Spiritual Hunger and Recipes for Spiritual Satiety
(A Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework for Educators)

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SPIRITUAL HUNGER AND RECIPES FOR SPIRITUAL SATIETY

(A SPIRITUAL NEEDS/MOTIVATION/VOLITION FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATORS)

by

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ABSTRACT

SPIRITUAL HUNGER AND RECIPES FOR SPIRITUAL SATIETY (A SPIRITUAL NEEDS/MOTIVATION/VOLITION FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATORS)

Russell Glen Yocum

Because of the spiritual aspect of our nature, we all possess a spiritual hunger. This hunger does much to determine the questions we ask ourselves throughout life as well as the paths we take. It becomes part of our spiritual identity. Satiating this spiritual hunger becomes a driving force in our lives. With this research, I seek to explore the phenomenology of spirituality and focus on how students’ spiritual expressiveness in the classroom increases their spiritual nourishment. The research reveals the positive impact on academic success while presenting a Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework to inform instructional strategies. Data gathered from a survey of 139 undergraduate students at the University of West Florida is presented to quantify the relationship that exists between students’ spiritual motivation, volition (such as with acts of artistic expression, Figure 1) and spiritual self-actualization. Additional data about students’ attitudes regarding spirituality, their own spiritual motivators and personal spiritual volition as well as their perception of their own spiritual self-actualization and success is garnered from one-on-one and focus group interviews.
Figure 1. An example of a personally expressive form of spiritual volition, “By His Stripes. . .,” pastel on newsprint by the author.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

We are a spiritually hungry people who long for spiritual answers. While teaching at the elementary level, I had students ask me about God, ghosts, demons, angels, what happens when we die and the eternal implications of suicide. How to deal with these kinds of questions in a public school setting can be tricky and perhaps worthy of study in its own right. Adults also ask themselves these questions, as evinced by the box-office successes of recent religiously and spiritually themed films (Rosin, 2007).

This hunger expresses itself as a quest for spiritual answers and as a need to engage in activities of spiritual expression. O’Sullivan (among others) asserts that while this hunger often seems anathematic to those who prefer more secular or market-driven motivators, it is important that students be given opportunities to express themselves spiritually in educational settings (as cited in Miller, Karsten, Denton, Orr and Kates, 2005). According to Kessler this spiritual hunger is akin to our body’s physical need for food, water, and air, “Just as the child’s body grows when the hunger for fuel and air is fed, and the child’s emotional life grows when the hunger for love and guidance is met, meeting these spiritual yearnings [‘awareness, serenity, compassion as well as other collaborative efforts’] supports, strengthens, and fosters the development of the spirit . . .” (as cited in Miller et al., 2005, p. 102).
Our spiritual hunger is not confined to what we seek, what we do or what we need. It is a part of who we are. It is widely accepted that our natures are not just the dualistic mind and body, nor even the slightly more inclusive mind-body, but rather what Pelletier and McCall term as the mind-body-spirit (as cited in Hoppe and Speck, 2005).

Additionally, educational and multicultural theorists affirm that an individual’s spirituality and religiosity are inseparably integral parts of his or her overall sense of cultural- and self-identity (Banks and Banks, 2004; Tisdell, 2003). Finally, survey data consistently show that over 70 percent of incoming college freshman indicate that “religion and spirituality guide students’ lives. . .” (Nash, Bradley and Chickering, 2008, p. 14).

Accepting that spiritual hunger pervades our being, defines who we are, guides our actions and helps determine the kinds of questions we ask ourselves and how we go about answering them – how can and should an educator attempt to satiate this hunger in educational settings? Eisler, Schiller and Sloan posit that classrooms and curricula which incorporate aesthetic, holistic and moral pedagogies (among others) provide students with spiritual nourishment and impart a sense of partnership in the educational process which empowers students to embark upon journeys of self-transformation, thus increasing learning levels and success in academia and life (as cited in Miller et al., 2005). Denton is but one of the many authors who assert that, consequently, an education that spiritually nourishes can also give students the means to transcend both profound adversity and the doldrums of everyday life, all critical steps toward success (as cited in Denton and Ashton, 2004).
Undoubtedly, students engage in a multitude of various spiritual activities on their own time, away from the classroom. However, the benefits of (and a more direct link to academic achievement deriving from) such spiritually nourishing practices are even more visible when instructors condone, or even overtly engage in, these activities in class (Hindman, 2002; Katz, 2004; Pippin, 1998).

Despite the well-evinced and seemingly intuitive assertions about our spiritual natures, spiritual hunger and need for spiritual expression, Kessler notes that educators have long felt that it is “dangerous… to address the question of spiritual development in schools” (as cited in Miller et al., 2005, p. 101). However, such open explorations of student spirituality on the part of instructors may be couched in readily justifiable holistic and aesthetic pedagogical practices without raising the First Amendment specter of proselytization (Clarke, 2001; Newman, 2006).

It is my fervent hope that the current research will empower and embolden educators’ facilitation of students’ spiritual nourishment, while casting additional light on the academic benefits which accrue from such facilitation. It is also imperative to add to the body of extant work in spirituality and education and point the way toward possible areas for future research.

Having introduced why this work is of professional importance to me, undoubtedly, readers will also suspect that some lived experiences have imbued me with such a personal passion for spirituality and its role in education. My own spiritual journey has provided me with some degree of spiritual nourishment and fulfillment of the hunger outlined above while simultaneously impressing upon me the importance for each of us to find a path to that which will spiritually satiate us. Along the way, I have gained some
insights into the phenomenon of spirituality that are applicable regardless of a person’s religiosity or chosen form of spiritual expression.

Genesis of a Researcher

The observations and insights recorded in this section are by no means casual. Rather, they are the result of over 4,000 hours spent listening to and preparing to deliver personal spiritual testimonies and spiritual and biblical lessons covering 16 of the past 24 years (an 8-year “backslidden” gap falls in the midst of that period). It is important to understand that since my personal experience with spirituality has been via Christianity, it is this perspective which will prevail in the autoethnographic account that follows.

Like most, my family history has played an inarguable role in the development of my spiritual identity. My mother, May Yocum, has always been one of my personal heroines. She was born in 1936 amongst the tobacco farmland of Exxy, Kentucky. No matter how often she has told me of her childhood, I relish each retelling. Her stories, always laced with country humor, convey a belief in the Lord Jesus Christ and the inerrant truths of the Holy Bible while instilling lessons of how to cope with hard times and the importance of work ethic.

Despite her father’s ownership of hundreds of acres of tobacco farmland, mom knew what poverty meant (even though she would just use the word “poor”). She has shared with me her experience of living through food rationing during World War II and eating groundhogs and possums that her dad hunted. There were no televisions. For fun, she and her brothers would adopt lambs as pets, run from snakes and capture lizards.
Mom attended a one-room school house where she was taught to read by memorizing passages from the Bible. When her mother grew ill and died, my mom had to quit school after earning only a sixth-grade education. She was now “the woman in the family” and as such was the one who did the cooking and cleaning. Undoubtedly, mom’s premature withdrawal from formal education is one of the factors that caused her to impress upon me the importance of education. She has been a constant encouragement to me in this regard.

During her early adulthood, my mother contracted tuberculosis and spent a good deal of time quarantined in a tuberculosis sanitarium surrounded by suffering and the ever-present shadow of death. Though most certainly shaken, her faith in God not only remained, but strengthened. Following a successful recovery, mom was eager to leave the “country” and took work as a factory seamstress in Louisville, Kentucky. It was during this time that she met my father, Russell Gordon Yocum, Jr., who served as an enlisted soldier in the United States Army. Mom related to me the worry and hardships she and my older sister endured travelling as a military family and waiting at home while dad served in Vietnam. Because my father died of a massive heart attack in April 1972 while I was still less than 6 months of age, I never got the chance to know him personally. Through mom’s stories I know that he was a dedicated, loving, hard-working husband and father.

I was taught that God “helps those who help themselves.” Personal responsibility and the importance of hard work and getting an education were subsequent to this lesson. Mom also passed along to me the reality of a living God and His perpetual presence and comfort during crises of suffering, sorrow and death.
Although I inherited some degree of spiritual identity from my mom, I too would have personal crises of my own to weather. When I was five years of age, my mother remarried an abusive alcoholic. My step-dad retired after 26 years as an enlisted soldier in the United States Army. He served in Korea and three tours-of-duty (two beyond the required one tour) as an infantryman in Vietnam. From the time I was five until my senior year of high school, I suffered (and witnessed my sister’s suffering of) mental, emotional and physical abuse.

Thanks to natural mental defense mechanisms, I have no memory of some of the abuse I endured as a child, but the instances that I do remember are bad enough. Besides constant name-calling, swearing and yelling, there are a few specifics that are prominent in my memory. Often while yelling at me, my step-dad would simultaneously slap both of my ears with open palms and then chop down on my shoulders. Another of his favorites was to follow me to the bathroom and watch as I urinated. If a drop of urine landed on the rim of the bowl instead of in the water, I would get punched. When I got a little older and more inclined to run if things got physical, he would simply show me one of his knives (he always carried one) and let me know that he would slit my throat as I slept. That was when I began sleeping very lightly, with my door locked and a baseball bat under my bed, loathing the sound of the jiggling doorknob.

As a child, I had no physical strength or any amassed intellect with which to cope with my crisis either externally or internally. I simply survived. I am sure it was only because of my mom that I am still living today. My family history and this crisis combined to lay the groundwork for my spiritual awakening.
When I was in the fifth grade, circumstances contrived to grant me access to what my spirit hungered for – love and safety. My fifth grade teacher was my first male teacher and he encouraged us to think, use our imaginations and express ourselves. Also, during this academic year, my school allowed students to participate in “moral training” on a volunteer basis, with parental permission. Our moral training took place after lunch on Wednesdays at local participating churches of our parents’ choice. The church buses would come pick us up at the school. We would go to the church for about an hour and a half, and then they would drive us back to school. My mom elected for me to attend moral training at the local Baptist church.

Not only did I finally have a positive male role model in the form of my teacher, who cared for me and allowed me to express myself, but I also now had access to people who taught me about right and wrong and spoke of the God that my mom believed in. Between these two sources, I began to learn that what I was experiencing at home was not normal and not my fault. The love and safety that I missed at home were being provided. How could my spirit have done anything other than leap within me for joy?

I resolved (though I would not have expressed it in these terms as a fifth grader) that since I could not do anything to please my step-dad, I would please my teachers and my God. I began to excel at school, transitioning from an average student to an honor roll student. I also gave my life to Christ and began to beg to attend the same church that I went to for moral training on Sundays and Wednesday nights. I wanted to experience this spiritual fulfillment more than just an hour and a half after lunch on Wednesdays. I even began to proselytize to my classmates during lunch and recess. After all, who would not want this kind of deliverance from their everyday circumstances?
I consider myself more than blessed to have been given this spiritual opportunity. With school, and now church, I had two locales providing the love, safety and spiritual nurturing I was missing at home. I would have most certainly been a much different person if I did not have caring teachers and if my school did not offer access for me to discover and cultivate my spiritual and religious identity via moral training. Without this awakened sense of spiritual identity, I would never have progressed beyond simple survival. Who knows where I would be right now?

My newfound spiritual identity and subsequent thankfulness to my God and my teachers resulted in a profound transformation. My determination to do my best at school and to be a good Christian motivated a kind of personal transformation that is integral to (and evidentiary of) spirituality.

These feelings found voice in my life most poignantly during my senior year of high school. For nearly 13 years I had cowered in the face of my step-dad’s ravings, drunken threats, and abuses. Managing to survive, my physical stature eventually became a bit more intimidating and the abuse tapered off a bit. More than mere physical development, I had begun to experience liberation with my spirituality. I knew that when my body ceased to function that my spirit would dwell with the Lord. This imparts a certain kind of fearlessness in the face of physical danger. One of my pastors once reinforced this idea with the phrase, “As long as God has a purpose for you on this Earth, you are immortal, as soon as He doesn’t, you’ll be in heaven anyway.”

My beliefs were put to the test one night at dinner. It was to be the last time I would ever feel threatened by my step-dad. For some reason, unbeknownst to any other than him, on this particular night my step-dad became angry with me during dinner. He
rose from his chair and brandished his steak knife at me. Wildly gesticulating and swinging the knife erratically in my direction, he told me that he was going to kill me. This was nothing new, but my reaction was. When he would act like this previously, I would tremble in fear, too frozen to move - - or I would run and lock myself in my room. But now, I was free. I stood up at the dinner table and shrugged. I told him to “go ahead” and that we would “see how it turns out.” He was visibly shocked. I remember him backing away from me around the dinner table. I moved toward him. “If you’re going to kill me, you’re going the wrong way.” My step-dad finally positioned himself where he was near the door. He flung the steak knife on the table and left the house. I felt so... free! I sat down and finished dinner. About 15 minutes later the Vine Grove, Kentucky Chief of Police called our house. He said that my step-dad came to the station and accused me of threatening him. Would I come down to the station? Mom and I went. We talked to the Chief and confirmed what he had already suspected. My step-dad was drunk and he was the instigator. I cannot explain my cool transcendence of my step-dad’s threats by any other than spiritual means. It was almost as if I were watching and someone else was the one being brave, akin to what Forbes describes as being “in da zone” (as cited in Miller et al., 2005, p. 153).

I have observed from the Christian perspective that the crises (of one kind or another) that we all invariably face throughout life are almost necessary to bring us to a point where we are ready to grasp the spiritual nature of our identities. For God, or spirituality to save someone, he or she must first realize a need to be saved. Many Christians who are saved at a young age, due in large part to the contribution of their
family history in formulating their spiritual identities, will often rededicate their lives to Christ when they face their own personal crisis later in life.

Since my initial salvation experience, I have been no stranger to repeat bouts of crisis and transformation. For me, embracing my spirituality and surrendering to God’s will has always been the most effective way of transcending these moments of pain.

When I graduated from high school (like many) I also graduated away from the shelter (such as it was) of home and family. To say that I had become “backslidden” in my commitment to God would be an immense understatement. In other words, I went wild. I discovered alcohol, parties, financial independence (with all those nice credit cards they give undergraduate students) and women. I went from being an honor roll high school student to a marginally average college student. I was more concerned with which of my party opportunities had the greater likelihood of free booze and female companionship than I was with my classes.

During this backslidden period, I began dating and eventually married a fellow Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) cadet. Together we endured 10 years of a miserable marriage. The military lifestyle can be extremely difficult on a family. Adding to that, my wife served as an AC-130U Spectre Gunship Navigator who spent the year following the terrorist attacks of 9/11 deployed to various combat zones.

Throughout these frequent combat deployments that typified the final year of our marriage, I had begun homeschooling our sons as a stay-at-home dad. As part of their education, we decided it would be good to “get back in church” and I rededicated my life to Christ and began another subsequent period of transformation.
The climax of this transformation was when I felt compelled to curtail my drinking. Although only a moderate drinker since leaving the Air Force, I became inexplicably ill one morning after having had only one drink the previous evening. I had just about resigned myself to a visit to the emergency room when I could hear God speaking to me. It was not an externally audible voice. I knew it came from within me, just as I knew it was not the voice of my own internal monologue. I was told that right now, for me, just maybe... even one drink was too much. I decided I should listen. I threw away every last drop of alcohol in the house. I instantly felt better.

Shortly after my wife returned from her final deployment, she announced her plans to seek a divorce. Obviously, this was another crisis event. I underwent inordinate amounts of stress, especially after the divorce robbed me of my sons and practically all possessions save my clothing. I seriously contemplated suicide. I did not even find solace in my newly redefined relationship with God. Honestly, I felt let down by God. Here I had surrendered myself to God’s will and was striving to allow Him to transform me. I was being a good little Christian. I had prayed practically without ceasing for months for God to make my marriage work. If I was doing what God wanted, why did He not answer my prayers? I soon discovered that God would not have me practice my spirituality in a vacuum.

In the midst of these latest crises, I was focused on me, my transformation, my children, my marriage and my relationship with God. I, me, my, my, my. My spiritual status during this time was both self-centered and self-indulgent but to an extent this selfishness is initially necessary. I needed to complete this transformation, allowing God
to fix me if you will, before fellow Christians could stand to be in my company. It is hard to minister to another’s needs when someone is completely broken.

The year leading up to my divorce, while my wife was largely absent, I felt that nearly every sermon was directed at me, personally. I remember thinking on more than one occasion, “Oh man, that’s one more thing I gotta fix.” First it was just attending worship services. As I became more comfortable with my transformation, I attended worship and Sunday School. Finally, I began to serve in some of the children’s ministries that my children were enrolled in at the church. As my sense of confidence in my transformation increased, so did my level of connectedness with other believers. By the time that year was over, I had finally reached the point where I felt I was of value to God and others. My church was no longer just my church. It was my church family. I was fully “plugged-in” as my pastor used to say.

It is a good thing I was. As I mentioned, the divorce was devastating. If I had not achieved connectedness, I have little doubt that I would have attempted to act on my thoughts of suicide. While I felt I was used up and worthless in the eyes of my wife, I felt needed, worthwhile and able to offer services in the eyes of my church family. These newfound brothers and sisters stood by me during the dissolution of my marriage. During a later child support hearing, my Sunday School teacher even retained the services of an attorney for me. I have no doubt that God knew I would need this year of transformation and gradually growing connectedness to a family of like-minded believers to get me through the divorce He knew was in the offing.

Once connected to my spiritual family, I began to gain fulfillment by acts of creative expression and servitude toward them. Like countless others, even during
periods of isolation and depression, times when I was working on “me,” I have been buoyed by aesthetic acts of expression. In churches, I have seen spirituality expressed through teaching, drama, singing, playing musical instruments, graphic arts, and so on. One of my preferred means of spiritual expression has been through art. Since achieving connectedness, I have been moved to create artwork for my friends at church. The abstract pastels that serve as chapter frontispieces are samples of these gifts. I always give away the originals and keep a copy for myself. These abstracts of Bible scenes or personages have served to be triply expressive for me. I can express my spirituality by the creative process of the art, the religious subject matter, and by giving them away as gifts.

Someone need not possess artistic talent to access the fulfilling spiritual benefits of expression. From the Christian perspective, sacrifice and service before self are oft-repeated biblical themes. Christians, among many other religious adherents, often engage in altruistic behavior; it feels good.

Service has occasionally trumped art in my expressiveness. After I had begun serving in children’s ministries at my church, I lost primary custody of my sons. I continued to work with the children at church, even when my own sons could not be involved. I found it easy to establish rapport with children, and this rapport carried over into work, where students I knew from church would see me in the hall, high-five me and not know whether to call me “Brother Russ” or “Mister Yocum.” I loved being around children, especially since I missed my own sons dearly.

I spoke to my pastor about this on one occasion. He casually mentioned to me that I had been doing a fine job with the children at church. I responded that I sometimes felt guilty and wondered if I should not be serving in a different ministry area. He looked at
me as if I had just sprouted horns. So I explained how I missed my own sons and that being around the children at church and helping them made me so happy that I wondered if I was not getting more out of it than they were. He replied, “Don’t be silly, Brother Russ… You’re supposed to be happy!”

When an individual finds his or her spiritual identity, allows that identity to transform him or her, and engages in spiritually nourishing activities that connect him or her to others, a sense of transcendence and empowerment is within reach. In my view, the academic success I have enjoyed has been a direct result of my spiritual empowerment. It is this personal connection between spirituality and academics that has largely influenced my passion for the current research. I began my graduate work in 2005 when I applied for a Florida Temporary Teaching Certificate. I was sent a Statement of Eligibility declaring I needed 9 credit hours of educational courses in order to be certified because my undergraduate degree was in psychology. Having been out of school for 11 years and considering my lackluster performance as an undergraduate, I faced the prospect of going back to college with more than a little trepidation. However, the semester had barely commenced when I decided that if I had to go back to school anyway, I might as well keep going and get a master’s degree. My re-transformed spiritual self gave me a motivation to excel at my graduate work that was absent when I was an undergraduate. I experienced academic success that eventually evolved into a specialist degree and now, doctoral work.

As my pedagogical mastery has increased via continued academic success, I have also enjoyed self-actualization and successes as an elementary teacher. I have been voted by fellow educators as the school’s Rookie Teacher of the Year, chaired the school’s
literacy committee that was named the district and Florida Region 1 Reading Leadership Team of the Year and led my class in co-winning a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Learning Challenge. We named a piece of the International Space Station and were invited to Kennedy Space Center to see it launched aboard the Shuttle *Discovery*.

Since I attribute much of my own success in life (and in academia) to the spiritual nourishment and empowerment I have found, how could I not have a passion for wanting to share this formula with others?

**Purpose of the Study**

With the present research, I seek to delve into the phenomenology of spirituality with a multi-pronged approach. First, a review of relevant literature will explore components of spirituality that are not only widely acknowledged by theorists but will also resonate with the lived-experiences detailed in the autoethnographic portion above. In this study I propose a Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework for studying spirituality. Data generated from interviews with college students will reveal how this population sees and defines spirituality. Data from surveys and interviews will also include students’ reports of their perceived spiritual motivators, their personal spiritual volition and how they suggest their spiritual needs may be met in educational settings.

Motivation, volition and spiritual self-actualization will be defined (in the context of the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework) in greater detail in the chapter which follows. For now, suffice it to say that *motivation* is a collection of extrinsic influences and lived experiences that provide the impetus for individual growth and
action. *Volition* is an action in which one voluntarily engages. Finally, *spiritual self-actualization* is that point in a person’s life when preceding spiritual growth, motivation and volition have freed that person to focus on self-efficacy and realize successes that may have otherwise been beyond their grasp.

Additionally, I will reveal how an acknowledgment of students’ spirituality has proven beneficial for them and how an understanding of the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework I present may be utilized to inform instruction in classroom settings without teachers’ proselytizing. This will be accomplished by presenting information from the reviewed literature regarding classroom appropriate pedagogies and instructional strategies that are spiritually nourishing to students. Further, data garnered from student interviews and surveys will reinforce the practical usefulness of the practices recommended throughout the literature.

Data has been gathered and presented from 139 undergraduate students at the University of West Florida with Institutional Review Board approval (Appendix A) using the 2009 Undergraduate Spiritual Expression Survey (USES; Appendix B) I developed. This data explores the relationships between students’ spiritual motivators (family history, crises, and educational influences) spiritual volition (acts of spiritual expression) and spiritual self-actualization (life successes including academic achievement).

I have long enjoyed creating works of art, and often, works of art hold spiritual significance for the artist as well as the art appreciator. I will be discussing how these works of art are examples of personally expressive acts of spiritual volition later in this work. Meanwhile, suffice it to say that one of my pieces of spiritually inspired, abstract
art appear as frontispieces to each chapter. The frontispiece to Chapter 2 depicts the Old Testament story of Jonah and the great fish (Figure 2).
Figure 2. Another example of a personally expressive form of spiritual volition, “Jonah and the Great Fish,” pastel collage on pastel paper by the author.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

One of the goals of this literature review is a look at the phenomenology of spirituality: “Phenomenology [is]… a complex, multifaceted philosophy [which] defies simple characterization because it is not a single unified philosophical standpoint” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 191). What Schwandt says here about phenomenology can also be said of spirituality. It takes no great leap of logic then to grasp that the phenomenology of spirituality is something that cannot and will not be fully defined in this meager space. Instead, using the broadest of brush strokes, current, relevant literature reveals recurring phenomenological themes pertaining to spirituality. These themes speak to a basic understanding of the nature of our spiritual identities.

Just as “phenomenologists reject scientific realism and the accompanying view that the empirical sciences have a privileged position in identifying and explaining features of a mind-independent world” so too, it is difficult to attempt to empirically explore spirituality (Schwandt, 2001, p. 191). After all, we cannot see someone’s spirit. We cannot see the wind either, but we can see evidence of where it has been by observing the rustle of leaves, bent boughs and even uprooted trunks. Phenomenology helps us understand the spirit we cannot see, by looking toward things that are more readily seen, such as how a person’s life is transformed, how he or she deals with crisis, the activities that someone chooses to engage in to seek fulfillment and how he or she defines success.
Additionally, the literature will begin to hearken toward the other purpose of the current work, the construct of a Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework that can be used by educators to inform instructional strategies. With sound educational practices that not only serve as a boon to student achievement, but which are also spiritually nourishing, I will present what spirituality looks like in the classroom.

Phenomenology of Spirituality

In undertaking an examination of the phenomenology of spirituality, it is important to establish a further understanding of the term *phenomenology*. Phenomenology as a theoretical perspective is at the heart of good sociological, ethnographic and qualitative research regarding a particular social phenomenon or phenomena. In the simplest terms, phenomenology is the concept of deriving meaning about a phenomenon by gathering data inherent to participants’ “streams of consciousness,” lived experiences and behavior (Schutz, 1970, p. 60). Phenomenological meaning is derived from these aspects of participants’ lives and responses as the researcher identifies commonalities among the data (Schutz). Schutz defines this process as phenomenological reduction:

> Phenomenological reduction [is] . . . [t]he basic procedure of phenomenological method. Through “bracketing” of all judgments about the ontological nature of the perceived objects, etc., and by disregarding their uniqueness, that which is given in cognitive experience is reduced to the “essentials” of its form. (p. 321)

With an understanding of phenomenology in place, it is next necessary to approach the phenomenology of spirituality, with a recognition (as outlined in the
Introduction) of the holistic nature of humanity. Public education is designed to produce tiny empiricists, with little or no faith in that which cannot be seen. As a result, Orr opines that spirituality is often viewed through the lens of dualism (as cited in Miller et al., 2005). It is as if we see the physical body (filled with organs and systems) as our dad and the mind, or heart (the seat of our intellect, memories and emotions), as mom. . . but our spirit is our weird uncle who no one likes to talk about. Even many very inclusive, forward thinking, holistically-minded theorists write about the mind-body and add soul or spirit almost as an afterthought. Pelletier and McCall suggest it is time to realize, that holistically, our beings are composed of the mind-body-spirit (as cited in Hoppe and Speck, 2005).

These aspects of our nature are not only inseparable, but wholly interactive. For example, medical doctors often espouse the power of a positive attitude during the course of patient treatment. How often have we heard about someone who was otherwise healthy, but simply “didn’t have the will to go on”? We would undoubtedly deal with suffering in a more efficacious manner when it arises; if we did not have to struggle against this dualist inculcation and discover and rediscover the benefits and healing properties of spirituality each time we need them (Hoppe and Speck, 2005; Tippett, 2007).

Having established that the spirit (and by extension spirituality) is an undeniable aspect of the human condition, it is useful to establish a common vocabulary that will clearly delineate the differences between religion and spirituality. The combined terms heart, soul and spirit and the terms spirituality and religiosity are often used interchangeably leading individuals to confuse the meaning of any use of these terms.
While Maslow (upon whose work I draw) often uses the term “religion” to refer to both religion and spirituality, he nevertheless offers eloquent discourse that establishes a vocabulary to help distinguish between the two (Maslow, 1964).

Maslow refers to “organized religion” and “organized churches” (Maslow, 1964, p. 4), “conventional religion,” and “orthodox religion” (Maslow, 1964, p. 33) in ways that (for the purposes of the present research) I will term religion. Maslow illustrates that someone can be religious without being spiritual when he writes:

Characteristically the abstraction-type of the legalist-ecclesiastic is the conserving organization man, an office and arm of the organization, who is loyal to the structure of the organization which has been built upon the basis of the prophet’s original [spiritual] revelation in order to make the revelation available to the masses. . . I may go so far as to say that characteristically. . . these [religion sans spirit] organizations can be seen as a kind of punch card or IBM version of an original [spiritual] revelation. . . (Maslow, 1964, p. 21)

It should be made clear that not all religious adherents (and organizations) fit into this doctrinally preoccupied, spiritually vacuous category. However, the extreme represented by this type of religiosity helps in understanding the difference between religion and spirituality.

Conversely, Maslow employs the terms “religious experience” (Maslow, 1964, p. viii), “peak-experience” (Maslow, 1964, p. ix), “spiritual values” (Maslow, 1964, p. 4), “transcendent” (Maslow, 1964, p. 20) and “mystical illuminations” (Maslow, 1964, p. 19) to describe the phenomena that I will treat collectively as spirituality. An individual does not need to be religious (as defined above) to have values and experiences that can be
termed as spiritual. In order to come closer to a definition of spirituality, Maslow offers a list of questions that can be used to grasp what kinds of values are encompassed by the phenomenon:

. . . [T]he age-old ‘spiritual’ . . . questions: What is the good life? What is the good man? The good woman? What is the good society and what is my relation to it? What are my obligations to society? What is the best for my children? What is justice? Truth? Virtue? What is my relation to nature, to death, to aging, to pain, to illness? How can I live a zestful, enjoyable, meaningful life? What is my responsibility to my brothers? Who are my brothers? What shall I be loyal to? What must I be ready to die for? (Maslow, 1964, p. 52)

Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework

Having established that the spirit is part of the holistic nature of humanity and having phenomenologically defined spirituality (and how it differs from religiosity) is a starting point from which more questions can be posed. How does someone develop his or her spirituality? What are an individual’s spiritual needs? What motivates a person to act in a spiritual way? How are these questions related?

Answers may be found by drawing upon what is commonly called Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs that provide “. . . a ready-made foundation framework of biological ends, goals, or values. . . ” upon which individuals can realize their “innate tendency to growth toward self-actualization” (Maslow, 1971, p. 366).

Essentially, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs is a construct that describes the human tendency to be psychologically motivated to act toward the fulfillment of needs. This
need fulfillment starts at the most basic level (encompassing survival-related needs for air, food, water, clothing and shelter), progresses to a social level (including the needs for love and connectedness) and finally culminates in “self-actualization,” whereby an individual is in touch with his or her identity and, in light of the fulfillment of more basic needs, is capable of self-improvement and self-efficacy (Maslow, 1971, p. 366). It should also be noted that progression through Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs is by no means one-way. At varying times in a person’s life, he or she may feel more fulfilled than at other times or simultaneously may feel more fulfilled in one area and less satiated in another.

I propose a Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework such that a person realizes fulfillment of his or her spiritual needs through acts of spiritual volition in response to a variety of spiritual motivators (Figure 3). As with Maslow’s Hierarchy, progression through these spiritual needs should not be considered as a one-way, one-time journey. Additionally, I make no claim that the spiritual motivators and acts of spiritual volition listed are all inclusive, but rather that they are representative of the types of motivators and acts of volition that a person experiences. These motivators and acts of volition should not be construed to occur in any certain order. Further, certain motivators or acts of volition may not occur at all.
Figure 3. The Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework proposed by the author.

The most basic spiritual need is that for spiritual awakening. This is the point in a person’s life when he or she first becomes aware of the spiritual nature of his or her being and begins to seek answers to the spiritual questions about life already discussed. A spiritual awakening is akin to what Maslow calls “core-religious experiences” or “peak-experiences” (Maslow, 1964, p. 19).

Historically speaking, incidents of spiritual awakening have been likened to the supernatural and have given birth to much of the world’s major religions:

The very beginning, the intrinsic core, the essence, the universal nucleus of every known high religion. . . has been the private lonely, personal illumination, revelation, or ecstasy of some acutely sensitive prophet or seer. The high religions call themselves revealed religions and each of them tends to rest its validity, its function, and its right to exist on the codification and the communication of this
original mystic experience or revelation from the lonely prophet to the mass of human beings in general. (Maslow, 1964, p. 19)

Today, spiritual awakenings need not be perceived as so mysteriously supernatural. These moments of epiphany, of transcendent peak-experiences can (and do) happen to any who are receptive. Although I call the first of these types of experiences a “spiritual awakening,” because it is instrumental to an individual’s recognition of his or her spiritual identity, these types of experiences are not solitary in nature. A person in touch with his or her spirituality may (and will, in the case of spiritually self-actualized persons seeking growth) have many spiritual “re-awakenings” and/or peak-experiences after the initial one:

. . . [There are] those who have private, personal, transcendent, core-religious experiences easily and often and who accept them and make use of them, and, on the other hand, those who have never had them or who repress or suppress them and who, therefore, cannot make use of them for their personal therapy, personal growth, or personal fulfillment. (Maslow, 1964, p. 29)

Knowing that a spiritual awakening is a highly personal and transcendent spiritual moment is hardly the same as knowing how someone becomes spiritually awake and begins on the path toward spiritual self-actualization. Motivation plays a key role in this process. There are those who only recognize the intrinsic side of motivation and espouse that it “. . . primarily is viewed to be a function of a person’s thoughts rather than some instinct, need, drive or state of arousal” (Ames and Ames, 1984, p. 1). While I recognize the existence of such internal motivation and acknowledge that a person’s cognitively
based motivation can play a role in the fulfillment of spiritual needs, for the purposes of the present research, more quantifiable extrinsic motivators are explored.

Lived experiences (whether they come in the form of personal crises, personal influences such as family history and religiosity or experiences that are imparted through a more formal process such as a secular or religious education) are just such types of extrinsic motivators that exert dynamic forces upon an individual:

This kind of character-change-learning means changing a very complex, highly integrated, holistic organism, which in turn means that many impacts will make no change at all because more and more such impacts will be rejected as the person becomes more stable and more autonomous. (Maslow, 1968, p. 39)

It can be seen from Maslow’s words here that as a person approaches spiritual self-actualization, the extrinsic motivators that receive focus in the present study gradually give way to the intrinsic motivation previously discussed. In other words, as someone becomes more in touch and comfortable with his or her spiritual identity, he or she is more likely to engage in acts of spiritual volition to seek fulfillment of spiritual needs even in the absence of specific external motivation.

A major personal influence that can act as a spiritual motivator is a person’s family history, traditions and culture (Greene, 2001; Tisdell, 2003). Similarly, an individual’s religious experiences (especially when viewed as part of family customs) exert a personal influence that can motivate one toward spiritual awakening and growth (Tippett, 2007).

According to Eberhardt, DaltoIn and Ostrander, family traditions notwithstanding, many choose to find their own path to spiritual awakening and often the crises faced
during life form the impetus for discovering (and strengthening) an individual’s spiritual identity and provides a motivation for spiritual acts of volition and toward seeking fulfillment of spiritual needs (as cited in Speck and Hoppe, 2007). Many would construe this as an implicit admission that belief in a higher power serves only as an emotional or mental crutch that adherents rely on to cope with crises. This view would be overly simplistic and either denies the existence of spirituality or implies a dualistic understanding (as previously discussed) of the relationship between mind-body and spirit (Heclo, 2007).

The crises that often precipitate an awakening or acceptance of someone’s spiritual identity can range from the mundane to the morbid. Our crises all come in different shapes and sizes, whether it is just the tedium of waking up for work and coming home to dinner, the more serious problems that we all face on occasion or something as dire as a “near-death experience” (Tisdell, 2003, p. 79-82). My personal crises are not uncommon: growing up in a dysfunctional family and being abused, coping with divorce, defeating alcoholism. Others facing much more difficult situations also turn to spirituality in order to find the strength to transform themselves and transcend their obstacles. Ostrander describes the well-known, crisis stories of Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman and countless other slaves who transcended their existence by finding the “spirituality of everyday life” (as cited in Speck and Hoppe, 2007, p. 180). But someone need not journey into the past to find life-threatening moments of crisis. Tisdell writes about how “close calls” such as automotive accidents, being threatened with guns and other modern “near-death experiences” become catalysts for individuals, prompting them to get “more in touch with” eternal concerns (Tisdell, 2003, p. 79-82).
Whether as a product of family tradition or of the struggle against crises, the awakening of a person’s spiritual identity is characterized by the kind of personal peak-experiences previously discussed that impart a transcendent ability in light of both crises and the routine of the daily grind (Greene, 2001). Greene writes about the spiritual, transcendent quality of sound aesthetic pedagogical practices in a way that eloquently conveys the kind of transcendence I mean here:

. . . [T]he point of these remarkable experiences is to enable you . . . to uncouple from the ordinary, from the grocery list in your pocket, the parking ticket that may be waiting, the humidity outside, even from the judgments you think you ought to be making, the posture you ought to be taking because you are at a music school [or whatever particular venue]. You are learning more, I am sure, about what it is to move deliberately into what can be called an aesthetic space, where the familiar becomes unfamiliar, where all sorts of things become revealed that the cotton wool of habit has for so long obscured. (Greene, 2001, p. 69)

This spiritual reaction to crisis has twice empowered me to transform myself from a marginal or average student to an outstanding scholar and enabled me to transcend dysfunction, divorce and alcoholism.

When an individual becomes aware of his or her spiritual identity, he or she begins to grasp the knowledge that there is more to life than the physical (Tisdell, 2003). Though crises may precede someone’s coming to terms with his or her spiritual identity, once such spirituality is attained and his or her life is transformed, Nozawa claims the individual obtains a sense of peace and undergoes a shift in focus from the corporeal to the incorporeal which allows future crises to be faced in a way that both liberates and
transcends (as cited in Miller et al., 2005). Similar to the courage I displayed at dinner with my step-dad, an individual who is confident as to the eternal disposition of his or her soul and spirit will learn to adopt a certain degree of fearlessness. Spiritually minded people who endure such crises transcend fear of bodily harm and learn to face the future with what Forbes and others describe as renewed feelings of purpose, responsibility and the value of life (as cited in Miller et al., 2005; Tisdell, 2003).

As already evinced, the initial spiritual awakening is a private, highly personal event. Just as people seek to fulfill social and emotional needs after basic needs are met (vis-à-vis Maslow’s Hierarchy), Ingersoll and Siebert maintain that spiritually awakened people next seek to form connections with like-spirited persons (as cited in Speck and Hoppe, 2007). Seemingly spiritual people need not agree or disagree with Mother Teresa’s religion to recognize that she was both a wise and deeply spiritual person. Her words on the role and value of “community” in an individual’s spiritual health are illustrative of what I posit regarding the spiritual need for connectedness (Mother Teresa, 1997):

One year I wanted to do something special for our sisters. I sent out a newsletter to each one of them, to each community, suggesting that each one write down what she thought was beautiful in her sisters and her community. I asked that each sister send her answer to me. A thousand letters arrived. Just imagine! I had to sit down and read each one, making a list of each community and all the sisters. Later I returned the letters to the communities. The sisters were surprised that someone would notice such beautiful things in them – that there was someone
who was able to see them. All of this fostered a beautiful spirit of love, understanding and sharing. (Mother Teresa, 1997, p. 59-60)

Miller discusses a variety of ways in which individuals seek connectedness as an elemental component of spirituality, through feelings of connection to a higher power, Mother Nature, a community of like-minded (or like-spirited) persons, or even the universe (as cited in Miller et al., 2005). As someone becomes more spiritually connected to others, he or she begins to develop a sense of family with and compassion for those to whom he or she feels connection with (Hoppe and Speck, 2005).

Maslow’s Hierarchy begins with physical needs (including safety), escalates to social needs and finally includes engagement in activities that are self-actualizing. So too does the spirit begin with a response to spiritual motivation, eventually leading to acts of spiritual volition and finally resulting in the kinds of spiritual growth that are akin to spiritual self-actualization.

If we view spiritual needs as the intrinsic elements that drive us toward achieving spiritual satiety and spiritual motivation as those external influences that can also steer us to spiritual self-actualization, then spiritual volition encompasses all of the outwardly evidenced (but not necessarily outwardly visible) actions in which we engage as a result of these needs and motivations. Teo and Quah (1999) describe how acts of volition are evidentiary of the kind of commitment required for students to achieve self-actualization and define volition as “the mental act of exercising one’s will. It is the power of choosing or determining action. It is not ‘automatic’ but [the] conscious exertion of the mind. . . ” (p. 25).
These conscious acts of spiritual volition find voice in both personal and communal acts of expression whereby spiritual satiety can be achieved in myriad ways. Cady and others typify some of the spiritually fulfilling activities that are more commonly undertaken as attendance at religious services, yoga, meditation, prayer, chants, song, communing with nature, and artistic expression (as cited in Speck and Hoppe, 2007).

My favored forms of personal expression (as acts of spiritual volition) have been in writing spiritually and religiously themed poems and in the creation of fine art. Before she passed away, my previous doctoral committee chair and advisor, Dr. Mary Rogers, saw some of my spiritual artwork and insisted that I find a way to include some of them in this work. These are the abstract, religiously themed pastels that appear as frontispieces to each chapter. My initial inclination is to just leave them in to honor Dr. Rogers’s request. However, I remain open to including them as part of the analysis to further explain the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework once I begin my study.

I can attest that creating art (and other acts of spiritual volition) is a vitally important process in the journey toward spiritual self-actualization. As I am quite certain is the case for many artists, I have always written my best poetry and created my best artwork at those times in my life when I have felt isolated, abandoned, lonely and depressed. In other words, it is when someone is spiritually broken that acts of spiritual volition take on greater significance. Personal examples of these kinds of acts of spiritual volition for me are the pieces of art that appear at the beginning of each chapter. Almost without exception, these pieces of art were created following a major life event.
(sometimes a depressing one, sometimes a joyous one). Each piece of art has its own story of personal meaning for me. Being able to creatively express my memories of these personal stories made the act much more meaningful in so many more ways than just rereading or hearing the biblical account could have done. Had I simply associated a personal memory with a story read from the Bible or even heard it preached, I would have been a passive visual/aural receptor of the memory. Recreating these memories through personal acts of expression made me an active participant in the memory in a way that was visual, kinesthetic and tactile.

Creativity is indicative of self-actualization (Maslow, 1968). But this is not to say that only artists can achieve moments of spiritual self-actualization. This kind of creativity is not confined to those who are somehow professionally trained or artistically inclined. Maslow discusses the correlation between creativity and healthy self-actualization, positing that some great artists have not been psychologically healthy, while some non-artistic people were (Maslow, 1968). Maslow came to terms with the seeming incongruity by expanding his definition of creativity, one that serves well when discussing creativity (and other similar acts of spiritual volition) and its relationship with spiritual self-efficacy:

Theorists, artists, scientists, inventors, writers could be creative. Nobody else could. . . But those expectations were broken up by various of my subjects. For instance, one woman, uneducated, poor, a full-time housewife and mother, did none of these conventionally creative things and yet was a marvelous cook, mother, wife and homemaker. With little money, her home was somehow always beautiful. She was a perfect hostess. Her meals were banquets. Her taste in linens,
silver, glass, crockery and furniture was impeccable. She was in all these areas original, novel, ingenious, unexpected, inventive. I just had to call her creative. I learned from her and others like her that a first-rate soup is more creative than a second-rate painting and that, generally, cooking or parenthood or making a home could be creative while poetry need not be. . . (Maslow, 1968, p. 136)

Binder and others discuss how expressive acts such as these nourish the spirit (as cited in Miller et al., 2005). Further, such aestheticism, even when engaged in solitude, grants the practitioner or the appreciator access to multiple levels of connectedness, connectedness to self and connectedness to others by experiencing the universal feelings and memories that art can inspire (Greene, 2001). Kates and Schiller detail how, when these acts of spiritual expression are also creative then they can further enhance the feeling of connectedness with “greatness [and the] infinite” (as cited in Miller et al., 2005, p. 161) and with the “Creator” (as cited in Miller et al., 2005, p. 196).

Even when practiced alone, expressions of spiritual volition assist in the attainment of a virtual spiritual connectedness (the practitioner can feel a sense of connection to self, nature, the universe, a higher power and so on). However, when such acts of volition are done in concert with other people (such as with corporate worship, singing in groups or other communal activities) or when personal expression is done as a gift for someone else, spiritual connectedness becomes actual. An example of what I mean here can be drawn once again from my own personal experience with my spiritually themed artwork. I have not kept any original pieces of my spiritual artwork. Even though each piece was personally significant to me, and each had its own story, I
would retain only a color copy while giving the original away to church members that I considered to be part of my extended spiritual family.

This concept extends into the spiritual acts of volition of service and sacrifice. I have always enjoyed cooking for my friends, helping them with yard work, putting up a shed, or volunteering my time to tutor their kids. When someone sacrifices their time, money or talent to serve others, not only is a sense of spiritual connectedness established, but it is also difficult to focus on your own problems when you are helping someone else.

To illustrate how service and sacrifice are important steps along the road toward success and spiritual self-actualization, an excerpt from Hunter is useful. Hunter writes about John Daily, a businessman who experienced typical struggles. Daily faced a mid-life crisis, marital woes and the work-related pressures associated with attempting to get the most of his subordinates while pleasing upper levels of management. Daily attended a leadership retreat at a Benedictine monastery, ostensibly to become a better manager, and learned how to become a spiritually self-actualized success at life by accepting the benefits associated with living a life of service and sacrifice:

But really, Simeon, in case you haven’t noticed, this is a power world,’ the sergeant insisted. “Can you give us any examples where service, sacrifice, and building influence were really effective at getting things done in the real world?” “Well, what about Jesus’ life,” the preacher offered. “He changed the world without ever exercising power, only influence. In fact, I recently preached a sermon on this. Jesus once said, ‘I will draw all men to myself if I be lifted up.’ He was of course describing His sacrifice of being lifted up on a cross. And He certainly did draw many as a result of this sacrifice.” “Cut the preaching,” the
sergeant snapped, red-faced. “Don’t tell me about a couple of thousand years ago. I asked about the real world.” (Hunter, 1998, p. 80)

Hunter goes on to detail modern, less spiritually overt exemplars of service and sacrifice that Simeon and other retreat attendees recalled, including Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Hunter, 1998). Another attendee, a school principal, nicely sums up how service and sacrifice are related to spiritual self-actualization and success in life:

“You’re right, Simeon,” the principal agreed, “it just makes sense that authority is built on service and sacrifice. It’s simply the Law of the Harvest – what any farmer knows. You reap what you sow. You serve me, I’ll serve you. You go to the wall for me, I’ll go to the wall for you. I mean, think about it, when someone does us a good turn, don’t we feel naturally indebted? There’s no rocket science or magic involved here.” (Hunter, 1998, p. 83)

Finally, Eisler discusses people’s levels of success in regard to spirituality; when an individual is consistently able to see motivators for acts of spiritual volition, he or she achieves a level of spiritual self-actualization that leads to personal success (as cited in Miller et al., 2005). These personal, spiritual successes need not be the same as secular, materialistic successes. Indeed, many religions teach their followers to disavow the world’s definitions of success. Christ, for example, defined success as serving others instead of wanting to be served, looking toward eternal things rather than compiling materialistic rewards. This juxtaposition of our natural tendencies empowers us, alone and collectively, to rise above our circumstances. Harris relates that this unnatural, supernatural sense of empowerment often ironically gives us the courage to act in ways that will yield conventional successes (as cited in Mansbridge and Morris, 2001).
Spiritual Self-Actualization and Education

Understanding spirituality as a social phenomenon, an inescapable aspect of the holistic human nature and comprehending ways in which people’s need for spiritual nourishment may be met are essential to (but only a primary step toward) successful integration of spirituality in education. Unlike with religious proselytization, the First Amendment does not prohibit spiritually nourishing instructional strategies in the classroom. Despite the fact that spiritually nourishing instructional strategies are not prohibited, many educators have become “frightened away” from and “overly cautious about presenting” these topics (Nelson, Palonsky and McCarthy, 2004, p. 181). As educators, we must understand that spirituality is not the same as religion. Educators then should know what kind of instructional strategies can be employed to move their students toward spiritual satiety.

As educators, we can engage in classroom activities that are spiritually nourishing without ever even saying the word “spirituality” or inviting controversy of any kind. What are these noncontroversial activities and how can teachers establish a spiritually nourishing classroom environment?

There are a variety of over-arching pedagogies (each of which will be defined in turn) that lend themselves to spiritually nourishing education. Among these are aesthetic education and moral education (Greene, 2001; Nash et al., 2008; Newman, 2006). More intuitively, just as holism and transformation are phenomenological elements of spirituality, according to Miller, so too holistic education and transformative education are recognized as providing spiritual nutrition (as cited in Miller et al., 2005). Another widely touted pedagogy (and just as easily related to the phenomenology of spirituality)
includes educational practices where teacher-student relationships and connectedness are heavily emphasized, as with what Eisler terms as *partnership education* (as cited in Miller et al., 2005, p. 48). Accordingly to Speck and as was discussed earlier, acts of servitude can be satiating acts of spiritual expression, therefore, *service-learning* is another pedagogy that feeds the spirit (as cited in Speck and Hoppe, 2007).

*Aesthetic education* goes beyond simple exposure to the arts, but rather is an educational approach whereby learners are given the skills and vocabulary needed to both participate in and connect with the arts, their own histories and with the world (Greene, 2001). Greene tells us that this kind of education “lead[s] to the discovery of new vistas. . . . [and] develop[s] a more active sensibility and awareness in our students” (Greene, p. 8). The connective enabling that is a part of aesthetic education makes clear the spiritually fulfilling nature of this pedagogy when linked to the spiritual hunger for connectedness already presented.

In Chapter 1, people’s hunger for seeking spiritual answers was given brief attention. While a *moral education* does not seek to impart a “particular ethical code,” it equips learners with the critical thinking skills required to find their own morality and then to use this morality efficaciously and justly in interactions with others (Newman, 2006, p. 249). Further, this pedagogy teaches students to acknowledge pluralistic views of religion, differing opinions of truth and facilitates tolerance (Nash et al., 2008).

Miller states that an *holistic education* is an “attempt to nurture the development of the whole person. . . includ[ing] the intellectual, emotional, physical, social, aesthetic, and spiritual. . . ” (as cited in Miller et al., 2005, p. 2). More than just aesthetic education with a side of fries, holistic education specifically seeks to nourish students with the extra
addition of “spirituality in the curriculum. . . [in order to facilitate] reawakening students to a sense of awe and wonder. . . [and] deepen. . . [their] sense of connection to the cosmos” (as cited in Miller et al., 2005, p. 2).

O’Sullivan shows the wide-reaching, spiritually satiating scope of transformative education when he quotes the definition of transformative learning posited by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Transformative Learning Centre:

Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body-awareness, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (as cited in Miller et al., 2005, p. 76)

Eisler posits that partnership education speaks to our need for spiritual connectedness while seeking to encourage people’s healthy development toward “self-realization;” teaching “skills” that impart “responsibility” for a “sustainable future” which enable students to transcend “environmental, economic and social upheavals” (as cited in Miller et al., 2005, p. 48). A teacher who engages in partnership with his or her students establishes close relationships with those students toward the end goal of producing future citizens who can contribute to society and solve their own problems.
Chickering reminds us that these kinds of “connective” approaches to education transcend fancy names for certain “techniques” when he quotes Palmer:

Good teaching isn’t about technique. I’ve asked students around the country to describe their good teachers to me. Some of them describe people who lecture all the time, some of them describe people who do little other than facilitate group process, and others describe everything in between. But all of them describe people who have some sort of connective capacity, who connect themselves to their students, their students to each other, and everyone to the subject being studied. (as cited in Chickering, Dalton and Stamm, 2006, p. 138)

Finally, there is service-learning. Service-learning affords students the opportunity to learn goal-setting and problem-solving skills while working individually and/or in groups on the creation and implementation of a project to provide a service to some other person or group of persons. These types of projects can be as simple as third graders making Christmas gifts for residents of a local nursing home or as complicated as college students developing adult education classes for delivery at that nursing facility. Sikula and Sikula likewise emphasize the diverse nature of both service learners and service-learning methodologies: “[t]here is no one correct way to come to know who we are, and there is no one way to learn to serve others” (as cited in Hoppe and Speck, 2005, p. 79).

As has been already explicitly stated, no matter what you call them, these types of pedagogies are just plain good teaching. Subsequently, and as one might naturally expect, a veritable cornucopia of specific instructional strategies could well be placed on the
banquet table of these pedagogies. Following are just a few morsels that teachers can set before their students; others have their own spiritually nourishing recipes to add to the mix.

Encouraging learners’ use of *story-telling* or personal *narratives* is forwarded in most of the relevant literature as a specific instructional practice that allows learners to reflect, awaken their feelings, activate background knowledge and connect with others (Newman, 2006). Teachers can integrate story-telling across the curriculum in a variety of ways. Story-telling can be implemented through the use of oral history projects (Tippett, 2007). Narratives are welcomed by encouraging what Nash and Bradley call “moral conversations,” so that all students’ opinions are heard and respected during classroom discussions (as cited in Speck and Hoppe, 2007, p. 137-154). Cohen and many others laud the usefulness of journal and poetry writing to allow students the opportunity to reflect and share stories; these strategies could also be useful in nourishing spirituality even via distance learning (as cited in Miller et al., 2005). Even theatrical performances and song (where students’ personal stories form the dialogue or lyrics) are venues for story-telling (Greene, 2001; Newman, 2006).

Theater can provide not only a story-telling experience, but also a *kinesthetic* one which provides students the opportunity to partake of spiritual nourishment through varying expressions of movement. Activities such as drama, dance and play are all useful methods for nurturing students’ spirits and allowing them to exercise freedom in self-expression (Greene, 2001). These practices are spiritually nourishing because it offers students another means to not only express themselves, but to transcend the ordinary or the undesirable. Greene characterizes these kinesthetics as a kind of language of
movement which “enable[s]... people to try to express through movement sometimes how they feel, what they desire, what they understand. . . [i]t is another language, another way of naming, another way of overcoming the emptiness” (Greene, 2001, p. 96).

Reflection can be achieved with means other than those couched within the storytelling practices previously described. Listening to and reflecting upon musical pieces gives students a chance to broaden their communicative and social skills as they connect with the music, with themselves and with others (Greene, 2001; Tisdell, 2003). With my third graders, I used to play instrumental music quietly throughout the day. This serves as a nice background noise that does not distract from the students’ work; in fact, they often become quieter in order to be able to hear the music better. At the end of each day, I increase the volume and let students listen to a particular instrumental piece and instruct them to close their eyes, clear their minds and think. Afterward, I invite students to share about how the music made them feel or what memories the music prompted them to recall. They eagerly incorporated words such as crescendo, decrescendo, tempo and climax into their vocabularies to use during their sharing times.

While quiet instrumental music or even raucous rock and roll can be used to give students a vehicle for reflection, sometimes no noise at all does the trick. Meditation (or quiet time, if you prefer) is an equally viable means of encouraging student reflection (Tisdell, 2003). The reflective instructional strategies of music listening and meditation can be done as stand-alone activities or can be paired with oral sharing and/or journal writing.

Story-telling (or narratives), along with kinesthetic and reflective activities are but a smattering of the instructional strategies that are aligned with the pedagogical
approaches outlined above. This small list of pedagogies and strategies are by no means meant to be all inclusive, but I hope they have served as food for thought that will enable instructors to provide healthy, nutritious meals to conquer their students’ spiritual hunger.

The benefits of incorporating such spiritually nourishing practices into the curriculum should be readily apparent. We pave the way for reflection, awareness, and tolerance while improving critical-thinking and social skills when we teach students to connect with subject matter, with art, with themselves, with others and with the world. These benefits provide an obvious path toward academic success and also empower students to reach higher levels of spiritual self-actualization and feel personally successful as their spiritual needs are met.

Other, less obvious (but no less important) positive impacts accrue from providing students spiritual opportunities. The mind-body-spirit holism of humanity has already been addressed and the link between spiritual health and physical health was hinted at briefly. Sloan contends there are indications that an education which spiritually nourishes (especially when implemented early in the course of human development) can actually reduce the number of physical maladies that might otherwise affect someone later in life (as cited in Miller et al., 2005). Eisler and Kessler both disclose that the connective properties of spiritually abundant educational practices develop learners’ tendencies toward expressing feelings of love, tolerance, kindness and respect that simultaneously reduce chances that students will attempt to solve problems with violence (as cited in Miller et al., 2005). Eisler and Forbes have found that students turn to kindness rather than violence, sex and drugs because an education that spiritually nurtures them opens their eyes to other options while providing a safe zone away from tough streets and
dysfunctional families (as cited in Miller et al., 2005). Spiritually responsive educational practices also result in school pride and improved quality of communication between school faculty, students and families, according to Binder (as cited in Miller et al., 2005). Finally, as is the case with any good education, Eisler and Kessler convey that a spiritually friendly curriculum turns out students with the kinds of critical-thinking skills and creativity to poise them for success in (while enabling them to rise above the stresses of) the economic marketplace (as cited in Miller et al., 2005).

As the current research unfolds, I will quantify the relationship between spiritual motivation, spiritual volition and spiritually self-actualized personal successes (including academic success). In addition, interviews will provide anecdotal evidence further supporting the link between spiritual motivation, spiritual volition, and the personal successes achieved via spiritual self-actualization. These research findings will be analyzed using the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework I created. These findings, then, will be translated to ways that non-controversial, spiritually relevant classroom strategies can be of value to educators of all levels who want to help their students realize the benefits of an education that acknowledges and nourishes the spirit.

As was briefly mentioned earlier, the frontispiece for each chapter is one of my spiritually-themed abstract pieces. The Old Testament biblical story of Noah’s ark (Figure 4) and the rainbow remind me of God’s promises. God created the rainbow to remind Noah and his family that He would never again flood the entire earth. When I look at this piece of art and recall the feelings I experienced while creating it, I am reminded of not only God’s promises, but other promises (both broken and kept) throughout my life.
Figure 4. An example of spiritual volition that reminds me of promises, “Noah’s Ark,” pastel on newsprint.
CHAPTER III

METHODS

Schwandt (2001) defines mixed methods as “the notion of using multiple methods to generate and analyze different kinds of data in the same study – for example, combining a narrative analysis of in-depth interviews with a content analysis of questionnaire responses. . .” (p. 164). Since I have proposed to provide readers with further insight and deeper understanding of spirituality (which is hard to quantify) while simultaneously presenting data which show a relation (which should be quantified) between students’ opportunities to express themselves spiritually in the classroom and their academic success, a mixed methods study will be used.

Just as I challenge the notion of dualism often applied to the mind-body-spirit nature of holistic humanity, I suggest the same challenge about the kind of dualism which still asserts itself in much of academia regarding qualitative and quantitative methods. A more pluralistic approach has begun to be acknowledged and is gaining ground. Schwandt (2001) writes, “[p]erhaps advocacy for the notion of mixed methods is an implicit endorsement of pluralism in social science. . . a way of saying that our understanding of social life should not be driven by either-or thinking. . .” (p. 165-166).

The literature has already demonstrated that many teachers are either unaware of their rights regarding the legal, educative incorporation of spirituality in the classroom, or are simply too afraid to exert their rights. Increasing both the number of quantitative
studies (as well as the number of such studies that are widely disseminated) will provide teachers with the insight to cast aside any misconceptions or fears about feeding their students’ spirits. The quantitative portion of this study enables such insights as it surveys college students’ perceptions about their experiences in K-12 and post secondary learning environments. Qualitatively, then, I have chosen the methods of autoethnography, hermeneutics and interviewing (both semi-structured one-on-one interviews and a focus group). Autoethnographies combine ethnography and autobiography, allowing readers to view the author’s life and the object of study at one and the same time (Schwandt, 2001, p. 13). The autoethnographical account that largely comprised this study’s introduction served not only as an introduction of me, my life and my passion for the research, but it also functioned as a means to both provide readers with true-to-life examples of the benefits of spirituality while preparing them to understand the interpretations of texts that were to follow in the review of the literature. Schwandt (2001) states that “[t]he hermeneutic method involves playing. . . unfamiliar parts of a. . . text. . . off against the integrity of the. . . narrative. . . as a whole until the meaning of the. . . passages. . . are worked out or accounted for” (p. 114). I applied a hermeneutic method to search for theories that helped me develop the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework. Therefore, hermeneutics, tacit knowledge of spirituality, survey results and theory all connect to inform the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework and establish the foundations for analyzing student interviews. The interviews serve as an additional data point for triangulation, acting as records of undergraduate students’ phenomenological definitions of spirituality while including their suggestions for how their spiritual needs
might be fulfilled on campus and how well they were met during their K-12 classroom experiences.

By comparison, the quantitative methods used are much more straightforward. My 2009 Undergraduate Spiritual Expressions Survey (USES) is a Likert-scale type instrument that captures respondents’ self-reported assessment of their attitudes, beliefs, values and spiritually expressive practices. As will be further detailed in the Research Design: Methods and Analysis section, a number of these indicators reveal students’ reports of engagement in acts of spiritual volition (both personal and in the classroom and/or spiritually expressive acts that were facilitated by instructors). These spiritual volition survey indicators are correlated against other survey indicators that relate spiritual motivators and influences in students’ lives and students’ self-reported spiritual self-actualization (including academic success). In particular, I selected these survey items to provide quantifiable evidence to explain my Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework and provide data to point to a link between spiritually nurturing classroom practices and students’ academic achievement in order to influence and empower teachers at all levels to modify their classroom practices accordingly.

Philosophical Perspectives

Schwandt describes the *bricoleur* as a “qualitative inquirer. . . capable of donning multiple identities – researcher, scientist, artist, critic, and performer. . .” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 20). Not surprisingly then, a *bricolage* of mixed methods approaches that imply a researcher’s pluralistic way of approaching methodology and knowing would also almost necessarily imply a tendency toward theoretical and philosophical pluralism.
Both my use of autoethnography and the fact that spirituality is a social phenomenon find a home within phenomenological theory. Schwandt posits that “phenomenologists insist on careful description of ordinary conscious experience of everyday life. . . a description of ‘things’ . . . as one experiences them” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 191). This phenomenological approach to spirituality is useful in that it is only possible to attempt to define an intangible, abstract concept such as spirituality by closely observing and describing elements of its nature. Schwandt describes the utility of phenomenology for defining an intangible phenomenon when he states that “[p]henomenological descriptions of such things are possible only by turning from things to their meaning, from what is to the nature of what is” (p. 191). Schwandt differentiates between two types of phenomenology, hermeneutic (which emphasizes interpreting a phenomenon through language) and existential (whereby interpretation through life experiences is emphasized) (p. 192). Both hermeneutic phenomenology (via the review of literature and the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework), as well as existential phenomenology (autoethnography and interviews) apply to the current research.

As already evinced, spirituality serves a variety of functions in the lives of spiritual practitioners. Spirituality provides us with means to transform our lives, manage crises and transcend our circumstances, all the while giving us the vehicle to express ourselves and help others in meaningful ways. Additionally, the likening of someone’s progressively hierarchical spiritual needs to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs with my Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework (as well as the functional nature of human spirituality) compels me to make a theoretical nod to functionalism. As Schwandt
(2001) explains, “[f]unctionalist theories or models aim to explain human behavior. . . and social-cultural institutions. . . in terms of the functions they perform in a particular group, society, culture, or community” (p. 102-103).

Finally, and quantitatively speaking, the public-school trained empiricist within me (combined with my acknowledgment that, for some, changes in modus operandi must be justified by “hard data”) led me to include a part of this study that views the relationships of the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework component by checking student perceptions through quantifiable survey responses. This quantification will support a future transition from a Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework to a Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Model.

Research Design: Methods and Analysis

My purpose with the present study is to first present quantitative data that tests the relationship between students’ ratings of spiritual motivators, acts of spiritual volition and indicators of spiritual self-actualization (including academic success). Subsequent to the quantitative data collection phase, interviewees were selected from the pool of survey respondents. These interviewees were not selected based on whether or not their survey responses supported my Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework. Rather, these interviewees’ survey responses revealed that spirituality played some important role in their lives. This increased the likelihood that interviews with these respondents would reveal further qualitative data that could enhance the meaning of and/or shed additional light on the quantitative data.
This particular style of mixed methods design is what Clark and Creswell (2008) call “a sequential explanatory mixed methods design with participant selection” (p. 497). Clark and Creswell’s description of a study that utilized this design provides a helpful comparison to the present research:

Thogersen-Ntoumani and Fox (2005) used a sequential mixed methods approach to identify and describe a typology of physical activity and mental well-being for adults at one organization. They collected quantitative measures with an online survey and used cluster analysis techniques to identify four distinct categories of physical activity and mental well-being. . . Next, the authors selected and interviewed participants representing each cluster to qualitatively describe what it means to be a cluster member and to validate the identified clusters. Thus, the authors used sequential timing, starting with a quantitative phase that led to a qualitative phase. (p. 497)

The qualitative hermeneutics of the literature review notwithstanding, the phase of the present research that includes human participants follows the design model explicated above. The quantitative phase allows generation of data regarding students’ spiritual motivation, spiritual volition and spiritual self-actualization. This phase also affords the opportunity for identification of clusters of students who have (and have not) achieved high levels of spiritual self-actualization with (and without) a high frequency of various spiritual motivators and acts of spiritual volition. These clusters will be used to guide recruitment of interviewees for the sequentially subsequent qualitative data generation phase as previously detailed.

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Just as certain questions guide the qualitative methodology of the present research (in respect to the stated purposes of the study), so too do specific questions speak to the quantitative methodology. These questions are (a) What is the strength of the relationship between students’ spiritual self-actualization and frequency levels of certain spiritual motivators? (b) What is the strength of the relationship between students’ spiritual self-actualization and frequency levels of acts of spiritual volition? and (c) Do the strength of these relationships support my Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework?

I hypothesized that there would be a significant correlation between students’ acts of spiritual volition, spiritual motivation (both personal and educational influences) and their spiritual self-actualization, such that as the frequency of students’ acts of spiritual volition and spiritual motivation increases, so does their spiritual self-actualization. Also, I hypothesized that the correlation between students’ educational influences on spiritual motivation and their self-reported grades and overall feelings of academic success will be significantly stronger than the correlation between students’ personal influences on spiritual motivation and their self-reported grades and overall feelings of academic success, such that as the frequency of students’ educational influences on spiritual motivation increase, so do their grades and overall feelings of academic success.

Prior to distributing the 2009 USES to participants, I piloted the survey in order to test the reliability of the instrument. Sixteen friends, co-workers and graduate students were provided with the pilot survey (11 females and 5 males). Cronbach ’s alpha was calculated (with formulae built into Microsoft Excel) for all survey items and for each cluster of variables (results in Chapter 4).
I compared the clusters of variables representing the three components of the framework (along with students’ self-reported current semester grades) with a *Pearson’s R* multiple regression analysis conducted with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Additionally, I measured the capacity for predictability between these correlations using SPSS.

As previously indicated, the quantitative portion of the study will utilize data generated via the 2009 USES to test the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework. With their initial completion of the 2009 USES, I collected demographic data from each participant that includes gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, religious denominational affiliation (if any), academic classification (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior), and academic major. Remember that the framework consists of three parts spiritual needs, spiritual motivation (personal and educational influences) and spiritual volition. Spiritual motivation (measured separately as “Educational Influences on Spiritual Motivation” and “Personal Influences on Spiritual Motivation”) and spiritual volition are addressed by separate sets of survey items (presented later). Spiritual needs are represented by survey items regarding overall spiritual self-actualization (the pinnacle of spiritual needs). All of these clusters of variables have been correlated against one another and also compared with the participants’ self-reported current semester grade averages. Spiritual self-actualization was measured by students’ responses to the following survey items:

1. Current semester grade average: F, D, C, B or A.
2. My spirituality has helped me achieve academic success: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree.
3. My spirituality has helped me achieve success at work, in business and/or in my personal finances: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree.

4. My spirituality has helped me achieve success in building strong, positive personal relationships: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree.

5. I have had a positive impact on other individuals and/or society because of my spirituality: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree.

6. Being in touch with my spirituality has helped me improve myself and my life: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree.

Students’ acts of spiritual volition were measured by Likert-scale responses to the statements on the 2009 USES. Answer choices were “Never,” “Rarely (less than once per month),” “Occasionally (once per month),” “Often (2-3 times per month)” and “Regularly (4 times per month or more)”: 

1. I participate in self-reflection, prayer or meditation that is not part of a campus-sponsored class, event or activity.

2. I participate in yoga, tai chi, go for walks, visit the beach, commune with nature or other similarly spiritually nourishing activities that are not part of a campus-sponsored class, event or activity.

3. I enjoy and/or participate in religious singing/chanting/music that is not part of a campus-sponsored class, event or activity.
4. I read sacred texts (Bible, Koran, Torah, etc.) or other books about religion/spirituality that are not associated with my participation in a campus-sponsored class, event or activity.

5. I attend religious and/or worship services that are not part of a campus-sponsored class, event or activity.

6. I participate in spiritually fulfilling clubs or organizations that are not part of a campus-sponsored class, event or activity.

7. I participate in spiritually fulfilling forms of artistic expression (such as painting, drawing, journal or poetry writing) that are not associated with my participation in a campus-sponsored class, event or activity.

8. I participate in a personal relationship that is spiritually fulfilling.

9. I achieve spiritual fulfillment by volunteering my services and/or time for the benefit of others either by myself or as part of an effort that is not associated with class or campus-sponsorship (examples: volunteering at church, work at soup kitchens, volunteer work for organizations such as the Peace Corps or Habitat for Humanity).

Students’ educational influences on spiritual motivation were also measured by Likert-scale responses to 2009 USES statements. Possible responses for questions 1-19 were “Never,” “Rarely (less than once per month),” “Occasionally (once per month),” “Often (2-3 times per month)” and “Regularly (4 times per month or more).” Possible responses for questions 19-26 are “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” Neither Agree Nor Disagree,” “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”: 
1. My college instructors care about me as a person and as a student and take steps to create a caring community of learners.

2. My elementary and secondary school teachers cared about me as a person and as a student and took steps to create caring communities of learners.

3. My college instructors acknowledge (and encourage tolerance of) all forms of spiritual expression.

4. My elementary and secondary school teachers acknowledged (and encouraged tolerance of) all forms of spiritual expression.

5. My college instructors use contemplation/meditation/quiet time as an instructional strategy.

6. My elementary and secondary school teachers used contemplation/meditation/quiet time as an instructional strategy.

7. My college instructors encourage or require reflective journaling and/or poetry writing as an instructional strategy.

8. My elementary and secondary school teachers encouraged or required reflective journaling and/or poetry writing as an instructional strategy.

9. My college instructors encourage or require students to share personal narratives and/or engage in storytelling as an instructional strategy.

10. My elementary and secondary school teachers encouraged or required students to share personal narratives and/or engage in storytelling as an instructional strategy.

11. My college instructors use art, music or drama as an instructional strategy.
12. My elementary and secondary teachers used art, music or drama as an instructional strategy.

13. I participate in religious/spiritual discussions in class and/or with college instructors, college faculty or staff.

14. During my elementary and secondary school career, I participated in religious/spiritual discussions in class and/or with elementary and secondary school teachers, college faculty or staff.

15. I participate in college level religious studies classes.

16. During my elementary and secondary school career, I participated in religious studies classes as part of the formal school day.

17. I participate in service-learning opportunities (volunteer efforts) that are part of a class or that are conducted in association with a college campus-sponsored organization, event or activity.

18. During my elementary and secondary school career, I participated in service-learning opportunities (volunteer efforts) that are part of a class or that are conducted in association with a school-sponsored organization, event or activity.

19. A college instructor (or instructors) acts (or act) as a personal spiritual role model (or role models) in my life.

20. A elementary or secondary school teacher (or teachers) acted as a personal spiritual role model (or role models) in my life.

22. My elementary and secondary schools allowed for personal expressions of spirituality.

23. At my college/university, there are spiritually fulfilling clubs and organizations that are sponsored by and/or located on-campus that meet my spiritual needs.

24. At my elementary and secondary schools, there were spiritually fulfilling clubs and organizations that were sponsored by and/or located on-campus that meet my spiritual needs.

25. At my college/university, there are spiritually fulfilling events and activities that are frequently sponsored by and/or located on-campus that meet my spiritual needs.

26. At my elementary and secondary schools, there were spiritually fulfilling events and activities that were frequently sponsored by and/or located on-campus that meet my spiritual needs.

Finally, students’ personal influences on spiritual motivation were measured by Likert-scale responses to 2009 USES statements. A number of these questions were sensitive in nature, asking respondents to state whether or not their spirituality helped them overcome personal crises and obstacles. Because of the potential negative memories this may have brought to the surface, the informed consent statement included a disclaimer that I was unqualified to offer psychological, medical or legal advice along with phone numbers for service providers in each of those fields (Appendix B). Possible responses were “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” Neither Agree Nor Disagree,” “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”:

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1. A family member (or members) acted as a personal spiritual role model (or role models) in my life.

2. My personal friend (or friends) acted as a personal spiritual role model (or role models) in my life.

3. A mentor or friend associated with organized religion (i.e. someone you know through your participation in organized religion) acted as a personal spiritual role model (or role models) in my life.

4. Throughout my life, I have faced crises of a personal nature (abuse, divorce, break-ups, loss of a loved one, loss of a job, alcoholism, illnesses, disabilities or other medical conditions, etc.) that have caused me to greater rely upon my spirituality.

5. My spirituality has helped me overcome personal obstacles and crises.

6. My spirituality has been a comfort to me through personal obstacles and crises.

The purpose of the qualitative portion of the research is to gain a deeper, richer understanding of the phenomenology of spirituality (as seen through the eyes of undergraduate students). Simultaneously, interview data included undergraduate students’ perceptions regarding the quality of the intersection of spirituality and education (at both the K-12 and post secondary levels). Specific questions stemming from these broad purposes are (a) What does spirituality mean to college students? (b) What forms of spiritual expression do college students typically engage in? (c) In what ways do students perceive that their campus environments and instructors (both former schools and K-12 teachers and their college campuses and post secondary instructors) as
facilitating or hindering their spiritual fulfillment? (d) What on-campus activities and
services (at all educational levels) should be offered to promote students’ spiritual
fulfillment? and (e) Do students feel that spirituality has contributed to their academic
success and overall successes in life?

While the literature review and quantitative portion of the research partially
address the second question, “What forms of spiritual expression do college students
typically engage in?” this question was further explored, along with the remaining
qualitative questions, using a semi-structured, one-on-one interview with 11
undergraduate students at the University of West Florida. This pool of interviewees was
self-identified from the initial 139 respondents of the 2009 USES who expressed interest
in participating in follow-up interviews. Additionally, 8 of the one-on-one interviewees
(4 females and 4 males) were asked to participate in a focus group meeting to see what
other understanding might be gained about the roles and benefits of spirituality in both K-
12 and post secondary education settings.

From the pool of potential, self-identified interview participants, I used
respondents’ survey answers to identify clusters of students whose responses indicated
that spirituality played a role in their lives to at least some degree. From among those
participants who had indicated a willingness to be interviewed and whose survey
responses indicated that spirituality played some role in their lives, I invited 10 males and
13 females to be interviewed, with the hope of interviewing 5-6 of each gender. Among
those who were invited, 6 males and 9 females responded with a willingness to be
interviewed. There were 7 female participants and 4 male participants who actually
scheduled and showed up for the interview (interviewees’ demographics will be further detailed in Chapter 5).

I reminded all interviewees of the informed consent that they signed as part of the 2009 USES and gave them an additional copy to keep. I provided each interview participant the opportunity to select his or her own pseudonym, but all indicated they would prefer to have one assigned. After reminding participants about the informed consent and asking them about their preference for pseudonyms, I obtained participant consent for audio recording of interview sessions. Although I asked relevant, off-the-cuff, follow-up questions, the staple of semi-structured interview questions were

1. How is your spirituality important to you?
2. What types of spiritual activities do you regularly engage in?
3. Where do you engage in these spiritual activities?
4. Thinking of your academic career, kindergarten through the present, in what ways have on-campus activities met your spiritual needs?
5. Again, thinking back through your entire academic career, describe any ways that you’ve felt spiritually fulfilled during a class session.
6. How have your instructors, throughout your academic career, encouraged (or discouraged) your freedom of spiritual expression?
7. How can instructors facilitate spiritual expressiveness?
8. What other activities or services should schools and universities offer to enhance students’ spiritual lives?
9. How has your engagement in spiritual activities affected your academic achievement?
10. How has your engagement in spiritual activities affected your overall success in life?

11. How has your engagement in spiritual activities affected the way you feel about yourself?

12. Describe a time that your spirituality has helped you through a period of crisis in your life.

13. What else would you like to add about your spirituality specifically or spirituality in general that I may not have asked about?

Upon completion of the one-on-one interviews, I scheduled a time for a focus group session that would fit most of the interviewees’ previously indicated schedules. I invited 4 males and 4 females to participate in the focus group session. The participants that showed up for the scheduled focus group were 2 males and 1 female. The focus group session was roughly a half an hour in duration. I obtained the participants’ permission to make an audio recording of the focus group session. The focus group topic was “Attitudes regarding spiritual expression on campus and in the classroom.” While the focus group was intended to be a non-structured discussion, I developed a list of discussion prompts that would provide further data regarding themes discovered in the one-on-one interviews to encourage the group to press through any lulls in the conversation:

1. What is spirituality and how is it different from (or the same as) religion?

2. What kinds of events and life experiences typically lead someone to discover their spiritual identity?

3. If you were asked to create a list of spiritual needs, what would be on that
4. What are some things that might prevent or hinder you from meeting your spiritual needs?

5. What would be your number one suggestion for schools who want to meet students’ spiritual needs without violating the religious freedom clause of the First Amendment?

6. Describe the things that might motivate you to engage in spiritual acts.

7. Is there anything else that anyone would like to share with the group?

After conclusion of the one-on-one interviews and focus group session, I transcribed and hand-coded the exchanges to identify any recurrent themes or patterns and look for data points which supported the concepts established in the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework. These themes will be presented in Chapter 5 along with relevant, supporting excerpts from the interview transcripts. Single data points stemming from these interviews will also be included in my later discussion of these qualitative data (if, for example, they resonate with the quantitative study or themes revealed during the review of the literature).

The correlation tests previously described helped identify the strength of the relationship between the clusters of data for each of the components of the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework and also formed the basis for the quantitative data analysis. When viewed and analyzed together, these quantitative and qualitative data clusters formed a more complete representation of the phenomenon of spirituality while providing supporting evidence to confirm the utility of the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework.
This process of clustering data is not unlike that employed by LeCompte and Preissle (1993) for categorizing qualitative data for analysis:

Once a researcher has established the categories within which the data are organized and has sorted all bits of data into relevant categories, the portrayal of a complex whole phenomenon begins to emerge. The process is analogous to assembling a jigsaw puzzle. The edge pieces are located first and assembled to provide a frame of reference. Then attention is devoted to those more striking aspects of the puzzle picture that can be identified readily from the mass of puzzle pieces and assembled separately. Next, having stolen some surreptitious glances at the picture on the box, the puzzle worker places the assembled parts in their general position within the frame and, finally, locates and adds the connecting pieces until no holes remain. Thus, analysis can be viewed as a staged process by which a whole phenomenon is divided into its components and then reassembled under various new rubrics. (p. 237)

Using LeCompte and Preissle’s jigsaw puzzle analogy, the quantitative data clusters represent the “edge pieces [that] are located first and assembled to provide a frame of reference” (p. 237). The qualitative clusters and individual data points of interest are then the “more striking aspects of the puzzle picture that can be identified readily from the mass of puzzle pieces” (p. 237). The Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework (constructed both through the tacit knowledge gained through my life and evidenced autoethnographically and hermeneutically in the literature review) provides “the picture on the box” (p. 237).
Once the spirituality puzzle is assembled, the interpretive and analytical results of the qualitative and quantitative data generation will be discussed in the respective chapters devoted to those portions of the present research. The conclusion presents these data in their interactive totality, along with a discussion for their implications for K-12 and post secondary classroom practices, school and university policies and future research in the area of spirituality and education.

The following chapter frontispiece (Figure 5) was one that I created for friends from a church I attended. They were redecorating their daughter’s room and her favorite Bible story was the one of Daniel in the lion’s den. This piece reminds me of the power of prayer.
Figure 5. This example of spiritual volition reminds me of the power of prayer, “Daniel in the Lion’s Den,” pastel on newsprint by the author.
CHAPTER IV
A CUP OF THIS, A TEASPOON OF THAT: “MEASURING” SPIRITUALITY

Before she passed away, Dr. Rogers had encouraged me to submit a grant proposal offered by the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Higher Education Research Institute for conducting research regarding spirituality. It was at this time that I learned that UCLA has a wonderful survey designed to capture college students’ attitudes and beliefs regarding spirituality and religion. UCLA has administered this survey at numerous colleges and universities and invites researchers to use these data in preparing their own studies for publication. I felt that the survey data that UCLA offers to share were too dated for my current research and I opted to write my own survey instrument. Although it was a challenge to write survey items to accurately capture the data I was hoping for, I was eventually pleased with the effort because it gave me an opportunity to align the survey instrument to my Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework. Hence the need for a pilot survey and reliability test was born.

Survey Reliability

I piloted the 2009 USES to sixteen friends, co-workers and graduate students (11 females and 5 males) in order to calculate Cronbach’s alpha to test the instrument for reliability (Appendix B and Chapter 3 both contain a complete listing of USES questions). The calculated Cronbach’s alpha for the entire 2009 USES was 0.84. I then calculated a separate Cronbach’s alpha for each set of questions that represented a
different cluster of variables. The “Expressions of Spiritual Volition” questions returned a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.82. My “Educational Influences on Spiritual Motivation” questions yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.74. Questions in the “Personal Influences on Spiritual Motivation” category resulted in a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.76. Finally, those questions which measure “Personal Success Attributable to Spirituality” offered a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.74. Generally speaking, a desirable Cronbach’s alpha score for reliability is between 0.70 and 0.90. When Cronbach’s alpha is lower than 0.70, survey items are so dissimilar that they do not obtain reliably consistent answers from participants. A Cronbach’s alpha that approaches 1.00 indicates that there may be too many redundant items, resulting in a too perfect Cronbach’s alpha.

Sampling and Data Collection

I administered the 2009 USES by personally visiting seven face-to-face classes of undergraduate students at the University of West Florida. I collected surveys from 139 respondents (99 females, 40 males). These students were enrolled in education (n = 71, 58 females, 13 males), math education (n = 25, 22 females, 3 males), pre-law (n = 33, 16 females, 17 males) and business (n = 10, 3 females, 7 males) courses. Additionally, demographic data were collected and the participants represent a variety of ethnicities, marital status and religious preference (Tables 1-3).
Table 1

Survey Respondents’ Ethnicity Frequency Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Asian</td>
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<td>Caucasian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
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</table>

\[ n \] 139
### Table 2

Survey Respondents’ Marital Status Frequency Table

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<td>Divorced</td>
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<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domestic Partnership</td>
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<td>Undesignated</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\[ n = 139 \]
Table 3
Survey Respondents’ Religious Preference Frequency Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Preference</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

\[ n = 139 \]

Survey Analysis and Results

After collecting the completed 2009 USES from respondents, each survey was assigned an identification number (1-139). I conducted this number assignment to facilitate anonymity and in order to be able to easily remove the data associated with any respondents who may wish to withdraw their participation at some point in the future. An average Likert-scale score for each of the four clusters of questions (“Spiritual Volition,” “Educational Influences on Spiritual Motivation,” “Personal Influences on Spiritual Motivation” and “Personal Success Attributable to Spirituality”) was determined for each
participant. Participants whose responses yielded a score average of 4 or higher in one or more clusters, and who expressed a willingness to participate in follow-up interviews, were separated from the other surveys. I then sorted these potential interviewees’ surveys and developed a list of respondents who represented a wide range of demographic diversity and invited them to participate in one-on-one and follow up interviews (refer to Chapters 3 and 6 for more details).

With the interview scheduling underway, I utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to conduct an analysis of all 139 2009 USES. I assigned a numeric value to each category of demographic data (Gender, Marital Status, Religious Affiliation). Students’ self-reported “Current Semester Grade Average (A, B, C, D, F) was also assigned a numerical value (5, 4, 3, 2, 1, respectively) and categorized as an ordinal variable. Participants’ responses to each of the 46 survey items were also assigned a numeric value. “Never,” “Rarely (less than once per month),” “Occasionally (once per month),” “Often (2-3 times per month),” and “Regularly (4 times per month or more)” were assigned a Likert-scale value of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 (respectively). “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Neither Agree Nor Disagree,” “Agree,” and “Strongly Agree” were also assigned a Likert-scale value of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 (respectively).

Each survey response from each participant was entered into SPSS. The response items in each cluster of questions (associated with specific aspects of the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework as previously discussed in Chapter 3) were averaged in order to calculate a Pearson’s R correlation coefficient to compare the four question clusters and the students’ self-reported current semester grades.
The four clusters of questions ("Expressions of Spiritual Volition," “Educational Influences on Spiritual Motivation,” “Personal Influences on Spiritual Motivation” and “Personal Success Attributable to Spirituality [Spiritual Self-Actualization]”) that represented variables associated with the three components of the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework were all significantly, positively correlated to each other. The statistical findings and scatterplots comparing the variables are presented below, while a more detailed discussion of the implications of the results will be found in Chapter 6.

The Pearson’s R correlation coefficient between “Expressions of Spiritual Volition” and “Educational Influences on Spiritual Motivation” was 0.312 ($R = 0.312, p \leq 0.001$). While the correlation is statistically significant, with an $R$ of 0.312, the relationship is not incredibly strong. Likewise, the predictive capacity between these two clusters of variables (indicated by $R^2$, $R^2 = 0.097$) is not a strong one (Figure 6).
Figure 6. Spiritual Volition and Educational Influences on Spiritual Motivation scatterplot (Pearson’s $R = 0.312$, $p \leq 0.001$).

The Pearson’s $R$ correlation coefficient between “Expressions of Spiritual Volition” and “Personal Influences on Spiritual Motivation” was more than twice as
strong at 0.680 ($R = 0.680, p \leq 0.001$). The predictive capacity between these two clusters ($R^2 = 0.462$) is also stronger (Figure 7).

![Figure 7](image)

Figure 7. Spiritual Volition and Personal Influences on Spiritual Motivation scatterplot ($Pearson’s R = 0.680, p \leq 0.001$).

I calculated the correlation between “Expressions of Spiritual Volition” and “Personal Success Attributable to Spirituality” (Spiritual Self-Actualization) and obtained a Pearson’s $R$ correlation coefficient of 0.724 ($R = 0.724, p \leq 0.001$). The predictive relationship between these two clusters is represented by $R^2 = 0.524$ (Figure 8).
Figure 8. Spiritual Volition and Spiritual Self-Actualization scatterplot ($Pearson’s R = 0.724, p \leq 0.001$).

The $Pearson’s R$ correlation coefficient between “Educational Influences on Spiritual Motivation” and “Personal Influences on Spiritual Motivation” yields a result of $0.377 (R = 0.377, p \leq 0.001)$. The predictive capacity between these two clusters offers an $R^2 = 0.142$ (Figure 9).
“Educational Influences on Spiritual Motivation” and “Personal Success Attributable to Spirituality” is represented by a Pearson’s $R$ correlation coefficient of 0.356 ($R = 0.356, p \leq 0.001$). The predictive relationship between the two is indicated by an $R^2 = 0.127$ (Figure 10).
Figure 10. Spiritual Self-Actualization and Educational Influences on Spiritual Motivation scatterplot (Pearson’s $R = 0.356$, $p \leq 0.001$).

The Pearson’s $R$ correlation coefficient for “Personal Influences on Spiritual Motivation” and “Personal Success Attributable to Spirituality” represents the strongest of the relationships between the variable clusters at 0.831 ($R = 0.831$, $p \leq 0.001$). The predictive nature of these two variables is indicated by an $R^2 = 0.691$ (Figure 11).
Figure 11. Spiritual Self-Actualization and Personal Influences on Spiritual Motivation scatterplot (Pearson’s $R = 0.831$, $p \leq 0.001$).

The statistics supports the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework in that all of the components of the framework are represented by clusters of variables that are significantly and positively correlated. It is interesting to note that the two strongest relationships among these variables are those between “Personal Influences on Spiritual Motivation” and “Personal Success Attributable to Spirituality” and that of “Expressions of Spiritual Volition” and “Personal Success Attributable to Spirituality.” The next
strongest relationship is that between “Personal Influences on Spiritual Motivation” and “Expressions of Spiritual Volition.”

While causality should not be inferred among these relationships, it appears that someone’s personal spiritual influences (as exerted by family members, friends and fellow religious practitioners) has a greater impact on their frequency of engaging in expressions of spiritual volition and on his or her feelings of success attributable to spirituality (spiritual self-actualization). Also, the more a person practices expressions of spiritual volition, the more likely he or she is to attribute his or her personal successes to spirituality.

The strength of the relationships between “Educational Influences on Spiritual Motivation” (spiritually nourishing instructional practices and activities provided as a part of formal schooling), while positive and statistically significant, has a much less pronounced impact on an individual’s feelings of success attributable to spirituality and on his or her frequency of expressive acts of spiritual volition.

The interview data presented in Chapter 5 and the discussion of results in Chapter 6 will delve further into the implications of and some potential reasons for these findings while suggesting areas for future research.

While not a purely statistical depiction, the graphic below is a quick way to visualize the strength and positivity of the relationship between spiritual volition, educational and personal influences on spiritual motivation and spiritual self-actualization as it shows respondents’ aggregated answers to each cluster of questions arranged in ascending order from 1 to 5 (Figure 12).
Figure 12. Spiritual Volition, Educational and Personal Influences on Motivation and Spiritual Self-Actualization Aggregated Participant Responses (arranged in ascending numerical order).

Given the results of the lower strength of the relationship between “Educational Influences on Spiritual Motivation” and the other variable clusters, it is not surprising then that none of the variable clusters representing components of the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework are significantly correlated to respondents’ self-
reported semester grade averages (again, refer to Chapters 5 and 6 for a further discussion of these findings).

The *Pearson’s R* correlation coefficient for “Expressions of Spiritual Volition” and students’ self-reported Current Semester Grade Average is 0.186 (*R* = 0.186, *p* = 0.035). The predictive nature of these two variables is indicated by an *R*² = 0.035 (Figure 13).

*Figure 13. Students Self-Reported Current Semester Grades and Spiritual Volition scatterplot (Pearson’s *R* = 0.186, *p* = 0.035).*
For “Educational Influences on Spiritual Motivation” and students’ self-reported “Current Semester Grade Average,” the Pearson’s R correlation coefficient is 0.124 ($R = 0.124, p = 0.170$). The predictive nature of these two variables is indicated by an $R^2 = 0.015$ (Figure 14).

![Figure 14. Students Self-Reported Current Semester Grades and Educational Influences on Spiritual Motivation scatterplot ($Pearson’s R = 0.124, p = 0.170$).](image)

The Pearson’s R correlation coefficient for “Personal Influences on Spiritual Motivation” and students’ self-reported “Current Semester Grade Average” is 0.039 ($R = 0.039, p = 0.654$). The predictive nature of these two variables is indicated by an $R^2 = 0.002$ (Figure 15).
Finally, for “Personal Success Attributable to Spirituality” (Spiritual Self-Actualization) and students’ self-reported “Current Semester Grade Average,” the *Pearson’s R* correlation coefficient is 0.111 (*R* = 0.111, *p* = 0.196). The predictive nature of these two variables is indicated by an $R^2 = 0.012$ (Figure 16).
Figure 16. Students Self-Reported Current Semester Grades and Spiritual Self-Actualization scatterplot (Pearson’s $R = 0.111$, $p = 0.196$).

The statistics presented above have answered the research questions which guided the quantitative portion of the study as presented in Chapter 3: (a) What is the strength of the relationship between students’ spiritual self-actualization and frequency levels of certain spiritual motivators? (b) What is the strength of the relationship between students’ spiritual self-actualization and frequency levels of acts of spiritual volition? and (c) Do
the strength of these relationships support the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework?

Overall, the quantitative data support the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework in that as a person’s level of spiritual motivation increases, so too does his or her frequency of engagement in spiritually expressive acts of volition and his or her feelings of success attributable to spirituality. The portion of my original hypothesis that was not supported by the research was the relationship between the variables represented by the clusters of questions and students’ grades. Because of the insignificance of the relationship between these variables and grades, the link between someone’s personal successes attributable to spirituality and more tangible, quantifiable successes is unclear.

The qualitative data presented in the following chapter will provide a deeper, richer, phenomenological understanding of the quantitative data revealed in the present chapter. Chapter 6 will provide a discussion of both data sets and their implications for educators along with potential areas for future research.

I associate the Chapter 5 frontispiece (Figure 17) with fond memories. I created this piece for a woman that I dated for some time at a church I attended. She did not have any suggestion for a Bible personage or story for this piece, but just asked me to do something with pink. I thought of Christ’s love as He allowed Himself to be sacrificed on the cross and came up with the idea of doing a pink, heart-shaped “sunset” behind the crosses.
Figure 17. Spiritually expressive artwork, “In This Is Love. . .,” pastel on newsprint.
CHAPTER V
A SECOND HELPING: THE QUALITATIVE PORTION OF SPIRITUALITY

As this chapter commences it is appropriate to review the purpose of and general research questions that have guided the qualitative aspect of the present research. The qualitative purpose of this study is to gain a deeper, richer understanding of spirituality in a phenomenological way. This purpose dovetails into the overarching purpose of supporting the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework that I have posited while providing educators with a research-based perspective that encourages spiritually nourishing instructional strategies. Additionally, the qualitative data also place the quantitative data into a more meaningful context. The questions posed by this portion of the research were (a) What does spirituality mean to college students? (b) What kinds of spiritual expressive acts do college students typically engage in? (c) In what ways do students perceive that their campus environments and instructors (at all educational levels) facilitate or hinder their spiritual fulfillment? (d) What on-campus activities and services (at all levels) should be offered to meet students’ spiritual needs? and (e) Do students attribute their academic achievement and overall success in life to their spirituality?

The one-on-one and focus group interview questions speak directly to the guiding qualitative research questions above. In this chapter, I will present data gathered from recurring themes that I detected in the one-on-one and focus group interviews that
provide answers to the qualitative research questions, support the Spiritual Needs/
Motivation/Volition Framework, enhance/support/explain the quantitative data and that expand the phenomenological understanding of spirituality. When particularly relevant, single data points from the interviews will also be presented. When this is the case, it will be disclosed that the data is from a single source rather than recurring.

Sampling and Data Collection

In order to target potential interviewees who would have data relevant to the present research, I calculated an average of respondents’ 2009 USES. If a respondent indicated a willingness to participate in follow-up surveys and had an average Likert-scale score of 4 or higher in one or more of the four question clusters (indicating that spirituality played a role of some importance in the participant’s life), I separated his or her survey from the rest. I then sorted these potential interviewees’ surveys based on demographic data, in order to extend interview invitations to a diverse mixture of students representing the different types of classes I surveyed, ethnicities, marital statuses, religious preferences and from both genders. My primary efforts at achieving sampling diversity were to ensure that the percentage of interviewees’ ethnicities and marital statuses were roughly proportionate to the percentages of all survey respondents’ ethnicities and marital statuses but that as much diversity in religious preference was achieved as possible. Knowing that people often express their spirituality through their religiosity (and that many people use the terms “religion” and “spirituality” almost interchangeably), this was the most important demographic area in which to achieve diversity among the interviewees.
Applying this purposeful sampling, I invited 13 females and 10 males to participate in semi-structured, one-on-one interviews, with the goal of completing 5-6 interviews with participants of each gender. From those invited to participate, 6 males and 9 females responded with a willingness to be interviewed. After scheduling conflicts and no-shows, there were 7 female and 4 male interviewees. All of these interviewees were undergraduate students from the University of West Florida who had previously completed the 2009 USES. The demographics of these 11 one-on-one interviewees are presented in Tables 4-6.

Table 4

One-on-One Interviewees’ Ethnicity Frequency Table

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Ethnicity</th>
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<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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\[ n = 11 \]
Table 5

One-on-One Interviewees’ Marital Status Frequency Table

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<td>Divorced</td>
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<td>Separated</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Domestic Partnership</td>
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<td>0</td>
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\[ n = 11 \]
Table 6

One-on-One Interviewees’ Religious Preference Frequency Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Preference</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

\[ n = 11 \]

As I met with each one-on-one interviewee, I reminded him or her of the informed consent that they had previously signed when completing the 2009 USES (Appendix B) and gave them another copy of the informed consent. I reiterated that I would not use anyone’s real name in my study and provided each interviewee with the opportunity to select a pseudonym. Every interviewee chose instead for me to assign a pseudonym. Finally, prior to conducting each one-on-one interview (refer to list of one-on-one interview questions in Chapter 3), I obtained the participants’ permission to keep an audio record of the interview sessions. For the first interview, I employed a
commercially available Sony digital voice recorder to obtain the audio record of the interview. Because of the lack of clarity of the recording, I had some difficulty transcribing the first interview. For subsequent interview sessions, I used the voice memo recorder application on my iPhone as the primary recorder and the Sony digital voice recorder as a backup.

One-on-One Interviews

The interview data are categorized by the major recurring themes that I detected. Although the interview data are presented thematically, these data will simultaneously serve to provide answers to the qualitative research questions and provide a more meaningful context for the quantitative data. I have aligned these themes so that they will support my goal of providing a phenomenological understanding of spirituality and corroborating my Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework. The one-on-one interview themes included for discussion are Phenomenology of Spirituality, Spiritual Needs, Spiritual Motivation, Spiritual Volition, Spiritual Self-Actualization, The Secret of Life and Spirituality and Education.

It should be noted that overlaps certainly exist between many of these themes. For example, part of the phenomenology of spirituality is an acknowledgment that spirituality allows people to draw upon a reservoir of hope, and of course, one could also see hope as a spiritual need. Additionally, recurring patterns detected and presented in the spiritual motivation category that follows later include the spiritually relevant natures of crises and family influences. We often need to rely on others to get us through a crisis. So, the separation of themes into the various categories is not intended to imply that these areas
are mutually exclusive from other categories. When these themes do crossover, I have selected a category in which to place the supporting interview data, rather than repeating them in several different categories. I will explicate when the interview data I have presented have been coded to fit in multiple themes simultaneously. In the excerpts from interview transcriptions, when I have interjected or asked a follow-up question during a participant’s response, my words are immediately followed by the word “interviewer” in brackets. All of the names are assigned pseudonyms.

*Phenomenology of Spirituality*

The most common thread running throughout the interviews was the misconception of what *spirituality* fundamentally is. It became apparent that most of the participants used the terms religion and spirituality interchangeably. This is not surprising considering that during the literature review, I related how Maslow often used the word religion in ways that could be associated with either religion or spirituality (Maslow, 1964).

This misconception typically arose in interviewees’ responses to the questions “How is your spirituality important to you?” and those questions involving spirituality and education. I was surprised at how engrained and paradigmatic this misapprehension of the differences between religion and spirituality appeared to be. Almost without exception, when an interviewee’s response indicated he or she used these two words interchangeably, even when I asked a follow-up question such as “Could you describe the difference between religion and spirituality?” the participant would still respond to later questions in such a way as to indicate he or she still thought of these terms as the same.
The following exchanges serve to illustrate this basic issue in how people define spirituality for themselves. My comments are followed by the word “interviewer” in brackets. The first of the interview excerpts that I have provided is revealing in that Carol readily admits that she uses both religion and spirituality “together”: “And you mentioned religion. . . Do you see that there’s a difference between religion and spirituality. . . [interviewer]?” “Yeah, I never really thought of it like that, I just always, I would, I mean, use those words, y’know, together, uhm, I don’t know.”

When asked a direct follow-up question about the difference between religion and spirituality, the following participants’ responses support the operational definitions of the terms that I proposed in Chapter 2. Namely, that religion is a more corporate, ritualistic practice, while spirituality is associated with more personal choices and beliefs. Again, even after explicating these differences, most respondents reverted to their previously held interchangeable use of the terms for later questions.

“Autumn. . . you mentioned religion. . . do you see that there’s a difference between religion and spirituality and if so, what, how would you describe that [interviewer]?” Autumn replied

Yes. Uhm, I think spirituality is more. . . being in tune to yourself and your surroundings, that kind of thing. And religion is something you regularly practice and. . . not that you wouldn’t regularly practice spirituality, but you actually go to a place and worship God and that kind of thing.

“Okay. So, you would say religion is more organized (interviewer)?” “Right.”

Gene echoed this opinion, sharing that religion is “a group or organization” activity while spirituality is “more of a personal” one. Gene stated
Well, I think . . . I guess religion. . . I think about individual groups or organizations, and, uhm, that you’re a part of something that’s, that’s, y’know, kinda like being in a group or an organization here on campus that would be, that y’know, where you all tend to believe pretty much the same things. And, and you follow the same, y’know, I don’t know if procedures is the right word, but y’know you just follow the same you, you all do the same thing. Y’know and I think spirituality to a lot of people is a lot. . . is a different . . . because with spirituality they think of more of a personal . . . you know they kind of. . . I think spirituality to people is a more personal . . . decision and religion is a more corporate, grouped together. And so, spirituality would be more an individual kinda, y’know an individual belief system. Cause even when you get a group of people together, they’re not all gonna believe the same thing. Y’know, they may have their core principles are the same, but their individual spirituality is gonna be a little different, here, y’know as they interpret different things.

Olivia’s response also indicates that spirituality is a personal phenomenon while highlighting that religion is more about belonging to a congregation and perhaps succumbing to a certain extent of peer pressure. Olivia said

I believe that it’s personal. Spirituality is a very personal choice. I lived in Miami and there were lots of Roman Catholics there, but they didn’t impose their beliefs on anyone. There’s these girls here, that follow religious trends. . . It’s vain if you do it just to belong to a group.

The following two exchanges regarding morality and hope are single data points as far as the present theme is concerned, but these data represent concepts that will appear
again in other themes. Phenomenologically, spirituality also provides a vehicle for people to codify their own personal sense of morality as Carol clearly explains: “I mean [spirituality] it’s definitely. . . I don’t know how to describe it. . . It, uh, wasn’t a big part of my life, but it definitely. . . I mean my morals are definitely based around it.”

A former pastor of mine counseled me after my divorce, and I am reminded of his words here: “You can live more than 30 days without food. You can live about 3 days without water. You can live maybe 10 minutes without air. But you can’t live very long without hope.” Hope is plainly an integral part of how people define their own personal sense of spirituality. Dependence upon hope seems to be a natural counterbalance to the spiritually motivating nature of personal crisis. How can we effectively face a crisis without drawing upon some well of hope? Olivia reminds us that hope is part and parcel of a phenomenological look at spirituality. “How is your spirituality important to you [interviewer]?” “It keeps me sane.” “Can you elaborate on that? How does it keep you sane [interviewer]?” “When everything is going wrong, your faith helps you, I mean my faith helps me look at the bright side.”

Of course, a phenomenological definition of spirituality involves more than differentiating its uniqueness from religion and a discussion of morality and hope. The remaining interview themes presented below serve to further flesh out the aspects of spirituality and its meaning in the personal lives of the participants.

*Spiritual Needs*

While more spiritual needs will be explored in the section devoted to the focus group interview, I was pleased that the recurring theme vis-à-vis spiritual needs was that
of spiritual connectedness. Though the participants referred to this need using a variety of terms – teamwork, relationships, friends, other people and family – they all really mean the same thing. A basic spiritual need for people is the need to connect to others in personally meaningful and satisfying ways.

The need for spiritual connectedness is particularly relevant because it was conveyed in response to entirely unrelated interview questions. That people think so much about the need to connect with others in relation to their spirituality clearly supports the need for spiritual connectedness previously explained in the outline of the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework presented in Chapter 2. Further, the interviewees’ acknowledgement of this need finds concurrence with the works of several of the authors presented in the literature review.

When asked what kinds of on-campus activities could meet students’ spiritual needs, Malcolm was quick to point out the benefits of team-oriented activities:

- ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps], in high school, when we would march. Uh, it’s a good feelin’, workin’ together with people. I guess I would say that and football. I was just really fortunate to be on good teams in both ROTC and football.

“So that same sense of teamwork helps you spiritually (interviewer)?” “Yes it does. Because we can’t do it alone. We can’t do it alone. . . Another thing is that being spiritual, I feel is that, we’re in this together and that you need each other.”

I asked Paula how her engagement in spiritual activities has affected the way she feels about herself and her response took an entirely different direction. Her answer shows that the need for spiritual connectedness is not strictly a phenomenon related to
teamwork, or any kind of corporate religious gatherings, but that it is also an aspect of personal relationships. Paula related that

I guess how it helps with relationships. Uhm, as far as, with family members. I don’t really. . . I guess it helps to have a [chuckle] tolerance for them. Cause you understand that they’re gonna be there for you. . . It helps, it helps with. . . your personal relationships, with your friends, because it kind of influences which friends you’re gonna choose. And also, uhm, same with relationships, as far as like, boyfriends or girlfriends. . .

Rodney also confirmed the importance of personal relationships and indicated that someone can rely on their spirituality to get them through times of isolation. Talking about Army basic training he said

Mmmm. Let’s see, well just recently I was in boot camp, last year and bein’ away from family and not havin’ any kind of contact with anyone, uhm, I was, I grew a lot closer to God during that time. That’s, that’s all I had.

In addition to teamwork, personal relationships with family and friends, the need for spiritual connectedness is also expressed in a person’s choice of religious activities. When asked about the kinds of spiritual activities he regularly engages in, Ken discussed the importance of his Christian friends, “and I associate with Christian friends that, y’know can help stimulate Christian growth.” Ken went on to specify that he interacted with these friends in both corporate religious experiences and “outside” of church, “hanging out” with them and meeting them for “lunch.” Similarly, Gene stated that Baptist Collegiate Ministries

. . . met a lot of spiritual needs because it’s uh, it’s uh, an opportunity to get with
other people, y’know, like-minded individuals at the same age, kinda goin’
through the same things. So I was able to meet a lot of needs there.

In thinking about the next thematic category, Spiritual Motivation, I’m reminded
of how motivation and needs are so very closely linked. Someone can intuitively say that
a crisis motivates one to make certain choices in order to overcome or avoid the
discomfort of a crisis. But, depending on a person’s perspective, it can just as easily be
said that someone needs to overcome crisis in order to grow into a stronger person. I have
categorized participants’ responses into the areas that have made the most sense to me,
but it is important to continue to keep in mind the blurred lines of potential overlap
between all of these categories.

*Spiritual Motivation*

How we rely on our spirituality to overcome or see us through obstacles and
moments of personal crisis is a recurring theme in my interviewees’ responses. Someone
might rightfully say that this theme is not surprising, considering that one of my
interview questions was “Can you describe a time that your spirituality has helped you
through a period of crisis in your life?” What is more revealing is how pervasive the
concept of crisis was throughout the interviews. More than half of all of the interviewees
talked about their personal crises, four of those were before I ever asked a question about
危机 and two brought up personal crises again in later questions.

The kinds of crises that the participants shared are certainly ones with which we
can all relate. These crisis events include both the mundane and the extraordinary,
ranging from day-to-day stresses, deaths of loved ones, medical problems, abuse, and family divorces.

It is interesting to note that the theme of crisis can be readily apparent despite the fact that people can have different personal definitions of crisis. When asked about a time that spirituality might have helped him through a crisis, Malcolm responded that “I really haven’t had a crisis. I’m fortunate in that I haven’t had a crisis where I would need to depend on my spirituality.” However, Malcolm had previously related both general day-to-day crises and a very significant personal crisis which he attributed to motivating his spiritual growth. Malcolm described these when he said

I guess you could also say that when things get tough during the day, that’s when your spirituality is getting tested. So I guess you could say that whenever somebody is going through a tough time that’s their time to show their spiritual strength. So, I have moments like that throughout the day, every day. . . Uh, my grandmother died in ’07 and I didn’t think about anything, but things did get rearranged. And I guess one of the things I did was, I started readin’ [sic] about spirituality and more about the philosophy of the meaning of life.

Paula’s response reveals the wide array of personal crises that one person might encounter throughout the course of their life as she relied upon her spirituality to get her through her parents’ divorce, loss of loved ones and abuse:

When my parents got divorced, it did. It helped me. And then also, uhm, when my mom remarried, both, right after she remarried, both his grandpa- or his parents died. So it was just a really tough time. Uhm, I’ve also had just other hardships with, uhm, I guess abuse from older men when I was younger and church really
helped me out with that. . . as far as, y’know, accepting that it’s not my fault and not other things.

Lillian explained how her spirituality helped with her medical condition:
Well, I was diagnosed with Lupis, uh, a year and a half ago and it was a really dark time for me, just going through the whole process. Because for a while I didn’t know what was going on with me, all I knew was that I was really sick and I honestly felt like I couldn’t get through another day. She credits her internal dialogue with God and her “spiritual entity” for bringing her through that medical crisis and making her condition manageable. Lillian said
And I was able to get through it and like I said, now things are just amazing and I feel like it really has something to do with, uhm, my relationship with, uhm, I just don’t even know what to call it, God or with my spirits, or whoever’s up there listening to me.

Lillian’s journey toward better health is reminiscent of the mind-body-spirit link whereby many associate physical healing with spiritual health (Hoppe and Speck, 2005; Tippett, 2007).

As Malcolm implied earlier, Ken, Olivia and Gene all relate experiences that reveal that there are more mundane crises. Typically, most of us do not have to cope with poor health, loss of loved ones and abuse on a daily basis. While those types of crises can certainly be more devastating, it is the continual daily grind of stressors with which we must all find ways to cope. Whether it is strained personal relations or just those “rough times” people are spiritually motivated by crises that are big or small. Olivia shared she
has relied on prayer, faith and guidance from God to provide the impetus to find a new place to reside, “I guess right now, I’m in a bad living situation with my current roommate. I’m constantly praying to keep my life intact.” Ken referred to the “comfort” that spirituality provides through “the rough times” when he said

I believe God has kept me going. He’s helped me through all the rough times in my life. And, y’know, He’s a loving father, He, y’know, comforts, y’know, all those who seek Him. And just. . . has. . . blessed me overall. Sometimes I don’t always feel the immediate effect of that, but we all have to go through trials and I look to Him to get through said trials.

Gene aptly relates the spiritual motivation of crisis to the spiritual need for connectedness when he talks about how people can seek out others and lean on their spirituality in times of need:

Y’know, and, and, I always think back to, y’know, I thought, y’know, “there are no atheists in foxholes.” I think that’s what I used to hear, like when you’re in battle, there’s no such thing as an atheist. When you get in a negative. . . And what’s interesting to me, is that, a lot of times when people are goin’ through things. . . and this may be completely off of your subject. . . but they always look to the. . . that’s when they start lookin’ [sic] for the spiritual people. When things are goin’ [sic] bad in their life, whether they’re spiritual or not, that’s the time when they end up turning towards the spiritual people.

Crisis is such a highly nuanced phenomenon, worthy of study in its own right. The data have shown how people employ their spirituality to see them through common and uncommon crises as well as how they may rely on others’ spirituality to help them
through these obstacles. Next, the data show that my participants also utilize their spirituality to understand, cope and sympathize with other individuals’ crisis moments. Carol discusses how she dealt with the crisis of her father’s cancer in a way that resonates with spirituality’s phenomenological aspect of hope. “I guess maybe when my dad got cancer, like . . . a lot of praying involved. . .” “Okay. And how would you say that helped you [interviewer]?” “I don’t want to say that it did or didn’t. . . It, uh, it’s kinda like a hope kinda thing.” Gabriella’s response confirms the idea that spirituality and hope help us understand and deal with others’ problems:

Uhm, there was recently a woman at one of the churches I . . . well my parents go to. . . I go to two different churches. . . there was a woman there and her and her husband used to do VBS [Vacation Bible School], and he recently died this year from a brain tumor, and it was really hard for all of us. But, uhm, knowing that he is in heaven right now, it’s kind of gotten us through it.

In concluding my discussion of the spiritually motivational nature of crisis, it is relevant to introduce a single data point from one of my participants. Although other interviewees’ responses did not mirror the following data in a thematically recurring way, this response is nevertheless revealing. In response to the question about describing a time of crisis that your spirituality has helped you overcome, Autumn took the question in an entirely different direction, stating how her spirituality has helped her marriage. This is a reminder that major life events (positive or negative) can be significant stressors. These stressors can be spiritually motivating whether they are positive (such as getting married) or negative (such as suffering the loss of a loved one). Autumn says this best when she speaks of her marriage:
Mmmm, I wouldn’t really say a crisis, per se [has been alleviated by my spirituality], but a major event would be my marriage. Going through the process of getting married. And, uh, we go to a Catholic church, so you have to go through all kinds of things leading up to your marriage. So I think that that was definitely. . . a big help.

Family influences are another recurring theme that I have identified in the motivation category. Eight of the participants disclosed that members of their families influenced them spiritually. In most instances the interviewees indicated that their family possessed certain spiritual beliefs that were passed on to them and that they attended religious services with family members. I have previously presented how family and spirituality are interconnected in Autumn’s marriage. Paula and Gabriella made note of the fact that they attended church regularly with their parents and Rodney talked about the spiritual relationship he enjoyed with his family and the sense of separation he experienced at Army basic training. Gene took the familial responsibilities in meeting spiritual needs to another level. When asked how schools might be able to better meet students spiritual needs, Gene responded, “. . . I think, when it comes down to, uh, spirituality and religion, it’s more of a. . . a family, a. . . it, it needs to happen inside the family or inside the home.”

Revisiting the idea that people have a phenomenological understanding of spirituality that helps form their sense of morality, Carol explains how family influences can also play a motivating role in the development of spiritual morals:

I’d say that it [spirituality] enhanced it [my academic achievement], but that could be more from my parents. But, it’s, I mean again, it’s more like moral issues, like
I have to strive to be my best. But, I mean... cause my parents were a lot more spiritual than I am.

Unfortunately, the spiritual motivation we receive from family members may not always be positive or clear. Lillian recalls the mixed signals that her parents sent her regarding spirituality, “The thing with me is like, my mom’s Buddhist and my dad’s atheist and I was brought up in a Christian school. So, like I said, I’m really, really confused.” Finally, Ken allows us to see that when the spiritual influences from our immediate family do not meet our needs, we always have the option of looking to our extended family:

Well, like, I’m blessed to have my grandparents. Because, like, they’re the ones who helped me... like, they’re the strong Christian influence on my life. Y’know, my parents, unh, I’m not gonna [sic] really go there, but my grandparents are a real blessing. They’re good, Godly influences on me.

The patterns detected regarding the spiritually motivational aspects of personal crises and family influences align with the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework presented earlier. Autumn’s explanation that major life events can be just as spiritually motivating as personal crises, suggests a further area for study and a possible adjustment to the framework.

In order for people to meet their needs in response to intrinsic or extrinsic motivators, it is most often necessary to modify behavior (Maslow, 1968). Individuals can modify their behavior by discontinuing acts that prevent their needs from being fulfilled, beginning to act in new ways that may help them meet their needs or by hanging
the frequency of certain acts. When these behaviors are willfully undertaken they are acts of volition.

_Spiritual Volition_

With the exception of one, outlying, single data point, all of the interviewees’ reported preferred acts of spiritual volition included attendance at religious gatherings, reading sacred texts and dialoguing with a higher power (such as through prayer). The frequency levels of these spiritual acts of volition range from a few times each year to daily. Most of these reports were in response to the question, “What types of spiritual activities do you regularly engage in?” A potential follow-up question for future research would be to ask participants how they believe their lives would be affected if they decreased or increased their participation in spiritual activities.

The traditional, religiously oriented nature of most respondents’ preferred acts of spiritual volition would tend to continue to support the notion that, in comparison with spiritual practices described in the review of literature, people have a narrow view of spiritual expression and continue to combine spirituality and religion in their thinking. The implications of this trending will be a point for further discussion in Chapter 6.

I will begin with the single data point. Refreshingly, Malcolm sees himself as spiritual, but not religious. When asked what types of spiritual activities in which he regularly engages, he responded

I just read a lot, uhm, I’m not religious in particular. I just do a lot of reading. . . there’s a difference between being spiritual and being religious. I’ve. . . been reading a lot. And reading some classical stuff. The last book I read was Victor

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Frankl’s *The Meaning of Life*. Yeah, it really has to be good, challenging stuff that you’re reading. . . Not uh, books about witches and ESP and stuff. Even though I love that. It really has to be something that’s gonna challenge you to improve as an individual.

Among the thematically traditional religious practitioners, Hannah said that her engagement in such activities was not enough to be considered “regular,” while Carol only attends a few times each year out of “necessity.” “I go to the necessity masses, Christmas and Easter, such as that. . . And then, y’know, I do Lent.”

Other interviewees attend some type of religious service more regularly. Paula said that “I go to church almost every Sunday with my parents. And then, when I was younger, up until about high school I went to Wednesday services.” Similarly, Olivia also attends regularly: “I just go to church every Sunday and try to pray every night.” Lillian implied that her confusion stemming from her family influences have placed her in a position where she is still coming to terms with her spiritual identity, but she still attends religious services with her mother when she visits:

So, sometimes I’ll go to the Buddhist temple with my mom and we’ll do a bunch of chanting and, uhm, we’ll interact with the monks and we will, uhm, pray to statues and stuff, so we’ll do that about once a month.

Then there are those participants who have an almost daily, personal ritual of reading and or prayer that they engage in outside of regular religious services. Autumn said that she engages in “. . . prayer and going to church weekly.” Ken is even teaching himself to read sacred texts in their original languages in order to plumb deeper meaning from them, “. . . I pray, I read my Bible, I attend church, y’know. Recently, I’ve even
been going through the Bible with a Hebrew/Greek dictionary to try to learn more.”

Rodney says that he starts every day with Bible study and prayer in addition to his participation in organized services. Rodney engages in activities like

  Prayer and Bible uhm, and I’m in Bible studies every week. I’m in at least two types of church services every week. I go on Thursday nights to BCM [Baptist Collegiate Ministries] here which is a worship service, and I go to church every Sunday morning.

Finally, there are those participants who do not seem content to merely engage in solitary or even group activities but are compelled to serve in some way. This proclivity toward service and self-sacrifice resonate with both the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework and with the spiritual significance that Hunter and the Benedictine Monks associated with service to others (Hunter, 1998). For Gene, this service to others comes in the form of leading Bible studies and helping out in worship services:

  Every Sunday, I teach Sunday School every Sunday morning. I . . . We have three services at our church and I do something in all three services so I’m, on, on Sundays I’m at church from 8 o’clock in the morning until our Bible study Sunday night.

In addition to regular church attendance, Gabriella expresses herself by volunteering her efforts to assist with VBS and “Chrysalis Flights.” “I go to church on Sundays and Wednesdays, uhm, I participate in VBS during the summer and when I have a chance, I try and do missions locally and I go to concerts. . . . Christian concerts frequently.” “And you mentioned ‘VBS,’ that’s Vacation Bible School [interviewer]?” “Yes. Sometimes I, uhm, there is a place in Andalusia, like, I work up there and volunteer for ‘Chrysalis
Flights’ which is a retreat.” “Uhm, could you tell me a little bit more about that [interviewer]?” Gabriella replied

It’s a “Flight” up in Andalusia, Alabama. I mean, and it’s a three or four day weekend and it starts on Thursday nights and ends on Saturday. And you go one time and it’s like a weekend, and it’s a bunch of different secrets and it’s all about coming closer to God and you listen to talks. And then, uhm, after your first “Flight” you can work them, and there are different things you can work. You can do worship committee, refreshments, uhm, you can serve the people that are going on their first “Flight,” you can do meal service. There’s just a whole bunch of stuff you can do.

As the quantitative data indicate, there is a positive relationship between spiritual motivators, engagement in spiritual activities and the level of personal success that someone attributes to his or her spirituality. I have presented a discussion of the qualitative themes associated with spiritual needs, spiritual motivators and spiritual volition. The next category, Spiritual Self-Actualization, helps reveal how these concepts contribute to a person’s feelings of success.

*Spiritual Self-Actualization*

As I previously detailed in Chapter 2, spiritual self-actualization may be represented by a person’s perception of their success in life. As a person is motivated, active and achieving fulfillment of his or her needs, it is only natural to assume that he or she would be and feel successful. Interviewees’ perceptions in this category were recorded primarily from the interview questions, “How has your engagement in spiritual
activities affected your overall success in life?” and “How has your engagement in spiritual activities affected the way you feel about yourself?” Many of the interviewees related that their feelings of academic success are indirectly related to their spirituality, in that their spirituality has imbued them with an enhanced sense of responsibility and morals that facilitates their success academically and in varying life endeavors. Some of these data have been covered in previous thematic categories or will be given voice in the Spirituality and Education category later in this chapter.

Before presenting the data that corroborate the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework, two of the interview participants discussed how their spirituality could serve as a possible impediment to success at work. Considering federal laws pertaining to equal employment opportunity and treatment of employees on the job, the idea that individuals may have their work success hindered because of their spirituality is troubling in the extreme. Malcolm relates how he does not like to associate with co-workers because of their disingenuousness and how that affects his behavior while on the job:

There’s uh. . . at work, I think most the people I work with. . . I wanna [sic] say fake, I wish I could use a better word, but fake’s the only word I can think of. And, uh, with me not being all that social anyway, it’s hard for me to work there, knowin’ [sic] they’re talkin’ [sic] [negatively about spirituality]. . . I mean for it to be a spiritual journey, it has to be about your situation and a time to show your strength. I know when I’m at work I usually just focus on getting’ my work done and not makin’ [sic] discussions with anybody else.
Paula tells how displaying spirituality at her place of employment could cost someone a promotion, while at the same time her spirituality has provided her with the morals to do well at work. When asked how spirituality has affected her overall success in life, Paula replied

Uhm, at work, it sort of prohibits it [my overall success in life]. Because with your religion you don’t prefer to participate in certain activities that you see going on. Or like, with my work, it’s really like a who-you-know sort of thing, so if you don’t like that group of people and you don’t wanna associate with them, then you’re kinda outta luck if you want a promotion because that’s who you have to go through. So I think it’s a little, uh, prohibited, just a little bit. But it’s also helped because I wouldn’t have the morals that I had at work if I didn’t have my spiritual place.

Lillian expresses how her ability to use her spirituality to cope with day-to-day stressors affects her feelings of personal success:

Uhm, I really feel like, uhm, from my own personal standpoint, uhm, it really helps me get through the day like when something goes wrong in my head, uhm, then like, y’know, maybe it’s because I wasn’t being the best person I could be spiritually, uhm. In the same light, if something happens in my life that goes really well it’s probably because I was thinking about, uhm, being a better spiritual person.

Gabriella believes that her spirituality has given her a more positive attitude in life, which, in turn has resulted in her acquiring friends and feeling successful. “I think it’s made me a happier person. I’ve done better in school. I’ve had plenty of friends
because I’ve had this peace and happiness come from my spirituality as a Christian.”

Finally, Autumn implies that the morals that stem from her spirituality have indirectly made her successful by instilling within her a desire to do what is right. “I think [my spirituality] it’s made my success better. It makes you want to be a better person, achieve my goals, do the right things.”

An increased sense of spiritual self-actualization gives people a more positive outlook on life, and generally makes them feel happier and more successful. The consensus among the interview participants regarding spirituality and success is that a person’s spirituality can be the basis for making him or her a more moral, responsible person which can lead to success in life. Individuals that regard spirituality as more important in their lives seem to be more inclined to credit their success to their spirituality. The Secret of Life section below sheds additional light on how spiritually-oriented people may have non-traditional definitions of success and that should be taken into account when attempting to understand spiritual self-actualization and a person’s overall success in life.

The Secret of Life

In Chapter 2, I presented a series of questions which Maslow posits that people ask themselves about the meaning and purpose of life. To paraphrase, these are questions like (a) “Who am I?” (b) “Why am I here?” (c) “What is there after this life ends?” (d) “Is there a higher power?” and (e) “What does it mean to be good and why should I be good?” (Maslow, 1964). It is all well and good to compare and even attempt to quantify the relationships between individuals’ levels of spiritual motivation, acts of volition and
sense of success, but people do not typically embark upon spiritual journeys in a structured, quantifiable way in order to achieve some kind of predictable result. Rather, for the most part, people set off on a spiritual path in order to answer these kinds of life questions and along the way they discover the benefits of acting in ways that help meet their spiritual needs. To look at the relationship between the variables previously discussed without seeking to discover the quality of the answers that people have discovered in respect to these life questions is tantamount to examining ingredients in a recipe without tasting the completed dish.

When I asked how their engagement in spiritual activities has affected the way they feel about themselves, Autumn and Olivia talked about how their spirituality has led them to understand that there is a purpose to life. Olivia states that her purpose is to “live for God,” while Autumn’s reply reveals that the sense of purpose she derives from spirituality helps provide answers to the types of life questions explored above. Olivia’s feeling is that the purpose granted her by her spirituality helps her transcend the basic necessities of everyday life:

It gives me purpose. . . Honestly, I used to date an atheist. That wasn’t fun. He thought life was bland. “I work, live and eat and I die.” But I think that life has a purpose. It is more meaningful to me and I think more highly of myself because I have a purpose and I live for God.

The way Autumn framed her response reminds me of an exchange between Billy Crystal’s and Jack Palance’s characters in the movie City Slickers. Crystal’s character is a yuppies who has paid for an old-west style rancher’s vacation package in order to reconnect with himself. Jack Palance portrays a seasoned cowboy who toughens up the
city folks who indulge themselves in these vacations (Crystal and Underwood, 1991). Crystal is trying to reinvent himself while out on the range and is seeking answers to life’s questions. Palance asks Crystal if he knows the secret of life (Crystal and Underwood, 1991). Crystal responds in the negative. Palance raises his index finger and says, “This is the secret to life.” Crystal asks, “A finger?” Palance responds, “No, just one thing. Stick with that.” Crystal eagerly asks what the one thing is. Palance tells him, “That’s what you have to find out” (Crystal and Underwood, 1991). This exchange perfectly illustrates the fact that spirituality is a means of answering these secret of life questions but that the answers to these questions are uniquely individualized. Autumn conveys this well, “I think it [spirituality] affects it [feelings about oneself] a lot. It makes you feel a better person. Uhm, after you engage in the activities maybe like you understand your purpose a little better.” “That would seem to indicate that you think that, uh, that someone’s sense of spirituality can give them a sense of purpose in life. Can you elaborate on that a little bit [interviewer]?” “Right. Uh, maybe some people question as to why… why they’re here, y’know, ‘why should I do good?’ ‘Why should I be a better person?’” “And you would think that they, they use their spirituality then to answer those questions for themselves [interviewer]?” “To answer questions and maybe help guide them. Yeah.”

Ken and Lillian take the general sense of purpose to another level and indicate that they feel that their sense of spirituality helps see them through personal crises because they feel that a higher power has a plan for their lives and that the struggles they face are somehow part of that plan. Ken speaks of this in general terms:

Because I know that God will work things out in the end, y’know, He ultimately

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has good plans for you. And, y’know, something everyone has to learn and realize. . . you have to learn to trust not, y’know, don’t trust in yourself, trust in God. Y’know, let Him handle everything.

Lillian on the other hand recalls a specific difficulty she has faced:

Uh, yeah, it [being diagnosed with Lupis] was really bad, uh, but then, y’know, I realized that, y’know, God has planned this life for me, and, uhm, He’s doing this for a reason and that’s why He gave me such a positive outlook on life. Uhm, so that I could get through it.

Hannah and Gene both combine this sense of a predestined plan for life with the idea that people’s sense of spirituality is a way for them to “make a difference,” a concept that continues to recur in the responses of other participants. Gene views this kind of plan that spirituality imparts to someone’s life as unfolding through opportunities that may or may not be granted:

Because I, I’m confident that I, that, that if I’m supposed to be doing something and I’m working towards it, then God’s gonna [sic] open up the doors and allow me to be successful in that. And if it’s not something that He wants me to be doing, then He’s going to show me that and, and move me away from that. . . It’s not necessarily about material successes and you know, you know and I think as individuals, y’know, as a spiritual person, you want your life to make a difference. And you wanna [sic] be a part of something bigger, than what you. . . than, than, y’know you don’t just wanna [sic] go through life humdrum. You want, you wanna [sic] be a part of something bigger. Cause I think God will, if you allow God to do that in your life then He will get you, He will put you into
situations where you can make a difference.

Hannah believes that we are here for a reason and that having “empathy” toward others is a part of that plan. Hannah said

Uhm, it’s not empathy, but it’s like, uh, more of, uh, like what I do matters and... what you do affects other people. You have more of a sense of that... impact on others. And you would feel more towards people... Okay, uhm... well I guess, my spirituality, I mean, I think it was twelve, like my motivation, my outlook on life it uhm, it helps me have more of a positive outlook and, uh, it makes me feel like, “okay, I’m not doing this for nothing,” y’know, there’s something that’s gonna happen. There’s a reason.

Rodney has a similar outlook on spirituality as he relies upon what God wants him to do and seeks to make a difference in the lives of others through teaching and future missionary work:

Uhm, I don’t feel like I’d be where I was at now, no doubt. Uhm, y’know, God leadin’ [sic] me to where I’m at and I, I uh, changed majors several times tryin’ [sic] to figure out... Outta [sic] high school, I had no idea what God wanted for me, y’know, what He wanted me to do and I changed my major several times and I finally just sit back and said, “God, I’m gonna [sic] do what you want me to do.” And, and He, uh led me to teachin’ [sic] and that goes along with that, He’s given me a heart for mission work and that gives me summers off so, so that’s a big part of why I’m in teachin’ [sic] and He, I felt like God wanted me to do something that I would be affectin’ [sic] lives, y’know, bein’ [sic] in the teachin’ [sic] profession, you have a lot of effect on your students.
Finally, as regards “making a difference,” Malcolm takes this spiritual secret of life to a serious extreme, stating that if someone’s spirituality does not empower them to make a difference in the lives of others then his or her spirituality “doesn’t matter.” Malcolm added

If you’re not helpin’ [sic] somebody else doin’ [sic] something, then it doesn’t matter how strong you are spiritually. It’s not makin’ [sic] a difference in the world. I guess I would have to say, being involved in activities that make a difference.

Although this is a single data point, rather than a recurring one, I conclude this portion on life’s secrets with an extensive quote that speaks eloquently to the secrets of life while expanding the phenomenological definition of spirituality. Gene discusses how everyone has a spiritual “emptiness” in his or her life. Gene implies that often people do not recognize the spiritual nature of this emptiness. Before they discover their spiritual identity, people may seek to fill this void with a variety of wrong “one thing[s] (a la Jack Palance)” (Crystal and Underwood, 1991). Gene explained

Spirituality is such a personal, uhm, aspect of your life that, I think that. . . Spirituality’s such a personal aspect of your life that when you’re asked to talk about it, then, y’know, it’s, it’s, it’s kinda [sic], it makes you start thinkin’ [sic] about it, but, uhm, it’s just y’know, spirituality fulfills an emptiness inside that I think a lot of people struggle with and try to fill it with other things and that other people are so. . . their religion, their spirituality is so, y’know, such a negative connotation in society that some people are afraid to explore it because they’re afraid they’re gonna [sic] be looked at as weak or strange or, y’know, a multitude
of different ways. That, y’know, that society has such a negative opinion of it, that it becomes, it’s becoming less predominant in people’s lives. And I think that’s a bad thing. There are people who are made to believe that it’s a, it’s for weak people that need something to fall back on. . . Does that make sense at all?

“It does. Uhm, but you raise an interesting point, if you don’t mind one more follow up question [interviewer].” Gene replied, “Oh, yeah, we’re, we’re good. I got an hour.”

“You talked about how spirituality fills an emptiness inside someone’s life, and if they don’t have that, they’re gonna be fillin’ it with other things. In your experience, what things do you think people would substitute for spirituality [interviewer]?” Gene answered

Oh. Oh man. A ton of things. You know, they try to fill it with other people. They try to fill it with alcohol. With drugs. Uh, y’know, they’re tryin’ to, y’know. . . I think everyone. . . Most, I think most people know that, ‘hey, y’know, you’re not supposed to go out and do drugs,’ but there is something missing in their lives that. . . and they’re tryin’ to fill it and they’re trying to figure out what they’re missing. . .

“And I just wanted to clarify that, so, they’re not necessarily even trying to fill that spiritual void with something else that equates to spirituality even [interviewer]?” Gene confirmed

They’re just trying to figure out what that. . . they just know that something’s not right. And my personal belief is they know their life is not, is not fulfilling to them in a way that, in a way that they think it should be. And so, they’re trying to
find what would make. . . what would fulfill them. And in turn, they end up turning into different. . . because the world tells you that, you know, it’s all about finding out what is good for you. And I think a lot of times you’ll find, uhm, fulfillment, through spirituality and your spirituality a lot of times mostly, see most spiritual organizations and things, they’re not into what can we do for you, it’s what they can do for other people. So a lot of times, they’re searching to fill that emptiness and they’re trying to find what’s gonna make them, what’s gonna fill them up. . . whenever what’s gonna fill them up is gonna be pouring themselves back out into something else. And that kinda goes back into where my personal beliefs is that you, when you go into spirituality, you wanna be part of something that’s bigger, that you want to make a difference.

*Spirituality and Education*

I have presented both the quantitative and qualitative data that show the relationship between spiritual motivation, spiritual volition and sense of spiritual self-actualization. Quantitatively, the data have shown that there is a significant, positive relationship between the variables representing the components of the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework. However, as was detailed in the previous chapter, the components did not have a significant correlation to students’ self-reported current semester grades. So beyond the spiritually nourishing, non-controversial instructional strategies presented in Chapter 2, the qualitative question remains, “What is the relationship between a student’s spiritual satiety and his or her academic achievement?”
This thematic category includes responses to the interview questions (a) “Thinking of your academic career, Kindergarten through the present, in what ways have on-campus activities met your spiritual needs?” (b) “Thinking back through your entire academic career, can you describe any ways that you’ve felt spiritually fulfilled during a class session?” (c) “How have your instructors throughout your academic career, encouraged or discouraged your freedom of spiritual expression?” (d) “How can instructors facilitate spiritual expressiveness?” and (e) “What other activities or services should schools and universities offer to enhance students’ spiritual lives?” The almost unanimous consensus achieved from my interviewees’ responses was that someone’s spirituality provides them with a greater sense of morality and responsibility, which may indirectly result in that person striving to do his or her best, having better study habits and making better grades. A sense of this has already been conveyed in some of the other thematic categories that have preceded this one. I would posit that even this indirect spiritual effect on students’ grades would be worth encouraging the development of students’ spirituality and meeting their spiritual needs.

I had also hoped that interviewees’ replies may have also revealed some additional non-controversial instructional strategies that are spiritually nourishing. However, even after discussing with respondents the difference between religion and spirituality, they clung to a combined paradigm of the two phenomenon and resisted seeing ways that spirituality can be nurtured in classrooms without violating the religious freedom clause of the First Amendment.

While I have no doubt that there are instructors who create caring communities of learners and employ spiritually nourishing strategies such as service-learning,
encouraging personal narratives and the like, most apparently do so with little or no
reflection regarding how these strategies spiritually affect students. Unfortunately,
participants have related that their own misconceived inseparability between spirituality
and religion has also been adopted by instructors who have become fearful of addressing
students’ spiritual needs. This qualitatively verifies the concept of teachers’ fearfulness as
presented by Nelson et al. (2004) in my review of the literature. This fear that teachers
have about spirituality (because they erroneously equate it with religiosity) is expressed
by several of the participants. Rodney shares how one of his teachers would only openly
express concern for students’ spirituality under certain conditions:

Like I said, we had one teacher in high school that we would have some deep
cconversations with every once in a while, but I had her for study hall and in study
hall she was a little more willin’ [sic] to talk out than she was in a classroom
setting. She was always in a group, and she always like, y’know, she knew she
wadn’t [sic] gonna [sic] get in trouble. We’d have some deep discussions
sometimes.

“And you mentioned she felt like she wasn’t gonna get in trouble because of the group
and the study hall atmosphere. Do you think that’s why a lot of teachers don’t. . .
encourage any kind of spiritual expression (interviewer)?” Rodney affirmed

Yeah, cause I mean you can get, it’s so easy to get in trouble in, y’know, I’m an
education major and, y’know, all you gotta [sic] have is an atheist with their
children in the room and they get wind of it and. . . and it can turn into a lawsuit
real quick.
This fear of “lawsuits” stems from teachers’ and students’ interpretation of “crossing the line” of “separation of church and state” as Autumn and Olivia convey. Autumn stated that

I wouldn’t really say that I’ve had anybody [instructors] go one way or the other with it [encouraging or discouraging spiritual expression]. But it was just kind of like. . . unspoken. I guess probably for fear, fear of crossing a line they shouldn’t maybe. . .

Olivia believes that facilitating students spiritual expressiveness would be illegal: “I don’t know, there’s big separation of church and state. So it [instructors’ facilitation of spiritual expressiveness] wouldn’t be legal.” “Do you think there’s any way that instructors can encourage spiritual expressiveness that would be Constitutionally legal [interviewer]?” “Maybe just having like 30 minutes of quiet time.” Likewise, Lillian, who attended public school after she had initially went to a Christian school, claims that teachers try to avoid spirituality because of potential controversy. “They definitely stayed away from spiritual, uhm, topics. As much as possible I think. You have to now, cause it’s a pretty controversial topic.” Malcolm expresses a similar opinion of teachers’ avoidance of certain topics: “There’s so many different. . . thoughts and ideas about what’s right and what’s wrong and that, y’know I think it’s easier for them to kinda [sic] just try to eliminate that whole conversation taking place.”

Gene, Paula and Carol voiced their agreement with how teachers’ fear makes them stay away from spiritual concepts. Gene said

I mean there’s not a whole lot of. . . there’s not a whole lot of spiritual talk going on inside. . . inside of classrooms. And I don’t know if that’s just. . . especially K
through 12, and I think that has a lot to do with more of, uhm, with teachers are afraid of what they’re allowed to talk about.

Paula’s opinion is that “I guess everyone’s so worried about, y’know, like touching toes – stepping on someone’s toes – they kinda [sic] stray away from anything except what’s in the book. They just stick to the book.” Carol’s response verifies that this fear emanates from a continued blurring of the difference between spirituality and religiosity, “Well, that’s kinda [sic] hard nowadays, like, because, y’know, someone says the word ‘God’ and everyone’s like, ‘What? You’re not allowed to say that at school.’” “Do you think they have to get into that area to facilitate spiritual expressiveness though [interviewer]?” “I don’t know. To me it’s a touchy subject. I think bringing up religion in school is. . . nowadays it’s too. . . frowned upon.”

Gabriella attended Pace High School, where a principal had recently become embroiled in controversy because of prayer at a school event. This event garnered national media attention when a lawsuit was filed on behalf of two students and Santa Rosa County District Schools voluntarily accepted a court order limiting the actions of school employees in ways that many consider to be stricter than the First Amendment would require. Gabriella was there:

Uhm, it’s kinda [sic] varied, like. . . The whole thing at Pace, I don’t know if you know about that, but the ACLU, they kind of. . . Pace has always encouraged. . . I went to Pace High School and they always encouraged us, whatever you were, because I had a friend, uhm, that was, who was a. . . recently turned Muslim and they allowed him to go to the office and he would pray. . . during his lunch breaks
and he would go when he needed to and they were also very open for the
Christian people because it was a very big Christian school.

“So, uhm, what I’m sensin’ [sic] here is that at your high school they allowed
people to practice whatever their faith happened to be [interviewer]?” “Mm-hmm, they
weren’t oppressive to any religion.”

Gene and Hannah express the way they see spirituality as having an indirect effect
on their academic success by giving them improved morals and responsibility. Gene says
that his spirituality inspires him to do his best:

I think it [my spirituality] makes me wanna [sic] be a better student, because,
y’know, my, y’know, my belief system says that you’re supposed to, y’know, you
should, everything you do, you need to, you need to do it to the best of your
ability. And so, y’know that encourages me to be a better student. To try to be
here and do the things that I’m supposed to do and do ‘em [sic] on time and do it
the best I can.

When I asked how engagement in spiritual activities can affect someone’s academic
achievement, Hannah responded

I wanna [sic] say yes, in the sense that, that when you have that spirituality you
have more of a sense of, uh, like “this is what I should do and this is what’s
right.” So then, they would be more responsible with their school. But, I don’t
think anything outside that really dictates anything. Just like study habits and. . .

“Just that increased sense of responsibility [interviewer]?” “That’s it.”
When I asked the participants how schools and universities could do a better job of meeting their students’ spiritual needs, almost all of them indicated that schools and universities already do a good job in this area by allowing students to form religious or spiritual student-led organizations. A few indicated that schools and universities can further their efforts in this regard by providing these student organizations with additional facilities, resources and access to guest-speakers, and by doing a better job of letting students know what kinds of organizations and services are offered on campus.

Ken believes that universities can “just allow students to start their religious organizations whenever they feel like it and not do anything to degrade it at all. And stop tryin’ [sic] to push God outta [sic] society.” Lillian told me that

I really do think they [schools and universities] do a good job. I know that there are a bunch of different activities that you can do for whichever you believe in. I see a bunch of flyers going all around, so, I feel like if you really, truly wanted to get into something like that the resources are there for you to utilize.

Gabriella describes some of the kinds of religious organizations that are available on-campus:

I mean, UWF [University of West Florida] is a great example, uhm, they give, they have the “Muslim Students Alliance,” they have, they have “Wesley,” I mean, I think, letting the students themselves start groups for their spirituality needs or their religions is a great way for the school to do that.”

“Okay. And, uhm, that’s the second time you’ve mentioned ‘Wesley,’ I’m unfamiliar with that could you. . . [interviewer]?” Gabriella explained
It’s “Wesley,” they also have BCM which is the “Baptist College Ministry.”

“Wesley” is the “Wesley” for uhm, John Wesley, he founded the Methodist Church. They call it “Wesley,” that’s just the Methodist Foundation, it’s like they have Bible studies, they have get-togethers.

Many of the interviewees discussed their participation in these kinds of on-campus religious clubs in K-12 and/or post-secondary schools. Gene shares about his involvement in these kinds of organizations while suggesting that the university can do a better job of publicizing the availability of these groups:

Well, I attended college when I first graduated from high school back, 20 years ago. And, I was at PJC [Pensacola Junior College], and I was involved in Baptist Campus Ministries. . . I mean, they can, mmm, I don’t, I don’t really know, because I, y’know, I think that it’d be nice to have things offered because if you don’t. . . A lot of times, if you’re not looking for. . . that kinda [sic] thing, you don’t know it’s there. So if the school, y’know, maybe if they had a, uh. . . a centralized place where you can go. . . Y’know, here, at UWF [University of West Florida], I see a lot of things hanging on bulletin boards and stuff, but it doesn’t seem that there’s a central place, like, to go. Y’know, I’m uh, I’m a commuter, so if there is a place you can go, if there is an office to go to, to find out about different organizations the campus offers. . . I don’t know where it’s at.

Rodney conveyed a similar recommendation when he said

Y’know, I guess they can just give ‘em [sic], just give ‘em [sic] avenues for it.

Y’know set up times and. . . I know we always had a Christian club, but it was never, y’know, like I told ya, it was never. . . nothin’[sic] much ever came from it,
but if they take the time to really promote that, y’know, it’s available, that we’re not leadin’ [sic] it, but it’s available if you need some, some spiritual guidance or anything, you can go to it.

“Okay. So just promoting the fact that those things are available, but not necessarily endorsing them [interviewer]?” Rodney responded

Maybe, maybe, uhm, I don’t even know how legal this is, but like if the school system decided to maybe get in touch with like some churches in the community. To not promote them, but just let students know that, y’know, if you have any kind of spiritual needs or anything, these are some people who, that have offered their time and here’s their times and here’s how you can get up with ‘em [sic].

Hannah’s suggestion was for a centralized non-denominational facility where students can engage in spiritual activities. Hannah believes

... that would be really cool to have like an area where students can go and just chill and just think. So they could have, I don’t know, they could have religious books available, I don’t know. But, but that could just be the place where students could go and they don’t have to worry about being interrupted. They could just meditate.

Autumn’s idea was similar and included providing facilities and speakers. She said that schools should have

... like more meeting times for students that want to meet. Facilities. Maybe have different people come in to those groups and speak with them, if they wanted, y’know, people from different religions to come in and speak, or people to come speak about their spirit – spirituality, that kind of thing.
Paula, Carol, Ken and Hannah all described their engagement in similar on-campus organizations during middle and high school. Schools and universities that allow the formation of these types of student-led spiritual or religious clubs are providing students with a vehicle for meeting their need for spiritual connectedness. Malcolm sees this need as so important that he recommended that participation in non-religious organizations or teams should be required of students: “I wish that they would make school participation mandatory. I mean clubs, ROTC, sports. . . Unless they have a job outside of school. I mean to be spiritual, you gotta [sic] be doin’[sic] something.”

The implications of these primary themes of spirituality and education are a need for the clarification of the difference between these two phenomena, providing teachers with training on how to nurture students’ spirituality in a holistic educational framework and continuing to provide students with the opportunity to form student-led, on-campus clubs. While some of the thematic categories above will be clarified or extended in the Focus Group Interview section which follows, further recommendations based on the totality of the quantitative and qualitative data will be presented in Chapter 6.

Focus Group Interview

I invited 8 of the 11 one-on-one interview participants to join the focus group and scheduled the focus group meeting during a time that most of the one-on-one participants had previously indicated availability. Four of those invited responded affirmatively to the invitation, two were “maybes” and two said they would be unable to attend. On the scheduled day of the focus group, one of the confirmed attendees cancelled. Neither of the “maybes” showed for the focus group. This left me with a focus group of three. The
attendees were Lillian, Rodney and Gene. Of the three, there was one female and two males. One was Asian, the other two were Caucasian. One was married, while the other two were single. Their religious preferences were Baptist, Methodist and Other.

Because the focus group was so small, I did not acquire the wealth of data I had hoped for. However, the data that were collected have supported, extended or clarified some of the findings of the one-on-one interviews. These data are presented using the same applicable thematic categories employed for the One-on-One Interviews section.

As with the previous section, all the names used are pseudonyms, and my three focus group participants are identified by the same pseudonym they were assigned in the One-on-One Interviews section. Additionally, just as before, the transcribed interview is not presented in its entirety, but rather relevant, supporting excerpts have been used. When my comments or follow-up questions appear, the word “interviewer” follows my words in brackets.

I informed the participants that everyone should value one another’s opinions whether or not they agreed and that if someone wished to disagree, they should direct their disagreement toward a comment rather than the individual. I obtained their permission to keep an audio record of the focus group and asked everyone to try to speak loudly and clearly. I let them know that I desired the focus group to be more of a free-flowing conversation, rather than everyone taking turns answering a question, but that for facilitating transcribing, that it would be helpful if they tried to speak one at a time. I encouraged the participants to share additional information or to extend the conversation in directions that were not necessarily covered by my questions if they chose.
Phenomenology of Spirituality

I began the focus group with a question intended to break through the paradigm of interchangeably using the terms religion and spirituality by asking them how they defined spirituality and to tell me the ways that it was the same as or different from religion. The ensuing conversation excerpts support some of the ideas about the phenomenology of spirituality that I posited in the One-on-One Interviews section. Namely, that religion is more about corporate worship with prescribed rituals and that spirituality is about a personal belief system. They all agreed, however, that some overlap between religion and spirituality was possible in that different people bring their own personal spirituality with them into a corporate religious experience, so the same religious experience might affect different people in different ways. Lillian offered that “Religion is like an organized, set rule or a set of rules that somebody follows, whereas spirituality is how you take it and make it your own.” Rodney expanded on the idea of organization and sets of rules by identifying them as traditions: “I think religion follows a lot of tradition. My spirituality, it’s more about a relationship than it is about following traditions.” Gene agreed

I think when you talk about religion, it does transcend other religions, because just, y’know, the knowledge that I have of other religions. . . . When I think of religion it’s more a group of people who have similar beliefs, getting together, and they do follow traditions and they follow, y’know, there are certain things they do during their worship time. . .

“Like rituals [interviewer]?” Gene replied

Yeah, certain rituals they follow, but when it does come to spirituality, it’s more of an individual, y’know, a personal relationship, than it is. . . . Because you know,
when you’re in a group of people you may have a similar experience, but your spirituality is just something that’s very personal.

**Spiritual Needs**

I asked the group, “If you were asked to create a list of spiritual needs, what would be on that list?” Rodney asserted spiritual needs that were very much aligned with that of spiritual connectedness: “Well, I think everyone wants to be loved and accepted.” The need that Lillian expressed was also one that is not incompatible with the idea of spiritual connectedness: “I also think, like, as a confidante... someone you can always turn to and talk to.” The spiritual need explicated by Gene was something that was included earlier in the discussion of life’s secrets:

I think you also want to feel part of something bigger than you. That you want to feel there’s something you have a purpose in your life other than just getting up, going to work, coming home. That you wanna [sic] be part of something bigger than just you.

In order to obtain an even deeper understanding of spiritual needs, I asked the group if they could describe potential obstacles that might hinder someone from meeting his or her spiritual needs. As a wonderful counterpoint to the need for acceptance, Gene supposed that an obstacle to meeting spiritual needs would be a person’s feelings of unworthiness:

I think that, at a personal level, guilt might prevent someone from fulfilling their spiritual needs. Uhm, y’know, I don’t know how to explain that, other than to say that there are times in life when you go through where you have something that
you do that may not be necessarily accepted, publicly or something, so you feel like you’re unworthy of a relationship, you’re unworthy of the acceptance from other people, cause you realize that in your private life that you’re doing something maybe that you’re not necessarily proud of.

We talked about how this and other spiritual “truisms” can sometimes be viewed more holistically as life lessons. Guilt and feelings of unworthiness can hinder someone from meeting his or her spiritual needs, but this is also akin to the idea that “If you want others to love you, you have to learn to love yourself.” Rodney’s response indicates that a fear of others’ perceptions and societal pressures could prevent someone from meeting his or her spiritual needs:

People sometimes get caught up in what other people think about them, so that they neglect what they really feel or what they want for their own selves because you have TV [television], you have parents, you have people pushin’ [sic] you into what they think you should be. When you should be concerned about what you feel inside and what your needs might be.

Lillian shared her frustrations stemming from a lack of knowledge regarding religion and spirituality and her family influences in meeting her own spiritual needs:

I think it’s also like, a lack of knowledge can hinder that [meeting of spiritual needs], uhm, my mom’s Buddhist and she absolutely hates the word “Christian” in the household. . . but I’ve always been interested in that and I don’t know where to begin because I can’t be outwardly Christian, so I just take my Bible into my room and I don’t know where to begin. . . You need, you need to know. I’ve,
like, searched on the Internet to try to figure out where to even begin with the Bible, but I can’t figure it out and it’s hindering my spirituality.

Lillian’s struggle to please her mother while independently exploring her own spirituality indicates that the personal influences considered to be spiritual motivators toward meeting spiritual needs can also serve as a barrier to fulfilling those needs.

When it comes to spiritual needs, the focus group data support the one-on-one interview findings. Love, acceptance and connecting with others (spiritual connectedness) along with the need to answer life’s questions are spiritual needs. The needs implied by life questions presented above, in the one-on-one interviews, and as secrets of life are not incompatible with the lowest tier of the spiritual needs in the framework, spiritual awakening. When someone begins to ponder these life questions, he or she is likely to embark on a spiritual awakening (or vice versa). The barriers to meeting spiritual needs include lack of self-worth, concern over the opinions of others, societal pressures, lack of knowledge and personal influences.

*Spiritual Motivation*

The focus group agreed that times of crisis or other significant “critical life choices” (major life events) serve as spiritual motivators and could be catalysts for causing someone to approach his or her initial spiritual awakening. Lillian related how her medical condition instigated her exploration of spirituality:

I think definitely something traumatic in their life, like I told you when I was diagnosed with Lupis I really got into my spirituality. Or cause, like I went to a Christian school for seven years and my mom’s Buddhist. So I was really
confused about what I believed in and when that [diagnosis of Lupis] came about, that made me realize there was more to life than, uhm, just me. I was being selfish my whole life and there’s a reason why I was diagnosed, and it really brought me, uhm, to become a lot more spiritual.

Rodney concurred, but cited crises of a less physical nature, “Like when you have any kind of crisis or a family crisis. Times like that.” Gene’s thoughts on the matter were much broader and included an implication of role of major life events as well as crises:

Critical life choices, or parts of your life where you’re diagnosed with something, those are things that make you become more focused on the fact that there is a void there, but I think that there’s a lot of people who go through life and they don’t ever come to a point where they . . . they feel like they need to get their spiritual life in order.

Gene’s input here reminded me of how a person may have a genetic predisposition to certain disorders but never contract those disorders unless the right environmental catalyst was provided. I shared this idea with the group, and they agreed that someone might never find his or her spiritual identity unless some event in his or her life leads that person to spirituality. Lillian provided an illustration of this point when she spoke again about how she was confused and experimented with body piercings and tattoos and admitted that she may never have begun devoting more thought to her spirituality if she had not been diagnosed with Lupis.
The Secret of Life

In addition to Gene’s earlier comments about a spiritual need to be a part of something larger than oneself, the focus group yielded only a couple of areas that address these types of life questions. Rodney introduced the idea of “identity check”: “I know a lot of people who turn to a spiritual side when they have an identity check or they’re trying to figure out who they are.” “You mean, like when people say, ‘I’m gonna [sic] go out and find myself [interviewer]?’” “Exactly.” Gene provided additional details regarding the spiritual emptiness that he believes predisposes us all to seek out spirituality:

I think each person has, whether they acknowledge that it’s a spiritual thing they’re looking for or not, each person’s looking for something. And they’re looking for something to fill that void. And they don’t always end up turning to spirituality, some people turn to alcohol, turn to different things to try to fill that void.

Spirituality and Education

Despite having addressed the difference between religion and spirituality at the very outset of the interview, the focus group struggled with the idea of spirituality and education. I even went so far as to reveal to the group some of the findings of my literature review, that non-controversial instructional practices like encouraging students to share personal narratives, using reflective journaling, meditation, music and art could help meet students spiritual needs. Yet the group could not think of any additionally spiritually nourishing classroom strategies. The groups’ recommendations regarding the
proper ways to nourish students’ spirituality in a school setting were limited to advising students of available community resources, presenting moral or character education and teaching students to love and accept themselves and others. Rodney, an aspiring educator himself, opined

I think teachers can just say, “we’re not the school and we’re not promoting this, but if you have spiritual needs, these are some of the things that are available.” That’s really the only thing I could think of without stirrin’ up a lot of controversy.

Gene pointed out potential difficulties in attempting to meet students’ spiritual needs and brought up the idea of a “generic” moral education:

I think the problem is that when it comes to offering spiritual things in school is that you have one side who wants just one view taught. Whatever that view may be. And then the other side wants a multitude of views taught and that’s where you start havin’ [sic] the problem. . . It seems like there ought to be a way for them [educators] to offer generic advice, y’know, if that’s what you want to call it. Because it seems like every religion has, y’know, I don’t know of a single religion that says it’s okay to steal. Y’know what I’m sayin’ [sic]? It seems like there should be some basic morality that could be established. . . But I don’t want schools teaching spirituality, because that’s my job as a parent.

Lillian recalled our previous conversation of spiritual needs and framed her ideas about spirituality in education as a way to meet the needs we discussed:

Going back to the spiritual needs we talked about. . . Instead of focusing more on religiously what could be taught, just focusing on being loved and acceptance and
letting them know, like, how that can be achieved by loving yourself. I think that would be a completely appropriate way to introduce [a discussion of meeting] spiritual needs in class because obviously, somebody else would want that too. And you could introduce them to how maybe to attain that and like Rodney said, give them the resources if they want to pursue religion as a way to meet those spiritual needs.

Now that I have presented the quantitative and qualitative data and explained how they have aligned to the originally posed research questions, literature review and the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework, the final chapter will include an overall discussion of the limitations and implications of the research as well as recommendations for areas of future research into spirituality.

The “story” that accompanies the final chapter’s frontispiece (Figure 18) will be used to provide ideas for teaching strategies to help meet students’ spiritual needs.
Figure 18. Spiritually expressive artwork, “All Things Work Together...,” pastel on pastel paper.
CHAPTER VI

WHAT’S FOR DESSERT?

Summary of Findings and Limitations

In the Discussion section to follow there will be an in-depth presentation of how the results of the present study align with the literature that was reviewed. For the moment, however, I will briefly summarize both the quantitative and qualitative research findings and detail the limitations of the study that have occurred to me.

The quantitative research goals of the present study were to support the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework by exploring the relationships between participants’ academic success and the clusters of variables on the 2009 USES which represented the components of the framework. A Cronbach’s Alpha score verified the reliability of the survey instrument. The data to realize the quantitative research goals were generated by 139 University of West Florida undergraduate students of varying disciplines and diverse demographics. The Pearson’s R scores presented in Chapter 4 indicate that there is a positive and significant correlation between the components of the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework, as measured by the clustered variable questions. However, there was not a significant correlation between students’ self-reported current semester grades and the components of the framework. Despite the insignificance of the relationship of the components of the framework to the grades, the
quantitative research findings are consistent with the previously reviewed literature. The link between the quantitative results and the literature will be fully explored in the Discussion section below.

The qualitative research goals (beyond the hermeneutics applied during the review of the literature) were to support the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework and to develop a deeper, richer, phenomenological understanding of spirituality and its role in the lives of students and their perceptions of their own success. Additionally, the qualitative data was hoped to have indicated additional strategies whereby instructors, schools and universities could meet their students’ spiritual needs. Data to support these goals were gathered by one-on-one interviews with 11 of the survey respondents and a focus group interview with three of the one-on-one participants. With varying degrees of success, the qualitative data met these research goals.

The interviews revealed that respondents’ use of the word spirituality was roughly identical to their use of the term religion. Even after discussing the differences with them, participants’ later responses were affected by this interchangeable paradigm of the two terms. Despite this difficulty, a phenomenology of spirituality was arrived at. While religion is a corporate experience that includes traditions and rituals, spirituality is a personal experience that informs individuals’ belief systems, morals and sense of responsibility. The most commonly identified spiritual need expressed among the participants was that of spiritual connectedness (including the needs for love and acceptance). Participants typically met these needs by their participation in traditional religious gatherings and through on-campus religious organizations. Barriers to fulfilling these needs were reported as low self-worth, concern about the opinions of others, and
pressure from family and society. The participants see personal crises, other major life
events, daily stressors and their lived experiences (including personal and family
influences) as elements that motivate them to engage in spiritual activities. Common acts
of spiritual volition were participation in on- and off-campus religious organizations and
individual prayer and the reading of sacred texts.

The participants’ continued reliance upon a combined religion-spirituality
paradigm made it difficult for them to see how instructors, schools and universities could
better meet students’ spiritual needs. The respondents almost invariably insisted that
attempting to encourage students’ spirituality in class would be illegal and that teachers
were afraid to do so. After discussion about the differences between religion and
spirituality, participants indicated some suggestions. Schools and universities should
continue to allow student-formed and student-led religious groups to meet on campus.
Schools and universities can better publicize the availability of these groups and provide
meeting places, resources and access to guest-speakers for these groups. The participants
indicated that a “generic” type of moral or character education along with teaching
students to love and accept themselves and others would be a non-controversial way of
meeting students’ spiritual needs in a school setting. Along with the quantitative results, I
will detail ways in which the qualitative findings mesh with the literature review in the
Discussion section.

Even though I am pleased with the research results, it would be an act of hubris
incompatible with my personal spiritual views to delude myself into thinking I have
prepared and conducted a flawless study. There were moments late in the data generation
phase in which I thought, “I should have asked them about this on the survey” or “why
didn’t I say that at the outset of each interview.” Fortunately, I am capable of learning from these mistakes, and I relish the opportunity to apply the knowledge I have gained to improve my future forays into the research field.

There are some potential concerns with the generalizability of the research findings. All of the participants of the current study were undergraduate students at the University of West Florida. Although I visited classes from a variety of disciplines, the majority of students in the classes where I distributed the surveys were Caucasian women. Distributing the survey to other classes or colleges and universities with a more diverse population would not only produce a larger sample size but would also enhance the generalizability of the findings.

The “oh-I-should-have” moments mentioned above reveal an additional limiting factor, that of the construction of the survey questions. The survey instrument was developed with a mind toward supporting my Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework. As such, the question cluster aligned with spiritual self-actualization asked respondents to indicate perceptions of their levels of success attributable to their spirituality. In retrospect, an additional set of questions asking about levels of success not attributable to spirituality would have made for a revealing comparison. In the cluster of questions whereby students reported their “Educational Influences on Spiritual Motivation,” it would also have been useful to separate these questions into two different clusters, one for the participants’ “K-12 Educational Influences on Spiritual Motivation” and another for “Post-Secondary Educational Influences on Spiritual Motivation.”

Finally, the weakness of the relationship between students’ self-reported current semester grades and the variable clusters representing components of the Spiritual Needs/
Motivation/Volition Framework has forced me to reflect on the data generation of grades in respect with the other questions. The questions about expression of spiritual volition, educational and personal influences on spiritual motivation and personal success attributable to spirituality were more holistically worded, in that participants could draw upon the totality of their lived experiences in answer to those questions. Conversely, the question which addressed students’ grades was worded “Current Semester Grade Average” with choices ‘A,’ ‘B,’ ‘C,’ ‘D,’ or ‘F.’ The wording of this question only makes possible a snapshot of the respondent’s grades, while he or she has reflected a more historical picture with the other responses. The validity of the survey in this area could perhaps be increased by asking students to report their grade averages at several intervals, such as “Elementary Grade Average,” “Middle School Grade Average,” “High School Grade Average,” and “College Grade Average.”

Even in light of the limitations, the research yielded results that were both significant and meaningful. The quantitative findings supported the basic construct of the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework as it was defined in Chapter 2. Additionally, the one-on-one and focus group interviews not only supported the framework and provided a phenomenological picture of spirituality, but also form a body of data that offer useful information for educators.

Discussion

The Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework was supported by both the quantitative and qualitative research findings. Quantitatively, the clustered questions that represented each of the components of the framework were positively and significantly
correlated. In Chapter 2’s review of the literature I proposed a Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework that is based upon and extends from Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and which was further informed by Maslow’s works regarding religion and spirituality (Maslow, 1964; Maslow, 1968).

At its heart, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs describes the psychological motivation by which individuals behave in such ways as to see to the fulfillment of progressively complex needs. The foundational tier of needs in Maslow’s Hierarchy are basic needs to sustain life, next are social needs and the pinnacle is self-actualization (the point at which someone is confident of his or her sense of identity and is able to pursue self-improvement and successes in life; Maslow, 1971).

My proposed Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework similarly posits that a person is spiritually motivated to engage in acts of spiritual volition in respect to the fulfillment of a set of spiritual needs. As I have already presented, the quantitative research results show a statistically significant positive correlation between the clusters of questions that were chosen to represent each of these components of the framework.

I will briefly discuss how the qualitative data intersect with the spiritual needs component of the framework, which, in turn, is aligned with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs described in the literature review. In the framework, “Spiritual Needs” were categorized as the needs for “Spiritual Awakening,” “Spiritual Connectedness” and “Spiritual Self-Actualization.” Spiritual awakening occurs when a person begins to ponder the spiritual secrets of life. As previously related in Chapter 2, Maslow presented examples of these kinds of spiritual questions which included “What is the good life? . . . What are my obligations to society? . . . What is my relation to nature, to death, to aging,
to pain, to illness? How can I live a zestful, enjoyable, meaningful life?” (Maslow, 1964, p. 52). Autumn’s interview responses nicely show how the qualitative data support this aspect of the framework and mirror Maslow’s questions so closely; one might think she had one of his books in front of her:

. . . [A]fter you engage in the [spiritual] activities maybe like you understand your purpose a little better. . . maybe some people question as to why. . . why they’re here, y’know, “why should I do good?” “Why should I be a better person?” [spirituality helps] answer questions and maybe help[s] guide them.

The spiritual connectedness level of “Spiritual Needs” was thoroughly supported by participants’ interview responses when they stressed the importance of gathering with spiritual friends at on- and off-campus religious organizations and when they explicated the needs for love and acceptance from others. Maslow’s self-actualization describes the level of needs whereby a person is in touch with his or her identity and has already fulfilled more basic needs and thus able to consider self-improvement (Maslow, 1971). Similarly, a spiritually self-actualized person is one who has discovered his or her spiritual identity and is able to pursue spiritual growth and success. This element of the framework was also supported by interviewees’ emphasis of the importance of having an “identity check,” overcoming low self-worth, and by their reliance upon spirituality as a foundation for their sense of responsibility, morals and desire to do their best.

Addressing the “Spiritual Motivation” component of the framework, both the literature and the interview data support the inclusion of crises and every day stressors. The stressors of these lived experiences can be serious ones, such as coping with death (Tisdell, 2003). Alternatively, these motivators can also come in the form of garden
variety, everyday stress (Greene, 2001). Although I originally explored both serious crises and mundane stressors in the literature review, my own preoccupation with the personal crises I had endured and overcame through my spirituality improperly narrowed my focus. I listed “Crisis” as a source of spiritual motivation. The interview data are more properly aligned to the literature than was the framework in this regard. My participants shared an emphasis on the importance of crisis as a spiritual motivator when they mentioned their personal illnesses and abuse, as well as the sickness and death of loved ones. Malcolm’s attention to the challenges he faces each day and Autumn’s discussion of marriage as a major-life event that provides spiritual motivation synchronize perfectly with the literature. Reflection upon this data and a reexamination of the literature has prompted me to adjust the framework (Figure 19). The too narrow “Crisis” has been replaced with the more inclusive “Stressors.”

*Figure 19.* The revised Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework proposed by the author.
My preoccupation with personal crisis affected my development of the framework. So too did the interviewees’ persistence in viewing spirituality and religion as the same affect their responses regarding educational influences. Even though the quantitative data supported the correlation between “Education Influences on Spiritual Motivation” and the other question clusters, interview participants mostly failed to see the possibility of this being a spiritual motivator because of their perception of teachers’ fears of addressing spiritual/religious topics. This perception on the part of my interviewees perhaps should not have come as a surprise because the literature review also confirmed this fear on the part of educators (Nelson et al., 2004, p. 181).

In Chapter 2, I offered a sample of spiritually nourishing instructional strategies from a variety of authors which included holistic, transformative, moral, aesthetic and partnership education as well as service-learning. I had hoped that my interview participants would be able to describe compatible classroom practices their instructors had used which met their spiritual needs. Because of the interviewees’ conceptions about religion, spirituality and perception of fear on the part of their teachers, the closest explicated response to such a classroom strategy was Hannah’s mention of “quiet time.” Participants’ responses to other interview questions do however imply the practical application of at least two of the strategies reviewed in the literature. Interviewees’ emphasis of the importance of allowing student-led organizations and their consistent mention of the spiritual connectedness needs are highly compatible with concept of Eisler’s “partnership education” (as cited in Miller et al., 2005, p. 48). Additionally, many of the interview participants placed an importance on helping others and “making a difference.” Instructors can speak to students’ desires to engage in these kinds of
activities with the incorporation of service-learning projects as described by Speck (as cited in Speck and Hoppe, 2007).

The final component of the framework is that of “Spiritual Volition.” The interviewees expressed their engagement of personal expression by practicing independent prayer, reading of sacred texts, “praying to statues,” and with references to meditation and “quiet time.” The communal expression element was thoroughly represented by interviewees’ participation in corporate religious experiences such as church services, group Bible studies, concerts and attending club meetings. Further, the service and sacrifice elements of the “Spiritual Volition” component of the framework were represented by participants’ emphasis on the importance of making a difference in others’ lives.

Finally, the literature review also included my use of Maslow’s work to form an operational definition of spirituality (as opposed to religion) that would guide the phenomenological aspect of the qualitative research. Drawing upon Maslow, I defined religion as a ritualistic, corporate experience while spirituality was a personal, more transcendental experience (Maslow, 1964). Of course, I have already discussed at length the problems associated with participants’ interchangeable use of these terms; however, when asked to describe how these phenomena were different, their responses supported the definition posited in the literature review.

I have summarized the findings and limitations of the present research along with presenting a discussion of ways in which these findings intersected and diverged from the information presented in the review of the literature. Although, overall, I am pleased with the results conveyed up to this point, there is still that lingering, overarching goal of
wanting to inspire educators to inform their instructional strategies in spiritually nourishing ways. The “Implications and Suggestions for Educators” section that follows will, I hope, bring me closer to meeting this goal as I connect the research back to the autoethnography and provide an example of how teachers can feed their students’ spirits.

Implications and Suggestions for Educators

That our society has devolved to the extent that educated college students cannot readily explicate the difference between religion and spirituality is almost frightening. The threat of religiously motivated, First Amendment “lawsuits” has caused teachers to “throw out the baby with the bathwater.” Of course, it is wrong for a teacher to stand before a class and proselytize. But the fact that teachers have been so fearful of violating the First Amendment that they have discontinued most legitimate, instructional references to religion and spirituality has been a disservice to students.

The good news is that teachers can help meet students’ spiritual needs without ever even having to utter the words “religion” or “spirituality” even in instructional ways. The instructional strategies that were suggested as part of the review of the literature in Chapter 2 offer non-controversial, non-religious ways to satiate students’ spirits and can be used to deliver instruction for any content area at any level. These are holistically relevant teaching strategies that have been researched and proven effective outside the realm of spirituality. These strategies will keep students engaged and learning. If students happen to have healthier, more satisfied spirits as a result, so much the better.

The interview data overwhelmingly conveyed the importance that students place on connectedness, love and acceptance. I could not agree more. In the autoethnography
that formed the introduction to this work, I related how I grew up in an abusive home environment. Although my mom was loving and protective, my home was not a place for connectedness, love and acceptance. These are spiritual needs, but even more basic than that, they are life needs. Since I could not consistently rely on my family life to safely fulfill these needs, I sought love, acceptance and connection with my teachers.

I was fortunate to have good, loving teachers who did not disappoint me in regard to the fulfillment of these needs. Their love and dedication was innately reciprocated and I strived to do my best to excel academically. Teachers can read this work and think that spirituality is so much hocus-pocus and that the instructional strategies presented are just plain common-sense. That is fine. But it would border on negligent to digest this work and fail to see the importance of love and care. As educators, we may never know what is going on in the homes and families of some of our charges. However, we full well should make sure our students are loved and safe when they are in our care.

Every student has a personal story. The strategies that I have found and presented in the literature review offer a variety of ways to encourage students to share those personal stories in ways that will help overcome whatever difficulties they may be facing. . . or at least be able to forget about them for a little while.

I thought it would be useful to offer a real example of how two such strategies can be used in the classroom. I have struggled throughout the course of this dissertation to find a way to make the artwork used as chapter frontispieces more relevant. In Chapter 2, I presented a review of the literature that pointed to the spiritual and academic benefits of incorporating opportunities for artistic expression in classrooms. The data generated during the one-on-one and focus group interviews have reminded me of the benefit of
personal narratives and storytelling (also discussed in Chapter 2). Conducting these interviews reminded me that everyone has their own unique story about his or her life’s journey. It occurred to me that pairing artistic expression with opportunities to relate personal narratives is an excellent, non-controversial way to nourish students’ spirits.

Although the autoethnographic introductory chapter was essentially a personal narrative, I would like to take a moment to indulge in some additional storytelling about the illustration on the preceding page. At one of my previous churches a divorced woman (I will refer to her as “Grace”) attended the same Sunday School class as I. Ours was a “singles” class and the entire class would often go to lunch together after church on Sunday and would meet in one another’s homes a couple of times each month to “fellowship” with one another (in organized religious circles the term “fellowship” often refers to informal get-togethers, usually to share a meal, watch a movie, play board games, etc.). We all got to know one another, shared our problems with one another, prayed for and helped one another. Grace was always working and had little time to cook or help her daughter with her academic studies. I would occasionally cook meals for them and tutored her daughter to help improve her grades in math and science.

During one of our gatherings, members of my class had seen my artwork and Grace really enjoyed my abstract pastels of Bible scenes and characters. She had recently moved into a new apartment and had few pictures on the walls. I printed her some copies of my older pieces (many of which you have seen as previous chapter frontispieces) but also thought it would be nice to create an original for her. I asked her to tell me about her favorite Bible story or character and she shared how the Old Testament story of Joseph
resonated with her life. A copy of this particular piece of art forms the frontispiece for this chapter.

Joseph’s brothers were jealous of the favoritism that their father lavished upon Joseph when their father gave Joseph a “coat of many colors.” The brothers’ jealousy was exacerbated by Joseph’s dream that his brothers were stars and bowed down to him. To make matters even worse, Joseph’s father sent him out to spy on his brothers while they were working in the field to make sure they were doing as they were told. The brothers finally had enough. They plotted to kill Joseph, but instead decided to sell him as a slave to some passing travelers. Joseph’s brothers bloodied his coat and took it back to their father, claiming Joseph was killed by an animal.

Joseph was eventually sold to an Egyptian official, Potipher, as a slave. Although Potipher treated Joseph kindly, Potipher’s wife attempted to seduce Joseph. He resisted her attempts and she accused Joseph of sexually assaulting her. Joseph languished in an Egyptian prison for years. Eventually other prisoners and guards learned of Joseph’s talent of interpreting dreams and Joseph was called upon by the Pharoah to decipher troubling dreams he had. The Pharoah had dreamed of seven healthy cows being devoured by seven sickly cows and seven robust ears of corn being consumed by seven wasted ears of corn. Joseph told him that this dream meant there would be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine and that they should save up grain during the abundant years. The Pharoah made Joseph an Egyptian ruler, second only to himself, and placed him in charge of the storage and allocation of all the grain.

During the famine, Joseph’s estranged family began to feel the effects and Joseph’s brothers travelled to Egypt in order to acquire food. They did not recognize
Joseph at first, but when they did, they were fearful that Joseph would punish them in revenge for their having sold him into slavery. Instead, Joseph used his position to relocate his family to Egypt and provide for them. When Joseph’s brothers wondered at his mercy, he told them that God had used their wickedness against him to place him in his current position in Egypt. If that had not occurred, Joseph would not have been able to save the family during the famine.

People who spiritually believe that a higher, intelligent power has a plan for their lives, such as my interview participants, truly relate to a story like Joseph’s. These believers take comfort from knowing that even when bad things befall them, they are part of some grander plan that will work out for their good in the end. This comfort makes the crises easier to endure. This story of Joseph resonated with Grace because of the struggles she endured with her divorce and ongoing stressors in life. Joseph has also always been one of my favorite Bible characters for the same kinds of reasons. Having read Chapter 1, it should be apparent how I relate my personal narrative to this story. Obviously, I would have preferred not to have been abused as a child. I would have rather not suffered a divorce and loss of primary custody of my children. Being addicted to alcohol was not healthy for me. However, when I adopt a perspective similar to Joseph’s I realize that maybe I had to endure abuse in order to care so much about pleasing my teachers instead of my step-father, which led me to higher academic achievement. Perhaps I needed to be divorced to have the time and loneliness in life so that I would be inspired to fill that time by pursuing graduate degrees and bettering myself.

Having this kind of personal narrative and being able to express it artistically and then giving that work of art to someone else as a gift has so many positive benefits for
someone. Sharing this story with someone orally, or in writing can certainly be therapeutic, but being able to create art with that story is more cathartic. The kinesthetic and tactile elements of creating art (and this could be drawings, paintings, writing, sculptures, music, song, dance, drama, etc.) is like pouring yourself and your negative feelings out onto the paper (or the canvas, or the stage, etc.). The therapeutic and cathartic benefits of creating this kind of storytelling art should be readily apparent. When you can then empathize with someone who may have a similar personal story and share your story and art as a gift to that person, you have added yet another benefit, the positive feelings associated with giving.

While my personal narrative and the subject choice for my artwork both have religious undertones, it should be easy for educators to see that this same kind of exercise can be applied to any student’s individual, personal narrative and choice of expression. Encouraging students to share their feelings and personal stories and using that energy to create and give to others is a simple and non-controversial way to nourish their spirits. Even if this kind of strategy (and the others suggested in Chapter 2) does not directly result in a better grade in some subject or another, the process of contributing to a better, holistic education for our students is a worthwhile goal. I encourage educators at all levels to digest the personal narrative I have shared along with the instructional strategies presented in Chapter 2 and to reflect upon, modify, combine and extend those ideas in ways that they can use to help their students grow into better, more successful people.
Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

The blurred, combined paradigms by which people interchangeably view religion and spirituality suggest that future qualitative research into these two phenomena, vis-à-vis comparative phenomenology, would be of great interest. Research into this area might better help society and educators understand the differences between these phenomena and provide a basis for a more comfortable embrace of holistic education.

There is probably not a single aspect of life that excludes the impact of needs, motivation, volition and feelings of success. Therefore, implications for future research into these areas are as endless as the imagination. As my own research interests currently lie within the realm of spirituality, and since there is a relatively small amount of existent research into this area, I will speak to those research possibilities here in both general terms and with specific future studies that are needed to extend or validate the current research.

In order to validate the current research, a future study would be to conduct quantitative research through administration of a modified version of the 2009 USES. In accordance with the present research limitations previously discussed, this adapted survey instrument would separate the K-12 and post-secondary influences on spiritual motivation into separate question clusters, contain an expanded set of questions for students’ self-reported grades and address both life success attributable to spirituality and those not attributable to spirituality.

A second specific future study that would provide a wonderful companion piece to the present work is a mixed-methods study to capture teachers’ perspectives about religion, spirituality and education. A survey instrument could be developed to generate
quantitative data about teachers’ frequency of use of various spiritually nourishing instructional strategies. Follow-up interviews with instructors would obtain a body of qualitative data exploring additional strategies that teachers use, their feelings about meeting students’ spiritual needs and their perceptions of their obligations under the First Amendment.

Additional research related to the present study would include a separate look at the components of the Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Volition Framework. When the focus group interview data revealed that a person’s family could be both a personal influence on spiritual motivation and something that could be a hindrance to meeting spiritual needs, I realized just how much overlap could exist between the elements of the framework. The relationships between each of the components of the framework are so nuanced that each component could benefit from being researched independently.

Additionally, a mixed-methods study of success would make for a highly readable work. Such a study could gather quantitative data regarding secular success (including indicators of socio-economic status) and success attributable to spirituality. Qualitatively, a comparative phenomenology could explore the relationship between self-actualization and spiritual self-actualization.

With the present study alongside the suggestions for future research, I have barely scratched the surfaces of the phenomena of religion, spirituality, self-actualization, motivation and volition (not to mention how these phenomena interact with education and academic achievement). The current research offered a few “recipes” for appetizers, but there is a whole cookbook waiting to be written. If you need me, I’ll be in the kitchen.
REFERENCES


APPENDIXES
APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter
Mr. Russell Youum

December 16, 2009

Dear Mr. Youum:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Research Participants Protection has completed its review of your proposal titled "Spiritual Hunger and Recipes for Spiritual Satety (A Spiritual Needs/Motivation/Validation Framework for Edwanness)," as it relates to the protection of human participants used in research, and granted approval for you to proceed with your study on 01-04-2010. As a research investigator, please be aware of the following:

* You will immediately report to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to human participants.

* You acknowledge and accept your responsibility for protecting the rights and welfare of human research participants and for complying with all parts of 45 CFR Part 46, the UWF IRB Policy and Procedures, and the decisions of the IRB. You may view these documents on the Research and Sponsored Programs web page at http://www.research.uwf.edu/irb. You acknowledge completion of the IRB ethical training requirements for researchers as attested in the IRB application.

* You will ensure that legally effective informed consent is obtained and documented. If written consent is required, the consent form must be signed by the participant or the participant's legally authorized representative. A copy is to be given to the person signing the form and a copy kept for your file.

* You will promptly report any proposed changes in previously approved human participant research activities to Research and Sponsored Programs. The proposed changes will not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the participants.

* You are responsible for reporting progress of approved research to Research and Sponsored Programs at the end of the project period 05-31-2010. If the data phase of your project continues beyond the approved end date, you must receive an extension approval from the IRB.

Good luck in your research endeavors. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact Research and Sponsored Programs at 850-857-6378 or irb@uwf.edu.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]

Dr. Richard S. Podemski, Associate Vice President for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies

Dr. Terry Presutti, Chair IRB for the Protection of Human Research Participants

CC: Janet Pilcher, Thomas Kramer
APPENDIX B

2009 Undergraduate Spiritual Expression Survey (USES)
### 2009 Undergraduate Spiritual Expression Survey (USES)

#### CONTACT DATA
- **First Name:**
- **Last Name:**
- **Mailing Street Address:**
- **City:**
- **State:**
- **Zip:**
- **Email Address:**
- **Phone Number:**
- **Date of Birth:**
- **Best Contact Method:**
- **Best Contact Time:**

#### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA
- **Gender:**
  - Male
  - Female
- **Ethnicity:**
  - African American
  - American Indian or Alaska Native
  - Asian
  - Caucasian
  - Hispanic or Latino
  - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - Other
- **Marital Status:**
  - Single
  - Married
  - Widowed
  - Divorced
  - Separated
- **Religious Preference:**
  - Baptist
  - Buddhist
  - Catholic
  - Jewish
  - Methodist
  - Muslim
  - Other
  - None

#### ACADEMIC DATA
- **Academic Classification:**
  - Freshman
  - Sophomore
  - Junior
  - Senior
- **Current Semester Grade Average:**
  - F
  - D
  - C
  - B
  - A

#### RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE

#### EXPRESSIONS OF SPIRITUAL VOLITION

- **Never**
- **Rarely** (less than once per month)
- **Occasionally** (once per month)
- **Often** (2-3 times per month or more)
- **Regularly** (4 or more times per month or more)

1. I participate in self-reflection, prayer, or meditation that is not part of a campus-sponsored class, event or activity.
2. I participate in yoga, tai chi, or other practices that involve exercise, visit the beach, communing with nature, or other similarly spiritually nourishing activities that are not part of a campus-sponsored class, event or activity.
3. I enjoy and/or participate in religious singing/chanting/music that is not part of a campus-sponsored class, event or activity.
4. I read sacred texts (Bible, Koran, Torah, etc.) or other books about religion/spirituality that are not associated with my participation in a campus-sponsored class, event or activity.
5. I attend religious and/or worship services that are not part of a campus-sponsored class, event or activity.
6. I participate in spiritually fulfilling clubs or organizations that are not part of a campus-sponsored class, event or activity.
7. I participate in spiritually fulfilling forms of artistic expression (such as painting, drawing, journal, or poetry writing) that are not associated with my participation in a campus-sponsored class, event or activity.
8. I participate in a personal relationship that is spiritually fulfilling.
9. I achieve spiritual fulfillment by volunteering my services and/or time for the benefit of others either by myself or as part of an activity that is not associated with a campus-sponsored activity (examples: volunteering at church, work at soup kitchens, volunteer work for organizations such as the Peace Corps or Habitat for Humanity).

(please continue to next page)
## Educational Influences on Spiritual Motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely (less than once per month)</th>
<th>Occasionally (once per month)</th>
<th>Often (2-3 times per month)</th>
<th>Regularly (4 times per month or more)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My college instructors care about me as a person and as a student and take steps to create a caring community of learners.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My elementary and secondary school teachers care about me as a person and as a student and take steps to create caring communities of learners.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My college instructors acknowledge (and encourage tolerance of) all forms of spiritual expression.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My college instructors use contemplation/meditation/quiet time as an instructional strategy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My college instructors encourage or require reflective journaling and/or poetry writing as an instructional strategy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My elementary and secondary school teachers encouraged or required reflective journaling and/or poetry writing as an instructional strategy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My college instructors encourage or require students to share personal narratives and/or engage in storytelling as an instructional strategy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My college instructors use art, music or drama as an instructional strategy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I participate in religious/spiritual discussions in class and/or with college instructors, faculty or staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>During my elementary and secondary school career, I participated in religious/spiritual discussions in class and/or with elementary and secondary school teachers, faculty or staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I participate in college level religious studies classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>During my elementary and secondary school career, I participated in religious studies classes as part of the formal school day.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I participate in service-learning opportunities (volunteer efforts) that are part of a class or that are conducted in association with a college campus-sponsored organization, event or activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>During my elementary and secondary school career, I participated in service-learning opportunities (volunteer efforts) that were part of a class or that were conducted in association with a school-sponsored organization, event or activity.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A college instructor (or instruction) acts (or act) as a personal spiritual role model (or role models) in my life.</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An elementary or secondary school teacher (or teachers) acted as a personal spiritual role model (or role models) in my life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My college/university allows for personal expressions of spirituality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My elementary and secondary schools allowed for personal expressions of spirituality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>At my college/university, there are spiritually fulfilling clubs and organizations that are sponsored by and/or located on-campus that meet my spiritual needs.</td>
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<td>At my college/university, there are spiritually fulfilling events and activities that are frequently sponsored by and/or located on-campus that meet my spiritual needs.</td>
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PERSONAL INFLUENCES ON SPIRITUAL MOTIVATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A family member (or members) acted as a personal spiritual role model (or role models) in my life.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A personal friend (or friends) acted as a personal spiritual role model (or role models) in my life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A mentor (or mentors) or friend (or friends) associated with organized religion (i.e., someone you know through your participation in organized religion) acted as a personal spiritual role model (or role models) in my life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Throughout my life, I have faced crises of a personal nature (sick, divorce, break-up, loss of a loved one, loss of a job, alcoholism, illness, disabilities, or other medical conditions, etc.) that have caused me to grow or help me to understand my spirituality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My spirituality has helped me overcome personal obstacles and crises.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My spirituality has been a comfort to me through personal obstacles and crises.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

PERSONAL SUCCESS ATTRIBUTABLE TO SPIRITUALITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My spirituality has helped me achieve academic success.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My spirituality has helped me achieve success at work, in business and/or in my personal finances.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My spirituality has helped me achieve success in building strong, positive personal relationships.</td>
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<tr>
<td>These have had a positive impact on other individuals and/or society because of my spirituality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being in touch with my spirituality has helped me improve myself and my life.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN ONE-ON-ONE & FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You may contact me to participate in follow-up one-on-one and focus group recorded interviews regarding my views on spirituality and education.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

INFORMED CONSENT

Data generated from this survey and participation in follow-up interviews are being used to determine whether or not there is a correlation between students' expressions of spirituality, personal spiritual motivators, and personal success. No participants' names or other identifying characteristics will be disclosed in any publication or product extending from this research. Participants may opt out of all or any portion of this research at any time. Your participation is both helpful and appreciated; however, no negative consequences will result should you choose to withdraw your participation.

Some survey questions may have had the potential to cause you to recall negative memories. If your response to any question has brought negative memories to the surface, and you require psychological, medical or legal counseling, please refer to the service providers listed below. Listing of these service providers does not constitute an endorsement of their services. Any fees associated with these services are the sole responsibility of the individual soliciting said services.

University Counseling and Wellness Services 850-474-2420 (M-F, 8:00am – 5:00pm)
After hours: Call University switchboard at 850-474-2000
and ask to speak to someone from the counseling center

University Student Health Center 850-473-2172

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
Florida Abuse Hotline 1-800-96-ABUSE (22873)

Escambia-Santa Rosa Bar Association 850-434-6009 (legal referrals)

Your signature below acknowledges your understanding of this informed consent and indicates your willingness to participate in the study.

Printed Name: [Signature]: Date: