerned about in my teaching because of all the soul-growing and formation I
> want to do. But you've got to push pretty hard, I think, to make that happen
> sometimes. But I'm scared of this deformation part. (SL, personal communication,
> April 6, 2009)

In reviewing the literature excerpts that I shared with her, Sarah also selected for

discussion a comment by Sharon Parks (1986): "Higher education--self-consciously or

unself-consciously--serves the young adult as his or her primary community of

imagination, within which every professor is potentially a spiritual guide and every

syllabus a confession of faith" (pp. 133-134), to which Sarah's initial response was:

> I kind of think that goes along with the formation / deformation part of it, just the
> … What you symbolize to students is far more than the person who conveys that
> lecture, and so remembering that…. But students are looking to you for different
> things. (SL, personal communication, April 6, 2009)

I appreciated Sarah's awareness of the symbolic aspects associated with being a

professor. As well, I told her that I had included that particular excerpt, primarily,

because of its emphasis on the importance of the course syllabus, at which point she

added:

> I think that that confession of faith piece: When I read it, I thought of …That's
> why I feel compelled to put the part about my responsibilities to them—to show
> them that it's not just about their participation in the process, but me … that I
> realize that I have responsibilities to be actively involved. So, to me, that kind of
> sends a message about what their expectations of you should be, and that they
> should remember that—that they need to hold me accountable. I can't just come in
> there and talk about whatever I heard on the news last week; it needs to be
> something relevant for this class. (SL, personal communication, April 6, 2009)

Sarah also chose to comment on an excerpt taken from an article by Derise Tolliver and Elizabeth Tisdell (2002) concerning spirituality and teaching for transformation. I felt her selection of this piece provided a closer look into how Sarah perceives spirituality and its impact on her interactions:

> First, 'spirituality is an aware honoring of the life-force that's everywhere' (Riddle, as cited in Tisdell, 2000). Second given that this Life-force is everywhere, spirituality is always present (though usually unacknowledged) in the learning environment. Third, spirituality is about how people make meaning, and about experiences that get at the wholeness and interconnectedness of all of Life. Fourth, spirituality is about how people construct knowledge through largely unconscious and symbolic processes, often cultural, manifested in such things as image, symbol, and music. Fifth, spirituality invites people into their own authenticity. Sixth, spirituality and religion are NOT the same, although for many people they are inter-related. And finally, spiritual experiences generally happen by surprise. (p. 391)

In reply, Sarah stated:

> Yeah, I do just think the spirituality piece is in everything you experience. And so, the classroom is part of that—for them and for me. That's why I feel compelled to talk about the things I do in class; and bring social justice kind of issues into the classroom; and how my interaction with them is a formation or deformation—because of that. (SL, personal communication, April 6, 2009)

I asked Sarah in what ways her academic discipline provides a forum to communicate what she values. Sarah laughed and said:

> 'Cause that's all I talk about. Yeah, I mean, I think as leaders of public and nonprofit, all they're supposed to be doing is taking care of the community. And the focus of, particularly nonprofits and public agencies, is to look out for disadvantaged people in any way. And to me, all those conversations require some kind of spiritual awareness in some way (whether it's God, religious language, or not); that you have to have thought about what the right choices are to make. It's not just about analytic knowledge and decision making, but it's about being a moral, thoughtful person who will do the right thing. (SL, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

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It was evident that Sarah wants to inspire meaningful growth among her students. I asked her to describe for me what effects her system of beliefs (religious or otherwise) has on the conversations she has with her students. Her response:

> I think that's what allows me to be patient and open-minded, despite the fact that sometimes I look at people going, "How can you actually be saying that?" But realizing that it's all our life experiences that get us to where we are right now and what's coming out of our mouth—that you can't discount that. I mean, that is their experience, their world, and their idea. I can try to add to that so that the result isn't what I consider scary at the end of it, but that all of … Everything they say is legitimate in the way that they're saying it. It might not be fair; it might be offensive; it might be ill-informed; but it really is, usually, what they believe; and what they've been taught; and what their experience has shown them. So I think if I didn't have some kind of concept of God and the world, that I would probably just be angry with them.
>
> And I can't imagine living that way. I mean, I don't think I've ever really thought of it that way. I've always been somebody who said, "I don't think that that liberal person's right, and I'm pretty sure that conservative person's not right. I think it's somewhere in the middle and it's a difference for everybody. And that used to make me uncomfortable because I felt like I wasn't making a choice. I thought I was just, you know, scared of making a decision or something. But I think that I'm able to see the whole spectrum. And then try to bring it back (like in the classroom, of trying to bring it back) to, "What are the tools? What decision are we trying to make? What situation do we have?" as the example of how we're trying to make a choice for the city or an organization. So that I can be (Not sure what the right word is: patient's not quite it), but that I can be, you know, be even-handed about it and just bring it back to the facts and information and who's at the table and talk about issues. (SL, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

Teaching her students how to think--not what to think, but how to think--was a major aspect of Sarah's concept of her role as teacher. At one point, in response to her telling me about a student who had expressed frustration about how challenging Sarah's course had been, I asked her to tell me what her students find difficult in regard to her expectations. She responded:

> Well, I require them to critically think (which I think is what college--and especially graduate school--is about), but to articulate it as fully as possible so that they're clear what they're talking about, and so that whatever they're trying to communicate, they're also as clear as possible. The biggest comments I give on any written assignment is: I'm writing "How?" or "Why?" all over….Sometimes

they know it in their head and they just failed to say it, but more often I think they failed to think about it. So the critical thinking brings in a lot of their assumptions, which often is some values in some way (whether it's religious, social, political, whatever); to get them to recognize what those assumptions are going into the issues that we talk about. I think that's the biggest reason for pushing them on those critical thinking and clear communicating issues. (SL, personal communication, April 6, 2009)

Later in that same conversation, in talking with me about the importance of critical

thinking skills, she stated:

> I think when I can see a student recognizes that they think they understand how something works, but there's still a little window open for, "Maybe that's not all that there is," I feel like they're getting critical thinking. When they can take something apart, but still remain open to some other possibility—that I want them to be confident in their skills, but not arrogant.
>   We do a lot of talking in this class--in this policy class--about the role of democracy, and incorporating citizens into policy-making. So it's not that there's this expert policymaker who sits in their office and has read all these books, and has all these cost benefit analysis skills, and knows the answer. But unless you're actually engaged with the community, you don't know what their needs are. And so, you have some set of skills and understanding, but you don't have it all—and you can't; the best policymaker doesn't. And so you have to remain open and connected to other people who can help you think through those things. So I think trying to continue to tell them that they have to learn and be smart, but they're not going to have all the answers they need … to remain open to having other people help them think through a process. (SL, personal communication, April 6, 2009)

That exchange, I thought, produced another essential feature to add to my list of

characteristics that define Sarah's spirituality. I said to her, "[T]hough the words aren't

used in conjunction with one another very often, I'm wondering if good critical thinking

skills are an important element of your own spirituality?" Sarah answered:

> I think they are an important part of how I think about my spirituality because I think the being able to take things apart, is thinking about how they fit back together. So understanding the different pieces of an issue makes you identify the essence of what you really need to be concerned about, and whether all those things fit together, or are important for how you're thinking about it. (SL, personal communication, April 6, 2009)

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Wanting to make sure we were balanced in our treatment of spirituality, I asked Sarah

if she could think of a time when she perceives spirituality to have been used in some

kind of negative way. Her response clarified further the parameters of her spirituality:

> Well, 'cause my spirituality is so not religion / God-focused in terms of language, of how I think about it or talk about it, I can't think of something like that. I mean, when you read the question, I think more of somebody using Christian words or talking about a religious belief in some way that students feel fearful of speaking against or even saying they agree or something. But I think the way I talk about spirituality is so vague, hippy-like, community, and the point is we're supposed to take care of each other. And a lot of it is based in … Really, American government is set up … I mean democracy is supposed to be where we kind of pool some resources and take care of each other. In theory, it's really, you know, spiritual if we could see it that way, but we don't act it out that way….
>
> I think the language I use allows it to really just be part of a fundamental (values isn't the right word I want to use), but it's just like basic ideas that we all kind of agree that we need to think about….So those ethical dilemmas that I bring up [in class] … I mean, I think, for me, that's all religion is: is kind of finding a … I think that denominations and religious traditions (or whatever the right word is), are the language that we've come up with in the past to put those kind of ethical decisions, and moral outlook on life, in a package. So I talk about it in abstract stuff 'cause the Christian language is used for such harm, that I don't even like to use it. I don't like to be around it most of the time, although I am around people who use it in what I think is a positive way … but I make my stuff so abstract that it's not really spiritual or religious. (SL, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

From a societal point of view, Sarah clearly supported the idea that taking care of each

other should be a function of democracy. Given some of the campaign dynamics (that

surrounded the issue of redistribution of income) in the national presidential election just

prior to the time of this interview, I asked Sarah if she talks about democracy in that way

with her students. Her answer:

> Yeah, I mean we talk about the role of government: "So why do we have government?" Because individually we can't do everything that we need to--even for ourselves--and then we all have to get along. So what structures do we create and what roles do we agree on that help us do that? I mean I ask them a lot, "What do you think the role of that is because here is what we do. Here's how we have the tax system in our country; do you think that's fair or not? Do you want to pay

more taxes? Y'all are kind of on the poor end of things. You have a good deal right now because of the way we structure it. So you're benefiting from it."

So I try to point out lots of ways that they benefit from the same structures that they often criticize. I talk about the student loan program; I talk about the home mortgage deduction--tax deduction--things that they can relate to that they don't want taken away from them. Yeah, I mean, and a lot of times they never even thought about that, like they didn't even think about that as a government program or as any kind of middle class welfare…. And so I think that, sometimes, they hate it and some of them just shut down and won't relate to it. But I think a lot of them have just seriously never thought about it before. (SL, personal communication, December 18, 2008)

In addressing some of these deficits in her students' understanding, Sarah reported that

her background in sociology has been invaluable:

I realize that every semester I creep in more of my sociology background: Of trying to explain institutions and structural differences between groups, and how we benefit in ways that are not just about us trying hard and succeeding. It's about all these other influences on our life. And so to accuse other people of not doing what they can when they have all these disadvantages: They just don't get it, I think.

But I think I do talk about it in a far more a-religious, spiritual way in class: About you needing to figure out your own path and what you think is the right thing to do. I mean there are moral and ethical judgments in every decision you make as a public official—whether you want to call it that or not. If you're deciding to shut down a community center, that's going to do some harm to some people. And so is that really the right decision? It might be, but it might not be. (SL, personal communication, December 18, 2008)

At our next discussion, I pursued these concerns a bit more by asking Sarah to talk

about the connections she finds between sociology and political science and the ways in

which these forums intersect with her spirituality. She replied:

Well, the last part is hard. So the sociology part is: I think that often students come to us with little background in understanding particular substantive policy issues—whether it's housing or homeland security, or poverty. They might understand one program they've worked for, but they can't think about it from the individual's perspective; and so trying to give them a more holistic understanding from a human perspective (human individual) rather than a programmatic (administrator) perspective.

I think it's too easy in our field to teach them how to plan and run a program to try to have these intended outcomes to improve somebody's life in some way, but unless you have some whole--or more whole--understanding of that person's life,

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you're likely to design a program that's not very effective, or only going to chip away at something, or could do a better job if you had that bigger understanding…. And so, unless they happen to take sociology classes as an undergraduate (or political science, even, in some way), they don't understand that world view.

So how that ties into the spirituality part: Part of it is the whole notion of wholeness— Not treating people like they're widgets that you need to apply something to and that will fix them, but understanding the wholeness of life, both in terms of being effective as a public leader, but also in terms of being humane and kind. And in terms of understanding other people's lives: To stop and think about that. I think that providing students an opportunity to think about life more fully makes them better public leaders because of that. (SL, personal communication, April 6, 2009)

Sarah had spent a fair amount of time discussing what it is she wants to communicate to her students. I wondered how she thought about her own role in these interactions. I asked her to discuss with me the personal qualities she brings to teaching that promote development and growth among her students:

Well, I think 'cause I think I'm … I'm genuine about it. And I think people know when you're genuine about that kind of thing. It's got to be clear from my teaching where my political leanings are, but I think I make an … I think I probably go far in the other direction to make sure anybody who disagrees with me gets to have their voice heard in the class, and it's valid. So I think doing that for students and allowing people to have different opinions and ideas that you don't share is a really empowering thing….

I share with them what informs my thinking. And so it's not just that, "No, I know this is the right way." But I share, you know, what my family upbringing was, and what my school experience was, in ways that are relevant to how they make me think—how I do today. And saying, "And every one of you in this room has a different package of that stuff that nobody else knows. It's only you; you know what you bring to the table and that that's really important, and you can draw on that to be a real strength if you can identify it in yourself, but you also need to be aware that everybody else is completely different." I think that being able to be open and talk about all that is what enables students to trust the process enough to be part of it. (SL, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

Concluding Remarks

As part of our second interview, I asked Sarah to engage in what I called a right brain exercise. I suggested, perhaps, a photo elicitation activity or the writing of a poem. Sarah

chose to write a poem, one that I thought captured superbly the various aspects of her

thoughts about being a soul-full teacher:

> *Empowerment*
>
> I want them to walk out of the door with confidence –
> Curious, concerned, committed.
> They have felt challenged, nurtured, supported …
> And pushed a little farther than they'd wished.
>
> In the beginning, they arrive each semester with fresh faces,
> wide eyes, some edgy, most eager to hear of the work load,
> expectations, deadlines.
>
> They want to change the world,
> or maybe just be in charge of a little piece of it.
>
> Some are meek and want to be a receptacle,
> a vessel into which I should pour knowledge.
> Others are more likely to be ruffled by the readings
> and discussions that are new to them. Ruffled, and often agitated.
>
> In all of this, I am challenged to remember and rethink my role(s).
> ☐ Cover the material
> ☐ Make it interesting at the end of a long day (for all of us)
> ☐ Be creative
>
> And beyond all of that, I remember:
> teachers have a terrific opportunity to nurture and support,
> but also are called to prepare the students for what is next.
>
> I want them to leave my course curious, concerned and committed.
> (SL, personal communication, December 18, 2008)

I liked the clarity with which Sarah began and ended her poem. Given her emphasis

on wanting to instill curiosity, concern, and commitment among her students, I asked her

to talk about how these qualities have meaning in her own life. She responded:

> I don't know where that concerned part comes from. It just feels innate, so I don't
> know how to explain what it is that… Just being raised knowing that you're
> supposed to be thinking about other people. I often fear that that sounds really far
> more selfless than it really is: It's just who I am; it's not something I consciously
> make a decision about how to act. So that being concerned about … whether it's

an individual poor person, or it's somebody in their job who's struggling, or somebody unique that's having a hard time … that concern is easy for me, I don't know that I … I don't know how to react, necessarily, in a way that's helpful, but the concern is always there.

And the curiosity often feels like an albatross … because it's non-stop of wanting to understand how things work, how people feel, how different people interact, to see how that happens. But I think part of it is me wanting to have some connection to that, and part of it is me wanting to make some connection among all that stuff that I see (which I guess is some kind of spiritual thing of trying to create that community and wholeness)….I don't feel like I'm committed like, "I'm here for the long haul, and I'm going to do what I can." It's just kind of … it's ongoing. And so, I guess I am committed, but I would never say, "I am committed to this," using that language. But I think if you're curious and concerned, the committed part just goes along with it. (SL, personal communication, April 6, 2009)

In closing, I asked Sarah if she had any other thoughts regarding the issues we had been addressing—if there was anything she wanted to add that would help me tell her story fully with respect to the question of how her spirituality informs her teaching philosophy. Ever the seeker, she replied:

So before we started these conversations, I think I recognized, to some extent, how integrated I need my life to be: That my job is a part of who I am, and it's a part of my spirituality, and a part of my volunteer social justice work in the community. It's all the same; it's just kind of different pieces—which has been affirmed by talking through all this on how integrated I think it is, in a lot of ways.

But as integrated as my life seems on paper and in conversations, it still feels disconnected in lots of ways to me. And so I continue to think, going forward from here, how I can make it not feel fragmented in some way … how can it feel more integrated? 'Cause I recognize that when it's more integrated, I'm a better person, and I'm less frustrated on a daily level on practical things … and my mind is where it needs to be if things are integrated properly. And I don't know how that can happen, but I'm kind of curious to see how that can change. (SL, personal communication, April 6, 2009)

I thought it fitting that Sarah closed her remarks by returning to her curiosity, for it seemed to me that it is this trait that draws her into so many aspects of life: from an exercise as small as finding the six words that most effectively communicate her thoughts about a topic; to something as momentous as a recent invitation to testify before Congress

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in regard to her expertise about the nation's public housing concerns. It is Sarah's insatiable curiosity, I believe, that feeds her taste for life in such a manner that her students consistently find, in her teaching, an experience that is refreshing; empowering; challenging.

Sarah's curiosity is a dynamic force, connecting her to life and feeding the deep-felt concern she has for people. What I found most impressive about this quality was the way in which it is exercised: Sarah's curiosity is not one that idly sits by, simply being fascinated with the world around her; but rather one that draws her into active engagement, even as it draws in others to share in that embrace of the challenges, the opportunities, the joys, the struggles of that world that intrigues her so. This, I believe, is why she speaks of commitment in the manner that she does—again, not as a capricious act of will imposed on the world, but rather, a spirit that resides in the very fiber of who she is as a person—connecting her deeply with those about whom she is concerned, and replenishing the curiosity that continually leads back into new cycles of learning and development. Curiosity, concern, commitment: a simple guide for some--fair warning for others--of those who accept Sarah's invitation to come along for the ride.

CHAPTER 4-G

Findings of Study

Will's Story

> [O]ne of the most remarkable conversations that I've been involved in with
> students was when we got fired in New Orleans: "Every institutional
> representative is telling us to take a hike; do you feel like that's what we should
> do? Is that what justice calls for, or is that just recreating and reproducing a
> pattern of privilege and intolerance that has gotten us to this point? Is more
> required of us; are we ready to do it?"
>   "There will be consequences: You're right; you could find yourself at odds
> with this institution that's been your home. You know they're not standing with
> us. We're going to have to do this--this community (the part of the university that
> we are)--and we may get some negative feedback from the press; you may find
> that you will pay some price professionally for standing up with these people."
> (Will McDonnell (WM), personal communication, December 22, 2008)

The stakes were high: Hurricane Katrina had done immeasurable damage to the city

and to peoples' lives, into which Will and his team of volunteers had come to quickly and

efficiently put together a plan for restoration of one of the poorest and most damaged

parts of the city—the upper and lower Ninth Ward. When first invited, enthusiasm and

support from his home institution had run high:

> We voted unanimously, students and faculty, to commit our department resources.
> We had a savings account of a quarter of a million of dollars--a slush fund that
> we'd developed over many, many, many years, and we decided to take the whole
> thing and commit it to post-Katrina work--and we funded lots of classes, travel,
> faculty. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

All went well until it became public information that the team's plan for

redevelopment was in opposition to those of developers whose plans for that area were of

a very different nature:

> [W]ithin 72 hours of that [information becoming public] … It turned out these
> guys were white developers who were using the tragedy of the storm to try to
> extend the French Quarter: Frighten people in the upper and lower Ninth Ward
> that their houses would never get rebuilt; that the city would never put any money
> in; and therefore they should sell the houses for nothing.

And these are the grandsons and great-grandsons of slaves, who cashed in their 40 acres and a mule to come in and buy a small spot and build a shotgun, and each generation add onto it, until they had a substantial home a hundred years later—60% of the homeowners in the lower Ninth Ward. That was never described in any of the press. These were multigenerational families--no mortgages; they owned them outright--so these were important resources to that African American community. And as soon as we said that, they started calling their friends up at city hall. We got fired. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

Upon the team's firing by the city, Will's department at his home institution also withdrew its support for the project—an act tremendously hurtful to Will, personally and professionally, but important at this point in his story as context for understanding the stakes involved in the choices he was laying out for his students' consideration. Articulating the options before them, he continued:

"On the other hand, you know if you don't [stay]: We know it's an uphill fight, but there is a chance, here, that we could leverage what we have to do something remarkable. How are you going to feel? If you can't do it now when you're a student; when you don't have a family that's going to depend upon you; when, in essence, we have some protection here: We have academic freedom; we've got some moral, and some philosophical, and some political, and some historical support for showing some courage … If we can't do it here, it's unlikely we're ever going to be able to pull the trigger anywhere else. So what do you think?" (WM, personal communication, December 22, 2008)

A Caucasian man in his mid-50s, Dr. Will McDonnell is a Professor and Chair of the Graduate Program in the Division of City and Regional Planning at the University of Memphis. Will has been in his present position for about a year-and-a-half. He is known nationally for his work in community organizing, community-based neighborhood planning, and university-community partnerships, and has written extensively in regard to these areas of study.

Will was raised in a Roman Catholic family, spending his early years in New York City:

> I grew up in a very tight-knit, but extended, Irish Catholic family in the Bronx, and, in fact, most of my family lived in one building: Of 60 units, I was related to, I think, 20 or 25 of them; so both paternal and maternal grandparents, all of whom came over from Ireland (several of whom left Ireland because of their political activity, and they had to). And so my early years were in a setting in which I was parented by, not only my mother and father, but four pretty amazing grandparents. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

The family later relocated to central New Jersey, where Will attended a Catholic high school at which his teachers helped nurture in him a strong concern with respect to issues of social justice.

In the midst of my search for participants for this study, I attended a talk that Will gave as an introduction of his work to the University of Memphis community. As I listened, I became more and more impressed with how much his spirituality seemed to be an integral part of his work and his teaching. I thought he might bring some interesting and insightful perspectives to the mix of participants I was considering for this study. He most certainly did.

Teaching

The situation in New Orleans was fraught with opportunities for reflection and for learning both for Will and for the students who had signed on with him to help create a plan of restoration for the Ninth Ward. Will described, for me, the two sides of the conflict that developed:

> Our faculty were advised … We were part of an Ivy League institution with great connections at the top of every power institution in the society, and several of our graduates who were in high places--in think tanks and the Bush administration-- said, "You shouldn't partner with this poor people's organization that's raising hell. And, therefore, they're never going to be heard; they're never going to win." And good faculty--young faculty--who feel as though they want to be part of a change found themselves pulling back at the advice of these folks because they felt that it was a high risk, low probability-of-payoff engagement. And I was proud that we persisted.

And I made the point that, "It would be great if we were able to push the needle in a manner … in the direction that would allow for this discussion to occur, and that an equitable approach to redevelopment becomes the dominant policy direction." Did I think that was highly probable? No, but I thought that the effort was worth it … that there was a lot of new attention focused on New Orleans that might create conditions, if we could mobilize the right institutions. But that, in terms of signaling to the next generation of young people that we only stand for justice when it doesn't cost us anything--when we're likely to win, and we're going to get the Nobel Prize and be on the front page of the New York Times--is a bad set of signals to give. And that this was a real opportunity to demonstrate our own personal, professional ethics: To stand with folks who were long aggrieved, to try to amplify their voice … not expecting to win, really. And, in a very short period of time, it had a dramatic impact on the policy direction of post-Katrina New Orleans. (WM, personal communication, December 22, 2008)

The students, along with their supporting faculty (and spouses of faculty), ultimately, decided to stay and see the process through, despite the city's, and their university's, withdrawal of support:

[A]s it turned out we finished the report. It got extraordinary coverage. We got it done two weeks before anybody else got their reports done. So as they were getting closer to the deadline, when everybody in the city wanted to know, "What do those plans have," the only plan that was on the table was ours, called: *The People's Plan for Overcoming the Hurricane Katrina Blues*. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

I was intrigued. I wanted to learn more about the inner resources that inspire Will to connect with students in such a risk-taking, make-a-difference manner. I asked him to talk with me about the influences that have shaped the ways in which he thinks about teaching, and he began to describe for me the impact of growing up in a family that valued being involved in social justice:

[M]y grandfather was active in the establishment of the Teamster's Union….[H]e was an active trade union leader. And a good deal of, I think, his own sense of values (which were very much embedded in sort of the social gospel of the church) came out of his understanding of social justice. And my grandmother (his wife) was an active member--a founding member--for a local international lady garment worker's union. So my grandparents on my mother's side were very active in the trade union movement. They had a deep influence on my mother and on my father.

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[M]y parents were more than Roosevelt liberals: They were not Socialists; but they were Social Democrats. They were also both deeply touched by Dorothy Day's work, and we got the *Catholic Worker* in our house from the … I can't remember a time when we didn't. And so, that was sort of the milieu….[B]asically, we grew up in a … I guess you would say, a Catholic Left household, where being involved in community reform activities, school reform activities, public housing, integration activities, was very much part and parcel of my parents' early lives.

That deeply influenced my sister, my brother, and I. All three of us became teachers and various forms of social workers. My brother taught inner city high school kids for many years and then went on to a business career. My sister teaches social work at Simmons and ran a practice for many years in Roxbury in Boston. And then after I finished my undergraduate work, I went to work for the Diocese of Paterson [New Jersey] in the Department of Social Justice doing community organizing among the elderly—mostly elderly that were retirees of labor organizations. It was like a full circle. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

The roots of Will's commitment to matters of social justice were evident, but his thoughts about using the classroom to address these concerns were not as clear to me. I asked him why he decided to become a teacher, and he replied:

Well, you know, I didn't start out being a teacher….The profession I thought that was closest to being a professional hell raiser, I thought, was social work….I think I thought I was headed toward a group practice in social work sort of work. But I got involved in the anti-hunger activities in high school, and then the farm workers' support work in high school (I worked for the United Farm Workers' support groups). And then when I got to college, I was very involved in the peace movement. I became the chair of the Indochina peace campaign at UMass, did lots of picketing and setting up tiger cages, etc., and then I found … By this time I realized that, you know, there wasn't really a good model of an activist social worker that I knew of, and I started looking around, "Well, what the hell am I going to do when I grow up?"

And my older sister (always smarter), she sent me [Saul] Alinsky's biography--or Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals*--and I said, "Oh my god, this is … this is what I want to be," you know? So then I looked for opportunities to get training in community organizing….So, I was going to be an organizer, and I did that for 7 years, full-time—full-blown, you know, 70-80 hours-a-week. I had the good fortune (and the misfortune) my first job of working for the Diocese of Paterson Social Justice Department. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

Will's early experiences in community organizing (in Paterson) were strongly influenced by the example set by two Catholic priests with whom he worked—Kevin

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Donegan and Pat Irwin. In describing some of what he learned from these men, Will

stated:

> [T]hey got up in the morning … they were running parishes, and did all the
> Masses for the elders, and then they did organizing all day. And then starting at
> 8:00 at night, they ran an urban sort of street mission for street people, and they
> were out until two and three in the morning: visiting the sick; and bailing people
> out of jail; and, for short terms, providing illicit adoption services—you know,
> hosting kids who had no place to go. And they lived a 24-hour life of
> commitment, which is hard to do when you're burning the candle at every end. So
> that's who trained me. So: great on values, fabulous on the methods of
> community organizing, and effective communication. I learned just a lot, but
> nothing on how to balance a private spiritual life with family life and a life in the
> public arena. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

Wanting to be part of the energy of those initiatives, Will threw himself completely

into keeping up with the pace of the work, but in so doing, also fell prey to its consequent

effects. The toll on his body and his spirit, eventually, became too much, and he decided

he should take a year off. He decided he would enroll in graduate school:

> So I'd run into somebody who was a planner, and he was an advocacy planner.
> This guy, Paul Davidoff, had influenced him, so I decided to go to Davidoff's
> planning school in New York, which was this participatory action, research-based
> approach to professional education. And I said, "Oh this is … this is going to give
> me new skills to go back and do organizing," but [then] I realized that the
> academy had an enormous set of opportunities that were hard to match in other
> institutional settings. Meaning, you had--every year, you had--60 really bright,
> energetic young people who wanted to make a difference in the world who were
> coming through your front door, and if you could influence them in terms of how
> they approached their social change work, it could be pretty formidable. Plus you
> had a platform, in terms of publishing and speaking, to reach a much broader
> audience than you did as an organizer, I thought. (WM, personal communication,
> October 10, 2008)

It was evident that the engagement of his students in participatory action, research-

based education has become a central feature of Will's work. I asked him to tell me more

about this method and how he has gone about integrating it into his work with students:

> The graduate program I went to at Hunter College was founded by a guy named
> Paul Davidoff, who is known, in planning, as the father of advocacy planning.

Basically he felt that planning had been captured by downtown elites and, as a result, corrupted. And that the official, state-sponsored planning was to re-concentrate wealth and power. And so he said we should be regularly planning for those for whom city hall is not, and we should be these independent grassroots people. Anyway to do that, then, he had to develop a methodology. So he became very interested in, first, participatory research and, then, ultimately, this whole notion of participatory action research, where it's no longer the researcher looking through the microscope at the people and their behavior with a social distance (and not contaminating their analysis by any emotional connection to the objects of their study), but arguing that people--that everything (even what appear to be ambiguous observations)--can be contested: That interpretation is problematic; that you absolutely need to involve the folks in the community that you're studying in the design of the research, the collection of the data, and the analysis.

And it's really the give-and-take between the local knowledge (as [Clifford] Geertz talked about) of the residents, and the expert knowledge of people trained in methodologies and from broad case study experience—the give-and-take is where interesting things can happen. So anyway, that became a methodology that I got trained in at the Master's level, and then when I went to [study for my doctorate], it just so happened that a bunch of the folks who were very central to this movement were there. And so, you know, the way I have worked has been to, basically, adopt that theoretical and methodological and pedagogical approach to teaching and learning. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

Will's explanation of the theoretical / pedagogical underpinnings of his work was helpful. I also wanted, though, to get a feel for the kinds of experiences that have fostered his commitment to these methods. Later in that same interview, I asked him to tell me about a critical incident that has shaped the kind of teacher he wants to be:

My first teaching job was: I was hired … as I finished up my Ph.D., to run an experiential education program. Juniors, instead of going abroad, they would go to New York and … Regardless of their field (it was all in the College of Human Services), they would go to New York; I would find placements for them. They would, then, talk about the connection between their daily work and larger policy issues connected to the structural factors that shape inequality. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

It didn't take long for Will to realize that the service program he was supposed to be coordinating, in reality, was something very different. Rather than being engaged in the work of human service agencies, the students were using their internships to get a foot in the door of many of the large financial organizations in Manhattan:

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Well, all of them were, in some way (this was in the early 1980s)--out of public service-oriented majors--were desperately trying to get into investment banking by using their semester of service in experiential education to get into the heart of capitalism….And so I reduced the number of days they were in placement (which was 4-1/2 to 3), and I said 2 days-a-week, you're going to work on a collective research project in an underserved community, which is suffering the consequences of a kind of capital-concentrating-activity that you are spending the other 3 days-a-week doing. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

Per Will's report, the students were very displeased with this new professor's ideas concerning service education but, at that stage of their curriculum, had little choice other than to cooperate. The project that Will selected (in which they were to engage on their 2 days of collective research) was a study related to a situation developing in lower Manhattan:

I made some phone calls among friends and the then-borough-president of Manhattan (later on to became the first black mayor of New York), David Dinkins said, "We've got a big problem on the Lower East Side where Wall Street is exploding, and it's now putting pressure on nearby low income neighborhoods. And one of those neighborhoods has a historic public food market, the Essex Street Market, and the mayor [Ed Koch] has just terminated the 50-year contract of the cooperative of immigrant merchants who manage this remarkable public space. And the merchants are told that they can compete for the right to continue to manage their own facility, but they've also invited the Trump organization and others to come in and completely gut it and turn into a creeping quiche-and-fashion boutique."

So that was the project, and so I introduced the students to this challenge and they went down and spent a day getting toured in the neighborhood by a variety of grassroots leaders. They got completely smitten by the passion and vitality and energy commitment and sense of community that these merchants had. You know, they felt like it was a vocation serving the unique cultural needs of their community and helping interpret their community to the broader New York. And our students got completely cranked up over it.

They did a very ambitious research project. It resulted in a big report. We closed down the market for the first time in 70 years. We set up big slide screens and we invited local elected officials….We got New York Times coverage, Boston Globe coverage, AP wire story, UP wire story--enormous press--and, all of a sudden, the issue of what to do with the Essex Street Market became the leading question in the mayoral primary between David Dinkins and Ed Koch….Dinkins ends up winning and we end up being able to (through a lot of additional organizing) save the market.

Well, our students: It was transformative! You know, for the first time they could see the real value of the kind of study they were doing in the classroom, and the importance of making sure that underserved communities had access to the best policy, planning, development, design resources. And they saved the Essex Street Market: twenty-three 19-year-old [college] sophomores and juniors … Yeah, it was extraordinary.

So that ruined me. That was my first year. And so I've stayed in that genre—always looking for ways to connect whatever undergraduate or graduate courses I was doing with real community needs or opportunities. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

With much of the same energy, insight, and abandon displayed in that experience, Will has gone on to create dynamic learning experiences for his students—always rooted in actual experience and efforts to uplift those in our society whose voices are less frequently--or never--heard. In describing the model that he has adopted, he stated:

So instead of doing the medical school model of education—with theory of science, and then some methods, and then 20 minutes before they become doctors, introduce them to their first bleeding patient: Throw that out the window! Instead, from the very beginning, have a more experiential approach where you introduce them to the theory in a rather economical way and immediately throw them into the messy world of practice. And give them regular opportunities to systematically reflect upon on it, distill principles of good practice, and then test that empirically in an experimental way by actually trying to use those new ideas (that are the result of the integration of theory and practice) to actually change the world. And that's the ultimate test. It's not a statistical relationship that you're establishing--a correlation--but rather, "Does this new understanding of this system that's guiding our action, actually, result in the production of the outcome that you want?"—which I think is a much more powerful way to engage reality and change it. So that's the way I've been teaching, right or wrong, for the last 25 years. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

The way he teaches was at the core of what I wanted to explore in asking Will to be part of this study. In order to experience that first hand, I asked him if I could attend a couple of his classes. One of these was the first class of a new term at which plans were being addressed for a participatory action project in a neighborhood of South Memphis. Believing that the first class can be critical in establishing a foundation for the semester, I asked Will what kind of agenda he tries to follow in the first class of a new term:

So one thing: We often don't take very much time to find out who the students are, so I always do this dyad exercise, where I ask the students to pick somebody they don't know and really interview them about who they are….I like doing that kind of introduction of each other: [I]t begins to build some relationships and helps people realize that even though we might have a daunting project that there's actually a lot of skill and knowledge and know-how and experience and commitment in the room if we can only tap it. So I always like doing that at the beginning.

And I often, then, like to introduce the project with a couple of examples that are inspirational. So, in the fall, I used the Dudley Street Initiative in Boston—which was a failed top-down urban renewal effort that residents rose up to oppose, and realized that that wasn't enough; that they really needed to transform this process into something that was going to build a different kind of Roxbury, and it's turned out to be a remarkable effort. So I talked about that. I also talked about the East St. Louis project that we had done. So I think those are those are two things.

And then, I try to share something about my own passion for the work, and the profession, and the meaning of the project, so that in some way … You know, I'm not sure I want people in the profession who are just looking for a job; I think you should pick some other field. I think that we have few resources for building the public realm and for building social capital--planning is one of them--and if this is the route you decide to travel, I think we should challenge students to understand that this is a special commitment. There's a social contract here that they need to be aware of.

And to do that (to bring it home for them), I talk about my own sense of how we should approach this. And so, if you only have four hours to do the class, this is probably not the class for you: That we're going to pull this to some reasonable point of conclusion, and that is going to take several weeks where we're going to have to go with reckless abandon. If we were to make the NCAA playoffs, no one would be complaining about the amount of practice. Well, we're going to try to get this neighborhood into the neighborhood playoffs, and that's going to require a lot of effort 'cause it hasn't gotten attention; it's been off the agenda for a long time.

So those are a couple of things I try to do. And the last thing is that whatever plan we have for the semester, it will be changed. And so if they need that structure and security, it's going to be tough for them. They're going to have to learn some level of flexibility. When you do natural science--well, geology, anyway--the subjects don't talk back at you. But this, they will, and you have to listen. (WM, personal communication, April 7, 2009)

One of the times when the ability to listen made a huge difference in his own life came early in Will's teaching career when he was invited to consider taking a teaching position at the University of Illinois-Champaign. He states he originally went for the job interview

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not really expecting to take a job in the Midwest, but all that changed when, on the last

day of the interview process, he was introduced to a group of African American church

women from East St. Louis, Illinois. These women were seeking professional assistance

for a neighborhood revitalization project they had begun in their home community—

which, Will observed, was at a considerable physical distance from the campus in

Champaign (about three hours in driving time), but at a far greater distance if comparing

the socio-economies of the two locales. As Will listened to these women from East St.

Louis make their case for why the university should partner with them, he knew he

wanted to take this job and become part of the work they were doing there:

> So anyway, I ended up taking the job at Illinois and spending most of my time
> working in East St. Louis. I spent Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, and Sunday
> mornings there for 10 years with my students: starting with just 11, and, by the
> time I left, several hundred. In this journey we were able to put together, over
> time, a series of increasingly larger and larger development projects that, you
> know, provided housing opportunities, job training, a charter school—a whole
> bunch of things. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

The leader of the group in East St. Louis, Ceola Davis, was a dynamic, caring individual

who, over time, had a powerful impact on Will. I sensed, in listening to him tell me about

her, that she became a personal hero for him—one whose standards, even now, remain a

touchstone for how he sees and thinks about the world he seeks to change:

> Once, our students took a tour of the neighborhood with her. We went down back
> alleys; there were unemployed men around barrels that were burning wood (It's
> colder in Illinois), and she knew all of them by name. By the time of day we got
> there, many of them were fairly well sedated. She treated them with enormous
> respect, care, love and affection. They had enormous respect for her.
>   We found ourselves, our first day doing fieldwork, in an area that hadn't been
> mapped….We're surrounded by these guys that are going to take everything we
> have—our van, our jewelry, God knows what else. I'm with six students, and
> what saved our lives was … "What are you stupid SOBs doing here?" And I was
> nervous. I mean, I was frightened because I had six students I was responsible for,
> and I said, "Well, we're here with Miss Davis." That was it….[W]e were
> protected the rest of the time we were in East St. Louis: Hands off! So our

students, seeing her example and the impact that she was having and the space she created for us to be able to do good work, those … Most of those students have gone on to do extraordinary things. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

It was obvious to me that the project in East St. Louis was a point of tremendous pride for Will. The work there was part of what helped to establish his national reputation in planning (which, eventually, led to him returning to his alma mater as the Chair of the planning department). But apart from those concerns, it seemed that his pride in relation to East St. Louis emerged from what he was able to learn there about teaching, relationships, service, issues of class and race … about what it means to be human. Speaking of the joy he derived from that work, Will stated:

> [M]y work in East St. Louis, the first park we did … to see the excitement: We showed up at 5:00 in the morning with equipment trucks, and there were children from the neighborhood (who had done the design with their mothers and grandmothers) waiting--at 5:00 in the morning--to build their playground. They did the design. I went back 15 years later. The park is kept immaculately; it's been upgraded; people do seasonal clean-ups and paint-ups and plantings. This was four burned-out, arson-damaged buildings that was a blight … that was a corner that everybody ignored. So I love that; I absolutely love it. (WM, personal communication, April 7, 2009)

In summarizing, Will added:

> East St. Louis … is quite an Easter story. Eight women went down and met Fannie Lou Hamer, had their lives changed, came back on a bus, pledged that they were going to turn their city around, and they spent the last 45 years doing it with extraordinary skill and commitment and focus. That's a hell of a story. (WM, personal communication, April 7, 2009)

Spirituality

It occurred to me that Will had a few life-changing stories of his own to tell, and I was grateful for his generosity in sharing them. As we spoke, the many dimensions he brings to his work became more and more apparent. It seemed that one of these was a dynamic spirituality that underlies his thinking and his work. Wanting to know more about this, I

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asked him to tell me about an incident that has shaped how he wants to be as a spiritual

person:

> You know, I've been so blessed. My father was a terrific soul—deeply spiritual. I
> lost, really, a relationship with him early on in my life through my young
> adulthood because he ended up becoming a rather serious alcoholic, and it created
> real havoc for me. And in that context, you know, being a very young boy, I really
> was looking for somebody to provide some mentorship and support for me.
>
> And, for me, it was a series of Catholic priests. And so in my junior high
> school, there was a young, Irish immigrant priest who was beginning to do
> outreach in my, by then, suburban setting (we'd moved from the Bronx to
> Morristown, New Jersey), and he'd become deeply involved in the African
> American and Latino civil rights work—set up a family life center; I became a
> tutor in it; he introduced me to folks doing work in Paterson….And so, you know,
> that young priest, John O'Brien, was just huge for me.
>
> I, then, went to a [Catholic] high school, but by this point it was the middle of
> the anti-war period….[M]y freshmen religion teacher was a guy named Bernie
> Prusak who's written about, you know, ethics and peace and justice. And the high
> school had a program of engagement, so all of our religion classes were about
> social action, social justice engagement. So my freshmen year, I was tutoring in
> Paterson. My sophomore year, I worked during the school year--and during the
> summer--in a farm worker's support center that the parish ran and that the high
> school was involved in. My junior year, I ran a hunger hike, myself, with the help
> of a [foreign missions] priest, that raised $23,000 for community organizing in
> Morristown and Hong Kong. And then we were, all along, involved in the student
> mobilization position against the war. (WM, personal communication, October
> 10, 2008)

Intrinsic to Will's description of his spirituality was an awareness--a deep

appreciation--of those who have helped him make informed, caring choices that have

shaped his way, both personally and professionally. He continued to tell me about these

spiritual guides:

> For me, I had a lot of anger: My father was quite sick; my mother was really
> overwhelmed. By this time, my grandparents had moved in with us and they
> needed care. It was, you know … we had a lot of responsibility, and I didn't
> handle it well as a young kid, really. And I complained a lot, and I bitched and
> moaned about school and about everything else. I loved the social justice activity,
> but everything else, I was pretty dysfunctional, I would say.
>
> And this one Catholic priest, Joe Casey: He introduced me to Gandhi and
> talked about non-violent change and explained to me that I could spend all my
> time, you know, trying to change our relationship by trying to get you to move

from that position over here, or I could just pick my chair up and move, and the relationship would be changed. I didn't know what the hell he was talking about.

And he said, "Well, you don't like any of these classes you're complaining about: Why do you go? Just go to the library and read what you think is important, and consult with some wise scholars." And so my senior year in high school, I did that. I didn't come back early for school. I didn't go out for the normal fall sports teams, which I was very involved in. And, instead, I spent September (I got to October before anybody realized that I wasn't really in class), and then the director of the school came....

[T]he director of the school called me in and he said, "What are you doing?" And I said, "I'm trying to find a way forward. Here's the situation I'm in. I don't like any of these things, and I'm practicing Gandhi's satyagraha—truth force." He laughed like hell, and [then] they actually worked with me in developing, sort of, an individualized course of study, where I took a couple of courses and did a bunch of independent studies. And then I realized that just because things look a way--just because trend is there--it doesn't mean it has to be destiny—that you can intervene. And, so, that was the huge gift that Father Joseph M. Casey gave me. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

Will went on to talk about the effect this one insight has had on his life and how it has given him abounding energy to work for change. He described many of the activities in which he engaged while in college that furthered his involvement in social justice and, again, spoke of the powerful impact of the priests and family members who have inspired him along the way. In concluding these remarks, Will shared an anecdote about meeting an old girlfriend whose reaction to his work helped put into perspective his good fortune in choosing the life he has:

I had a girlfriend my first year in college. We lost contact. She went off to a great career and, about three years ago, I had an occasion to meet her again at a conference. She's retired as a vet now, and she's telling me about her life (all these things she's done), and she says, "What have you been doing?" And I gave her the shorthand version and she laughed. She says, "Well, you're doing the same old [stuff] you were doing in 1970." And I got very upset, and then I thought about it and I said, "Yeah, I'm trying to do it in a more thoughtful, more humane, more humane, more effective way …" But yes, I had this huge gift at a very early age: I found that there was potential for a life of meaning along a particular path, and I've been on that path for better or worse … For better! (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

In the conversation in which he told me about the development of his style of

community organization, Will had indicated that many of his mentors struggled to find a

balance between their work and caring for themselves. In our ensuing interview, I asked

him if he does better in regard to maintaining balance in his life. He laughed, said he has

not, and then went on to say:

> I'm a workaholic. I'm able to get a lot done, but I think … I've often had
> wonderful experiences, but I'm so stressed--so tired--not to really be able to fully
> savor the joy of seeing good things happen. I'm already on to my next project
> before I take the time to celebrate an important victory around something….When
> you win anything on behalf of poor people--with poor people--for yourself, as a
> working class person, you've got to celebrate that, but I'm not very good at that.
>   So I would say that I haven't. I may have maybe made some progress, and
> recently I've been more engaged in my own spiritual life, I think, in a more
> intentional way, but I think that was not a gift some of my mentors gave me …
> with a few exceptions. (WM, personal communication, December 22, 2008)

I asked him to tell me about being involved in his spiritual life in a more intentional

way:

> Well, you know, I … For many years, I had a number of unpleasant experiences
> with my organized institutional affiliation--the Holy Roman Catholic Church--and
> it disappointed me in the sense that people that I thought were really following
> Christ seemed to be marginalized, and villain-ized, and demonized by the
> institution. And I found myself on occasion, in small ways, shamed by my own
> faith's … my own Church's leadership.
>   Both my sister and I were active in social justice stuff and were in a family that
> was struggling. And the Church was not … the institutional Church--the parish
> we belonged to; the Catholic high school we went to--were not very
> understanding; did not extend themselves very much. And so I found myself
> basically alienated from it for many years. But I noticed when I came back after
> finishing school and began to do community organizing, so many of the people
> who were doing the toughest work were clergy--nuns and priests--often who had
> the same kind of relationship with the institutional Church— they were in trouble.
>   And the people that [the institutional Church] seemed to promote (at least in
> the diocese that I was in) did not represent, I think, the best of my faith or the
> shared faith I guess we had. And that troubled me. So I didn't … I would go to
> church on occasion; I prayed on occasion. I have a very good friend who is very
> spiritual, who sort of kept me thinking that this was a part of my life I really
> needed to excavate, and I needed to separate the institution from a larger sense of

the Divine. And I guess the last 5 or 10 years I've been entertaining that more, but never made the time to do it.

When we moved here to Memphis, really, we re-connected for the first time in a regular way. I mean, I've always done social justice work with church institutions, and for 15 years--well, for 10 years in East St. Louis--mostly with the Black Baptist Church. But my own Catholic faith I didn't really explore very much. And I don't know … I'm not quite sure what it was that finally got me off my rear end to think about it and try to explore it a little bit more. (WM, personal communication, December 22, 2008)

It occurred to me that Will's re-connection with his faith tradition may well be due to a convergence of several factors. I asked Will if he would agree with that observation, and, if so, what some of those factors may be. He replied:

Yeah, you know, I don't know if I'm at middle age or early old age (I'm somewhere in the crux there), but there have been a bunch of things: I got promoted to a position of substantial leadership at an institution that I love, which has a real tradition in planning of social justice work. I really pushed that, and I got slammed in a major series of ways and did not get support from my elders who taught me that this is the way we should act and stand in the world. I got hung out to dry, and it was a sobering experience, and caused me to think a little more deeply about why is it that I do what I do.

To be a white person and be involved in economic and social justice that, in some ways, is viewed as trying to create new opportunities or expand opportunities for communities of color, you get a lot of undeserved accolades, because most of the people in our society won't go there. And so if you're willing to cross that line, you get a lot of atta-boys. And I realized that this was the first time since getting arrested with the farm workers, and getting arrested for stepping out of my high school school bus (with my sister in Washington; at the student mobilization against the war) that there was any, even, price to be paid for doing the right thing.

And so what initially started out as, "Let me understand a little bit more about the inadequacies of my mentors," turned into, "Gee, I'm learning a lot about myself in this process—that I have been the beneficiary of this privilege, in a way, which I hadn't really thought deeply about. And I'm getting a lot of crap for this work, and I have to think about why is it that I'm called to do this—why I just can't walk away from this." And so I think that was significant. (WM, personal communication, April 7, 2009)

The episode in New Orleans, actually, was the second major situation in which Will felt betrayed by people who were important to him in his profession. Just a couple of years prior to that incident he had been involved in challenging his professional

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organization to relocate its national conference and review the values to which it says it

adheres:

> [A]bout five years ago I ended up becoming a member of the board of my
> disciplinary association, American Association of Schools of Planning. And, you
> know, I've been in this profession since 1982; I got on the board in 2000. And
> shortly after getting on the board, there was a discussion about where to hold our
> national conference. So it doesn't seem too important to me, but they start
> discussing Charleston, which is a city that still flies the confederate flag over its
> state house. So I am sure that an urban planning profession which has, as part of
> its code of ethics, a commitment to taking affirmative action to dismantle
> structures of oppression: that we're not going to go to Charleston 'cause it's on
> the NAACP boycott list. And then to my utter chagrin and disappointment, we
> voted 18 to 7 not once, not twice, but three times, to go.
>
> I ended up, then, getting involved in an effort to organize a counter conference
> at a historically black college … and we were going to hold a conference looking
> at racism in our profession and in our teaching profession. We got 700 people out
> of the 1,100 folks in our profession signed up to go, and when that happened, the
> organizers of the main disciplinary association decided to move the conference to
> Kansas City. And we all went to Kansas City, and there was a special session on
> race and class in the profession.
>
> Subsequent to that I got voted off the board. I had two formal integrity cases
> filed against me (one as a faculty member and one as a professional planner) by
> the host campus at Clemson University….[T]he experience left me deeply
> disturbed. Here I'd won all these awards from this organization, and I'd been part
> of the inner sanctum santorum. These were my colleagues. I'd always assumed
> that if we were ever really going to move ahead on justice questions, that these
> would be fellow travelers in the long line promoting justice. And I found out that,
> in essence, they were frightened, aging men and women in the academy who felt
> like their privilege would be affected. (WM, personal communication, October
> 10, 2008)

The impact of the two experiences--Charleston and New Orleans--left Will reeling: In

one, finding himself at odds with a huge number of peers in the profession he loves; in

the other, feeling abandoned by so many colleagues at the school he loves. In discussing

the impact of these experiences, Will said:

> I got lots of accolades for most of my career until more recently, and then I
> realized how even that experience was pretty distorting of how I viewed myself
> and how my work was portrayed. So it's given me a new level of humility and
> sort of a … a goad to be more serious about what it is I do and how I do it. (WM,
> personal communication, October 10, 2008)

As so often was the case in my conversations with Will, I found myself feeling

impressed by the integrity and the generosity that he exudes. In continuing to tell me

about the converging forces that have fostered a re-connection with his faith tradition, he

added:

> I think loss of parents--we lost both of our mothers in the last 5 years--was a major thing, and reconnecting with our own religious tradition around those losses. I think that was pretty significant.
>
> And I think when you get to the point where there is a shorter period of your career left than you've already experienced you think about how you want to be in the classroom and how you want to interact with your students and what you want to model for other, younger faculty. I felt that when I was certainly recruiting and trying to mentor, in some way, new faculty.
>
> And I guess I came away from this thinking that it would be nice if, once in a while, the world gave you a little atta-boy, but ultimately the decisions I've made to spend my time and energy, personally and professionally and civically on behalf of a social justice agenda, really comes out of my own deep need to live in a world that is less torn by just grinding and bruising and jarring inequities. And I think that desire was largely shaped by church and family—my own religious tradition. It's taken me 30 years to come to this; I'm a slow learner. (WM, personal communication, April 7, 2009)

I was glad to hear Will also say, in concluding these remarks, that re-connecting with

his faith tradition has helped him to begin to let go of some of the hurt he felt in regard to

the situations that developed with respect to New Orleans and Charleston:

> And now, I feel much more forgiving of my colleagues who sort of screwed me … and understanding … and much less worried about what they and other people think. I mean, it's really been liberating to realize that it's about my own sense of what is sacred and humane and required of a person of faith at this moment. (WM, personal communication, April 7, 2009)

In our final interview, I returned to those two incidents and asked Will to talk about

the resources that helped him weather the betrayal he felt in each of those instances. He

replied:

> Anytime you work with poor people in a resource-constrained environment, you risk irritating people in power. And I have done so more times than I care to

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remember. So what's helped me weather that? Well, I think the example of my own grandparents who were labor leaders, and my parents who were active in various ways in the Civil Rights movement—all of whom took courageous positions, I think, inspired in large part by their understanding of their faith. And that our family … We're Catholics; we follow Christ—his life, at least on this earth, ended in a pretty tough situation, right? But led to 2000 years of inspired followership aimed at trying to create the Kingdom of God on earth.

So I think, for me, the people that I know and whom I most admire, few of them have ended up with big bank accounts, civic awards, or ribbons, but [with] a rich spiritual life and communal life and family life based upon witness for justice—inspired by their sense of what we're called by our faith to do. So I think that was very important. And then I was trained as an organizer by a group of mostly priests, all of whom did the same thing. You don't expect to get the Cadillac and the keys to the suburban house and a pool and early retirement doing this, but you have an enormous sense of satisfaction, community, solidarity, a sense of belonging—being part of a long line of people who have tried to make change, who live lives of meaning. (WM, personal communication, December 22, 2008)

Integrating Teaching and Spirituality

Will, obviously loves the work that he does and loves being a part of that history of people who have worked to build a better--a more just--society. It also seemed evident to me that he has been effective at inspiring others to invest their lives in those kinds of initiatives. I asked him if he feels that teaching is a vocation for him--if he is called to teach--and he answered:

Good question. You can do a lot of things: Does this uniquely use whatever gifts I have in the most powerful ways to advance good things? And I sometimes have vacillated between … There are probably more good teachers than there are good organizers. For me that's always been the tension: Between working for a grassroots organization and direct action organizing; and teaching people the basic skill set where they can do that work or be supportive of it. And so I've spent half my time doing each (now a little bit longer teaching). And I think I've found a way to blend the two, so I don't have to make that decision. I've made long term commitments, as an educator, to working with grassroots organizations. And, in the process, have had an opportunity to use these gifts that I've been given in ways that, I think, have benefited the community partners, my students, as well as myself, that joy of being involved and helping move things forward. Social justice work around social movements and social change, I think, is what I was put on this earth to do. I'm absolutely sure of that. (WM, personal communication, December 22, 2008)

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I was interested in knowing more about what Will feels he brings to his interactions

with his students—what personal qualities make it possible for him to reach his students:

> Well, I think one thing: You know, having sort of had a tough pre-adolescent / adolescent period where I lost, you know, substantial direction from … My dad wasn't able to be there with me, I think I have a … It gave me a little bit more sensitivity about young people who are at that point of really trying to find what their gifts are, and where they can make a difference. I think I'm a little bit more sensitive and a little bit more in tune to that.
>
> I think another thing is: You know, the Irish are big talkers, but if you're in a household where there's a lot of discussion and talk about, you know, the sacred, political, economic, civic, cultural, and you're a young person, you also develop the ability to listen and realize that that's a gift….I think I have good listening skills.
>
> And the last thing is, you know, I guess because I come from a family of activists, you know, just because it's that way doesn't mean it has to be that way, and young people have a sensitivity--have a belief--that you should be able to change some of this, and I resonate to that … And so I'm more likely to think--engage in a discussion about--"Well, how could we explore that?" rather than giving them the 10,000 reasons why: "Now is not the time to do it;" and "This is not the place;" and "You're not the person." (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

He concluded this commentary on the qualities he brings to his work by adding one

more—this one owed to his family heritage:

> So I think those are some qualities. And then I think just the … There's something about the O'Brien family animalistic energy….Our family, we have that quality of being energetic and, you know, it may be that we … Whatever the problem is: We may make it worse by what we do, but you'll never … We'll never be accused of seeing a problem that we don't think we could make a constructive contribution to. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

Will's enumeration of the personal qualities that enable him to engage with students, I

thought, helped to explain the positive attitude and the resilience he brings to his work.

At one point, in talking with me about how difficult it is to get institutions to change,

Will said:

> I think it's sort of [like the old saying], "Better to light a candle than curse the darkness." I think there's a lot to be said for that. And it's certainly more

nurturing to actually be engaged in some effort to effect real change than trying to get institutions to move. I think ultimately you can change them by changing the hearts of the people in them. It's hard work. It's a slower process, but ultimately it's more, I think, powerful. (WM, personal communication, December 22, 2008)

I liked the hopefulness expressed in this model for institutional change, and I asked

Will to tell me more about his thoughts regarding the changing of peoples' hearts:

Well, I'll give you a good example. We, this semester, have our students working in a low-income, working-class African-American community. As part of the effort to sort of prepare them (many of them come from highly segregated communities in which they don't really get a chance to interact on a face-to-face basis with people of color—particularly not working-class people of color), I did a week on white privilege and unexamined racism. And I got e-mail.

This is my … I'm new to the South. This would not be a topic that would be viewed as that unusual in certain northern schools. Apparently this was really unnerving to the students. "What could this be: white privilege? What is this?" They couldn't even understand why it would be on the agenda. And they were polite because they like me, but it was one of those classes where you knew you did something that you thought was important to do, but no one took it very seriously—or few people did. People of color in the class--two of them--came by afterwards and thanked me for doing it. So then we go to South Memphis, and they interview, collectively, 174 families—mostly in their living rooms. And two of them came in the Monday after we came back and said, "I get it now." (WM, personal communication, April 7, 2009)

Although the topic of white privilege seemed foreign to so many of the students in his

class, it is one that has become prominent in Will's thoughts. In talking with me about his

decision to move to Memphis, he stated:

[P]art of my decision to come to Memphis was a deeper sense that we need to make a more dramatic and significant effort to really look at these deep structures of prejudice, bigotry and privilege that exist in a variety of hierarchies, but particularly higher education because we are preparing the next generation. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

Later in that same interview, he added:

I'm very interested, now, in learning more about what kinds of effective education projects have been undertaken in more recent years around white privilege. When we actually went to debate the issue in Charleston and in New Orleans, there was a whole rhetoric of, you know, "Whiteness blinds people to issues of great inequity," and I thought, "That's too shrill; that's over the top." But when I

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actually sat in two different rooms--in one case among my disciplinary partners; in another case in city hall trying to argue why we deserved to be able to continue our work--I realized that that was so very true. And that those of us, you know, who've been privileged to get the university education, to be involved in fairly high status professions are often unaware of that. I've become more aware of it in the last couple of years. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

Following their experience of surveying the residents of South Memphis, Will's class continued to discuss their personal reactions to that experience, and Will used those responses to help his students explore how they plan to respond to this newfound awareness:

> We then talked about [the experience] again the week after, and people talked about the extent to which they were, not only anxious, but really anxious (like almost a little terrified) because of what they had heard about South Memphis. It was easy to tell people proudly in their white community that they were working in this neighborhood--they got kudos--but to actually, then, have to leave their comfort zone … and go out and knock on doors of public housing complexes and multi-family … they were really frightened. And the fact that they were so broadly invited in: People were welcoming; they took time out; they gave them sweet tea. And we, then, made the point where if two young African-American kids--well groomed; from [a historically Black college]--showed up in [one of several predominantly white sections of Memphis], what would be the likelihood that 90% of the folks home would take time out and invite them in? And they all said in a minute: "Zero."…
>
> So I think it's taking people to places where they'll have new experiences that challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about how the world works; how the institution they're a part of works and their role in it. And then encouraging them to, with that new information, to think about (You know, we don't want them to feel guilty—be immobilized): "Well, now that you've realized that others' disadvantage has produced an advantage for you, what are you going to do with that undeserved blessing (as the Jews would say)? How are you going to try to tilt the balance of justice a little bit in your own life?" So there would be an example. (WM, personal communication, April 7, 2009)

On more than one occasion, Will voiced his opinion that students have a special obligation to draw from the privilege of their own lives to help others. I asked him if he uses that kind of language (privilege / special obligation) in speaking with his students:

> I have …The most dramatic example of that is we had two students at Illinois when I was there early on, one of my first years teaching out there, a double

suicide. And these were very well known students in our college, and our students were just distraught. And my father had just died and his death was an amazingly powerful and illuminating experience for me. So, I remember talking to them: "Right now you're feeling enormous pain, and you've lost two people that are enormously important to you. There's no explanation that we can really offer you as to why this happened, and you're reaching out for each other, and you hope and you expect that people will be there. It's sort of like going to the bank and you need resources and, you know, the only way they're there is if you're putting in."

And then I told them about my dad's life which, you know, after he got sober (which took him a long time), he became completely dedicated to AA, and set up a whole bunch of AA programs; set up alcoholic recovery programs at a Catholic hospital; became the chairman of the board of the hospital; raised money for it. But he was always a candy striper at the hospital. He was the only male, and he insisted on being on the psychiatric ward--with the craziest folks--because he felt that that was the journey that he had made, and who better to be there to help them see that there was, you know … there was a future that was good and positive.

And he died, and when my mother found him, she had a heart attack. So it was, you know, tragic. All the kids were away, but this little town that they had been so deeply involved in, as volunteers, took care of everything—including taking care of us. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

Will went on to describe an incredible tale of kindness and sensitivity that this small community extended toward his family in helping them through the experience of his father's death and his mother's serious health issue. He concluded:

So I told the students; I said, "Think about it. This entire community rose to support the family affected by this, and just as right now, you're finding that wherever you look, there are people there available, but how are you in your life; how are you in your profession; how are you as a citizen contributing to the weaving of that fabric that's going to be there for you and other people?"

So I tried, you know, to present it in that way that those … For those of us who've had the opportunity to go to a great university, we have a special obligation, and that should be clearly communicated. And so, you know, I think you can do that in a secular sense--you know, your civic obligation--but I think you can also touch the traditions of various faith communities and say this is part of all of our traditions, and that you have an obligation that goes beyond being a good practitioner, but using that knowledge and that skill for the common good— for transformative change. And that will be good for the community, and it will be good for you; I can testify to that. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

I noted that near the end of his narrative about the incident in New Orleans, Will had used that same term in regard to learning situations, when he said: "I don't think it can be transformative if you're not engaged in a real struggle" (WM, personal communication, December 22, 2008). At our next meeting, I asked him to tell me more about his thoughts on transformation:

> Well, let's see. Part of it is, you know, we all grow up in a family, in a community, where there's a certain number of scripts that we're given. And often they're scripts which create insiders and outsiders, and our rules of hospitality towards those two sets of people are quite different. And I think that's created a society with enormous fragmentation and very clear class and racial lines that needs to be undone, deconstructed, dismantled and replaced with something that's more generous of heart and spirit and more inclusive … in which a measure of a man or a women is the degree to which they create opportunities for others and share their gifts….
>
> So I think creating opportunities where folks can, with some encouragement, step out of their comfort zone; cross critical cultural, class, racial, ethnic, religious lines; and come to know others in an intimate kind of way, with some set of supports and skills of reflection, so that they can critically examine their assumptions about the other and maybe entertain more engagement, more exchange, more reciprocity. I think that's important on a personal level. In addition to that, once you can put yourself in another's shoes, you also get a sense of what some of the broader environmental and structural and institutional factors are that may be shaping opportunity or limiting opportunity … reproducing equity or inequity.
>
> And I think the second thing is helping people connect that journey on an individual basis to their larger responsibility as citizens and to use their individual resources to connect with others—community organizations that can change some of the basic operating rules….So part of it is helping people cross those boundaries, and then I think helping equip people with a set of critical reflection skills to connect what they're seeing to larger structures in the society, and then I think challenging them to actually take action, to not just accept trends as destinies, but to see that through collective action they can actually change outcome….
>
> So I think those are maybe three things: Crossing boundaries; critical reflection; and then helping them develop organizing skills to effect change and the reinforcing impact that has on their sense of what the possibilities are … and also what's of value and what's joyful. (WM, personal communication, April 7, 2009)

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In an earlier exchange, Will had spoken about some of the hands-on ways in which he attempts to engage with students. I noted that his goal in relation to these efforts, again, was one of transformation:

> I think with my conversations with students who are beginning to think about whether or not planning is the right career for them (as the chair, they come and see me), that's an opportunity to have a fairly serious conversation. And in my previous job, I did the advising for all the freshmen (as the department chair), and that was really a gift. And then I teach--I've always taught--the *Intro to Planning* class, which I love, because it gives me a chance to present a view of planning that is about, you know, community building, healing, justice, democracy, and to challenge them to think about how they might be able to contribute to that work. And not everybody would want to teach the *Intro to Planning* class for 25 years, but I can't imagine not teaching it.
>   And I try to constantly look around for the examples of people who are engaged in giving prophetic voice to justice claims and are trying to promote transformative change because, I think, when you can introduce people to that, it has a deeply transformative impact. (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

Will's belief in the importance of helping his students experience transformative change was very evident. I asked him to talk more with me about how he helps his students find meaningful answers to the question(s) of what life is all about. He replied:

> I think one of the advantages of now being closer to the retirement age than the initiating part of your career is that, I think, as you get a little bit older you think more deeply and critically about, you know, "What do I want to leave as a legacy? What is it that I want to be able to look back on my life and take great pleasure and appreciation in?" And I think that young people who are beginning, trying to find careers, they resonate to that. And I think finding opportunities and spaces to, you know, get people to--students to--look beyond getting a job. "You'll have five or six different jobs; you'll have four or five different careers. The question is towards what end is it that you're seeking to make a contribution? And why? And, you know, what are you going to be satisfied with when you're 60, 70 and 80 if you're blessed enough to live [that long]? What do you want your children to be able to look upon your own life and be inspired by? What is it that you want to pass on?" (WM, personal communication, October 10, 2008)

Throughout the conversations I had with Will, I was conscious of this sense of obligation he carries—on the one hand, an obligation to be responsive to the rich heritage

that has been given him; and on the other, a passion to pass along those gifts, those opportunities, those challenges to those he teaches. I was not surprised when he concluded his remarks concerning the personal resources that have enabled him to handle the recent disruptions in his life, by stating:

> I never expected to be a tenured professor, or be a chair of a department, dean, president … That was never my … I was looking for a way to make a difference. And I thought it was going to be as an organizer or social worker. In essence, I've been sort of that in the context of higher [education]. And the upside, there, has been that you've been able to share this with young people and inspire them. And where my students have gone and what they've done: I think that's the most significant thing I've done—is to share this with other people….I can look at a dozen or more students who have made a lifelong commitment to social justice work. I mean, I think, like me, there was lots of nurturing, but I think I helped them see a way that they could use their professional skills to really make a difference. So, that's what's given me meaning. (WM, personal communication, December 22, 2008)

Concluding Remarks

Ultimately, it was these issues of giving something back, of promoting a more equitable society, of creating a legacy of which they would be proud, that shaped the backdrop of the conversation Will had with his students in post-Katrina New Orleans. In explaining to me his own thinking with regard to the choices he put before his students that day, he stated:

> How do you, in an unflinching way, share the gift of life and of love that you've been given by a creator with others: to promote justice; to create the City on the Hill; to create the beloved community? How do you do that? What are the opportunities? What are the qualities of thought, of affection, of the skills that you need in order to do that? I think helping young people identify their unique gifts (everyone has them); and what does that mean in terms of what contribution you can make; what path you can follow in order to support bringing together the Kingdom of God and to serve? I think that's part of what a teacher can do in an advising situation, in the intimacy of a classroom that's engaged in difficult work….[I]t was really, on so many levels, a great opportunity to really think about what it means to be a person, to live a life of commitment, to be a person of integrity in a particular profession. (WM, personal communication, December 22, 2008)

I thought it appropriate that Will's statement was suited not only to the options he put before his students, but to the choices he has faced himself over time. The tumult of the past few years has provided him with a good deal of pain, but also with rich opportunities for exploring those same questions of the kind of person he wants to be; what it means to be engaged in a life of commitment; and to what his sense of integrity calls him. I felt privileged to have been the recipient of Will's generosity in discussing these concerns with me, and was pleased to observe that he seemed happy and at peace with the resolutions at which he has arrived. Those questions, of course, he will re-visit many times over as new opportunities and new challenges arise, but for today, his stance is clear: "So if I were to drop dead at the end of this interview, I would feel like I have had the richest, most remarkable journey on this earth … Blessed" (WM, personal communication, December 22, 2008).

At one point in our work together, I asked Will to engage in what I called a right brain activity (in an attempt to have him reflect on these concerns in a manner less linear than our previous discourse). In response to my request, Will wrote a reflection that summarized beautifully much of what he had shared with me over the course of our conversations, at the same time that it eloquently portrayed his gratitude for the many dimensions of his life:

> Well I don't think its poetry; it's some kind of prose which … I was thinking about this notion of, "Is what I do: Is it an occupation; is it a calling; is it a vocation; is it something I decided?" I have been doing this kind of work from my teen-age years, really. Somehow, I just think it was what I was meant to do: that is bringing people together around common concerns, and trying to help them explore paths forward that would both transform the situation, and them, and me.
> And so, this is a little bit about, "I think it was a gift; I didn't do anything to acquire it. It was just something--a role, a way of being or looking at the world-- that has always seemed like it was available to me, and potentially transformative.

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And that sense of confidence that you could push things forward and (call it wild naïveté or rational optimism, etc.), it seems to be a family trait. So I'm part of a clan of people like this, which I'm hugely grateful for:

An undeserved blessing

I was given a gift
A sense that what is best about the present, could be,
The foundation for an improved tomorrow
A gift freely offered by my parents, family, church, and God
Inspired examples of its use provided by those surrounding me
Expecting to use it as an organizer, advocate, or social worker
Never anticipating sharing it as a teacher
Deeply and forever touched by the power of the gift to change those who
     received it and those with whom they shared it
Grateful for the opportunity to work with others to see to limitless
     possibilities for change in themselves and others
Appreciative of the time, energy, and grace to participate with others in
     building the beloved community
Blessed to experience, as a teacher, the Kingdom of God each day as those
     with whom I work come to appreciate the divine in themselves and
     others
Becoming as Ghandi predicted the "change we wish to see"
(WM, personal communication, December 22, 2008)

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Implications of Study

I'd rather learn from one bird how to sing
than teach ten thousand stars how not to dance.
(Cummings, 2003, p. 143)

In chapter 1 of this document, I wrote:

> [M]y main objective in this study was to strive for depth of understanding relative to the perceptions and experiences of the participants (individually and collectively) and, then, to tell their stories well. If I was able to accomplish that objective, I believe that the story will be one from which people can borrow to better understand these issues and their pertinence to sound educational practice.

I believe that, to a large extent, I have accomplished that goal—at least in regard to the telling of the individual stories of each of the professors who participated in this study. My purpose in this closing chapter will be to address their collective response and what might be learned from the generous, courageous, and reasoned sharing they did in speaking about this very personal area of their lives.

Based on what I have learned in this study, I can say that the simple answer to the question of whether the spirituality of teachers in higher education informs their teaching philosophy is, "Yes, it does!" Or, at least, that is true of the seven professors who participated in this study. As I stated previously, many teachers in higher education would not identify spirituality as being important to their teaching, but for many professors--including those in this study--spirituality is a vital means of how they see, experience, and interact with the world. Thus, it makes sense that this important aspect of these teachers' lives has a demonstrable effect on their teaching. Even though none of the participants in this study understood spirituality or teaching in exactly the same ways, there was a common thread that wove together their divergent stories, testifying to the

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importance of the relationship between spirituality and teaching—at least from their perspective. In concluding this study, I hope to use this chapter to portray the main aspects of that common thread.

Revisiting my Research Questions

In chapter 1, I outlined six research questions that have served as a foundation for this study. These were:

1. What did these teachers in higher education think about their spirituality and/or religion?

2. What did these teachers in higher education think about the processes of teaching and learning?

3. How have spirituality and teaching come together in the cognitive processes, the affective experiences, and the actions—that is, in the person—of each of the participants?

4. What were the perceptions of these teachers with respect to the factors that have enabled them to reach, or not to reach, their students in ways that promote growth and development?

5. What kinds of experiences have manifested these learning and developmental exchanges?

6. What can be learned about the connections between spirituality and teaching based on the perceptions and experiences of these seven teachers in higher education?

My purpose in this chapter will be to reply to these six research questions by an examination of the collective response of the professors who participated in this study, which I will do by applying Blumer's (1969) principles of symbolic interactionism (as discussed in chapter 3):

> [H]uman beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them; … the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interactions that one has with one's fellows; … [and] these meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he or she encounters. (p. 2)

Research Question 1

What did these teachers in higher education think about their spirituality and/or religion? The simplest answer to this question is that in regard to their spiritualities, none of the seven teachers thought exactly alike. Given the fact that all of them shared the common religious heritage of Christianity, I found it interesting that the differences in their spiritualities, in many ways, seemed more prevalent than did their similarities—at least, in my judgment. While that statement may say much about the divisions within Christianity itself, I believe, even more, it acknowledges the reality that spirituality always is a product of multiple influences, of which religious heritage is only one. In listening to the stories of these seven professors, it was abundantly clear that a number of other factors were significant in the forming of what they defined as their spiritualities. At various times in our discussions, I became aware of the significant roles played by their personalities, their experiences, their identities, and their cultures in shaping their spiritualities. It seemed clear, as well, that the reverse aspect of this dynamic holds true as well: that their spiritualities have a significant impact in helping to shape their personalities, experiences, identities, and cultures. It seemed to me that it was from within the tumult of this symbiotic interaction that they wove their stories and articulated their thoughts concerning the relationship between their spiritualities and their philosophies of teaching.

Given all of those influences, it is not surprising that there were significant differences in the ways in which these professors spoke about their spiritualities. Nonetheless, that remark should not be taken to suggest that there were no similarities observed in their presentations with respect to this area of their lives. Per my observation, these teachers exhibited a number of common elements in speaking with me in regard to their spiritualities:

- For all of them, spirituality was only one dimension among many in defining their rich identities, but spirituality was a vital dimension in how they understand themselves as human beings;

- Again, while spirituality was only one among many frames of reference that these professors apply in understanding and interacting with the broader world, it was an important frame of reference in how they thought about, and interacted with, the world;

- For all seven, the concept of spirituality had to do with making-sense-of, with discovering and understanding meaning in life;

- All seven of these participants would say that they are spiritual beings, that spirituality is a resource on which they draw for strength, understanding, meaning;

- For all of them, spirituality included an aspect of connection to others—a feature they very much wanted to pass along to their students via their role as teachers;

- For all, spirituality seemed related to a desire to make a difference in the world; to have an impact; to be part of building a more fair, a more just, society;

- Personal relationships were an essential component of all of their spiritualities. This, especially, was evident in their descriptions of how their spiritualities were formed;

- For these seven, some sense of a transcendent was an aspect of their spiritualities. Although some people may have other ways of speaking to these kinds of concerns, this was a fundamental aspect in the presentation of all of these professors;

- For most, but not all, their religious affiliations were important to the ways in which they thought about and discussed their spiritualities.

Throughout the conversations that I had with the seven participants in this study, the element of how they find meaning in their interactions with the broader world was a key feature in regard to how they understood themselves; how they made sense of the world; how they chose to interact with that world; and how they interpreted those interactions. To a large degree, these interpretations are what I perceived to be the spiritualities of these teachers. These elements seemed to emanate from the core of who these professors are as people and to fit comfortably within the definition for spirituality that I asserted at the beginning of this document:

> [T]he values that we hold most dear, our sense of who we are and where we come from, our beliefs about why we are here--the meaning and purpose that we see in our work and our life--and our sense of connectedness to each other. (Astin, 2002, ¶ 3)

The points of common perspective that I enumerated earlier in this section speak to the value sets of these participants in regard to who they are; their interpretations of how

they have come to be; and their purpose(s) in being here. The points also speak to how these seven individuals find meaning in their work and in their lives. Finally, the points spell out the ways in which our connectedness as a human community serves as the medium in which this development, this learning, this meaning, occurs.

After reading the literature regarding some of the different ways in which some theoreticians approach this issue, and employing a broad definition of spirituality in my design of the study, I thought I likely would have at least one member of my panel of participants who would talk about these concerns apart from a sense of a transcendent being or presence. That proved not to be the case. All seven of these professors acknowledged a sense of relationship or connection to something beyond themselves as a foundation of their spiritualities. That partially may be the result of whom I chose to include as a participant; certainly, it is a product of their own conceptualization of the language I was using in directing these conversations. What it says most clearly though, I believe, is that for many people--including these seven--this sense of a relationship with a transcendent being or presence is an essential part of how they understand themselves and the world around them.

None of the participants understood the spiritual part of their lives in the same way, but for all of them, it was an essential aspect of their characters. To ask teachers to deny this part of their lives, or to encourage them to set this aside when entering the classroom seems, at best, short-sighted. Teachers do need to be cautious in the exercise of how they might share this aspect of their lives: Potentially, there is danger that this sharing could be done in such manner as to be abusive toward students—but no less so than the many ways that teachers can abuse a multitude of privileges that come with their positions. Part

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of being a professional, is a commitment to keep those kind of temptations in check, to be respectful of the students we are charged to serve, and to give ourselves wholly to the service that we do in accepting the mantle of being educators. The seven professors who participated in this study seemed to understand those boundaries well, which is part of what makes them, in my opinion, skilled teachers whose teaching philosophies are informed by their spiritualities.

Research Question 2

What did these teachers in higher education think about the processes of teaching and learning? In a manner similar to their thoughts regarding spirituality, these seven professors displayed widely divergent perspectives in regard to their thoughts about teaching. None of them thought exactly alike about that role, and, again, their perceptions were shaped by multiple influences—perhaps, for teaching, due even less to their formal preparation for that role than was true of spirituality. Some of these differences in style or philosophy may have been due to the fact that the professors teach in various disciplines, some due to differences between graduate and undergraduate education, but neither of these explanations could account for all of the differences that were observed. The individual perspectives of these individuals played a huge part in determining how they think about teaching, and how they structure their classes.

Many of these professors' thoughts about teaching were established on the basis of their own personal experiences. For the most part, none of them engaged in discussion of theories of education, nor, in most cases, did they talk about courses they took that prepared them to be a teacher. Overall, the determining factor in most of their teaching philosophies and styles was their own experience of what works and what does not—

perspectives they have imbibed both from their own experiences as a student and what they have learned in their time as teachers.

Those differences being acknowledged, there still were several points of convergence in their presentations with respect to their thoughts about teaching:

- All seven of these professors valued the role of being a teacher. For all of them, this identity has become an important part of how they think about themselves in relation to the world;

- All felt that this role was an important means of them being able to make a contribution to the world;

- All seven of these professors talked about teaching as a means of drawing others into meaning-making engagement;

- All seven seemed to have significant expectations of their students. The demands they made of their students seemed to be an essential component in helping their students develop to their fullest potential;

- The requirements that they stipulated for their students included the learning of external material pertinent to an area of study, but all seven of these teachers were more focused on the development of their students as people than on the accumulation of information;

- The teaching philosophies of all seven would identify themselves more as facilitators of learning than disseminators of knowledge (Robertson, 2005), and their methods for achieving this goal were situated more in drawing knowledge out of their students, than in trying to pour knowledge into them;

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- Personal relationships, again, were key—in the formation of their own ideas about teaching, and in regard to the times they identified in which they have felt they have made a difference as a teacher;

- Although most didn't use the term, most of them discussed teaching and learning as a transformative exchange. To that end, they were interested not only in changing how much their students know, but the *ways* in which their students know.

Throughout the conversations that I had with the seven participants in this study, the element of how they find meaning in their interactions with the broader world was a key feature of what they brought to their students. The concerns about how they understood themselves, how they made sense of the world, how they chose to interact with that world, and how they interpreted those interactions, all were vital components of their interactions with their students, and, in fact, the projection of those same types of concerns onto the student populace was a significant aspect of the teaching dynamic that each of these professors brought to the classroom. The participants had different ways of framing their thoughts about this dynamic, but, again, these various concepts fit comfortably within the definition that I asserted for teaching philosophy in chapter 1 of this document:

[H]ow teachers think learning occurs, how they think they can intervene in this process, what chief goals they have for students, and what actions they take to implement their intentions. (Chism, 1998, Components of the Statement section, ¶ 1)

The points of common perspective that I enumerated earlier in this section speak to the ways in which these seven professors perceive their common role as teacher—the perceptions they have with respect to how learning occurs, their part in facilitating those processes among their students, the aspirations they have for their students, and the techniques, methods, and activities they employ in helping their students strive to attain those objectives. In addition, these points demonstrate the confidence that these professors have in their students, or, more appropriately, what might be identified as their *affirmation* of their students' capacity to engage in their own searches for meaning and purpose in ways that are informed and caring, and rooted in a sense of connection and responsibility to the human community.

I was very pleased with the diversity of academic disciplines I was able to recruit among the professors who participated in this study—to have had the opportunity to observe the ways that teachers within these various fields of study think about the processes of teaching and learning. I especially was pleased to be able to include professors from disciplines that were very different than my own to gain their perspectives. As I listened, I was delighted to realize that their purposes were rooted in desires very similar to those of the teachers who were from disciplines closer to my own (within the social sciences)—a desire to make sense of the world in which we live; a concern for wanting to fashion a world that is better, more beautiful, and more just; an interest in discovering ways in which we can relate more effectively as a human community.

One of the best parts of doing this study was to have had the opportunity to observe the commitment these seven professors bring to their craft, and the way in which that

dedication seems rooted in a deep commitment to those whom they teach. This commitment did not appear to be something that was generated in response to any kind of external authority, but rather something that arose from the inner life of these teachers—from the people they have become in response to their quest for meaning and connection to the community of which we all are part. This university encourages "engaged scholarship" (SUAPP, n.d., ¶ 1), by which it means connecting the research done under its auspices to the needs of the larger community, but in observing the dedication of these seven professors to their students, I thought that label was fitting here as well. These seven teachers regularly and consistently draw their students into engaged scholarship by the commitments they make to helping their students learn, by the encouragement they offer their students toward seeking and discovering the truth of their own lives, by the learning activities they employ to foster growth, insight, and commitment among the students they teach.

Research Question 3

How have spirituality and teaching come together in the cognitive processes, the affective experiences, and the actions—that is, in the person—of each of the participants? This question, perhaps, lies at the heart of the concern that defines this study: How do these aspects of the lives of these seven professors come together within the person that each of them has become? As indicated in my response to the two previous research questions, none of the professors thought alike in regard to either spirituality or teaching, yet all of them identified this relationship as an essential element of how they define themselves within their own personhood, and in relation to their students and the world at large. The previous chapter of this document portrayed these seven individuals' various

stories—all very different from one another; as are the people whose stories were told. Running beneath those differences, though, were many characteristics the group held in common:

- For the most part, all of these professors seemed comfortable with whom they are as people and in their role as teachers;

- That comfort, however, has not led to complacence: All seven professors seemed more than open to--seemed to yearn for--further change and growth;

- None of these seven seemed to be among the "disaffected, dispirited, and alienated faculty" (Walsh, 1999, ¶ 3), described in chapter 2 of this document;

- For all of these participants, teaching seemed to provide a forum to share what they believe and what they value;

- All seven seemed to have valued the opportunity to acknowledge and talk about their spiritualities as related to their teaching;

- All of these teachers seemed to work at how best to balance their spirituality with the other dimensions of their lives.

- All seemed grateful for the opportunities teaching has provided as a forum for connecting with their students in meaningful ways;

- All seven seemed grateful for the vehicle that teaching has provided for them to be able to serve their communities and the broader world;

- In their respective disciplines, all seemed to have discovered a medium that allows them to pass along what they think, believe, and value;

- The methods of teaching employed by these seven professors reflect who they are, what they value, and how they believe learning occurs;

- Most, but not all, indicated a sense of call, or vocation, with respect to being a teacher. Among those who did acknowledge a sense of being called, not all identified the source of that call as having originated from outside of themselves, but all did say that they experienced that call as something deep within themselves, and that this call either led them to become teachers, and/or it has sustained them as they have grown into that role.

Throughout the conversations that I had with the participants in this study, the element of how they have found meaning served as a foundation for both their own personal development and the presence they have brought to their efforts to inspire growth among their students. The concerns about how they have come to understand themselves, how they have made sense of the world, how they have chosen to interact with that world, and how they have interpreted those interactions, all have become catalysts for their own further development. The individual styles of these professors differed widely with respect to both spirituality and teaching--some tending to be more cognitive, some more emotional, some more action-oriented--but all seemed to integrate these various aspects of their personalities in such a manner as to enhance the presence they brought to their role as teacher. In turn, the integration of their own responses to the world seemed to translate well into an ability to promote similar kinds of growth among their students.

Research Question 4

What were the perceptions of these teachers with respect to the factors that have enabled them to reach, or not to reach, their students in ways that promote growth and development? In chapter 2 of this document, I wrote:

These concepts are the core of what I wanted to address with the participants in this study—how the inner life of these teachers feeds the connection they experience with their students in the processes of learning, how they perceive these connections to create experiences of meaning and transformation in the lives of their students, and how these experiences of transformation have fed their own sense of meaning with respect to the ways in which they serve the human community.

The seven professors who participated in this study exhibited various perceptions and engaged in different practices when it came to their attempts to connect with students in meaningful ways. Many of those divergent practices are portrayed in the seven stories that are told in the previous chapter of this document. But, again, among the many differences there recorded, I also note a number of qualities these seven teachers hold in common in the ways in which they strive to reach their students:

- All seven of these professors were student focused, which translated into all of them incorporating student interaction and other student-centered approaches (such as group discussion and reflective writing exercises) into their classroom practice;

- Most, but not all, encouraged civic engagement of some kind. There was a strong investment in having students make connections between their study and its potential impact on the community;

- All of these teachers seemed invested in inspiring their students to find ways to make a difference in the human community;

- All supplemented their teaching with attention to other aspects of their role, for example: advising, research, and service (both on campus and in the community), and in regard to research and their service to the community, they often had developed avenues by which students could share in those activities;

- All spoke about the use of multiple techniques and methods that they employ in their teaching, but all seemed willing to adapt these when necessary to serve the needs of their students;

- All seven emphasized the seminal importance of personal relationships as conduits for effective learning;

- Most, implicitly--and a couple, explicitly--talked about being continual learners. Part of the connection they make with students is in their own desire to keep learning;

- All took seriously the charge to help their students grow into their full humanity, as well as to inspire their students to make the world a better place;

- Most felt comfortable helping to facilitate their students' spiritual development, but in most cases this was done informally;

- Most were not shy about discussing meaning-of-life kinds of issues, but all pretty much refrained from discussing religion unless their students took the lead on bringing up those concerns;

- Some were more comfortable than others with the use of religious language; but none engaged in proselytizing.

Throughout the conversations that I had with the participants in this study, the element of connecting with their students in meaningful ways was paramount in their consideration. How these professors have come to understand themselves, how they have made sense of the world, how they have chosen to interact with that world, and how they have interpreted those interactions, all have become primary components of their efforts to relate to their students and to transmit those values and beliefs to those who come after

them. Similarly, it seemed that a key aspect of what they attempt to inspire in their students is a commitment to engage in that same quest: discerning how to understand themselves, how to make sense of the world, how to interact with that world, and how to make sense of those interactions,

Research Question 5

What kinds of experiences have manifested these learning and developmental exchanges? In outlining my plans for this study in chapter 3, I stated that I would examine the material that these teachers shared with me through the frameworks provided by various theoreticians who are respected for their work in regard to cognitive development (Perry; Belenky et al.; Kegan) and faith development (Fowler). (The numerous stages of each of these frameworks are summarized in chapter 2 of this document). As I listened to the participants share their stories, however, I realized that I best could employ these schemes by shifting the ways in which I had been conceptualizing these frameworks in two significant ways. I realized that these schemes would better serve the knowledge to be constructed in this study: (1) if I were able to view them as a composite picture of development rather than as alternative (or competing) schemes; and (2) if I were able to think of them (in the words of the old cliché) as descriptions of--rather than prescriptions for--development (Eller, 1970). In both of these adjustments to my own thought processes, I feel I have been able to attend more closely to the intent of the theoreticians who articulated these stage-oriented frameworks as measures by which we might better understand cognitive and faith development.

The realization that captured my attention, as I studied the various developmental frameworks, was that the higher levels of each of these schemes involve, in some capacity, two features that were repeatedly exhibited by the seven professors who participated in this study: (1) a capacity for tolerating (perhaps even embracing) ambiguity and paradox; and (2) a giving over of oneself—an extending of oneself in relationship to others (often in the form of service to the broader world). It was these features that repeatedly captured my attention as I listened to the participants describe the ways in which they think about spirituality and teaching. Similarly, I believe, these features are central aspects in how these teachers make sense of these connections in their own thought processes and in regard to living their lives.

In William Perry's (1970/1999) outline of cognitive development, he identifies *Commitment* as the highest form of development. As I described this stage in chapter 2:

> This stage is characterized by the learner's ability to make choices and to act—even in the midst of uncertainty. A person in this stage of development is able to view the broad range of perspectives that may be pertinent to an issue or a decision, and choose a course of action. This individual has a much higher tolerance for ambiguity and paradox than is true for learners in any of the earlier stages of development. While this stage accentuates one's ability to commit to a course of action, the nature of this commitment does not portend finality rooted in premature or immature resolution of complex issues. Rather the learner commits to an ongoing process of development that is established as a foundational element of his or her ongoing growth.

I experienced the teachers who engaged with me in this study, not as academics who idly sit and ponder the vagaries of life, but rather as people of action: in their engagement of students, in their attention to the concerns of the human community, in their willingness to engage and interact with the world at large, these are people who are engaged in active efforts to make the world a better place. And, yes, the choices they make in regard to those actions often are made in the midst of great uncertainty. In their

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willingness to act, it seemed, they exhibit high levels of tolerance for ambiguity and paradox within themselves, in the disciplines in which they teach, and in regard to the world at large. In addition, it seemed that these were people who, in committing themselves, did not close themselves off to alternative courses of action, nor to the continual processes of personal development.

Belenky et al. (1986), who expanded on Perry's schema by incorporating the perspectives of female respondents, were careful to state that their scheme was intended to complement--not compete with--Perry's work, and that the framework was not intended to suggest that these stages of development were gender-specific. They identified the highest level of their schema as *Constructive Knowing*, as I described it earlier in this document:

> As the name suggests, this stage was characterized by a more constructivist approach to knowing; in other words, knowledge comes from within and the learner is involved in shaping what becomes known. Individuals in this stage were much more attentive to context, as well as being more tolerant of ambiguity and contradictions, and they were involved more actively in the seeking of knowledge and personal growth.

This concept, of course, lies at the heart of the process in which the participants and I have been engaged in doing this study. It also is true of the ways in which these teachers go about conducting their courses—not attempting to pour information into their students' minds, but rather, helping their students draw out of their own experiences the elements on which new understanding and knowledge can be established. Awareness and appreciation of context, and a tolerance of ambiguity are essential aspects of this kind of knowing—as is an active posture that engages the individual (students and teachers) in a continual quest for knowledge and growth, rather than passively waiting for these to be bestowed from somewhere, or by someone, outside of oneself. It seemed that the

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professors who were part of this study engaged in this type of knowing for themselves, even as they attempted to inspire the same among their students.

Fowler's (1981) scheme of development also was founded on the basis of Perry's framework, but Fowler concerned himself with faith, rather than cognitive, development. In addressing this scheme, I feel it necessary to address the two highest levels of this framework. I do so because Fowler states that very few people attain the highest level of his scheme. Most of my comparison of these professors will be with respect to the penultimate stage of his schema which Fowler calls *Conjunctive Faith*, but I also will direct a couple of my remarks to the highest level of the framework—what Fowler identifies as *Universalizing Faith*.

In chapter 2 of this document, I described *Conjunctive Faith* as follows:

> In this stage, the individual attempts to piece together a system of belief that is consistent with reality in all of its ambiguity and paradox. This person is comfortable enough within his or her self to extend one's belief system beyond the self. This person is open to other cultures and traditions, realizing that truth is always partial and that there always is more that one can learn. The strength of this position is the openness one has to multiple forms of truth. Transition to the final stage of development, when that occurs, begins with a sense of call to root one's transforming vision for the world in action to achieve that vision.

And I described *Universalizing Faith* in this manner:

> The movement to this stage does not occur with great frequency. People who attain this level of development radically commit themselves to the fulfillment of the human community. These individuals may appear to be subversive in that they concern themselves, not with security and survival, but with the transformation of the future of the human community. Fowler (1981) offers the names of Mohandas Ghandi, Martin Luther King, and Mother Teresa of Calcutta as examples of people he feels have achieved this stage of development.

The participants in this study all seemed open to taking in new ideas, new experiences, new ways of understanding, often which came to them via their openness to diverse cultures and to traditions other than their own. They seemed to embrace the

multitudinous ways in which truth presented itself—or, at least, the ways in which they conceptualized truth as more than a single, immutable entity. The ability to stretch themselves and their understandings, again, seemed to be fostered by a high level of tolerance for ambiguity and for the paradox that is part of our lives, our institutions, our world.

I am not sure that I agree with Fowler on the rarity of people attaining the sixth level of his framework. While I certainly believe that the people he names are laudable in the service they have done for the human community, I am not sure that this, necessarily, means that they attained a higher level of faith than is true of many other people. Using these people as examples, perhaps, gives us a picture of this level of faith, but that picture is rooted in our *images* of these people, not in the quality or degree of their faith. It may be true that few people attain this level, but some of that judgment, I suspect, depends upon what one means by *radical* commitment. It seems to me that there are myriad ways one can be radically committed to the fulfillment of the human community even when one's scope of service may be less grand than the examples put forth by Fowler.

One of the reasons I am uncomfortable with the notion that this level of faith should be so exclusive is that I believe that the exuberance of our reverence for our heroes, at times, can impede our awareness, or diminish our appreciation, of all the small acts of heroism that people live every day. Repeatedly, as I listened to the stories of the seven professors who were part of this study, I was moved by the small aspects of the ways in which they strive to build the human community. Frankly, I do not know that these acts are any less radical--or, more to the point, any less faithful--than the dramatic actions

played out on the international stage by the people whom Fowler named in asserting his model of faith development.

The final developmental scheme I wish to consider as part of this analysis is that posited by Robert Kegan (1989). His, again, is intended as a framework to help us better understand cognitive development, and he lists his final stage as *Trans-system/Trans-complex*, which I summarized in chapter 2 in the following manner:

> This dimension is observed in the ability to understand dialectics within oneself and the institutions of which one is part. This individual is much more in touch with ways in which she or he shares in others' lives—not from outside, but as part of the same transpersonal reality. This person discovers connection with others in place of what used to appear as differences. Therefore, this person is high in empathy and a commitment to the broader human community.

Kegan's model, for me, is more difficult to understand than some of the others, but I felt it was important to include here because of his attention to the interior changes that occur within the person: in such a manner as to transform difference into connection--separation into communion--and his connection of these personal transformations to the development of empathy and commitment. I believe these are qualities that I witnessed repeatedly in the stories of those who participated in this study. These professors, in my estimation, were people with very high levels of both empathy and commitment, and I believe these qualities were rooted in their ability to see past difference and division to ways that we are called to live together, to be united in our humanity.

Throughout the conversations that I had with the participants in this study, the element of learning as development was readily apparent in their consideration. How they have come to understand themselves, how they have made sense of the world, how they have chosen to interact with that world, and how they have interpreted those interactions, all have become primary features of the ways in which they engage with the

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developmental processes of their own lives and in guiding the lives of the students with whom they are engaged.

Research Question 6

What can be learned about the connections between spirituality and teaching based on the perceptions and experiences of these seven teachers in higher education? Much can be learned from the stories that these professors have shared in the course of this study. Although they were only seven in number, they brought a rich diversity of both experiences and perspectives to the concerns addressed in this study. Simply put, their stories indicate that the spirituality of *some* teachers does inform their teaching—in different ways and to different degrees, yes, but the composite picture portrayed in the stories that they shared attests to this fact: Spirituality informs teaching!

Some of the frameworks for better understanding these connections are provided in the literature that I reviewed earlier in this document. As I indicated in chapters 1 and 2 of this document, there has been a fair amount of attention given to the topic of spirituality and teaching over the past few years, and writers have employed various labels and terminology in situating the importance of this discussion within higher education. In listening to the professors who participated in this study, it was evident to me that their thoughts align well with the various forms of language being used in that discussion.

Astin (2002, 2006) frames many of his remarks concerning this topic within the concept of values. In turn, this theme of attention to value-centered education ran throughout the presentations of each of the participants in this study. As examples, I might point to Will, posing to his students the question of whether they should stay and

align themselves with the people of the Ninth Ward in New Orleans; Jerome, who has touched the lives of countless young people by his teaching of the nine core values of the First Tee program; and Daniel, who is such a strong advocate of the need for our society to re-investigate its values if it hopes to have any impact on the growing social problems that we face. These are only examples; in the course of their presentations, every participant discussed numerous values that contribute to both the content and the enactment of their teaching practices. The emphasis on which values they stressed varied from one participant to another, but all of them emphasized the importance of exercising--and encouraging among their students--a value system that promotes human development and collegiality.

Chickering et al. (2006) speak about these concerns more under the umbrella of authenticity—the professor being true to self, and becoming more oneself by her or his engagement in the classroom. Again, the professors in this study demonstrated this element in their presentations to me. As examples, I might point to Don, who reaches out consistently to work with other disciplines to broaden his understandings of the world and to continue to grow into the fullness of his life; Michiko, who locates her style of teaching within the value set of a profession in which she believes so earnestly; Sarah, who regularly involves herself in activities that push her to grow spiritually and expand her awareness of the world around her; and Jerome, who has internalized the lessons of his own student years to develop an engaged style of teaching in which he creates opportunities for his students to practice, and make sense of, the theories they are learning in the classroom. Again, over the course of our discussions, each of the participants demonstrated this concern in numerous and varied ways. By and large, these

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seven professors were people who were comfortable with who they are in relation to the world and their students, but that level of comfort was not such as to diminish their quest to continue growing more fully into the person they are striving to become.

Parks (2000) describes the teacher as mentor, a role she, obviously reveres, and one that shares many of the aspects that have been discussed in this document. Only one or two of the participants in this study, actually, used the label of mentor in their discussion of being a teacher, but it was clear to me that this is a vital feature in the way that each of them thinks about that role. There was Jim, who has an open studio policy intended to provide his students with access to a safe place in which they can grow professionally and personally; Michiko, who has received special recognition from the members of the student group that promotes good practice and professional growth within her discipline; and Don, who is thrilled when he is able to light the fires of rational inquiry in a student who never before even considered a career in the sciences. Even though few of the professors used the label, mentor, when speaking about their teaching, it was very clear to me that all of them are engaged in this role as at least a part of their identity as teacher.

And, finally, Palmer, who in his writing (1998, 2000, 2003) more openly uses the term spirituality, clearly asserts the connection between spirituality and good teaching as a function of the identity and integrity of the teacher. Again, the participants in this study provided multiple examples of this perspective: Sarah, who integrates her curiosity, concern, and commitment into every aspect of the ways in which she strives to engender these qualities among her students; Daniel, who strives to be faithful, reliable, encouraging, and consistent in the ways in which he engages with students so as to give them new frameworks for making sense of the world they are planning to serve; Jim, who

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uses his practice studio to teach his students the importance of working respectfully with others and challenges them not to make excuses for one's performance—in the rehearsal hall, nor in life; and Will, whose integrity has brought him a number of dynamic challenges, but who continues to explore new avenues for re-defining his identity in relation to a world that he finds wondrous. Each of the professors, again, had different ways in which they spoke about the ways in which teaching provides an avenue to express the identity and integrity of who they are as persons, but all of them exhibited this as a common feature of their role as teacher.

Summation

Before starting this study, I had always heard that one should select a topic for a dissertation based on its ability to hold one's interest because the investment of time and energy required in completing the study would be almost endless. I understand that advice, now, in a much more personal way than when I began this process. The time and energy this project has consumed, indeed, has been considerable, but I am happy to report that the topic has done more than just hold my interest. This study has enriched my life: the process of designing and carrying out the study in all its details; the volume and breadth of reading I did; the conversations I shared with trusted others who helped to guide the process; the information I learned that I hope will make me a better teacher and a better person; but, especially, the conversations to which I was privileged with the seven professors who gave of themselves in response to my invitation to share in this journey. I am very fortunate to have been the beneficiary of their generosity and their kindness.

I'm not sure any of the participants in this effort fully appreciated all the places our conversations would take us when we began this study, but all of them, at the end of the process, expressed gratitude and seemed to be satisfied with the product of our conversations. As was indicated in chapter 3, some participants engaged more fully in some of the exercises than did others, but the exercises were simply tools used to evoke a response and/or to provoke, perhaps, some different ways of thinking about the topics we discussed. Even among those who did not do all the exercises, I think they would attest they had more than enough opportunities to explore these concerns and to articulate their perspectives with regard to the issues addressed in this study.

From my own perspective, I was more than pleased with the response of the group—the generosity they showed in sharing significant portions of time, energy, and consideration; and the courage they exercised in speaking openly and in great detail about matters that were, at times, quite personal. I was delighted, particularly, not just with their willingness to respond to the various exercises I brought to them, but with their interest in wanting to explore these concerns for themselves. Some of this openness, of course, may have been a result of them getting to know me and trusting me more, but some of it, I felt, was their own desire to delve into these issues more than often is allowed by social convention on the college campus in 21st century America.

There are at least two issues commonly raised by those who are opposed to acknowledging a connection between the spirituality of some professors and their teaching: (a) that teaching should be purely objective, devoid of the person who is teaching the particular course material; and (b) that allowing one's spirituality to inform one's teaching is the equivalent of proselytizing students. The first of these objections

already has been addressed earlier in this study (in the literature review), when I discussed some of the differences between constructivist and positivist forms of knowing. If one accepts the positivist model of knowing, perhaps there would be some validity to the image of the teacher as one who simply passes along external truths. But as soon as one moves away from the positivist model (in its purest form), the personhood of the teacher becomes a factor in the learning exchange, and that personhood is comprised of all kinds of features—personality, experience, identity, and culture, at the very least. To that list, I would add spirituality as an essential element in how some people define their personhood, noting that many people (including myself) would include personality, experience, identity, and culture as some of the elements that define one's spirituality.

In regard to the more evocative charge--proselytizing--I can clearly attest that, although each of the participants in this study indicated their spirituality did inform their teaching, there was never a time in any of these conversations when I sensed that any of them engages in the proselytizing of his or her students. In speaking with their students, some were more comfortable than others with the use of religious language (some of which may be as much a cultural, as a religious, concern), but none of the seven ever said anything to suggest they had an agenda of conversion to some kind of religious ideology that runs beneath their efforts in the classroom. For most of the participants in this study, there were plenty of other language forms (beside religious language) they could employ to encourage the growth and responsibility they desire for their students. For some, this was the language of becoming an educated person; for others, the language of becoming a member of a profession; for others, doing one's civic duty; still for others, being a responsible member of the human race. Far more than concern about their students'

religious practices or beliefs, these teachers seemed to focus on wanting to inspire their students to grow, to helping students discover ways they can make a difference in this world, to improving their students' abilities to think critically and rationally about the world of which they are part.

Meeting my Objectives

Upon completing this study, I feel I was able to meet the objectives I outlined in chapter 1 of this document. I wanted to better understand why teachers do what they do in the course of educating their students. The generous response of the seven teachers who participated gave me a good deal of information about their methods of teaching and the reasons they feel those methods are useful to their overall purpose. They shared this information with me by telling me about their lives and by speaking about their beliefs and values and how these impinge upon their role as teachers. One of the things I enjoyed most about this aspect of the study was the multitudinous abilities, perspectives, and experiences these teachers brought to the study and the many ways in which they shared these with me.

As a result of the significant amount of time that I spent with each of the participants and the quality of the interactions that we shared, I feel I was able to capture a good sense of how their spiritualities contribute to what they do in the classroom. As was stated earlier, these teachers did not spend time discussing arcane elements of educational theory, but rather shared their lives and the derivative insights they have gathered from years of striving to be good teachers. I also enjoyed the opportunity they provided me in allowing me to visit their classrooms so that I could observe them in the act of teaching. Obviously, attending two or three classes provides very limited exposure, but it is far

more than usually occurs in the everyday course of higher education (at least on this campus). I believe I gained understanding by attending these classes, and I am grateful that these seven teachers allowed me to be there.

My main objective in doing this study was to craft a good qualitative account of how spirituality informs teaching. I believe I have done so. Although it was a huge task to complete, I thoroughly enjoyed writing the narratives that I felt would best capture the participants' stories. Next to doing the interviews themselves, I believe this was my favorite part of doing this study. Later in this document, I hope to address what all of this means—or what it might mean to the future of higher education. As stated earlier, this is not intended to be the definitive statement in the discussion that is occurring across this country with respect to the shape of higher education, but I hope it can be a part of heightening the awareness of those who want higher education to succeed and more fully informing those who want to help teachers to be the best they can be.

Filling Gaps in the Literature

There are few things on earth as powerful as a good story—a lesson we have had to learn many times over in the field of education. The chief contribution this study may make to that field is the power of the stories of these seven professors who shared the inner workings of their lives in such manner as to improve the field of teaching. Of course, stories are only as good as their telling. Thus, I bore a huge responsibility to tell these stories well, which perhaps is the piece of this that gives me the most pride. My commitment to these teachers was to tell their stories well, and I believe I have done so.

Perhaps the biggest gap in regard to this study is the very topic, itself. For far too long, higher education (with some exceptions) has treated spirituality as though it were

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inappropriate to the educational setting. Some of this, as was stated earlier, was due to confusion about the overlapping vistas of religion and spirituality. Setting that problem aside, I believe this study demonstrates that *one* of the frames of reference through which some teachers see, experience, and act toward the world is spirituality. To pretend this frame does not exist or does not impinge on the teaching process is terribly shortsighted. If Parker Palmer (1998) is right (and I think he is) in saying teachers do their best work when teaching from their identities and their integrity, spirituality is a part of that mix that should not be ignored.

Limitations

In any study, there are limitations that should be reported because these qualify the results that are reported as outcomes. In some cases, these are the product of mistakes the researcher may have made in the course of doing the study; more often, they simply are recognition of restraints that are part of the research process itself, which is always limited to some degree, always imperfect. In most cases, recognition of these limitations does not diminish the research that was done, but rather provides a lens through which the research can be interpreted more fully. Hopefully, this recognition also can be useful to future research efforts, helping the people that conduct those studies take into consideration more information that helps them in the design of the studies they conduct.

I wrote in chapter 1 about some of the limitations inherent in this study: the size and provincialism of the group of professors who were participants in the study; finite limits of time and energy (my own and that of the participants); finite limits of insight and understanding (my own and that of the participants) at any one point in time; and, of course, my own subjectivities--my own frames of reference, preconceptions, and beliefs--

that have conditioned every aspect of this study as it has been developed, implemented, and reported. In qualitative research, the researcher always is in the midst of the research itself, and this needs to be acknowledged as a limitation of any qualitative study that is done.

In addition to those elements (which were inherent to the process itself), there were other limitations in this study. Perhaps the one I most regret is the fact that I did not audio-tape the mini-interviews that I used for screening candidates for participation in the study. That was a judgment call on my part, and I opted not to impose a tape recorder on the process with, in most cases, people I was meeting for the first time. In making that decision, however, I may have lost the spontaneity, and in some cases the content, of some valuable information. Even though I encouraged the people that I selected for participation to repeat these pieces of information in our first formal interview (when I *was* audio-taping), the exchanges about many of these situations did not feel the same and in some cases, affected the impact of my telling those sections of their stories.

In addition to using those mini-interviews as a screening process for who might be a good participant for the study, I also used them to inform the potential participants about the study. For the most part, I think this was helpful, but I did not know every detail of what would be involved (for example, I designed some of the exercises that were used later in the research process as the processes of disclosure unfolded). I also did not appreciate how much time it would take to transcribe all of these interviews, nor how busy these professors were in their day-to-day lives. All that to say, that the research process stretched out over 5 months and it seemed to me that a couple of the participants lost some interest, or at least, became absorbed in other activities so as to not engage as

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fully in the interview process with me. Prior to all three interviews, I sent the participants a rubric for the interview in order that they would know want to expect, and in some cases, to ask them to give consideration to some exercises that would be part of that interview. In some cases, there were participants who had not made time to read the rubric and, thus, were unable to respond as fully as I would have liked to the exercises that were part of the interview. The exercises were included only as tools that might evoke a response and/or provoke different ways of thinking about the topics we discussed, but given the meaty responses of some of the other participants, I was disappointed that I wasn't able to capture this kind of substance from everyone.

I was pleasantly surprised--even a bit amazed--at how quickly I was able to assemble a roster of potential participants for this study. Once I started the networking process (which was another aspect of the mini-interviews), the list of candidates developed quickly. Actually, it was during this process, that I expanded my proposal from seeking four participants to identifying seven. There were others that I screened who I believe might have been excellent participants, as well, but I knew I had to set a limit on the number of participants and get started with the formal interview process.

One of the more obvious limitations of this study was that the religious heritage of all of the participants was Christian. Initially I did not plan this to be so, but after giving it more thought, I decided I would have plenty of variety among the participants even if I didn't include members of other faith traditions. Since qualitative research is intended to provide depth, not breadth, I thought it would be better to stay closer to my own experience and closer to what I know (at least to some degree). In no way, was this structural decision intended to suggest that the experiences of people from other faith

traditions would be less important or less helpful. I simply felt that I could achieve a sufficient level of diversity within the population with which I was more familiar. I think I was right in that assessment.

One other limit inherent in qualitative research is the means of gathering information. For the most part, I feel I engaged well with the teachers who were part of this study, but that is not to say that their level of sharing may not have been even more open, more informative had someone else been doing these interviews or discussing with them the ways in which their stories were constructed. Similarly, the responses to which I was privileged were those offered on a given day at a particular place and time. I had no control over what other factors may have been contributing to the dialogue that we shared at these particular moments. For example, a busy schedule, a sick child at home, or innumerable other conditions, may have significantly affected the dynamic that existed that day between this researcher and that participant. In turn, I was pleased with the exercises I was able to incorporate into the study as tools for stimulating our discussion, but these may not have been optimal for the ways in which every participant likes to interact in these types of settings, or the ways in which they process information, or the ways in which they learn. There is a human element in qualitative research that is inescapable; nonetheless it should be kept in mind as having an effect on the research that is done.

Possibilities for Further Research

Given the limitations listed above, the most obvious possibility for additional research is that there are lots more stories that could be--I would say, even, should be--told. As I stated in chapter 2, the topic of spirituality in relation to teaching has not been a

part of the attentions of higher education for quite some time, so information regarding this topic is limited. With the numbers of people who are bringing the subject back into the realms of acceptable discourse, I believe that more stories that communicate the rich diversity of the connection between spirituality and teaching will be helpful. The issue in qualitative research should not be volume--that is a quantitative concern--but diversity. Since the goal of qualitative research is to produce results that may be transferable, more diversity will provide a broader range of results from which people can draw in making sense of the world in which we live.

One area of study that I believe would add significantly to the forum of these concerns would be a study that incorporates the experiences of teachers from faith traditions other than Christianity. Even though I opted not to include these professors among the participants in this study, I think the addition of their diverse perspectives would add to the richness of the discussion of this topic.

Much of the discussion around the relationship between spirituality and teaching is value-centered, and much seems related to transformative education, as well. Any research that is done with respect to either of these concerns will add to the richness of further study in regard to spirituality and teaching—perhaps even providing new frameworks from which these connections can be considered or defined. Again, the more ways in which these questions can be considered, the richer, more comprehensive response we should be able to develop.

In Sarah's story, I raised the question of how the highest stage of Perry's (1970/1999) scheme of development, *Commitment*, might align with the fourth movement in Nouwen's (1992) description of spirituality, *Given*—in what ways these concepts are

similar; in what ways different; in what ways they might shed light on one another. These types of connections--across areas of discipline, across types of literature--need to be explored more fully. Further, I believe the developmental frameworks that I addressed in this study offer a solid foundation on which future studies could be based in broadening the discussion in which these questions are taken into consideration.

As the adult population of higher education continues to change, it will be important to continue to do research studies that help the institution respond intelligently to these changes. I believe that incorporating spiritual concerns as an element of those studies will benefit both the students and the institutions themselves. And along that same line, studies that explore the ways in which various institutions of higher education respond to this expressed need among their students will be critical to the overall development of higher education in general. Now that the connection between spirituality and teaching is being articulated, the attempts of various institutions to respond should be studied and reported for the benefit of all.

Importance to the Future of Higher Education

The important features this study brings to the future of higher education are several. Some of these are addressed earlier in this chapter in the comments I have made with respect to having met my objectives for the study, and in the section in which I articulate my recommendations for further research. In addition to these, perhaps the most important question to address is: Given the experiences of these seven professors and the knowledge that they are not alone in having a spiritual frame of reference for their lives, how should the institution respond?

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In the course of the interviews that I did with these seven participants, I raised that

concern with each of them in the form of a Yes-or-No question, followed by a pursuant

question that would invite them to expand upon their initial response:

> Should spirituality even be acknowledged as pertinent to teaching (a question that might especially be raised by some people with respect to public educational settings)? If one's answer to that last question was "Yes," how should that relationship be honored and nourished within the educational system; and if the answer was "No," how can the system ignore a referential frame which many teachers would consider seminal to their perception of their own lives and the world in which we live?

It was interesting to me that most of the participants were very cautious about having the

academy adopt an institutional response to this area of concern. Some expressed anxiety

that there very probably would be faculty that would abuse institutional sanction, mostly

by confusing religion for spirituality; others simply felt that the ways in which our society

interprets the separation-of-church-and-state concern mitigates against the institution ever

adopting any kind of formal position with respect to teaching and spirituality.

I'm unsure what specific image the participants had in mind in responding to this

inquiry because we did not discuss particular forms of an institutional response. To some

degree, I share their concerns about how such sanction could be abused. Nonetheless, as I

believe this study demonstrates, spirituality is an essential frame of reference in the lives

of many teachers and, in being so, I believe it is a part of the teaching that they do—even

when it goes unacknowledged or unspoken. In response to this fact, it may be best for the

academy to consider this issue less under the heading of spirituality, and more as a

feature of the renewal we all need in order to continue to grow and develop into the

fullness of our humanity. As an example of what I am speaking, the renewal process

implemented by Richland College of the Dallas County Community College District in

Dallas, Texas (Garcia, 2000) demonstrates one way that this kind of institutional renewal can be addressed. Teachers in the Richland system had the opportunity to sign up for small group sessions at which they discussed various issues related to the renewal of their lives as teachers. Not all professors in the system opted to be involved in this initiative, but those who did choose to be engaged, reported the experience to have made a major difference in their teaching efforts, and thus, the institution and its students benefitted greatly.

One other consideration (that I touched on earlier in this chapter, but I feel it bears repeating): Discussion of this topic is not giving license to teachers to engage in proselytism of their students. If there was one thing I thought this study clearly demonstrated, it was that there are myriad ways in which teachers can, and do, inform their teaching practice through their spirituality without engaging in proselytism. To continue to situate the discussion of how spirituality informs teaching on that false premise is misleading and counterproductive. Peter Senge (1990) is eloquent in describing how our mental models--our beliefs and attitudes--shape our responses to the world around us, and how the changing of our mental models changes our responses and, thus, changes the world. We would do well to heed his guidance in changing the ways in which we have been addressing this concern for far too long.

Expanding on that line of thought, I feel the academy would do well to look to the broader aspects of Senge's work (1990) to learn how it can become an effective learning organization. In better understanding the dynamics that foster effective organizational learning, the institution would better serve all those who are in its realm of influence—faculty, students, administrators, and society at large. I believe--and I think this study

demonstrates--that a crucial aspect of that organizational learning should include a fuller, more holistic, integration of the spirituality of those who are called to teach.

Concluding Remarks

I entitled this study *Soul-full Teaching*, realizing full well that the notion of soul is one filled with ambiguity. For some, this title might suggest teaching with substance; for others, teaching with some type of religious implication; for others, teaching with profound attention to ethical concerns; for others teaching with deeply felt emotion; still for others, teaching from one's very core. I like the ambiguity of the word and the many directions its use can take one in trying to capture an image of teaching that is full of soul.

As I began the study, I was unsure of what image I might use to capture that concept until the meeting I held with my dissertation committee for the purpose of defending my prospectus. Toward the end of that gathering, one member of the committee shared the image of *soul* that he had learned while in seminary many years before. He stated that in his Hebrew class one day, the instructor stated they were going to discuss soul and he would help them understand this elusive concept with one simple image. With a reminder that Hebrew is a pictorial language, the instructor said the Hebrew word "nephesh" and showed a picture of a young bird with its head cast back, its beak stretched wide open, confidently awaiting what it knew its mother would supply. "This is soul," said the instructor (Dr. Brooks Ramsey, personal communication, June 3, 2008).

I loved that image. On one hand, I thought it a bit risky in regard to a discussion of teaching because, for some, it might suggest old positivist images of education (students passively waiting to be fed whatever their teacher might be interested in dispensing). On

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the other hand, when applied to both students *and* teachers, this image connotes a lively, meaning-filled exchange in which both students and teachers seek; students and teachers take risks; students and teachers are nourished. And when soul meets soul, there is soul-full teaching.

For me, the image of nephesh speaks poignantly of what I believe soul to be: that which opens us to the world; that which leaves us vulnerable; that which is rooted in trust; that which yearns for fullness; that which connects us to the human community. Soul-full teachers, those who have cultivated these qualities of openness, vulnerability, trust, yearning, and connection, within themselves bring a precious gift to the students they teach. I feel fortunate that this study has given me the opportunity to spend time with, and to learn from, seven teachers who share that gift so generously—seven teachers who I believe are *soul-full*.

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Appendix A

Protocol for Interview 1

Background

In order that I will be better able to understand your story, would you please respond to the following matters?

- A quick review of demographic data gleaned from your vitae

- Would you please talk with me about why you decided to participate in this study?

- Would you talk with me about the influences (people, ideas, experiences) in your early life that shaped how you think about teaching?

- Would you talk with me about the influences (people, ideas, experiences) in your early life that shaped how you think about spirituality?

Unfolding story

In order that I will better understand your thoughts in regard to teaching and spirituality, would you please respond to the following concerns?

- You are teaching at a mid-southern, state-supported, research university. Would you please tell me about at least one critical incident that guided you to being a teacher in higher education at this institution?

- Would you please tell me about at least one critical incident that has shaped who, and how, you want to be as a teacher?

  o Would you tell me about at least one critical incident that has changed how you think about your teaching?

- o Similarly, would you tell me at least one critical incident that has reinforced how you think about your teaching?

- Would you please tell me at least one critical incident that has shaped who, and how, you want to be as a spiritual person?

  - o Would you tell me about at least one critical incident that has changed how you think about your spirituality?

  - o Similarly, would you tell me at least one critical incident that has reinforced how you think about your spirituality?

- Would you please tell me about at least one critical incident that exhibits how spirituality and teaching have come together in your cognitive processes, your affective experiences, and your actions – that is, in the person who you are?

- Would you tell me about at least one critical incident that has had an impact on what you believe and what effects those beliefs have prompted in the ways in which you interact with your students?

- Would you please tell me about at least one critical incident that exhibits the personal qualities that have enabled you to reach, or not to reach, your students in ways that promote growth and development?

- Would you tell me about at least one critical incident in which you perceive spirituality to have been a negative force, or in which you may have employed spirituality in a negative manner in your teaching practice?

Further Perspectives

In order that I might gain a more comprehensive understanding about your thoughts in regard to these issues, would you please respond to the following concerns?

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- In the words of the old song, "What's it all about?", and how do you give shape to your commitment to helping your students find meaningful answers to that question?

- How does the particular academic discipline in which you teach provide a forum to communicate what you believe and what you value?

- In your opinion, should the educational system of which you are a part recognize / affirm spirituality as pertinent to teaching?
  - If your answer to that question is "Yes", what are your thoughts about how that relationship is honored and nourished within that educational system?
  - If the answer to that question is "No", what are your thoughts about that educational system ignoring a referential frame which you consider seminal to your understanding of your own life and the world in which you live?

- Do you have other comments or perspectives that you consider important to this topic that have not been addressed above?

Appendix B

Protocol for Interview 2

Previous Interview

In reviewing the transcript of our last conversation, do you have anything you would like to say by way of clarification or elaboration in regard to anything that we discussed?

Classroom Observation

I would appreciate you sharing any thoughts you may have regarding the class that I recently observed, and the notes I wrote in response to that experience. Two pieces that I know I would like to hear you discuss are:

- Why did you do whatever you did in leading this class? I am interested in what guides teachers in making the choices they do in conducting their classes – and what, in you, shapes those choices.

- What did I miss? I know things always look different from the other side of the desk. What else was going on in the classroom environment that affected the way in which the class developed and the choices you made in response to those developments?

Right Brain Exercise

I would appreciate you sharing your thoughts regarding the "right brain" homework exercise. This was to be an artistic representation that creates or captures images, expressing what spirituality and/or teaching mean for you. I will leave it up to you whether it might be better for me to review this exercise before our conversation or to experience it in the context of the interview.

Nouwen's Framework

In his book, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World*, Henri Nouwen (1992) characterized the spiritual life as embodied in four movements:

- Taken (Chosen)

- Blessed (Affirmed?)

- Broken

- Given

I would be interested in your response to any or all of these components as they – if they – make sense in your experience as a teacher. This book is over 10 years old, but I found my way back to it because of a couple of questions that were rumbling around in the back of my head after my first round of interviews with you and the other participants. These questions were:

- Is teaching a vocation to you; that is, have you been "called" to teach? If so, what does that calling mean to you?

- What have been the seminal experiences (physical, emotional, cognitive, spiritual) that have carved out who you are for the world and your students? What are the layers that lie beneath some of the stories that you shared with me in our first interview – layers that add meaning; layers that well up within you and seek some form of expression, connection, solitude; layers that integrate, define, impel; etc.?

- To what do you give yourself in teaching?

Other formulations

Are there other formulations / schemas / theoretical constructs that you feel would be useful in helping me better understand how spirituality informs your teaching philosophy?

Appendix C

Protocol for Interview 3

Previous Interview

In reviewing the transcripts of our last two conversations, do you have anything you would like to say by way of clarification or elaboration in regard to anything that we discussed?

Classroom Observation

I invite any comments, expansions, qualifying remarks, etc., that you may have in reviewing the text of my observation of your class earlier this semester. Since my observation took place in the first class session of the new semester, I'd especially be interested in what decisions you made in shaping that class session and in laying a foundation for the semester.

Six-word Exercise

A few weeks ago, *Newsweek* had a brief piece about a book in which people were asked to write about their lives in just six words. The author noted, "Summing up a life, a romance or a trauma so succinctly may seem like an abomination out of the Twitter generation, but it actually dates back to the 1920s when Ernest Hemingway bet colleagues that he could write a complete short story in just six words. The result, 'For Sale: Baby Shoes. Never Worn,' he reportedly called his best work" (Ellison, 2009, p. 10). What six words would you use (not necessarily in story form) to capture the ways in which you conceptualize each of the following: God / Higher Power; Spirituality; Teacher / Professor; Soul.

Pertinent Literature

In connecting our conversation to the larger discussion that is occurring in higher education with respect to these concerns, I would be interested in your response to some excerpts that I have taken from various writers and theoreticians (Please see the other attachment). In the interest of providing diverse perspectives, I have included several excerpts. I am asking you to pick out two or three of these and share any thoughts or feelings that the material evokes in you.

Last Lecture

Prior to his death from cancer last year, one of our colleagues in higher education, Randy Pausch of Carnegie Mellon, received a good deal of attention for his "last lecture" in which he shared his perspectives about what's important in life (2007). What would you say if you were asked to give your "last lecture"? How do you incorporate the concepts / ideas / values of which you would speak in such a lecture into the teaching you do each semester / each day?

Closing Thoughts

Do you have closing thoughts regarding the issue we have been addressing? What will help me to tell your story fully with respect to the question of how your spirituality informs your teaching philosophy?